

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST



As compiled and taught by
Rev. Brad Montsion
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INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1:1 – 8

Key Verse: *Revelation 1:19*

Key Thought: *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*

Date Written: *Approximately 96-100 AD.*

Penman: *The Apostle John (1:4,9; 22:8 cf. 1:1) as inspired by the Holy Spirit*

Written to: *The seven churches of Asia Minor originally*

Writing style: **Apocalyptic** - *it is always eschatological (future events)*

- it is always dualistic (two distinct ages; God and Satan; historical and temporal)

- is always full of symbolism

The book of Revelation is usually read with zeal by new converts but sadly neglected by mature Christians. It's unfortunate because it contains a great deal of the Theology of Power. Could it be that because Satan's total defeat is recorded here, that this book is being subtly overlooked?

“In the Evangelists we have the record of his humiliation, his condescension, his toil and sufferings, his patience, his mockings and scourging by those who should have done him reverence, and finally his death upon the shameful cross, -- a death esteemed in that age to be the most ignominious that men could inflict.

In the Revelation we have the gospel of his enthronement and glory, his association with the Father upon the throne of universal dominion, his overruling providence among the nations of the earth, and his coming again, not as a homeless stranger, but in power and great glory, to punish his enemies and reward his followers.”

Uriah Smith
“Daniel and Revelation”
 p.349

This book contains many scenes of glory. We have unveiled the only One who can hold the keys of David and His ministers who once were dead but now are alive forevermore. He assures us that He is the triumphant possessor of the keys of death and the grave (cf. - Isaiah 22:22). He has given every overcomer the multiplied promise of walking with Him in white, having a crown of life, and partaking of the fruit of the Tree of Life which grows in the midst of the paradise of God.

We see Him seated upon a throne that is high and lifted up. The reader is filled with scene after scene of the grand and lofty imaginary and the magnificent description that focuses our attention upon the Revelation of Jesus Christ our Lord.

There Are Several Different Views of Interpretation.

A. Preterist or Contemporary View - This view sees the events as exceedingly meaningful for the people to whom it was written. They see John as totally preoccupied with the church of his day in the context of a dominant Roman Empire around 96 AD. This view began with a Spanish Jesuit monk in the 16th century named Alcazar. They believe that it records therefore the conflict of Christians with Emperor Nero. But neither Nero or Domitian could fulfill the requirements found in the this book in reference to the Antichrist.

B. The End Time or Outline Interpretation - This interpretation believes that Revelation 1:8-18 are "*the things which are seen;*" while Revelation 2:1– 3:22 are "*things which are.*" They see the letters as strictly for the early church while Revelation 4 to the end of the book is seen as futuristic.

C. Spiritualist Interpretation - It proposes that John had more than one vision. They disregard any physical interpretation. Therefore, they see the plagues as spiritual not literal. This view is held by most amillennialists and postmillennialists.

D. Historical Interpretation - It claims that Revelation deals with the entire period of God with man. Therefore the plagues of Egypt are included. One must juggle historical events considerably to make them fit with this recorded prophecy.

E. Futuristic View - This view originated in 1585 with the Spanish Jesuit monk named Habara. It was used as an attempt to shift the influence of the reformers from off the Catholic Church. They placed all past events into the future. It was an attempt to save the Papacy.

Within the last century, the futurist view has changed to believe that the book of Revelation is a prophecy that is primarily yet to be fulfilled. This teaching, accepted by most premillennial Bible teachers, sees chapter 6 and following to take place in the near future.

It may be that there is a little bit of truth in each type of interpretation or viewpoint. It is probably best to see that John did write with respect to his immediate situation; his prophecies did have historical fulfilment; he did anticipate a future consummation; and he also revealed principles that have operated within the course of spiritual history.

LESSON 1

Perhaps it keeps us humbled to recognize that we must all consider the viewpoints of others who are also servants of God. Too often we mistakenly believe that only our interpretation is correct. We must acknowledge that certain interpretations are sealed in their truth until God's appointed time. We can speculate but we must be careful in making hard and fast conclusions about specific interpretations before their time.

It is best to remember that any apocalypse contains symbolism that can be interpreted in a variety of ways. The Holy Spirit definitely had specific truths to unfold to the Church. What we must remember is to humbly pray that God grants us ears to hear what the Spirit says to the Church today as He did thousands of years ago.

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

1:1 – *“The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John,”*

THE SUBJECT OF REVELATION

The revelation of Jesus Christ must always be the prominent message of this prophetic book. The Greek word for *“revelation”* is *“apocalypse”* which means *“unveiling”* or *“disclosure.”* It is the unveiling of Jesus Christ and His power demonstrated during a final catastrophic period in world history when God emerges in total victory. It has been described to be *“a panorama of the glory of Christ”* to all who are the servants of God.

“God says that it was given to show something to his servants; and yet many of the expounders of his word tell us that it does not show anything, because no man can understand it! As though God would undertake to make known to mankind some important truths, and yet fall into the worst than earthly folly of clothing them in language or figures which human minds could not comprehend! As though he would command a person to behold some distant object, and then erect an impenetrable barrier between him and the object specified! Or as though he would give his servants a light to guide them through the gloom of night, and yet throw over that light a pall sold thick and heavy that not a ray of its brightness could penetrate the obscuring folds! How do they dishonour God who thus trifle with his Word! No; the Revelation will accomplish the object for which it was given, and *“his servants”* will learn therefrom *“the things which must shortly come to pass,”* and which concern their eternal salvation.”

Uriah Smith
“Daniel and Revelation” pp.352

Only Jesus is able to open the scroll of destiny (Revelation 5:5,9) and disclose its contents (Revelation 6:1,3,5,7,9,12; 8:1). God is the source of all revelation. Daniel said that He alone reveals the secrets of the heart and makes known what shall come to pass (Daniel 2:28,29,45; cf. Amos 3:7; Acts 13:40; Revelation 10:7). The words of Moses to the children of Israel seem to apply when we attempt to understand the words of this prophecy.

“The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law (and in this case – this prophecy).”

Deuteronomy 29:29

THE SCOPE OF REVELATION

“What must soon take place” - This will be suddenly or without delay when the appointed time comes. It speaks of the certainty of the events. It is best to recognize that these events have always been *“imminent”* (*“impending, close, or inevitable”*) (See also Luke 18:8; Romans 16:20).

“He made it known” - The word used for *“made it known”* refers to *“some sort of sign or figurative representation.”* This should prepare us for the symbolic portrayal that is soon to follow instead of looking for a literal interpretation.

THE SENT ONE OF REVELATION

“by sending his angel to his servant John.” - Angels have played an important part when Jesus Christ is to be revealed (Matthew 1:20; Luke 1:11,19, 26; I Thessalonians 4:16). The angel is a messenger. There are many angels mentioned in this book (a strong or mighty angel [5:2]; an ascending angel from the East [7:2]; a mighty angel straddling the sea and land [10:1-2]; an angel with a sickle [14:19]).

THE SOURCE OF REVELATION

1:2 – “who testifies to everything he saw – that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

It is important to recognize the fourfold sequence of transmission: from God to Christ and then to the angel and finally to the apostle John. John was then given the responsibility to insure that the message reached the seven churches in the province of Asia.

The testimony of another in Jewish law was very important. Once there were two people agreeing before the elders, the matter was considered as established and true (Numbers 35:30; Deuteronomy 17:6; John 5:32; 8:17,18; I Timothy 5:19; Hebrews 10:15,28; I John 5:6,8). Therefore, witnesses were held accountable for the words they said (Matthew 19:18; Romans 13:9). Those who were false witnesses faced heavy sentences (Acts 6:13; 7:58,60). Liars were not able to have a place in heaven (Revelation 22:15).

THE SALUTATION OF REVELATION

1:3 – *“Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.”*

This is the first of seven Beatitudes (also 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7,14). There is a blessing for those who hear the Word of God and obey it (Luke 11:28). This blessing can be placed upon individuals as well as churches who hear and obey the Word of God. Too often people are fearful when reading this book instead of being blessed. Is it because we are toying with the little time we have to prepare for the coming of the Lord? We may not feel ready for it to happen. We often shutter in fear instead of shouting in happiness.

1:4 – *“John, To the seven churches in the province Asia: Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before the throne,”*

Seven is the number of completeness and perfection in the Bible. This revelation was never intended only for the seven churches recorded in chapters 2 and 3. They were the original recipients but not to be the only recipients. Like all other letters (epistles), this apocalypse was to be distributed among all the early churches.

“*Grace*” is the Greek method of greeting while “*peace*” is a Hebrew form of greeting.

“*who is, and who was, and who is to come*” speaks of our eternal God. He is a changeless God in a changing time. We go on to see God the Spirit and also God the Son mentioned in these opening verses.

“*The seven spirits before the throne*” refers to the sevenfold work of the Spirit as revealed in Isaiah 11:2 where He is called “*the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of understanding, the Spirit of council, Spirit of might, the Spirit of knowledge, the Spirit of the fear of the Lord.*”

THE SAVIOUR OF REVELATION

1:5 – *“and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood,”*

“*Jesus Christ*” – once again we have the emphasis upon the Son of God.

“*faithful witness*” – (see John 3:32; 18:37). The result of His witness was His death. This was very important to the Asian church that was about to face a great persecution. Jesus is our model of a non-compromising life (I Timothy 6:13).

“firstborn from the dead” - (also Colossians 1:18). He is sovereign over His church as well as over all martyrs and the kings of the earth (Psalm 89:27).

“ruler of the kings of the earth” – This clearly points Him to being the King of kings (17:14; 19:16).

“loves us” - Note the present tense of the verb

“freed us” - We are freed (denotes paying the full price) because we are washed in the blood of the Lamb. The only acceptable ransom paid to redeem the faithful was the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (5:9) on the cross.

THE SAINTS OF REVELATION

1:6 – “and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father – to him be glory and power forever and ever! Amen.”

“a kingdom” – This kingdom has no boundaries or population stats. It is comprised of citizens who presently make their home on earth but whose eternal home is in heaven. The order is very important. We must be redeemed (freed) before we can begin to build His kingdom.

“and priests” - By stating that it is ruled by priests signifies a holiness and separation from the world. We have moved on from a kingdom based upon the Letter of the Law written on stone to having the Spirit of the Law engraved upon hearts (Exodus 34:4; Jeremiah 31:33; II Corinthians 3:3). A priest mediates (speaks to God on behalf of men and to man on behalf of God) while a lawgiver judges.

We need to speak a message of reconciliation (II Corinthians 5:20) not judgement. Few people will come to God if our words are harsh and our actions are forceful. We are inheritors of the blessings of God in order to bless others (I Peter 2:5,9).

We have to learn to constantly surrender our bodies to God for His use (Romans 12:1) and so will those whom we reach with the message of Christ. Each person surrenders at a different rate. We will gain many more through care and compassion than we will through sternness.

“glory” - This speaks of the praise and honour that only God is worthy of receiving (Revelation 5:13).

“and power forever and ever” - We must always remember that we serve the One and Only God of power and might. We’ve read the last chapter – God wins and that means, so do we.

THE SUPREME REAPPEARANCE OF REVELATION

1:7 – “Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen”

“**Look, he is coming with the clouds,**” Jesus ascended in a cloud (Acts 1:9) and He will return in the clouds (Matthew 24:30).

“**and every eye will see him,**” - This reaffirms the fact that people will look upon Him and actually see Him. It will not just be those who are alive at the time of His return, but also every soul that has passed on whether they were Christian or not (Matthew 24:30,31; 26:64).

“**even those who pierced him;**” - This corresponds with other scriptures that contain a similar thought (Zechariah 12:10; cf. John 19:37).

1:8 – “I am the Alpha and the Omega,’ says the Lord God, ‘ Who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”

‘**I am the Alpha and the Omega,**’ - These are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet [Aleph Tau - Αα - Ωω](cf. 1:17). When used together in this manner it is regarded not simply as the first and last letters but also including all letters in between.

“**the Almighty**” - This title is used 10 times in the New Testament, and nine of these occurrences are found in the book of Revelation (1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7,14; 19:6,15; 21:22).

THE FIRST VISION OF THE EXALTED GLORIFIED CHRIST

Revelation 1:9-20

1:9 – *“I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.”*

“I, John, your brother and companion” – Here we have the oldest living apostle, the one respected above any Christian addressing himself as a brother and a companion. The division between clergy and laity has brought much harm to the church through the centuries.

“in the suffering” – This suffering was by no means comparable to the Great Tribulation which was to follow. The apostle John was banished by Emperor Domitian around AD. 94.

“and kingdom” – It is argued as to whether the church was already part of this kingdom or whether it was still to come. Was it revealed at the time of Christ? Was it initiated at Pentecost and continuing to this present day? It is argued that through much tribulation we enter into the kingdom (Acts 14:22). In other words, we are either in tribulation or in the kingdom but not in both at the same time. The words of the apostle Paul to Timothy may come to also offer support of this belief (II Timothy 2:12a). Perhaps the Bible is teaching us that we are presently in the kingdom of grace but we shall soon be joining our Lord in the kingdom of glory.

“and patient endurance” – It takes a patient endurance to be faithful and to occupy our time wisely until the end of this age.

“the island of Patmos” - This island was located in the Mediterranean Sea just off the mainland of Asia from the city of Melitus. It is about eight miles in length, four in breadth and eighteen in circumference. It was only sixteen square miles. Those who were considered as political offenders were exiled to this barren island to work in the cruel mining production. Emperor Domitian probably thought he had at least extinguished one torch of truth. Instead, a spiritual beam of light with vision after vision of heavenly glory was captured and written for millenniums to come.

“because of the word of God and a testimony of Jesus” – Even at the age of ninety years John remained faithful to his Resurrected and Glorified Lord.

*** The early church father Polycarp was burned at the stake because he would not recant his faith in God. Just as they set the torch to the wood stacked at his feet he said, *“Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never did me any wrong. How could I blaspheme my King and my Saviour now?”*

1:10 – “On the Lord’s Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet,”

“The Lord’s Day” - Sunday worship began with the early church because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ (John 20:19; Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 16:2) and continues to this day. This is the only place in the New Testament that this phrase is used.

A number of commentators believe that this refers to the time immediately following the end of the church age. This would include the rapture of the church as well as the seven-year tribulation period. I tend to believe that it refers to Sunday the main day of worship in honour of our Lord’s resurrection.

“was” - It literally means *“I came to be”*

“in the Spirit” -- This speaks of an ecstatic experience or a trance (Acts 11:5; 22:17; II Corinthians 12:2). John may have been experiencing banishment but never isolation from God. This is the highest state of spiritual elevation into which the Holy Spirit can bring us while we are limited to this earthly body.

“loud voice like a trumpet” – Trumpets are mentioned more in the Book of Revelation than in all the other New Testament books combined. Trumpets are usually associated with last things or end time events (Matthew 24:31; I Corinthians 15:52; I Thessalonians 4:16). A trumpet must give a clean and distinct sound so people know what to expect. God often used a trumpet to capture the attention of His people (Exodus 19:16,19; cf. Hebrews 12:19).

1:11 – “which said: ‘Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.’”

“write on a scroll” – This was one scroll containing seven letters. The entire scroll was to be read in all the churches, not just the writing for the specific church.

“and send it to the seven churches” - These seven cities were known as the distribution centres for the seven postal districts of west-central Asia Minor. They were roughly 30 to 50 miles apart along a horseshoe-shaped road that went north to Pergamum then turned southeast to Laodicea, and then returned to Ephesus.

“to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea” – The order of the churches does cover a geographical area. Some writers believe that they also portray seven successive periods of history. It is clear as well that even though they were written to seven existing churches, the strengths and weaknesses were common among churches throughout history as well as today.

1:12 – “I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands,”

“I turned around” – Anyone who receives a spiritual revelation and illumination needs to turn around and head close to God.

“to see the voice” – This is an unusual expression. We usually hear a voice -- not see a voice. It points again to the need to see Jesus in this revelation.

“I saw seven golden lampstands” – This points to the distinctiveness of each church. Unity is gained once Christ is in the centre of the Church. The early Church was unified but yet distinct from each other.

When the spiritual light failed, the lampstands (churches) were removed and the flaws were addressed (Revelation 2:5). Jesus told us to be the light of the world (Matthew 5:14) because He was the Light of the world (John 8:12).

These lampstands were not candlesticks. Candles were not in use at this time although oil lamps were quite common. Moses was instructed to make a seven-branched lampstand hammered out from pure gold (Exodus 25:31–37). In John’s vision, there were seven separate lampstands.

1:13 – “and among the lamp stands was someone ‘like a son of man,’ dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with the golden sash around his chest.”

“like a son of man” -- We find the background of this thought in Daniel 7:13. This Jesus was seen as a Prophet (1:1); King (1:5); and High Priest (1:13) (cf. -- Exodus 28:4; 29:5).

“dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet” – This is the attire of a high priest (Exodus 28:4; 39:22) and also of a prophet (Zechariah 3:4). In all but one of its references in the LXX this phrase is used strictly in connection with the attire of the high priest.

“The golden sash around his chest” – This indicated important service to others through the dignity of a notable office (Exodus 39:29).

1:14 – ***“His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire.”***

“His head and hair were white like wool” - This indicates calmness, dignity, and wisdom (cf. Leviticus 19:32; Proverbs 16:31; Daniel 7:9).

“his eyes were like blazing fire” – This symbolizes a penetrating insight that is sovereignly used of God not only in the Church but also in the world. The literal translation is that ***“his eyes shot fire.”***

1:15 – ***“His feet were like bronze blowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters.”***

“His feet were like bronze” – This is some kind of copper alloy. It portrays strength as well as stability. It is a symbol of judgment. There is coming a day when God will stamp out all unrighteousness. The ungodly will also be stamped out.

“his voice was like the sound of rushing waters” – This is an interesting term from John who never escaped hearing the sounds of waves breaking upon the rocky island. It suggests the inspiring power behind these words (i.e., – a waterfall; cf. -- Ezekiel 43:2).

1:16 – ***“In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.”***

“a sharp double-edged sword” – Any messenger of Jesus must stay close to the Word (sword) of God. The right hand indicates favour and protection. The sword is an offensive weapon (Revelation 19:15,21). The short Roman’s sword was shaped like a tongue (Hebrews 4:12). Anyone who does not repent will hear the sharp words from the mouth of God (Revelation 2:12). The sword represents the irresistible power of divine judgment (Isaiah 49:2).

“face was like the sun” – Moses experienced this same brightness (Exodus 34:29) as did the disciples of Christ (Matthew 13:43; 17:2). It describes the glory of God which was not just limited to His face (Matthew 17:2).

1:17 – “When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: ‘Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last.’”

“I fell at his feet as though dead” -- There are a number of similar responses recorded in the Bible when God’s people enter His glorious presence (Joshua 5:14; Ezekiel 1:28; Daniel 8:17; Acts 26:14).

“Then he placed his right hand on me” – The right hand was used to convey power as well as a blessing. It commissioned John in such a way to restore his confidence and prepare him to receive the Revelation of Jesus Christ which was to follow.

“ ‘Do not be afraid’ ” – Jesus often tried to remove fear from His disciples (Matthew 14:27; 17:7).

“I am the First and the Last” – This is almost the same as the title used in 1:8. It is also included in 22:13 (cf. – Isaiah 48:12). It speaks of our Lord’s eternal existence.

1:18 – “I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.”

“I am the Living One” -- Isn’t it wonderful to know that we serve a God who is not just alive but is the source of all life. It is no wonder that He could not be kept in the grave.

“And I hold the keys” – These keys are a Hebrew symbol of authority.

“of death and Hades” – **“Hades”** is the Greek name given to the place of departed spirits just as **“Sheol”** is the Hebrew name. It is not to be confused with the name **“Gehenna”** which is the place of torment (Matthew 5:22,29,30). Jesus unlocked the door (gates) of the grave and led the souls of the dead into eternal life. In Jewish literature, the power over these keys belongs solely to God.

1:19 – “Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later.”

“what you have seen” – The vision of the Son of man (1:8–18).

“what is now” - The writings to the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3.

“and what will take place later” - This is recorded from chapter 4 to the end of the book.

1:20 – “The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.”

“The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches” -- This appears to be a Hebrew style of writing that personifies the prevailing spirit of the church. It is never used to describe Christian leaders (Greek – **“aggelos”**). It is rather a messenger and mostly used to describe an angel of the Lord. Some believe that they are the guardian angels of the churches. By implication it could refer to the bishops or pastors.

“the seven lampstands are the seven churches” – There is no question for speculation when the Holy Spirit makes it this clear.

Thus we have the Son of God portrayed in all His majesty before the angel addresses the seven churches. Likewise, we need to have a clear picture of Jesus before we can accept what He has to say to our church. May God grant us eyes to see as well as ears to hear.

THE LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS
The Apostolic Church - AD. 30-100

Revelation 2:1-7

These next seven letters written to the churches of Asia Minor find themselves sent at a time when pressure is being brought upon the Christian Church to become more flexible and accepting of many social changes such as emperor worship and the like. During a time when temples were clearly seen by the apostles, Jesus said that He would build His church and the gates of hell would not prevail or overcome it (Matthew 16:18).

2:1 - “To the angel of the church of Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands:”

These seven letters were most likely sent as one scroll for all the churches to read. The topics covered have relevance to God’s people at all times and in all places although writers differ on this issue. Most modern commentators accept the letters as an integral part of the Apocalypse, but differ as to the nature and purpose. We will look at the various approaches in order to gain an appreciation of these differing opinions.

NATURE AND PURPOSE

1. They were written simply as letters to the 7 churches of the Asia Minor.
2. The order of the messages seem to be divinely selected to give prophetically the movement of church history from the time of the apostle John to the end time church.

- a. **Ephesus - The Apostolic Church** - AD. 30 -100
- b. **Smyrna - The Persecuted Church** - AD. 100 - 312
- c. **Pergamum - The Indulged Church** - AD. 312 - 606 (from Constantine)
- d. **Thyatira - The Pagan Church** - AD. 606 - to the Tribulation (Dark Ages)
- e. **Sardis - The Dead Church** - AD. 1520 Reformation to the Tribulation
- f. **Philadelphia - The Church Christ Loved** - AD. 1750 Missionary to Rapture
- g. **Laodicea - The Apostate (People’s) Church** - AD. 1900 to the Tribulation

3. It clearly represents the church of Jesus Christ throughout history. In other words, these seven types of churches have and always will be in existence until the coming of the Lord.
4. It is simply a message of God continually working victoriously in and through His church.

THE GENERAL PATTERN

1. **A greeting** - *“To the angel of the church . . .”*
2. **A title of the Risen Christ** - compare the descriptions found in chapter 1
3. **A Commendation** - *“I know your . . .”* (except Laodicea)
4. **A Condemnation** - *“Yet I hold this against you”* (except Smyrna & Philadelphia)
5. **A Counsel** - *“hold fast; remember; repent”*
6. **A Challenge** *“He who has an ear . . . To him who overcomes”*

“To the angel” - According of 1:20 the stars are the angels and the lampstands are the churches. Some believe these **“angels”** must be messengers or Bishops/ministers of the churches mentioned. The messages of God were sent to these ministers who in turn were to pass it on to the church as a whole. Others believe that they represent the prevailing spirit in the church.

“of the church of Ephesus” - The word **“Ephesus”** means **“desirable.”** It was indeed desirable that this church would continue in the simplicity and purity that it was birthed in. They enjoyed the benefits and blessings of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. They were noted for their works, labour, and patience. They were fervent in evangelism.

It is appropriate that Ephesus which was founded by the apostle Paul on his second missionary journey received the first letter:

1. It was the most important city of proconsular Asia the metropolis of Ionia.
2. It flourished as an important commercial & export city by converging 3 trade routes. It had a wealthy, cultured, and corrupt standard of living.
3. It had a magnificent avenue (35 ft. wide) lined with columns which led from the harbour to the city centre.
4. The population was 250,000.
5. Three great trade routes converged at the city.
6. It was granted the right of self-government by Rome.
7. It boasted a major stadium, marketplace and a 25,000 seat theatre on the west slope of Mount Pion overlooking the harbour.
8. Several large temples were built in honour of Claudius, Hadrian & Severus.
9. The Temple of Artemis (Diana in Latin) became one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world. It was 425 ft long; 220 ft wide; & 60 ft high. It had 127 pillars made of Parian marble. It had 36 pillars overlaid with gold and jewels. Artemis was originally an Anatolian fertility mother goddess.
10. Aquila & Priscilla brought to it the Christian faith about 52 AD. (Acts 18:18,19) and it became the centre of evangelism (Acts 19:1,9,10) through the use of the lecture hall of Tyrannus. The work was then carried on by Timothy (I Timothy 1:3) and after Paul’s death by the apostle John.

“of him who holds the seven stars . . . walks among the seven golden lampstands” - Christ ***“holds”*** (lit - ***“firm grip”***) the angels which are in His control and walks (present in their midst; aware of their activities - see Leviticus 26:12) among the lampstands.

Christ’s Commendation

2:2 - ***“I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested them that claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false.”***

“I know your deeds” - This covers the entire course of their lives. These ***“deeds”*** suggest ***“working to the point of weariness.”*** There was a continued service being rendered in the name of God. The church was not satisfied to be a comfortable club for preserving the life of a few saints.

“your hard work” - This is the active side of their lives. Things that are costless are usually worthless. Evangelism was characteristic of the early church while apostasy and indifference is fast becoming the standard of today’s church.

To come to Christ costs nothing, to follow Christ costs something (Matthew 10:37-39), but to serve Christ costs everything (Mark 10:28-31).

“and your perseverance” - The apostle Paul ran as the forerunner as the one who stood against the disbelieving Jews; the seven sons of Sceva unsuccessfully tried to imitate the work of the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:13-16); the mob aroused by Demetrius the silversmith (Acts 19:23-40). The biggest trouble came from men (called wicked or evil men) who placed themselves within the believing community. But God was even able to turn this trial into grace & glory.

“you have tested them” - Today church standards and church disciplines are facing great opposition. Some churches have laid aside holiness & distinctives for increasing numbers. Are we loyal to what we know is truth? Many key seminar speakers are questioning the authority of the Bible; the virgin birth; the deity of Christ; atonement; divine healing and hell. The Church should never tolerate false teachers in their midst. The test of a true prophet in the ***“Didache”*** was that ***“he have the behaviour {fruit} of the Lord”*** (Matthew 7:20).

“and have found them false” - We have all been confronted by those who are not merely deluded themselves but are not satisfied until they attempt to deceive us as well. These are like those who became the chief opponents to the apostles (II Corinthians 11:5; 12:11). The true Ephesians would not allow them to spread their leaven of hypocrisy. Paul tearfully forewarned the church about them (Acts 20:29-31).

Because of the devil's use of semantics, we have to examine what men mean by the words they use, as well as the words themselves (i.e - saved; born-again; Christian etc.).

2:3 - "You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary."

"You have persevered" - This was not a temporary crisis but rather a long, severe trial of their faith. The church remained steadfast in doctrinal purity despite the ongoing attack. We must always be on our guard against a Gibeonite deception (Joshua 9).

"and have not grown weary" - The enemy is very determined to accomplish his goals in and even sadly through the church. We must not lose strength to overcome his relentless attacks.

Christ's Condemnation

2:4 - "Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love."

"Yet I hold this against you" - No eye but that of the penetrating gaze of the Holy Spirit would be able to detect the failure of this church. If Judas had been a member of this church he would not have found anything to criticize. He criticized Mary of Bethany because she had been extreme (in his opinion) in her response of love to Jesus.

"You have forsaken your first love" - The word **"forsaken"** means **"to abandon."**

"First love is the love of espousal. Its notes are simplicity, and purity, marital love, the response of love to love, the subjection of a great love to a great love, the submission of a self-denying love to a love that denies self. First love is the abandonment of all for a love that has abandoned all.

First love defies analysis. It loves, it knows not why, save that the lover has by love attracted love, and the responsive love is pure, unselfish, ardent, humble."

G. Campbell Morgan

"A First Century Message to Twentieth Century Christians"

p. 42

It is the love demonstrated before marriage (Jeremiah 2:2; II Corinthians 11:2). We all need to ask ourselves whether we have forsaken our love for God, His Church (John 13:35) or even the unsaved. Doctrinal purity and loyalty can never be a substitute for true Christian love. Our greatest love for Christ should always be in the present moment.

2:5 - “Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.”

“**Remember**” - This literally means “*keep on remembering*” or “*hold in your memory.*” our memory can be a powerful force in affecting the return to a more satisfying relationship. It is possible to slip away from the Lord without noticing because it is done gradually instead of abruptly.

“**Repent**” - This is an aorist tense (past and completed) of the verb which means that there must be a sharp break away from evil. The next is to return doing the good things that you began doing in your Christian walk.

“**remove**” - This signifies a total distinction and separation. Not only would their minister/message be removed but they would also forfeit their right to carry the light of the gospel of truth to the world. This church heeded the warning according to Ignatius in his “*Epistle to the Ephesians.*”

Christ’s Counsel

2:6 - “But you have this in your favour: You hate the practises of the Nicolaitans, which also I hate.”

“**Nicolaitans**” -

“This was heretical sect who retained pagan practices like idolatry and immorality (a community of wives) contrary to the thought and conduct required in Christian Churches.”

D.M. Beck

They had worked out a compromise with the pagan society that they lived in. It violated the Apostolic decree that had been agreed to at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:20,29). We need to leave the ancient boundary stones in the places God intended them to be (Proverbs 22:28).

It is incorrect to identify Nicolaus (Acts 6:5), as some do, who was an early church deacon in Jerusalem. The word comes from 2 Greek words “*niko*” which means “*to conquer, or overthrow,*” and “*laos*” which means “*the people or the laity.*” The etymology of the name means “*victory*” and “*people.*” It is very similar to Balaam (2:14). These were also much like the followers of Jezebel (2:20).

It is the same kind of false teaching that attempts to modernize Christianity by adapting instead of requiring people to change from their sinful habits. It attempts to create an ecclesiastical order to fulfill its purpose. It becomes a tool for a corrupt and ungodly government

to use.

Christ's Challenge

2:7 - “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.”

“He who has an ear, let him hear . . .” - These words were often used by Jesus (Matthew 11:15; 13:9,43; Revelation 13:9).

“To him who overcomes” - The overcomer in Revelation is not one who defeats an earthly foe by force but rather one who remains true and faithful to the Lord until the end.

“tree of life” - This tree was originally placed in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:9) which following the sin of Adam and Eve was guarded by cherubim (Genesis 3:22-24). Those who enter the New Jerusalem will find access to its symbolic source of eternal life (Revelation 22:2). There was and always will be a limited access to its fruit.

“the paradise of God” - This comes from a Persian word meaning **“park”** or **“pleasure garden.”** It symbolizes a future state of perfect fellowship with God (II Corinthians 12:2-4; Revelation 21:10; 22:1-6).

THE LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN SMYRNA
The Persecuted Church - AD. 100-312

Text: Revelation 2:8-11

We now come to the second city that the apostle John is told to write a letter to. Each letter is distinct from the other because each church is so unique from the other.

2:8 - “To the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again.”

“the church in Smyrna” - This is the only city still in existence today (modern Izmir). It had an excellent harbour that was narrow enough at the mouth that it could be closed for protection during times of war. It was second only to Ephesus in predominance. It offered an important trade with the rich produce from the valley of Hermas and its regions beyond.

It was rebuilt in 290 BC as a model city. It boasted the birthplace of the great poet Homer. It contained a famous thoroughfare called “The Street of Gold” that rose over 500 feet from the harbour. At either end was a temple - one to Sipyrene Mother (a patron divinity) and the other to Zeus. The population was 200,000. It was believed to be the first city to become involved with emperor worship. In 23 BC Smyrna won permission (over 10 other Asian cities) to build a temple in honour of Emperor Tiberias.

It had a large colony of Jews who were hostile to Christianity. The name **“Smyrna”** means **“myrrh.”** Myrrh had to be crushed to give out its fragrance. It was frequently mentioned as a part of the embalming process. The church was probably founded during Paul’s 3rd missionary journey (Acts 19:26).

“who died and came to life again” - Notice that the Lord introduces Himself to each church by mentioning some of His characteristics which show Him to be worthy to bear the testimony that He is about to utter. This church was about to face great persecution and martyrdom. The church needed to know Him who had victory over death. Faithfulness will always receive its reward of eternal life.

*** The famous elderly Polycarp in his 90th year was their 12th martyr. He refused to acknowledge Caesar as Lord. His body was burnt so his friends couldn't bury him. *"The multitude of heathen and Jews living in Smyrna cried out with uncontrollable wrath."* They then gathered wood (although it was the Sabbath) and burned him alive. ***

Robert H. Mounce
"The Book of Revelation"
 p.92

Christ's Commendation

2:9 - *"I know your afflictions and poverty — yet you are rich! I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan."*

"I know your afflictions and poverty — yet you are rich" - There is many a rich poor man and many a poor rich man. The wealth of this world is a currency never found in heaven. It is not merely that He knows by watching but rather by His own experience. This is the shortest of all of Christ's messages. There are three things that are noted - **afflictions, poverty and slander**. Interestingly, God offers them no solution to their problem of pain.

The word *"afflictions"* or *"tribulations"* denotes serious trouble; the kind of burden that crushes a person. It is used to describe the pressure of stones that grind out the wheat or force the juice out of the grapes.

"poverty" - The poverty they faced was due to their severe persecution and not from any economic decline. It indicates actual beggary. Their property was confiscated and looted by mobs (cf. - Hebrews 10:34).

"yet you are rich!" - Even though they were poor in earthly riches, they were rich in heavenly blessings which was a sharp contrast to the Laodicean Church. Christ sees wealth as an enrichment of our character, not simply our possessions of gold. They were forced to hold services in caves, catacombs and other hidden places. They put sentries on guard. They may have been poor in earthly possessions but they were rich in their faith of God (James 2:5).

"say they are Jews and are not" - Read Romans 2:28-29; John 8:31-47; Galatians 3:28,29. Ephesus was troubled by self-proclaiming apostles while Smyrna was persecuted by self-proclaiming Jews.

“a synagogue of Satan”- The Jews rejected their Messiah therefore, their assembly was unto Satan. In Hebrew the word ***“Satan”*** means ***“adversary.”*** In Greek it means ***“slanderer or accuser of the brethren.”*** Satan has his own religion. Two heresies that are often noted are a false doctrine about Christ and the mixing of law and grace. These continue to find their roots in every cult that Satan produces.

Christ’s Condemnation

There was not even one word of condemnation. This is so true for those who are born again and are walking in accordance to the Word of God.(Romans 8:1-4).

Christ’s Counsel

2:10 - ***“Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.”***

“Do not be afraid” - They needed to rather fear the One who could kill their soul (Matthew 10:28). Paul warned that all who wanted to live a godly life in Christ would suffer persecution (II Timothy 3:12). The fainthearted needed to be admonished lest they relinquished their faith under severe trials.

“the devil will” - He is always at the root of fierce opposition.

“in prison to test you” - This was the place the accused awaited execution but it was also a place of confinement and punishment (Acts 16:23; II Corinthians 11:23).

“ten days” - This may possibly mean ***“within ten days.”*** It may also indicate a short period of time. It could symbolize an extreme or complete tribulation. It is interesting to know that during the two centuries of Roman persecution beginning with Nero until the year 312 AD. that there were 10 distinct edicts demanding the governors to seek out Christians everywhere and put them to death. The last and tenth persecution (303 - 312 AD.) was under Diocletian.

Augustine was correct in saying that ***“the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church.”***

THE TIMES OF GREAT PERSECUTION IN THE EARLY CHURCH

Nero	AD.	54	-	68	Paul beheaded and Peter crucified
Domitian	AD.	81	-	96	John exiled
Trajan	AD.	98	-	117	Ignatius burned at the stake
Marcus Aurelius	AD.	161	-	180	Justin Martyr killed
Severus	AD.	193	-	211	
Maximinus	AD.	235	-	238	
Decius	AD.	249	-	251	
Valerian	AD.	253	-	260	
Aurelian	AD.	270	-	275	
Diocletian	AD.	284	-	305	

Henry H. Halley
"Halley's Bible Handbook"
 24th Edition, p. 758

"During the second and third centuries this persecution age saw hundreds of Christians brought into amphitheatres of Rome to be fed to hungry lions while thousands of spectators cheered. Many were crucified; others were covered with animal skins and tortured to death by wild dogs. They were covered with tar and set on fire to serve as torches. They were boiled in oil and burned at the stake, as was Polycarp in the church of Smyrna itself in AD. 156. One church historian estimated that during this period, five million Christians were martyred for their testimony of Jesus Christ."

Tim LaHaye
"Revelation Made Plain and Simple"
 p. 30

"Be faithful" - The word for ***"faithful"*** here is from the root word which means ***"to be convinced."*** In addition to establishing many new churches in spite of the persecution, this church age produced more hand-copied manuscripts of the Scriptures as well as the translation of Scripture into many languages (Syriac, Arabic, Persian, Armenian, Latin).

"crown of life" - This ***"crown"*** was not a ***"diadēma"*** or a royal crown but rather a ***"stephanos"*** which was a wreath or garland awarded to the victor during the Olympic games. It was also worn as a festive garland by guests at a banquet. It would be an imperishable crown (I Corinthians 9:25). See also I Timothy 2:19; II Timothy 4:8; James 1:12; I Peter 5:4.

Christ's Challenge

2:11 - *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death.”*

“not be hurt at all by the second death” - The strong double negative indicates that there is absolutely no possible way for the second death to bring harm. The second death is eternal death and separation from God (Revelation 20:6,14; 21:8) in the lake of fire and brimstone. We are to fear Him who can kill the soul more than him who can kill the body (Matthew 10:28).

Conclusion: Here was a church that while it passed through the fiery furnace of persecution, it proved itself to be one with a sweet smelling savour unto the Lord. Satan discovered that he could not destroy the church through persecution. Satan went on to use his most effective weapon to weaken the Church, that of indulgence and endorsement.

THE LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN PERGAMUM
The Indulged Church - AD. 312-606

Text: Revelation 2:12-17

Satan has always had a kingdom to set his throne in. He began by trying to build the Tower of Babel which God quickly brought to an end by confusing the languages of the people. Later the golden city of Babylon boasted that it could never be conquered. Yet during a night of drunken revelry the writing came upon the wall and the empire was overcome.

Pergamum eventually became another place for Satan to set up his throne. It was an ideal location due to its idolatrous religions and affluence. It was here that God planted a church that He expected to overcome the deceitful schemes of the enemy. They failed to do what God desired.

2:12 - *“To the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword.”*

“church in Pergamum” - Pergamum was a very impressive capital city. The name ***“Pergamum”*** means ***“citadel”*** while ***“Pergamos”*** means ***“height, elevation.”*** It was by far the most distinguished city in all of Asia. It was not as important commercially but it was very important politically, religiously and financially. It became prominent after the death of Alexander the Great (133 BC.). In 29 BC. there was a dedication of a temple to ***“the divine Augustus and the goddess Roma”*** which was an imperial cult. It was considered treason for anyone not to take part in this official cult.

This city boasted having a library of 200,000 parchment scrolls. Our word ***“parchment”*** derives its name from ***“Pergamum.”*** People came worldwide to be healed by its serpent-god ***“Asclepius.”*** The city was known as the Lourdes of the ancient world. It also boasted a college of medical priests. They also worshipped the god of revelry named ***“Bacchus.”***

“the sharp, double-edged sword” - This sword was the “Word of Judgement” on the church for its lax attitude toward pagan practises (2:16). The church found itself between the sword of Rome and the sword of the Lord. Yet only God had the ultimate power over life and death.

The proconsul in this provincial city was granted ***“the right of the sword”*** where they were given the right to execute anyone at will. The Sovereign Christ reminded this threatened congregation that He ultimately held a double-edged sword which fully controlled power over life and death.

Christ's Commendation

2:13 - "I know where you live — where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city — where Satan lives."

"where Satan has his throne" - The church at Church of Smyrna was noted to have **"a synagogue of Satan."** In Pergamum there seemed to be an even stronger foundation because it was here that **"Satan has his throne."** This was the richest city of the seven churches. It seems to be so difficult to serve God and mammon (money) at the same time.

There are at least four explanations of this phrase.

1. It was a reference to the great throne-like altar to Zeus which overlooked the city from the citadel.
2. It was a reference to the cult of Asklepios who was designated as their saviour and whose symbol was that of a serpent.
3. It was a reference to the appearance of the city (like a giant throne overlooking the plain) from the ancient road that one would travel from the south.
4. It was a reference to the prominence of Pergamum as the official cult centre of emperor worship in Asia. This appears to be the best explanation.

"Yet you remain true to my name"- Even in the midst of adverse situations they held fast to the name of Christ. It was during this time that the Arian controversy was fought at the Council of Nicea (AD. 325). Arius and his followers denied the personal deity of our Saviour. This teaching gave foundation to our modern-day Jehovah Witnesses cult. During the conclusion of a heated debate which was presided by Constantine it seemed like the brilliant Arius had defeated all his opposition. But God would not allow this heresy to get rooted into the church.

"a hermit from the deserts of Africa sprang to his feet, clad chiefly in tiger's skin. This latter he tore from his back, disclosing great scars (the result of having been thrown into the arena among the wild beasts). With his back dreadfully figured by animal claws exposed to their view, he dramatically cried, 'These are the brand marks of the Lord Jesus Christ, and I cannot hear this blasphemy.'" Then he proceeded to give so stirring an address, setting forth clearly the truth as to Christ's eternal deity, that the majority of the council realized in a moment that it was indeed the voice of the Holy Spirit."

The Council of Nicea then declared that Jesus Christ was to be recognized as **"very God of very God, Light of Lights, perfection of perfection and God and man in one blessed person."**

“You did not renounce your faith in me” - They did not deny their faith in God by burning incense to the emperor or declaring that *“Caesar is Lord.”*

“even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness” - Very little is known about Antipas as an early martyr. Later writings state that a man by this name was slowly roasted to death in a brazen bull during the reign of Domitian (AD. 81-96).

“It is supposed that Antipas was not an individual, but a class of men who opposed the power of the bishops, or popes, in that day, being a combination of two words, *‘anti,’* meaning *‘opposed’* and *‘papas’* meaning *‘father or pope;’* and at that time many of them suffered martyrdom in Constantinople and Rome, where the bishops and popes began to exercise the power which soon after brought into subjection the kings of the earth, and trampled on the rights of the church of Christ.”

“Miller’s Lectures”
pp. 138-139

“my faithful witness” This is where the Scriptures now make a transition from the Greek word *“martus”* from a meaning of *“a witness”* to becoming *“a martyr”* for the Lord.

Christ’s Condemnation

2:14 - *“Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality.”*

It became clear to Satan that he was only bringing growth to the church through persecution. A change of tactic took place early in the 3rd century. Historians explain how Constantine was contending for the throne in Rome with Maxentius (October 312 AD.) after the death of Galerius. During a strategic battle at the Milvian Bridge overlooking the murky Tiber River it is alleged that Constantine saw a vision of a fiery cross in the sky and heard a voice saying *“in this sign conquer.”*

Constantine went to battle believing that God had sent this message. He believed that if he would embrace the Christian religion, he would be able to conquer his enemies. There is much argument about how sincere his faith in God was. Yet he did order Eusebius, the Bishop of Rome, to supervise the production of 50 copies of the Holy Scriptures to be used in the churches. These manuscripts still comprise some the oldest copies we have of the Word of God.

Constantine proclaimed himself as “*the protector of the Christian faith.*” He issued an “edict of toleration” for Christianity which brought many favours to the Church. Money was provided for the operation of the Church by the Roman government. Many pagan temples were taken over by Christians. What appeared to be a blessing soon became a curse as anti-Christian practices of pagan origin began to flood the churches. The doctrine of the imminent return of Christ was lost during these three centuries which definitely influenced the evangelistic fervour of the saints.

“*You have people there who hold the teaching of Balaam*” - The full account of the teaching the Balaam is recorded in Numbers 22 – 25, 31:13 – 16).

“Numbers 25:1 ff reports that the Israelites ‘*began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab,*’ who in turn were successful in getting them to worship their gods and take part in their sacred meals. Although there is no mention of Balaam at this point, we learn in Numbers 31:16 of his role in Israel’s apostasy (the Midianite women acted ‘*by the counsel of Balaam*’). Blaiklock notes that Balaam’s clever notion was to break down Israel’s power by an indirect attack on their morale. ‘Pagan food and pagan women were his powerful tools against the rigidity of the Mosaic Law (p.39). Thus Balaam became a prototype of all corrupt teachers who betrayed believers into fatal compromise with worldly ideologies. At Pergamum, where Satan sat enthroned, some within the church had decided that accommodation was the wisest policy.”

Robert H. Mounce
“The Book of Revelation”
 pp. 97-98

The mystery of iniquity was becoming prevalent corrupting the doctrines of the church. Satan was laying the very foundation of wickedness through false teaching. Notice some of the teaching of this period of time.

- AD. 300 – Prayers for the dead
- AD. 300 – Making the sign of the cross
- AD. 375 – Worship of saints and angels
- AD. 394 – Mass first institute
- AD. 431 – Worship of Mary begun
- AD. 500 – Priests began dressing differently than laymen
- AD. 526 – Extreme unction
- AD. 593 – Doctrine of purgatory introduced
- AD. 600 – Worship services conducted in Latin
- AD. 600 – Prayers directed to Mary

Loraine Boettner
“Roman Catholicism”
 p. 8

2:15 - “Likewise you also have those who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.”

“the teaching of the Nicolaitans” - This appears to be the doctrine that supports a strong ecclesiastical hierarchy ruling over the laity. The laymen were not given a voice in the Church and were required to blindly follow the decrees of the clergy.

Christ’s Counsel

2:16 - “Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.”

There was no avenue of escape for this church except to repent. It is probable that only a portion of the church had fallen prey to this false doctrine, but the entire church was guilty because the proper action was not taken to eliminate the seduction of Balaam and the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

“I will soon come to you and fight against them with the sword of my mouth” - This coming of the Lord was to bring judgment. Unless the Church is willing to repent of its violations of the Word of God, it will be judged by the Word of God.

Christ's Challenge

2:17 - "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it."

"hidden manna" - During the time of Balaam the people were fed with manna. It was called the grain from heaven and the bread of angels (Psalm 78:24,25). God easily supplies for the needs of His people in times of wilderness journeys when they leave from their places of bondage.

"a white stone" - A white stone was used initially to signify that a jury had acquitted someone. Likewise black stones were dropped into an urn to signify a person was condemned. Also white stones were given to those who had returned from a battle and had won a victory. White has always symbolized a triumph of faith. The white stones were also used as tickets to enter public festivals. They were therefore, a symbol of admission into the Messianic feast to come.

They were also used in reference to a customary stone known as the *"tessera hospitalis"* used in hospitality. When two men were about to part on a long journey they would divide a white stone in two and each carried a half of the stone with them upon which they inscribed the name of their friend. This stone was bequeathed to the next son for generations to come. Those who had possession of the stone had full privilege of entrance into the home of the host who carried the other half whether they knew them or not. These stones were to be carefully guarded.

Therefore, this stone had several meanings. It was a symbol of acquittal which is like our justification. It was also a sign of victory over our enemies. It was a sign of citizenship which marks our entrance into the city of God.. And it was finally a symbol of an ending friendship in which our name and God's name is closely knit together.

"a new name" - In antiquity a hidden name was considered as something very precious. We often find that God changed the names of those He used in His service (Abram, Jacob, Peter, Paul etc.). God gives us a new character which no one knows except the one who overcomes.

Thus we conclude the letter to the church at Pergamum which indulged itself with its surroundings. It was infected by the world instead of affecting the world. It was a sad story indeed.

THE LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN THYATIRA
The Pagan Church - AD. 606 to the Tribulation
The Dark Ages
Text: Revelation 2:18-29

This is the longest letter given to any of the seven churches and yet it is the smallest and least significant of them all. The city became known for being the centre of manufacturing and marketing. It was well known for its trade guilds. We know that there were wool-workers, linen-workers, makers of outer garments, dyers, leather workers, tanners, potters, bakers, slave-dealers, and bronze-smiths. We read in Acts 16:14 ff of Lydia who was a seller of purple goods.

It was because of the commerce of the day that this church faced difficulties. The trade guilds held regular “*common meals*” that were dedicated to their pagan deities. Many Christians participated alleging that since the gods were not really in existence but rather only based upon one’s faith that they could participate without becoming engulfed in the worship. Through this compromise the church took on a new and dangerous form.

2:18 - “To the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze.”

“*the church in Thyatira*” - The city itself is believed to have been founded by Seleucus I as a military outpost to guard one of the approaches to his empire. Since it didn’t have any natural fortifications, it relied heavily upon military strategy to defend its position.

It became known for its outstanding colour dyes.

The name “*Thyatira*” means “*continual sacrifice.*”

*** R. C. Church declares that in the mass they offer a continual sacrifice for the sins of the living and the dead. This totally denies the finished work of Calvary. Every mass openly denies the unchanging work of the cross. Ask a Roman Catholic priest what their function as a sacrificial priest is and they will say, “*It is my privilege to offer up to the Lord Jesus from time to time a continual sacrifice for the living and the dead.*” You can then ask “*Christ has to be slain to be offered, doesn’t He?*” They would have to answer, “*Yes.*” They would have to agree then, “*You kill Christ afresh every time you offer a sacrifice.*” (Read Acts 2:23b).

LESSON 6

This church continued on this downhill slippery-slope into paganism that had begun with the church of Pergamum. The following major changes were introduced and embraced by the Roman Catholic Church.

- AD. 600 – Boniface III made the first Pope
- AD. 709 – Kissing the Pope’s feet
- AD. 786 – Worshipping of images and relics
- AD. 850 – Use of “*holy water*” begun
- AD. 995 – Canonizing of dead saints
- AD. 998 – Fasting on Fridays and during Lent
- AD. 1079 – Celibacy of the priesthood
- AD. 1090 – Prayer beads
- AD. 1184 – The Inquisition
- AD. 1190 – Sale of Indulgences
- AD. 1215 – Transubstantiation
- AD. 1220 – Adoration of the wafer (Host)
- AD. 1229 – Bible forbidden to laymen
- AD. 1414 – Cup forbidden to the common people at communion
- AD. 1439 – Doctrine of purgatory decreed
- AD. 1439 – Doctrine of seven sacraments affirmed
- AD. 1508 – The Ave Maria approved
- AD. 1534 – Jesuit Order founded
- AD. 1545 – Tradition granted equal authority with the Bible
- AD. 1546 – Apocryphal books put into the Bible
- AD. 1854 – Immaculate conception of Mary
- AD. 1864 – Syllabus of Errors proclaimed
- AD. 1870 – Infallibility of the Pope declared
- AD. 1930 – Public Schools condemned
- AD. 1950 – Assumption of the Virgin Mary
- AD. 1965 – Mary proclaimed as Mother of the Church

Lorraine Boettner
“*Roman Catholicism*”
p. 8,9

“*the Son of God*” - This is the only place this name is used in the book of Revelation (cf. Daniel 10:5,6). It was a very important time for the church to recognize the place of the Son of God (if we consider that this message also portrayed the church of the 4th to 7th centuries). He needed to be seen as the Son of God and not the Son of Mary. The Church was about to recognize the Bishop of Rome (Pope) as the visible head of the Church. This began the formation of the Roman Catholic Church and papacy. Their first Pope was NOT Peter.

“whose eyes are like blazing fire” - This indicates God’s penetrating power to see all things. He is able to uncover the seduction of false teaching.

“and whose feet are like burnished bronze” - This is His strength and splendour as He marches forth in judgement.

Christ’s Commendation

2:19 - *“I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first.”*

“I know your deeds” - The Church has always been recognized as the place of good works. The Church should always be considered as a *“house of mercy,”* Hospitals were often started by Roman Catholic and other churches.

“your love” - This is *“agape”* love. Their love was not *“cold”* like those in Ephesus or *“lukewarm”* like those in Laodicea. Love should always bring about acts of service.

“and faith” - This kind of faith brings about *“perseverance”* or steadfastness.

“your service” - This reminds us of our need to minister to others.

“and perseverance” - This speaks of a patient endurance. Too often love is occasional and spasmodic. Here it was constant. Patience is the ability to remain constant when the waves of life try to toss us back and forth.

“doing more than you did at first” - They had not slipped back.

Christ's Condemnation

2:20 - *“Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of foods sacrificed to idols.”*

“You tolerate that woman Jezebel” - She worked on blending the religion of Israel with the religion of Phoenicia (I Kings 16:29 ff; II Kings 9:30 ff;). The N. T. Jezebel was . . .

“a clever woman with a gift of speech who professed to interpret God’s will, offered prosperity at the price of compromise with heathendom.”

E. M. Blaiklock
“The Seven Churches”
p.49

During the 4th - 6th centuries you find the church compromising with heathen rites and ceremonies that by the 7th century you couldn’t tell a heathen temple from a Christian temple.

Jezebel alludes to Ahab’s wife who slew the prophets of the Lord, led her husband into idolatry, and even fed the prophets of Baal at her dinner table.

It would do some of us well to go to some churches and sit through all the ceremony and see all the display and compare it with our Bibles. Where does it come from? It is definitely not from the authoritative Word of God. Then go to a heathen temple and compare. You’ll quickly find a number of similarities.

“sexual immorality” - This could also be seen as spiritual fornication.

“foods sacrificed to idols” - This speaks of open idolatry.

2:21 - *“I have given time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling.”*

“I have given time to repent” - God is never swift to bring about destruction from His wrath (II Peter 3:9-13). History proves this point - Savonarola in Italy, Wycliffe & Crammer in England, John Knox in Scotland, Martin Luther in Germany, Zwingly in Switzerland and John Calvin in France. Yet God will demand a time for repentance for immorality and injustice.

“of her immorality” - Those who participated in the guild-feasts with its promiscuity become involved with just another form of fornication. We need to also beware of spiritual fornication. Consider that since the 16th century the Roman Catholic Church has added the following dogmas to their beliefs.

1. The absolute sinfulness of Mary
2. Has given her a position of a female God
3. She was caught up to heaven without dying
4. They have crowned Mary as *the "Queen of Heaven"* (Jeremiah 44:17, 19, 25)
5. The infallibility of the Pope (Council of The Vatican)

2:22 - "So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways."

"on a bed of suffering" - She who profaned the bed will be pinned to it. This is a bed, not of a dining couch or even a funeral bier, but one of sickness and pain. Could this be the reason for many sexual sicknesses today such as AIDS and the host of STD's?

"unless they repent of her ways" - This offers a prospect of deliverance even though they had hesitated from repenting when initially told to change their ways.

2:23 - "I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds."

"I will strike her children dead" - Those who embrace and practice her teaching will die. The term **"her children"** refers to her proselytes. The literal meaning of the phrase **"I will strike"** is **"to slay utterly"** or **"to kill by pestilence"** (cf. Jeremiah 17:10; Matthew 16:27; Romans 2:6). This is often considered to be reference of the second death (Revelation 20:15).

"Then all the churches will know" - This gives further support for the second death proposal because nothing will be hidden when God finally judges the nations of the earth and all its people as well as the churches that have turned from His Word of Truth.

Christ's Counsel

2:24 - "Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold her teaching and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets (I will not impose any other burden on you):"

"Satan's so-called deep secrets" - Those who tamper with truth often take on a lifestyle of complete reversal from God to Satan. Gnosticism made this boast. We don't need to know all that Satan is doing to conquer him.

"I will not impose any other burden on you" - No further demands are placed upon the faithful. Those who had suffered under papal oppression would find relief.

2:25 - “Only hold on to what you have until I come.”

“**Only hold on**” - This means “**to take a firm grip of it.**” This is not a threat of punishment but rather a word of hope.

Christ’s Challenge

2:26 - “To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations”

“**I will give authority over the nations**” - This was quite a promise to an insignificant church. There is support for this truth in several other Scriptures.

1. The Father will give Christ the right to rule and reign over the nations - Psalm 2:8,9
2. The saints will rule and reign with Christ - Revelation 3:21
3. The saints will rule and reign with Christ for a thousand years - Revelation 20:4
4. The saints will judge the world and angels with Christ - I Corinthians 6:2,3
5. The saints will execute the judgement sentence with Christ - Psalm 149:9

2:27 - “He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery’ – just as I have received authority from my Father.”

“**He will rule them**” - This word “**rule**” means to “**shepherd**” in the sense of wielding a shepherd’s staff or club to ward off wild animals.

“**an iron scepter**” - This was a staff tipped with iron

“**dash them to pieces**” - This is what was frequently done with pottery that could not be moulded.

2:28 - “I will also give him the morning star” - There have been a number of suggestions to this phrase such as . . .

1. An allusion to Lucifer - Isaiah 14:12
2. Jesus Christ Himself - Revelation 22:16
3. A reference to Daniel - 12:3 and the immortality of the righteous
4. The dawn of eternal life
5. A literal reference to the planet Venus
6. The Holy Spirit

The morning star is the forerunner of each and every day. The apostle Peter calls it the day star which is just another word for the “morning star” which in Greek is “*phosphorus*” (II Peter 1:19; cf. Numbers 24:17).

2:29 - “*He that has an ear, let him hear with the Spirit says to the churches.*”

“*He that has an ear*” - It is always the wise man who prepares for the upcoming storms by listening to wise advice and then acting accordingly. Just think of many who have been terrified and some have lost their lives because they chose not to heed the warning of the weather networks.

“*let him hear*” - What voices are we listening to today?

During our weary nights of struggle and watching, we have the Word of God to shed its wonderful light upon our darkened pathway. We also have the assurance that the Morning Star will come as the early sign of the Radiant Light that will shine forth and dispel all darkness forever.

THE LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN SARDIS
The Dead Church
AD. 1520 Reformation to the Tribulation
Text: Revelation 3:1-6

We now come to what has been called the Dead Church or as some would refer to it as the Sleeping Church. During the time of the Protestant Reformation God moved through His remnant to bring the Church back to Himself, to His Word, to His Will, and to His Way. This did not reverse the work of Satan within the Church.

THE CITY

- it was a city that lived upon its famous past
- in the 6th century BC. it was one of the most powerful cities of the ancient world
- located 50 miles east of Ephesus on the northern tip of Mount Tmolus as the capital of Lydia
- it overlooked the broad, fertile plain of Hermus
- the acropolis (citadel) had rock walls rising 1500 feet in an almost perpendicular manner
- As the city grew, a lower city was made in which has been unearthed a Roman theatre and stadium as well as a large temple (160 X 300 feet) which was dedicated to Artemis. Its 75 Ionic columns (two still stand) were 58 feet high
- the temple was destroyed and rebuilt many times
- its main temple's patron deity was believed to have power to restore the dead back to life (cf. - 3:1,3)
- the people were known for their liberated way of life
- its interesting that no outside opposition is mentioned (i.e., - Jewish hostility, heresy)
- the main problem was deep spiritual apathy as a result of their lifestyle
- jewels found in its cemeteries indicated a great prosperity
- it was the first city to strike gold and produce silver coins
- it claimed to be first in discovering the art of dyeing wool and became noted for its carpet industry
- "**Sardis**" means "**prince or song of joy;**" "**remnant;**" "**those who have escaped;**" or "**those who come out**"
- the city was destroyed by a severe earthquake

Christ's Commendation

3:1 - *“To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead.”*

This church received the shortest commendation of any of the churches. Some writers even consider it as a condemnation due to the way that it ends.

“who holds the seven spirits of God” - This is another way of saying the sevenfold Spirit. It denotes the Holy Spirit and His sevenfold ministry as listed in Isaiah 11:1,2.

The Spirit of Wisdom - this refers to His ability of having sound judgment demonstrated through His infinite perception and discernment.

The Spirit of Understanding – this speaks of his ability to comprehend and interpret as well as to explain clearly as seen through the Holy Scriptures.

The Spirit of Counsel - this insures us that He knows exactly what we need and offers truth from the Word that will enhance our condition.

The Spirit of Power/Might - this makes it clear that He is all powerful.

The Spirit of Knowledge - this describes His ability to be fully acquainted with every facet of truth.

The Spirit of the Fear of the Lord - this describes His true reverence for the Lord.

Christ's Condemnation

“you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead” - This is a terrible indictment against any church. This church was like the dead prodigal son (Luke 15:24). Only by repentance could they receive life (Ephesians 5:14; cf. James 2:17). It is a picture of nominal Christianity (outward prosperity; busy religious activity but no spiritual life). They had set up their own standards and discarded God's standards.

It has been said that we can tell how popular a church is by how many attend on a Sunday morning. The popularity of the preacher is indicated by attendance on Sunday night and the popularity of the Lord is known by those who attend weekly prayer and Bible study meetings.

The exterior whiteness of a sepulchre has no attraction to the Lord when it is filled with dead men's bones (Matthew 23:27). The breaking of bread means nothing if we are not spiritually feeding on the Bread of Life (John 6:27,35). Dried or silk flowers are no substitute for the beauty and fragrance of the real ones.

During the Reformation the State churches included all members made so by infant baptism. They had come to a place where they placed their trust in forms and rituals. It takes “old time preaching” to bring about “old time conversion.”

Once a church is swept clean of those things which bring about spiritual death it is very important to replace it with the life of God (Matthew 12:43 – 45). Protestantism’s strong protest against error and corruption was weakened by its failure to embrace truth. There was plenty of religious activity in Sardis but it was a kind of activity that displaced Christ. Membership came about by physical birthright rather than through the new birth of salvation.

Christ’s Counsel

3:2 - “Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of God.”

There were five things that this church was told it must do.

“Wake up” - This literally means to **“be watching.”** This seems to carry a special meaning because in both 549 BC. (Cyrus) and 216 BC. (Antiochus the Great) captured this city by night because the city failed to post guards. The leadership and citizens of Sardis felt that they were secure so they did not remain alert. We should ask ourselves, *“how secure is our nation . . . church today? Should the church be on an alert today?”*

“Strengthen what remains” - It was not too late. No one can survive merely on ritual. A *“remnant”* of spiritual life still existed. If revival didn’t come, the remaining church would soon fall into spiritual death. The smoldering embers needed to be fanned into flames. The early days of the Reformation restored the doctrine of salvation by faith, the total depravity of man, and the authority of the Word of God.

A few spiritual leaders today believe that organizational union is required for strength. But God is requiring spiritual unity rather than an ecumenical movement. Let us not become the frozen chosen. It is a fact that just before a person freezes to death that they feel quite warm and very sleepy. If they are not awakened and made to exercise, they will die. We have major denominations at this same point today. Some pastors are denying the creeds (**“credo”** means **“I believe”**) that their churches have stood for centuries of time.

“I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of God” - The word used for **“complete”** or **“perfect”** does not refer to having absence of any flaws. It rather speaks to **“being satisfactory in the eyes of God.”** They did not meet God’s requirements. Are we satisfied with an imperfect activity that attempts to bring into focus good works instead of a good God? This church fell short in its reform since it did not meet scriptural standards.

We should take time to compare our activities today in the church. Is our worship truly coming from our heart? Are we in the habit of daily Bible reading? Do we offer our finances on a regular basis to the Lord not out of sense of duty but because we love Him? How often do we spend in personal prayer as well as in local prayer meetings? Are we involved in a ministry that helps to reach the lost or train those who are growing in God?

3:3 - “Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.”

“Remember” - This literally means **“to bear in mind”** rather than recall. Keep it in the forefront – like an early teaching.

“received and heard” - Members of the church had received their faith of God as an abiding trust (present tense) at the moment (aorist tense) that their faith came by hearing.

“repent” - The church has lost its power of protest. It has become so accustomed to compromising that it does not feel the need to repent. Sunday is fast becoming a day of amusement instead of the day of worship. We need to repent of becoming doctrinally correct but spiritually ineffective. Has the Church (for the most part) become like Samson in not recognizing that the power of God has left it?

“I will come like a thief” - This speaks of an unexpected visit in judgment (cf.. Matthew 24:42 – 44; I Thessalonians 5:2; II Peter 3:10). This is not speaking so much of a suddenness as it is of an unexpectedness. This is not a reference to the Second Coming of Christ. The Lord is never hasty in bringing judgment. He is never tyrannical in His attitudes. The Church’s ignorance of the Lord’s visitation is a serious and fatal mistake (Luke 19:41 – 44)

Christ’s Challenge

3:4 - “Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy.”

“Yet you have a few people in Sardis” - During the time of the Reformation we read of such leaders as Martin Luther, John Huss, Savonarola, John Knox, John Wycliffe and John Calvin who remained true to God and His Word.

“soiled their clothes” - Stained or soiled garments refer to one’s character as marred (Isaiah 64:6; Jude 23). In Asia Minor inscriptions, soiled clothes would disqualify the worshipper and dishonour the god they served. To this city famous for dyeing clothes this term would stand out strongly. Sometimes garments were dyed again because of stains that had penetrated the cloth. The only way to make our garments white are to dye them with the blood of Jesus Christ which will make them as white as snow (Isaiah 1:15 – 18).

“They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy.” - White clothing is symbolic of exchanging iniquity for righteousness (Zechariah 3:4,5).

3:5 - “He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels.”

There is a threefold promise made to the overcomer.

“be dressed in white” - White garments or robes are mentioned seven times in the Book of Revelation. Scriptures show us that martyrs will be given white robes (Revelation 6:11). We’re also told that the 24 elders wear white garments before the throne in heaven (Revelation 4:4). The apostle John was also shown a great multitude clothed in white raiment and washed in the blood and Lamb (Revelation 7:9,13). The armies of heaven will be arrayed in white garments (Revelation 19:14)

“I will never blot out his name from the book of life” - This thought is first mentioned in Exodus 32:32 – 33. It is also found in other scriptures like Psalm 69:28 (cf. - Daniel 12:1). It represented everyone who were registered with the Israeli community in the Old Testament. In Asia once a name was removed from a civic register, a person would loose their citizenship.

“will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels” - (cf. – Matthew 10:32; Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26; 12:8). Won’t it be a wonderful day when Jesus Christ vouches for us before His Father? Only those who have clean hands and a pure heart will ascend into God’s presence (Psalm 24:3–5).

3:6 - “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

“He who has an ear” - There are at least four tests that can be used to speak of the spiritual health of any church. The **first** is whether there is spiritual growth. The **second** is whether the church has a deep compassion for others (Romans 5:5). The **third** is whether the church is unified and not struggling through strife, schisms, quarrelling and back biting (Ephesians 4). The **fourth** test is whether there is a wholesome emotion which is evident in both life and worship. Does the church weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice? It is very important not to take on the nature and actions of this church. No church can survive that patterns itself after the church of Sardis.

THE LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN PHILADELPHIA
The Church Christ Loved
AD. 1750 Missionary to Rapture
Text: Revelation 3:7-13

We have now made it to the sixth church of Asia Minor. This is the church that portrays the love of God. This church along with Smyrna are the only ones that did NOT receive a word of condemnation from our Lord.

THE CITY

- this city was located at the juncture of three trade routes (Mysia, Lydia, Phrygia)
- the city was probably founded between 189 BC. – 138 BC. upon the site of an earlier settlement
- it had a surprising influence on the area considering its short time of existence
- the volcanic area to the North became ideal for growing grapes
- it was located on a fault line. A great earthquake in 17 AD. levelled 12 surrounding cities with Philadelphia being the most severely damaged
- the city was named after Attalus II's love and devotion to his brother
- "*Philadelphus.*" means "*lover of his brother*" or "*brotherly love*"
- Philadelphia was built to become a "*missionary city*" to bring Greek culture into the annexed area of Lydia and Phrygia

DIONYSUS

- the worship of Dionysus became its chief pagan cult and festival
- Dionysus was the youngest of the Greek gods. Legend has it that he came from India travelling through Asia in a triumphant march accompanied by creatures with pointed ears, snug noses and goat's tails
- he became so associated with man that he was known as the man-god or god-man
- he was known as the god of vintage or wine
- they practised a ritual of opening the previous year's vats of wine only when the new vines showed new life

3:7 – “To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.”

“These are the words of him who is holy and true” – It is important to recognise that before the words of Christ are mentioned that His character is established. Righteous actions are the direct result of a holy character. Nothing can be compared to His holiness because it is absolute in God alone. He acts out of His holiness. Holiness and truth will eventually conquer the deceit and lies of the enemy. We need to be careful not to enter into the enemies scheming devices (II Timothy 4:3,4).

“who holds the key of David” - This indicated complete control over the royal household. It came to mean an undisputed authority to admit or exclude anyone from the New Jerusalem. It was widely used to describe God (Job 12:14). The prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 22:22) speaks of Eliakim who alone would be able to temporarily open the treasury of David (cf. - I Chronicles 29:1-5).

A key will also be given to an angel (star) to open the bottomless pit in Revelation 9:1,2.

“What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open” – History proves that the great missionary movement began in the 1750's. In 1793, William Carey, a cobbler became burdened for the lost in India. God also opened the door for Adoniram Judson (Baptist missionary to Burma), David Livingstone (Scottish missionary to Africa), Jonathan Goforth (Canadian missionary to China), as well as James Hudson Taylor (English missionary from 1824 – 49 who was the founder of the China Inland Missions). It was during this time that Africa, China, Japan, Korea, India and South America as well as the islands of the sea were all reached with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

There were two main reasons for this missionary thrust.

- 1. The Word of God was printed into the language of the people.**
- 2. There was a renewed emphasis upon the doctrine of the Return of Jesus Christ. (Premillennialism had died from the third century and returned around 1800).**

There is a tendency to compromise in order to get opportunity, but if we walk in the truth it will be God's responsibility to open up the doors of opportunity.

Christ's Commendation

3:8 – “I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no man can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.”

“See, I have placed before you an open door” - This indicates an open door of opportunity, especially in the preaching the gospel (Acts 14:27; I Corinthians 16:9; II Corinthians 2:12; Colossians 4:3). The door was opened so those who desired could enter into the Messianic kingdom.

“I know that you have little strength” - This church was seen as small, poor and lacking influence upon the world around them. The world often measures strength in numbers. With the Lord and ourselves we have a majority (II Corinthians 9:8).

“yet you have kept my word” – This speaks of the particular period of trial in the past (aorist tense) in which this church remained faithful. There are two simple tests to determine whether we are part of God's remnant today. The first is whether we are true to His Word (John 17:8; II Timothy 3:15-17). The Word is a very powerful weapon against the deceit of this world (I Timothy 4:1,2; John 6:63; Hebrews 4:12; I Peter 1:23). This church not only believed the Word of God; they also kept the Word of God. Their faithfulness was tested because of the great increase in false christ's and religions that came about during this time.

“and have not denied my name” – The second test is whether or not they would stay true to the name of Jesus Christ. To not deny His name is to affirm the deity of God. Paul warned the Church not to be deceived into preaching another Jesus (II Corinthians 11:3,4; Galatians 1:6-8).

Christ's Vindication

3:9 – “I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claimed to be Jews though they are not, but are liars – I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you.”

“of the synagogue of Satan” - This describes the Jews that were making an outward appearance but inwardly they were not Jews (Romans 2:28 – 29). The Jews were convinced that national identity in religious heritage bought them access into God's kingdom. Their slander and persecution of this true church showed who they really were.

Paul warned the church not to remove itself from the teaching that was true to God and His Word (Galatians 1:6-8). Satan is very deceptive in his ways so we must keep our guard up against him (II Corinthians 11:14,15).

“I will make them come and fall down at your feet” - The Jews will be forced to render to the Christians what they expected the Gentiles to do to them (Isaiah 49:23; 60:14; Ezekiel 36:23).

Christ’s Preservation

3:10 – ***“Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who lived on the earth.”***

“I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world” - There has never been a world-wide tribulation. It will come during the seven years of devastating tribulation as recorded in Revelation 6–18. The church will be removed (raptured) before that time. It is **deliverance from** (Greek ***“ek”*** meaning ***“out of”***) rather than **deliverance through** this hour of trial (cf.- John 17:15).

This time of trial is recorded throughout the Bible (Daniel 12:7; Mark 13:19; II Thessalonians 2:1 – 12; Revelation 13:5 – 10 (3 ½ years). It is very difficult to see the church kept from this trial if it is left upon the earth. Many scholars believe the Tribulation of the ***“saints”*** will be for the nation of Israel and not to the Church as a whole.

Christ’s Counsel

3:11 – ***“I am coming soon. Hold onto what you have, so that no one will take your crown.”***

“I am coming soon” - This church age (beginning with AD. 1750) now represents over 250 years. The initial church age is almost 2,000 years.

“Hold onto what you have” - It is important not to forfeit our place as others have done.

Esau	➔	Jacob
Reuben	➔	Judah
Saul	➔	David

“so that no one will take your crown” - The word used here for ***“crown”*** is ***“stephanos”*** which is a garland or a wreath worn to indicate a victory. We can lose this crown without losing our salvation.

The late Dr. Oswald J. Smith believed that there were true basic building blocks of any spiritual church. They were Evangelism and Missions. To this we should also add the teaching of the Word of God.

Christ's Challenge

3:12 – “Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name.”

“I will make a pillar in the temple of my God” - A pillar speaks of stability (Galatians 2:9). It also speaks of the assured place of the overcomer in the final Kingdom of God. It is speaking symbolically and does not contradict Revelation 21:22.

This had a special meaning to the citizens of Philadelphia because the people had to flee to temporary dwellings due to frequent earthquakes.

“the name of the city of my God” - This indicates a citizenship in a Heavenly Commonwealth. Those who received these names were given entrance rights into this city.

“I will also write on him my new name” - It entitles the bearer to be “his servants” (Revelation 22:3–4). This city had been renamed twice before. It was called “*Neocaesarea*” as a sign of gratitude to Tiberias for building the city after an earthquake. It was also later called “*Flavia*” after the family name of Emperor Vespasian.

3:13 – “He who has any ear, let him here what the Spirit says to the churches.” –

“let him here what the Spirit says to the churches” - The message to each of the seven churches is also a message to each and every church today.

THE LETTER TO THE CHURCH OF LAODICEA
The Lukewarm Church
AD. 1900 - Tribulation
Text: Revelation 3:14-22

The word *Laodicea*” means *the rights or the voice of the people.*” We unfortunately live in a society that has adopted the Old Latin slogan *“the voice of the people is the voice of God.”* This same mind set is unfortunately prevalent in the present day church.

Laodicea

- situated at the convergence of three great roads of commerce
- it became the wealthiest city in Phrygia during Roman times
- Agricultural and commercial prosperity brought in the banking industry
- it became a prominent centre of banking and commerce. One of the richest in the world
- fertile ground was excellent for grazing sheep. Careful breeding placed its glossy, soft, black wool in great demand
- it rebuilt itself (without finances from Rome) after a devastating earthquake in AD. 60
- its physicians followed the teaching of Herophilos (330-250 BC.) who taught that diseases required compound medicines.
- two famous medicines developed during this time were
 - 1). Ointment from spice nard for ears
 - 2). Eye-salve made from *“Phrygian powder”* mixed with oil
- the city lacked a source of water. An open aqueduct channelled water from local streams
- they were helpless during times of war.

“Such vulnerable communities must learn the art of appeasement and reconciliation.”

Blaiklock

- the church was probably founded by Epaphras (Colossians 1:7; 4:12) a short form of the word *“Epaphroditus”* (from *“Apaphrodite”* the goddess of love). He most likely was a convert from paganism.

3:14 – To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: these are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s creation.”

“these are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness” – *“The God of Amen”* or *“the God of truth”* (Isaiah 65:16) indicates the faithfulness of God. The trustworthiness of God unfortunately did not bring about a faithful church. As a title for Christ it meant *“I am Truth.”* Christ is the last word - the ultimate authority. No further search for truth is required.

“Christ is the seal of God’s revealed truth, the finality of all that the Father has spoken. Beyond Him, God has nothing more to say to man.”

Dr. Merrill C. Tenney

“the ruler of God’s creation” – Some cults use this verse to teach that Christ was created. A simple comparison of Scripture proves different (“... *all things were created by him and for Him*” – *Colossians 1:15-18*). Some versions use the word **“beginning”** instead of **“ruler.”** The word **“ruler”** means **“source”** or **“origin of creation.”**

Christ’s Commendation

This is the only church that our Lord cannot even find one word of commendation. This is a tragic indictment to the church that may also represent our period of time.

Christ’s Condemnation

3:15 – ***“I know your deeds, that you are neither cold or hot. I wish you were either one or the other!”***

“neither cold or hot” – We must be very careful about building an organization of programs, committees, and activities that have no power of God in them. It indicates that this church didn’t have a cold hostility or rejection toward the gospel but it didn’t have a hot zeal and fervour either. They had become indifferent, nominal and complacent. It contrasted the hot springs of Hierapolis and the cold, pure waters of Colosse.

“Six miles north across the Lycus was the city of Hierapolis, famous for its hot springs which, rising within the city, flowed across a wide plateau and spilled over a broad escarpment directly opposite Laodicea. The cliff was 300 feet height and 1 mile wide. Covered with a white incrustation of calcium carbonate, it formed a spectacular natural phenomenon.”

Robert H. Mounce
“The Book of Revelation”
p. 125

There were also the pure cold water springs in Colosse. So the hot mineral springs were seen as having healings powers. The cold springs provided refreshment. Those who are lukewarm provide neither healing to the spiritually ill or refreshment to the weary. There is more hope for a man who is coldly outside the church than for a man who is near enough to its warmth not to appreciate it and far enough from its burning heat to be utterly useless to God.

3:16 – “So, because you are lukewarm – neither hot nor cold – I am about to spit you out of my mouth.”

“So, because you are lukewarm – neither hot nor cold” - Lukewarmness is a very dangerous self-deceiving spiritual state. The whole ecumenical movement is built on this kind of humanistic ideals. Anyone who does not accept the Biblical teaching of the deity of God; His virgin birth; vicarious atonement; His bodily resurrection; the authority of God’s inerrant Word; the Second Return of Christ; Heaven and Hell; sin & salvation; and a host of other unchangeable doctrines are entering the lukewarm waters of spiritual pollution.

A person who is cold has no desire for the things of God. These have completely ignored the purpose of God for their lives. They live in a perpetual state of death and condemnation before God unless they are willing to repent.

The Bible is full of examples of those who have moved from a coldness to become hot in their pursuit of God. Such were those like Zacchaeus who welcomed Jesus into his home and restored a fourfold restitution to those he had robbed (Luke 19:1-10). Saul of Tarsus turned from being a persecutor of the church to one who earnestly and zealously proclaimed the gospel (Acts 26:1-29). Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter choosing rather to identify himself with his enslaved people (Hebrews 11:24-26).

“I am about to” – Not **“I will”** but rather **“I shall soon.”** We must notice that Revelation 3:18-20 is a call to repentance. Therefore, the lukewarm church is not beyond the hope of recovery. This strong appeal was to arouse this church to change.

This church symbolizes the present church that preaches a social gospel.

Social Action not Gospel Action
Reformation not Transformation
Planning not Praying

“spit you out of my mouth” – Any unsuspecting visitor who drank the water in that area would quickly spit it upon the ground due to its lukewarm temperature and high alum and calcium content. This is just how God feels when we attempt to do His work without His power. Anything that glorifies man brings a distaste to God.

3:17 – *“You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.”*

“do not need a thing” – Isn’t it amazing how financial security can give a pretentious security of spiritual matters. The church boasted that she had acquired her wealth by her own efforts. This church was deceived about its condition. Jesus said, *“Without me, you can do nothing.”* Man can organize, build, promote, preach and teach but only the Spirit of God can convict men of sin. (Read Matthew 7:22,23).

This is an interesting contrast to the two churches that our Lord commended. In the church of Smyrna the Lord knew of their poverty yet He saw them as being rich (Revelation 2:9). To the church in Philadelphia He said that they had little strength (Revelation 3:8)

“you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked” – The word *“wretched”* means to be *“oppressed”* with a problem or burden. Their wealth was actually a burden for them yet they could not see it.

The word *“pitiful”* (translated *“miserable”* in the KJV) means *“one who is in need of pity.”* It is interesting that God called them *“poor”* when they thought they needed nothing. May we never get rich enough to lay up treasures on earth and forsake our soul. They became *“blind”* in the sense that they were nearsighted. They could only see the things of this earth and yet were blinded to any heavenly vision. Those who are spiritually blind lack discernment to the things of God. These kind carry a cloak of Christianity but actually are standing *“naked”* before God.

They may teach on inner peace and positive thinking but their condition is clear before the eyes of God. Even though it is often robed in its vestal garments, this kind of church is seen as naked in the eyes of God. Other churches were robed in white clothing - not this one.

“The pulpits of churches are being used today as sounding boards for racial agitation, which depicts the blindness of these churches because they are striving to solve man’s racial problems externally or by means of education. That is impossible! Man’s nature can only be changed internally, and only Jesus Christ can do that! The more man tries to solve social problems without Christ, the more confused the problem will become.”

Dr. Tim LaHaye
“Revelation – Illustrated and Made Simple”
 p. 63

Christ's Counsel

3:18 – *“I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.”*

“I counsel you to buy” - This is not to say that we can purchase spiritual blessings (cf. Isaiah 55:1,2). It will cost us our self-sufficiency; self-righteousness as well as the price of repentance. God still requires us to act WITH His will.

“gold refined in the fire” - The trial of our faith is much more precious than gold (I Peter 1:7). Our salvation has been bought with the high price of the precious blood of Jesus.

“white clothes to wear” - These are garments of purity and righteousness (cf. Revelation 3:5). This is in contrast to the city's reputation of making clothes from black wool.

“salve to put on your eyes, so you can see” - Phrygian physicians could only help in physical blindness through an application of their Phrygian powder. Christ can heal spiritual blindness. They were unable to see the Biblical truths so clearly set before them.

3:19 – *“Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.”*

“Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline” - We often become best by going through times of discipline (Proverbs 3:12; Hebrews 12:5-6).

3:20 – *“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he will eat with me.”*

“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock” - Holman Hunts famous picture of *“The Light of the World”* shows Christ standing outside a door knocking. There is no doorknob on the outside inferring that we must open the door to give Him entrance. Christ is also standing at the door of our heart seeking admission. If Christ does not ignore those who are lukewarm but actually makes a point to gently go to them, we should be careful as well how we approach them.

“and eat with him” - Sharing a common meal indicated a strong bond of affection and companionship, confidence and intimacy. It speaks of a leisurely event not a hurried snack. Jesus was criticized for eating with Publicans and sinners (Luke 15:2). Peter was also criticized for eating with Gentiles (Acts 11:3).

3:21 – “To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.”

“To him who overcomes” - Since our Lord was able to overcome the world (John 16:33), we also through Him can become an overcomer. Many Scriptures point clearly to the fact that our Lord defeated Satan (Ephesians 1:20-23; Colossians 2:15; Hebrews 2:14,15). It is also true that He has made us an overcomer (Romans 8:31-39; I John 5:4,5; Revelation 12:11). We are not simply a conqueror but rather **MORE THAN A CONQUEROR** in the Kingdom of God.

“I will give the right to sit with me on my throne” - The 12 disciples were promised to sit upon 12 thrones to judge Israel (Matthew 19:28). Paul encouraged Timothy by telling him . . .

“If we endure, we will also reign with him.”

II Timothy 2:12

There are many rewards for being a conqueror in Christ.

1. Will eat from the Tree of Life - Revelation 2:7
2. Will not be hurt by the second death - Revelation 2:11
3. Will eat of the hidden manna - Revelation 2:17
4. Will be given authority over the nations - Revelation 2:26
5. Will be dressed in white raiment - Revelation 3:5
6. Will become a pillar in the house of God - Revelation 3:12
7. Will be forever in the presence of God - Revelation 3:12
8. Will be given a new name - Revelation 3:12
9. Will be seated on the throne with Christ - Revelation 3:21

3:22 – “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

The comprehensive warnings to the churches were:

- | | | |
|------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Ephesus | - | Forsaking their first love |
| 2. Smyrna | - | Fear of suffering |
| 3. Pergamum | - | Doctrinal compromise |
| 4. Thyatira | - | Moral compromise |
| 5. Sardis | - | Spiritual deadness |
| 6. Philadelphia | - | Failure to hold fast |
| 7. Laodicea | - | Lukewarmness in spirit |

LESSON 9

Let the church today give careful heed to the warnings of God. We will all stand before the Lord and give an account some day for what we believe and what we practise.

So we close the message to the seven churches with Jesus knocking and hoping for entrance. Those who would open their heart and give Him full entrance would reap the plentiful rewards.

**THE FIRST VISION OF HEAVEN
THE INTRODUCTION TO FUTURE THINGS
Part I**

Text: Revelation 4:1-6a

Chapters 2 and 3 unfolded the moral and spiritual condition of the churches in the time of John, but they also illustrated conditions that would be present historically in the Church. They may also have been written to portray various stages the Church as a whole would go through or even what to expect during the closing age of the church.

Chapters 4 and 5 are introductory in that they prepare the reader for the future events to unfold in chapters 6-22. This is evident from the words, “*after these things*” of 4:1. This speaks of the sequence of events that were to follow chapters 2 and 3. Specifically, according to chapter 1:19, they occur after “*the things which are,*” the present time, the church age. Chapters 4 and 5 are represented as occurring before chapter 6 and following.

Spiritually speaking chapters 4 and 5 form a prologue to The Tribulation events and give us heaven’s perspective of the terrible judgments that will be poured out on the earth. One cannot understand the nature of The Tribulation judgments without this scene. In these two chapters, John was given heaven’s perspective of earthly events as he walked through the door that was opened to him in 4:1.”

After John had his vision of the glorified Lord walking amongst the churches, he immediately saw a vision of heaven. He saw the door OPEN NOT OPENING.

Its important to know that we do not read about the Church after chapter 3. The word “*church*” is stated 20 times in the first three chapters but not again in the rest of the book of Revelation. Also, there is no mention of “the body” or “the bride” until the 19th chapter.

Chapters 4 an 5 give us a vision of the throne room before the impending tribulation that is to follow (chapters 6 ff). Our focus once again is placed upon God. He is seen as the great omnipotent and omniscient God.

THE THRONE STANDING IN HEAVEN

The Invitation into Heaven (4:1)

4:1 - *“After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, ‘Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.’”*

The KJV uses the word *“behold”* to capture the attention of the reader. It was a word that meant *“see, look, behold.”* It is used here to arrest the attention of the reader, undoubtedly because of the nature of the material that will be introduced. Here is a vision of special importance, one vital to understanding the nature of the prophetic events described.

“a door” - The word *“door”* is used four times in the Book of Revelation. In 3:8 it is used in connection with the door of opportunity for ministry given to the church at Philadelphia. Then in 3:20 it is used twice in reference to Christ standing at the door of the heart desiring fellowship. Here, the door is opened to give John and us heaven’s insights into the earthly scene that are to follow. This is an essential prerequisite if one is to comprehend the nature of the events and the purpose of God behind them.

“standing open - God opened the door for John which serves to remind us that this is a divine revelation. It reveals that which we could never see or know apart from this special revelation from God. The door had been opened and was left that way to prepare the way for John’s arrival. John stands as the last of the 12 apostles and therefore he could easily represent the Church being raptured.

NOTE:

- 1). The location is in heaven
- 2). It falls into succession with Church history
- 3). The absence of the mention of the Church from chapter 4 onward
- 4). There is much similarity in Old Testament symbols from chapter 4 to chapter 18. Consider Jacob’s trouble (The Tabernacle, Art of the Covenant, altar, elders, censers, cherubim, seals, trumpets, plagues).

“in heaven” - There are three heavens mentioned in the Bible

- 1). The atmosphere – *“the prince of the power of the air”*
- 2). The Stellar heaven – known also as the universe
- 3). The third heaven – where God’s eternal throne abides

THE THRONE STANDING IN HEAVEN (Contd.)

The Invitation into Heaven (4:1) (Contd.)

“And the voice I had first heard speaking to me” - This is most likely a reference to the voice that John heard in Revelation 1:10.

“Come up here” - Again, true prophecy has its source in heaven and men must rise up to receive it. This is similar in thought to the rapture. (I Thessalonians 4:16, 17; I Kings 22:19).

“I will show you what must take place after this” - A true insight of future events can only be seen through the vantage point of a heavenly throne (not horoscopes, crystal balls, tea leaves, palm reading, etc.). The word *“must”* indicates that it is both necessary and binding.

The Placement of the Throne (4:2a)

4:2 - “At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it.”

“At once I was in the Spirit” - This could very well be speaking of a fresh wave of the Holy Spirit. Even though we can be filled with the Holy Spirit at a certain point in our lives, we can still have great moments of ecstasy later on in time (cf. – Ezekiel 11:1,5). He was first taken by the Spirit and secondly the Holy Spirit came upon him.

“before me was a throne” - This is the central thought of this chapter (8 times in 4:1-6 and 18 times in chapters 4 and 5. All totalled this phrase is used 45 times in comparison to its 15 other times in the New Testament).

The throne of God is essentially the centre of the universe. Everything revolves around it. It is unmovable. Just as the North Star is the navigational guide due to its fixed position, so was the throne of God the centre of God’s rulership.

The use of the Greek words here indicate that this throne was purposely set in place for the coming events of judgements.

Some suggest that this is not the eternal throne. It may rather have been one that is set in place for the upcoming tribulation judgements (Psalm 9:7; Daniel 7:9, 13-14)

THE THRONE STANDING IN HEAVEN (Contd.)

The Person on the Throne (4:2b-3)

“with someone sitting on it” - It is clear that this is the Lord God Almighty (4:8). The prophet Isaiah wrote, *“I saw the LORD seated on a throne, high and exalted”* (Isaiah 6:1). The Psalmist said, *“God is seated on his holy throne”* (Psalm 47:8).

This wonderful thought became the inspiration for Handel’s *“The Messiah.”* The scene strongly portrays the fact that God is in control. Though the nations rage and devise their plans, He who sits in the heavens laughs (Psalm 2:4).

4: 3 - “And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow, resembling an emerald encircled the throne.”

“And the one who sat there” - John is allowed to see the throne room and the thing that stood out was the One seated on the throne.

“the appearance of jasper” - Modern jasper is opaque (clear, crystal-like). It is said to be as clear as crystal, perhaps like a diamond. It is the most brilliant of all precious stones thereby vividly depicting the holiness and the purity of God (Habakkuk 1:13). Since such a stone picks up and reflects light, it calls our attention to the fact that God is light, a holy God who reveals, and un.masks darkness.

In the Old Testament these stones had a special relationship to the tribes of Israel. Each tribe had a representative stone which the High Priest wore on his priestly garment. As the High Priest, he was representing each tribe before God at the altar. **“Jasper”** was the stone representing the first tribe, the tribe of Reuben. The last tribe, Benjamin, was represented by the **“carnelian”** or **“sardius.”** So these two stones represented the whole nation, the first and the last and all in between.

“Jasper” was used for the breastplate stone of Reuben whose name means **“Behold a Son.”**

“and carnelian (sardius)” - This is probably like the red ruby of our modern times. The ruby “(carnelian or sardius)” was the first stone on the high priest’s breastplate and the “jasper” was the last stone (Exodus 28:15 – 21) . Ruby, being red like blood, speaks of sacrifice (Romans 5:8), wrath, judgment, and ultimate salvation and perfect justice (Romans 3:19).

It was used for the breastplate stone of Benjamin whose name means **“Son of my right hand.”**

THE THRONE STANDING IN HEAVEN (Contd.)

The Person on the Throne (4:2b-3) (Contd.)

“A rainbow, resembling an emerald encircled the throne” - This is a beautiful green coloured stone. The rainbow is more like a perfectly circular prism of colours. Unlike the partial rainbows we generally see on earth, this one completely encircled the throne. This too is significant in calling our attention to the person and work of God on behalf of man, the one who rebelled against God’s grace. Our Lord completed His work when He said, *“It is finished.”*

In Scripture the rainbow is a sign of God’s faithfulness to His Word and Covenants. It is also a sign of God’s mercy, grace and long-suffering.

It was used as the breastplate stone of Judah whose name means *“Praise.”*

The breastplate speaks of Christ’s ministry as the High Priest. These selected colours represented the priesthood. So immediately after the rapture, the priesthood is brought into focus.

We are the priesthood of believers. We have two responsibilities namely:

- | | | |
|-------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| I). Intercession | - | I Timothy 2:1 |
| II). Sacrifice | - | Our bodies (Romans 12:1) |
| | | Our praise (Hebrews 13:15) |
| | | Our Service (Hebrews 13:16) |
| | | Our Giving (Hebrews 13:16) |

The Persons Around the Throne (4:4)

4:4 - “Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads.”

“twenty-four other thrones” - Note that these are thrones and not seats.

“twenty-four elders” - There are a number of interpretations of what these represent.

- 1). They could represent:
 - The Old Testament – 12 patriarchs
 - The New Testament – 12 apostles

- 2). They could represent angels dressed in white (cf. John 20:12; Acts 1:10). They worship the Lamb (5:8) and offer the prayers of the saints to God.

THE THRONE STANDING IN HEAVEN (Contd.)

The Persons Around the Throne (4:4) (Contd.)

3). They could represent the raptured Church seen in its priestly role.

I Chronicles 24:1-19 tells that king David appointed 24 elders (orders) to represent the entire Levitical priesthood. There were thousands of priests (perhaps 20,000 and same number of Levites), and obviously all could not serve at once, so each order was represented by one priest. By Scripture's own use, the number 24 has a representative character to it (cf. I Chronicles 24 & 25; Luke 1:5, 8, 9). Each "course" was to serve for two weeks in the temple.

Josephus, the Jewish historian, tells us his family line was "*of the first course of the four and twenty.*" So there was one high priest, 24 orders of priests with 24 who served as representatives of the whole nation.

Their white robes indicate their righteousness before God.

"had crowns of gold" - The crowns (Greek - "*stephanos*") of gold speak of a victor's crown (1 Corinthians 9:25; 1 Thessalonians 2:19; II Timothy 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Peter 5:4; Revelation 2:10; 3:11; 4:10). There can be no crowns given out until the rapture takes place.

Only the Church is raptured before the events begin in chapter 6 (the Tribulation) and is in heaven, glorified, and eligible for reward. It is commonly believed that Israel or the Old Testament believers can not be represented here until after Daniel's 70th week. Israel's resurrection and rewards come then, "*after the time of distress such as never occurred . . .*" which is undoubtedly a reference to The Great Tribulation (Daniel 12:1-2).

The Proceedings Around the Throne (4:5)

4:5 - "*From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. Before the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God.*"

"flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder" - These represent both the presence of God (Exodus 19:16; Ezekiel 1:13) as well as the power and glory of God (Psalms 18:13-15; Job 37:2-5).

These "***flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder***" increase as the vision given to the apostle John progresses. They are always representing the temple scene which includes the throne of God (Revelation 8:5; 11:19; 16:18).

THE THRONE STANDING IN HEAVEN (Contd.)

The Proceedings Around the Throne (4:5) (Contd.)

“seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God” - The seven lamps, defined as the seven Spirits of God, speak of the fullness and perfection of the Spirit and His ministries. In this context, however, there is one particular work of the Spirit which is stressed. The Holy Spirit is viewed, not in His ministry of saving men, though that will surely occur for Israel in the Tribulation, nor is He viewed in any of His other ministries as seen in the Church.

Rather, here He is set forth in connection with His holy character (righteousness and justice) as light to illuminate the perfections of the throne of God. Everything inconsistent with the absolute righteousness and purity of God and His throne must and will be judged. The seven branched lampstand that was found in the Tabernacle of Moses not only offered light but also exposed the priests that stood in the Holy Place (Isaiah 11:2)

- 1). The Spirit of the Lord
- 2). The Spirit of Wisdom
- 3). The Spirit of Understanding
- 4). The Spirit of Council
- 5). The Spirit of Might (Power)
- 6). The Spirit of Knowledge
- 7). The Spirit of the Fear of the Lord

When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we should also manifest these characteristics – wisdom, understanding, council, might (power), knowledge, and a reverent fear for the Lord.

4:6 - *“Also before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. In the centre, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back.”*

“a sea of glass, clear as crystal” - It is impossible to be dogmatic as to the meaning of this phrase. It could possibly:

- 1). Be a reference to the Church at rest
- 2). Call to mind the sea of brass used in Solomon’s Temple (1 Kings 7:23-40). The laver represented the Word of God (Exodus 30:17-21). But this Sea is not for cleansing. It stands as the abiding, stable, sure, never passing away, Word of God. The tribulation saints that are martyred stand upon it later on in time (15:2)
- 3). A picturesque element that adds to the description of the majesty of God. Perhaps again, as crystal sparkles and reflects the light, so this simply adds to the picture of God’s holy character.

LESSON 10

What a beautiful way to be brought into focus before the time of The Great Tribulation. Our God in heaven is in control of everything that is about to take place. We can rest assured that He will judge those who have turned against His will. The day of appointment with destiny is about to begin. When the curtain of heaven is drawn back for a short time, we need to reflect upon where we truly stand before God. The day is soon coming when it will be too late to make that decision.

**THE FIRST VISION OF HEAVEN
THE PRAISE AROUND THE THRONE
Part II**

Text: Revelation 4:6b-11

THE THRONE STANDING IN HEAVEN

We have just finished getting a panoramic view of the throne of God. Now we're about to have the action taking place around the throne of God unveiled.

The Praise Around the Throne (4:6b-11)

The Four Living Creatures (4:6b-8)

4:6 - *“Also before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. In the centre, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back.”*

“a sea of glass” - Many see an allusion here to the laver in The Tabernacle of Moses (Exodus 30:17-21) and to the Sea of cast metal in Solomon's Temple (1 Kings 7:23-37). These were used for the purification of the priests. They symbolized the Word of God and the Holy Spirit, God's agents for cleansing our lives. Here, however, the sea before the throne is like glass, solidified, like crystal—not water because no cleansing is needed in heaven. Perhaps again, as crystal sparkles and reflects the light, so this simply adds to the picture of God's holy character.

“In the centre, around the throne” - This indicates the inner circle. It also indicates a place of honour and conformity to the will of God. The position of the four creatures is also due to their function as worship leaders (4:9-10; 5:14).

“were four living creatures” - There are two times that *“beasts”* are used in the KJV. The Greek words *“ζῴον or Zôon”* mean *“a living being”* which come from the root word *“ζοῦ”* which means *“life.”* We derive our word *“zoology”* from this word. It therefore has the meaning of living, angelic creatures or animals not terrible or fearful looking beasts.

Their number is four. Three is the number of God and the Godhead and four, due to the way it is often used in Scripture, is the number of the earth (4 corners) or the world as well as mankind in general. Scripture often points to four divisions within the human race (cf. Revelation 7:9, nations, tribes, peoples, and language). Further, there are four elements: fire, water, earth and air; four wind directions, four seasons, four universal empires (Daniel 7), and four representations of Christ, the Saviour of man in the gospels as we will show below. Thus, together they represent God's judicial government and activities over man.

“they were covered with eyes, in front and in back” - Nothing escapes their constant attention and observance of the affairs on the earth on God’s behalf. George E. Ladd describes it as a *“ceaseless vigilance and unlimited intelligence.”* The cherubim of Ezekiel 10:12 were also full of eyes signifying their intelligence and spiritual perception of the ways and judgments of God. This is most likely the emphasis here.

“in front and in back” - This could indicate the perception of God’s dealings as keenly with our past as He is able with our future.

4:7 - *“The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle.”*

There are some similarities yet not always a total likeness with the creatures described in Ezekiel 1:4–14;10:14, 20, 21

Author	LION	OX	MAN	EAGLE
Sweete	Noblest	Strongest	Wisest	Swiftest
Rabbinic	Mightiest of the wild kingdom	Mightiest of the domestic kingdom	Mightiest of all angelic hosts	Mightiest of all the birds
Ironside	Divine Majesty	Divine Strength	Intelligence	Swiftness
Lenski	The Wild Place	Cultivated spots	Cities and towns	The air
Irenaeus - AD 170	John	Luke	Matthew	Mark
Hendrickson	Strength of a lion (Psalm 103:20)	Ability to serve (Hebrews 1:14)	Intelligence (Luke 15:10)	Swiftness to serve (Dan 9:21)
Jerome - AD 400	Matthew	Luke	Mark	John

4:8 - *“Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.’”*

“Each of the four living creatures had six wings” - This may indicate that they were Seraphim (Isaiah 6:1– 3). They were created to swiftly carry out God’s will.

“Day and night they never stop saying” - There is no weakness or imperfection in their worship or service. No wonder Isaiah saw his sinfulness (Isaiah 6:5) when placed before them.

“Holy, holy, holy” - This speaks of the Trinity. It also speaks of perfect holiness and righteousness found in God alone.

“the Lord God Almighty” - The praise of His holiness leads to the affirming of His omnipotence and eternal nature. This phrase also refers to God’s power. It is an expression reserved to describe God alone. He is the Creator and also the only One who sustains all things.

“who was, and is, and is to come” - This is an expression that encompasses eternity itself.

The Four Living creatures and Their Response of Praise (4:9-11)

The Explanation and Introduction (4:9)

4:9 - *“Whenever the living creatures give glory, honour and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives forever and ever,”*

“Satan may have seduced the world through millenniums of struggle to accept him as the prince of this world and as the god of this age, but now beings mightier than he show the way of true worship. God alone is to receive the homage of men.

Donald Grey Barnhouse,
“Revelation, An Expository Commentary”
Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1971, p. 98

The Worship Expressed by the Elders (4:10-11)

4:10 - *“The twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives forever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say:”*

“fall down before him” - This is a way of describing those who prostrate themselves before God. Funk and Wagnall’s dictionary describes *“prostrate”* as a word derived from the Latin *“pro”* – *“before or forward”* and *“sternere”* – *“to stretch out to; to lie prone with your face to the ground; brought low in mind and spirit; to throw flat; to overcome, make helpless.”*

This word is very close to the word *“prostitute.”* The Latin word once again is derived from *“pro”* meaning *“before or forward”* and *“statuere”* meaning *“to place, to sell services for unworthy purposes.”* We must be very careful that our worship is proper before the Lord. Fervency is no substitute for honesty and true worship.

“The word ‘worship’ originally involved the idea of prostrating oneself before a deity to kiss his feet or the hem of his garment. As an act of reverence and respect it was not uncommon in the East.”

Robert Mounce
“The Book of Revelation”
 William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
 Grand Rapids, p. 139

“and worship him who lives forever and ever” - This is an act reserved for God. If they were not worshipping God and God alone, then heaven would be full of idolaters.

“They lay their crowns before the throne” - The word *“casting”* is a bit too strong a word. Instead, they make it an act of orderly worship. They acknowledge that their authority is a delegated authority. The crowns are symbols of God’s rewards for faithful service. Although the crowns had been given to them by God for faithfulness, when they see the worship of the living creatures, they will clearly recognize that it was all by God’s grace and that no crowns rightly belong to them for they owe their existence and lives to God.

“The honour given them is freely returned to the One who alone is worthy of universal honour.”

Robert Mounce
 Ibid.

Everyone must yield to the sovereignty of God - even the saints. Someday all mankind will bow (Philippians 2:9–11). Who are they bowing before? (John 1; Colossians 1; Hebrews 1). It is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

4:11 - “You are worthy, our Lord and God to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”

“You are worthy, our Lord and God” - This was a phrase used to greet a Roman emperor during his triumphal procession. The ***“Lord and God”*** was introduced by Domitian for cult worship of emperors. But the worship of those in heaven is much larger than anything this earth can produce.

The four living creatures praise God for He is the eternal one (who was, who is and who is to come). The 24 elders praise Him for the glory of His works.

“they were created and have their being” -

*** In the town hall in Copenhagen stands the world’s most complicated clock. It took forty years to build at a cost of more than a million dollars. That clock has ten faces, fifteen thousand parts, and is accurate to two-fifths of a second every three hundred years. The clock computes the time of day, the days of the week, the months and years, and the movements of the planets for twenty-five hundred years. Some parts of that clock will not move until twenty-five centuries have passed.

What is intriguing about that clock is that it is not accurate. It loses two-fifths of a second every three hundred years. Like all clocks, that timepiece in Copenhagen must be regulated by a more precise clock, the universe itself. That mighty astronomical clock with its billions of moving parts, from atoms to stars, rolls on century after century with movements so reliable that all time on earth can be measured against it.

But man in his arrogance has rejected this clear revelation of God and so often in the process, he has also rejected God himself. Evolution, a pure figment of man’s imagination, has sought to replace the concept of creation, and in the process, it has sought to jettison God. So, in the minds of many today, humanism has replaced Theism, the belief in God. Man the rebel has believed the lie of Satan when by rights he should fall down in adoration and worship of the Creator. Instead, he stands in open rebellion and worships the creature, himself, in place of the Creator.

Chapter four concludes with this *“great anthem of praise by the four living ones and the 24 elders to God as creator. In 5:11-14 the focus of worship is on God as Redeemer.”* ***

Charles C. Ryrie,
“Ryrie Study Bible, Expanded Edition” NASB
 Moody Press, Chicago, 1995, p. 2020

WORSHIPPING THE REDEEMER

Revelation 5:1-14

We have just finished unveiling the Revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ as the “Creator” (chapter 4), now we enter into a time where He is worshipped as the “Redeemer.” This chapter brings us into the reality that we have no power within ourselves to change the course of history. In fact, we have no way of even beginning God’s final revelation of the world’s agony.

If the truth stopped at our inability, we would we like John, in tears. But the story must be told in full. No one in all the universe could be found worthy enough to break the seals. No wonder John wept as he did. John realized that the redemption of all mankind could never be fulfilled until the scroll was opened. No individual was worthy to break the seals and read the contents of the scroll. Only Jesus Christ could meet all of the qualifications.

Let us again take a look at heaven and its throne. This time from another perspective. Let us discover the overwhelming reasons why Jesus Christ is worthy of our worship.

5:1 – “Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals.”

“the right hand” - The right hand of God is generally considered a symbol of expression representing His almighty power. Notice that the scroll was laid upon His hand.

“a scroll with writing on both sides” - Ancient scrolls were made of sheep skin or sheets of papyrus. They were made of thin sheets usually of two layers. They were placed at right angles to each other. They were joined by glue, the Nile water and pressure. Both sides were used when space was important. Here we have the extensive and comprehensive decrees of God.

“sealed with seven seals” - The destiny of our earth is still sealed up. As each seal is broken, a further part of the revelation unfolds. When the 7th seal is broken the first part of judgment will be completed.

What is this sealed book? (cf. Jeremiah 32 – 587 BC. One year before the siege). Jeremiah lived just prior to Jerusalem’s siege by Nebuchadnezzar. Seventy years of captivity was foretold. At the end of the seventy years the Jews were to return and rebuild Jerusalem. Hanamell, Jeremiah’s cousin, owned a field that would soon be worthless. God told Jeremiah his cousin would come to sell the field and he was to buy it (Jeremiah 32: 8). Jeremiah had not immediately taken possession of the land. Jeremiah bought it and took the sealed deeds and gave them to Baruch who hid them in a clay jar for safety and long-term keeping. He was taken into exile before he could claim the title. After the exile the scroll was taken by an heir of Jeremiah who was told where it was hidden.

5:2 – “And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, ‘Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?’”

“Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?” - Adam sold his claim to Satan. Satan never was to be the heir of Adam’s blessing. Yet all of mankind was born into sin. Angels could not pay sin’s penalty. Therefore, there was no person or created being in either heaven or on earth who was worthy to open the sealed scroll.

5:3 – “But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it.”

“or even look inside it” - Not only was no one able to open the scroll, but they were not even allowed to look inside. If anyone saw ahead of time what would take place they could use it to their advantage. They could write a book and sell millions of copies. The secrets of the world’s future belong only to God Who will reveal only what He decides to. No man can pry into them until God’s timing is completed. Even the greatest of angels don’t know the time or events.

5:4 – “I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside.”

“I wept and wept” - This denotes a noisy grief, a wailing. This is weeping because of the possibility of an infinite postponement of God’s final and decisive action in world events.

I. HE IS WORTHY BECAUSE OF WHO HE IS (5:5 – 7)

There are three special titles given to our Lord in order to help us understand who He is.

A. The Lion of the Tribe of Judah (5:5)

5:5 – “Then one of the elders said to me, ‘Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.’”

“See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah” - (cf. Genesis 49:9,10). Jacob prophetically gave the scepter to Judah to distinguish it as a future tribe of kings. As the Lion is the king of the beasts and since Judah is the ruling (scepter) tribe of Israel, it indicates the true Christ who rules over all men has triumphed. The image of the Lion speaks of dignity, sovereignty, courage, and victory.

I. HE IS WORTHY BECAUSE OF WHO HE IS (5:5 – 7) (Contd.)

B. The Root of David (5:5)

“the Root of David” - This refers to our Lord’s incarnation. (cf. - Isaiah 11:1,10; Romans 15:12). King David had his roots into our Lord (not vice-versa).. Before David was born into existence our Lord was ruling and reigning in heaven. We serve the “Ancient of Days.”

“has triumphed” -

“And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.”

Colossians 2:15

C. The Lamb (5:6)

5:6 – *“Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into the earth.”*

“Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain” - The first Adam brought sin while the second Adam brought redemption. The word **“Lamb”** is used 27 times in the book of Revelation and only is it used once elsewhere in the New Testament (John 21:15). The word **“Lamb”** means *“a little pet lamb.”* It is interesting that in heaven the victory belongs to an innocent Lamb. Earth’s symbol of victorious countries are quite different (Russian Bear; British Lion; France Tiger; USA Eagle).

The question that was asked of Isaac - *“Where is the lamb”* - Genesis 22:7, was answered by John the Baptist who cried out, *“Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away this sin of the world!”* - John 1:29.

“He had seven horns and seven eyes” - The **“seven horns”** indicate that God is all-powerful (Zechariah 1:18; Matthew 28:18) while the **“seven eyes”** speak of His all-seeing judgment. Nothing escapes the Lord’s view. So we have the One who represents **perfect power (seven horns), perfect wisdom (seven eyes), and perfect presence (seven spirits in all the earth)**. These clearly represent the attributes of God’s omnipotent, omniscience, and omnipresence.

II. HE IS WORTHY BECAUSE OF WHERE HE IS (5:6)

5:6 – *“Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into the earth.”*

“standing in the center of the throne” - It is important to recognize that Jesus is not in Jerusalem, or on the cross or in the tomb. He has ascended and is exalted in heaven. He suffered and was slain like the sacrificial lambs but His suffering has turned into glory.

We must also recognize that He is in the centre of the throne. This means that everything that takes place in heaven transpires around Him. Notice as well that He is located at the throne. The throne is the place of majesty, power and dominion in heaven.

5:7 – *“He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne.”* - In other words the Lamb (who represents Jesus) goes directly to the Heavenly Father to receive the sealed scroll. There has never been and there will never be a mediator between God and man other than Jesus Christ.

III. HE IS WORTHY BECAUSE OF WHAT HE DOES (5:8-10)

5:8 – *“And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.”*

“the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb” - This brings to fulfilment the prophecy that the Holy Spirit inspired the apostle Paul to write (Philippians 2:9–11).

“each one had a harp” - A harp (or a lyre) was the traditional instrument of the Psalms (cf. - Psalm 33:2).

“golden bowls full of incense” - Incense has often been associated with prayers (Psalm 141:2). Our prayers go to God as a sweet smelling savour. Therefore, both prayer and praise were included at this time.

5:9 – *“And they sang a new song: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.’”*

“And they sang a new song” - God is returning to His Church with a “new song.” During the time of Martin Luther and John Wesley many new hymns of salvation were brought to the Church. The Pentecostal Renewal brought hymns of holiness and revival. In the 1970s many Psalms were sung. In the 1980's and 90's we had many Spiritual Songs added to our worship.

A. They Sang a Worship Song

“You are worthy” - The word *“worship”* means *“to ascribed worth.”* We must remember that true worship is about God and not about us and definitely not about the devil.

B. They Sang a Gospel Song

“because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God” - The word translated *“slain”* means to be *“violently slain.”* In heaven we will praise our Lord for both the cross and the crown. We must never forget that He shed His blood on the cross for us. We must be very careful that we do not remove this important truth from our praise and worship. The old hymn writer wrote: *“He was nailed to the cross for me . . .”*

1. For the individual (Genesis 22:13; Galatians 2:20)
2. For each family (Exodus 12:3)
3. For the nation of Israel (Isaiah 53:8; John 11:49–52)
4. For the whole world (John 1:29)

C. They Sang a Missionary Song

“from every tribe and language and people and nation” - The reason why He can open the scroll and break its seals is because of His shed blood for the people of every tribe, every language, and every nation. The words *“tribe or kindred”* mean they are from *“a common ancestry.”* The word *“language or tongue”* refers to *“a common language.”* The word *“nation”* refers to *“a common rule or government.”*

Innumerable people will be in heaven. Every child that was aborted will be there. Everyone who has had their name written in the Lambs Book of Life will stand to worship the Lamb.

D. They Sang a Devotional Song

5:10 – *“You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God,*

“You have made them to be a kingdom and priests” - This is because of the fact that we have now been given a unique position in Christ. This is the fulfilment of prophecy (Exodus 19:6). There is no doubt that we will rule and reign with God (Revelation 2:26–27; 20:4; 22:5). When Jesus died on the cross the veil of the temple was torn giving us full access to God based upon His conditions (Hebrews 10:19-25).

E. They Shall Sing a Prophetic Song

“and they will reign on the earth.” - When our Lord returns to earth, He will establish His righteous kingdom for 1000 years. We will reign with Him during this millennium (Revelation 20:1–6). God’s creation will then be set free from the bondage of sin (Isaiah 11:1 – 10).

III. HE IS WORTHY BECAUSE OF WHAT HE HAS (5:11-14)

5:11 – *“Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders.*

Heaven is full of worshippers. What a day that shall be when we are ushered into the presence of the Lamb who is worthy to be praised.

5:12 – *“In a loud voice they sang: ‘Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!’”*

1. Power - I Corinthians 1:24
2. Wealth(Riches) - II Corinthians 8:9; Ephesians 3:8
3. Wisdom - I Corinthians 1:24
4. Strength (might) - Luke 11:22; Ephesians 6:10; II Thessalonians 1:9
5. Honour - Philippians 2:11; Hebrews 2:9
6. Glory - John 1:14; Hebrews 2:9
7. Praise - Matthew 21:16; Luke 18:43

“He was born in weakness and He died in weakness; but He is the recipient of all power. He became the poorest of the poor (II Corinthians 8:9), and yet He owns all the riches of heaven and earth. Men laughed at Him and called Him a fool; yet He is the very wisdom of God (I Corinthians 1:24; Colossians 2:3).

He shared in the sinless weakness of humanity as He hungered, thirsted and became weary. Today in glory, He possesses all strength. On earth, He experienced humiliation and shame as sinners ridiculed and reviled Him. They laughed at His kingship and attired Him in a mock robe, crown, and scepter. But all of that is changed now! He has received all honor and glory!”

Warren Weirsbe
“The Bible Exposition Commentary”
 Volume 2 p. 586

5:13 – “Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea and all that is in them, singing: ‘To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, forever and ever!’”

“Then I heard every creature” - This will be the final acclamation of everything that God has created. All angels (5:11), the four living creatures (5:14) as well as the 24 elders will be included.

“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, forever and ever!” - This will all take place because the Lamb will be able to take the scroll from His Father’s hand. The eternal plan of God will be fulfilled, and all creation will be set free from the bondage of sin and death. When the seals are broken, the final events will take place to usher in the return of our Lord.

5:14 – “The four living creatures said, ‘Amen,’ and the elders fell down and worshiped.”

This will be a shocking day for anyone who didn’t believe or teach about the rapture of Jesus Christ.

1. Liberal preachers facing their congregations
2. Newspaper editors explaining the disappearance
3. Cults
4. Backslidden Christians
5. Disbelieving Jews

THE WHITE HORSE AND ITS RIDER
The First Seal
Revelation 6:1-2

The biggest question in the mind of the Church is not IF it will happen but rather WHEN the tribulation will happen. There is no doubt that God has a specific time planned for these events to begin.

“For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all man by raising him from the dead.”

Acts 17:31

There are a number of biblical examples that God has set specific time periods to complete His will. Consider the city of Nineveh - Jonah 3:2,4

1. In 40 days Nineveh will be destroyed
2. Jonah preached
3. The people repented
4. Judgment was averted
5. The fulfillment of the prophecy took place 150 years later during the time of the prophet Nahum.

God’s Word will take place at its appointed time. The apostle John would have vividly remembered the invading armies of Rome that entered Jerusalem in the year of 70 AD. The rider on that white horse led the army carrying a bow in his hand, a sign of victory and power.

Also the Parthians, who were the dreaded enemies of Rome, rode on swift white horses and were deadly accurate with a bow and arrow. In 62 AD. the Parthian king named Vologeses overtook a large portion of the Roman Army.

The rider on this white horse is definitely NOT Jesus Christ.

<p><u>Revelation 6</u></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - rides a white horse - held a bow - comes out of the seals of judgment that only Jesus could open (6:1) - has only one crown (“<i>stephanos</i>”) given to him (6:2) - has no title other than the rider (6:2) - destruction follows him (6:4–8) <p style="text-align: center;">Conclusion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - this rider is a counterfeit

<p><u>Revelation 19</u></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - rides a white horse - rules with an iron scepter; out of His mouth comes a sharp sword - (19:15) - comes out of heaven - (19:11) - Jesus has many crowns (“<i>diadem</i>”) - (19:12) - the rider is called Faithful and True; KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS (19:16) - the saints of God follow Him (19:14) <p style="text-align: center;">Conclusion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - this rider is the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

This rider will try to conquer without war (no arrow). He will do it through diplomacy. He wants people to acknowledge him as the true Christ. He is a deceiver. He will try to capture the heart’s of men and women (John 8:44; cf. – Revelation 20:8).

A. Historical Deceit

1. The Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:9–21)
2. The children of Israel worshiping the golden calf (Exodus 32)
3. Samson and Delilah (Judges 16)
4. David and Bathsheba (II Samuel 11)

The apostle Peter warned us when he wrote,

*“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.
9. Resist him, standing firm in the faith.”*

I Peter 5:8,9

B. False Religions

“Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name claiming, ‘ I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many.”

Matthew 24: 4,5

1. Masquerading Messiahs

The world that has rejected God's Christ is ready, able and willing to receive the devil's christ.

I John 2:18 – "*antichrist is coming*"

I John 4:3 – "*spirit of the antichrist*"

I John 2:18 – "*many antichrists have come*"

C. Satanism

1. Black Mass

- it reverses everything known and sacred to Christianity
- black instead of white
- uses an upside down crucifix
- hymns are sung backwards
- brings death not life
- spits (or worse) when Christ's name is mentioned
- acknowledges Satan as their lord
- closes with a curse (not a blessing)

2. Cults

There are over 2,200 cults in North America today. The two major deceptions that they promote are:

- they ignore true religion
- they create a false religion in its place

a. How Can We Tell the False from the Truth

- i. Is Christ worshiped as Lord and Savior (John 14:6; Acts 4:12)?
- ii. Is the Bible the final authority for doctrine and practice (II Peter 1:20, 21)?
- iii. Is participation in a local (visible) fellowship encouraged and practiced (Hebrews 10:25)?

b. Ways Deception Takes Hold

i. Half-truths - Christianity is not the end of all trouble and pain. It is the beginning of facing them and becomes a lifelong decision to meet them through the power of the cross. The apostle Paul was showing how much *“he must suffer for my name”* (Acts 9:16; II Corinthians 6:4-10). Paul’s sufferings ended not in discouragement or complaining but rather in joy and victory.

Godliness will bring persecution (II Timothy 3:12) but so will foolishness. One person avoids it while the other looks for it. When we tell only the stories of victories, we tell only part of the truth. No one but Jesus had a 100% success rate.

Half-truths, easy answers and lies are part of this rider’s weaponry. He kills without firing a shot.

ii. Double-Standards - We work so hard to suppress a scandal (and rightly so) but it produces a false sense of reaching our standards. We need to be honest enough to deal with the fact that we are not perfect. The blood of Jesus Christ needs to continue to purify us (*“continuous cleansing”* - I John 1:7) from all our sins. Don’t pretend to be perfect and live behind a double standard.

iii. Discriminating Against Certain Sins - We can often make an unbiblical list of do’s and don’ts. Sin is sin. Sometimes important sins are missed. For example - gossip, envy, malicious talk, backbiting, unconcern for victims of injustice, racial prejudice, gluttony, and unforgiveness are also sinful actions.

Be on your guard against the spirit that pervades our society that is similar to the one I am talking about. It will bring you to a destructive end. It is interesting that this antichrist leads the way into The Great Tribulation.

THE RED HORSE AND ITS RIDER
The Second Seal
Revelation 6:3-4

It needs to be stated clearly that God is not the cause of war. He had a much greater plan for His creation. It's man's disobedience that has brought war upon this earth. If we stop and listen, we can hear the approaching hoof beats of this red horse.

1. Machine guns
2. Flame throwers
3. Mortar rounds
4. Bombs (15 megaton+) and missiles

In the early 1990s, we had a stockpile of 60,000 hydrogen bombs that could destroy the earth 17 times over with nuclear flames reaching 130 million degrees Centigrade. On August 6, 1945 at 8:15 AM a warning was sent by the Japanese Broadcasting Corp. – three enemy aircraft sighted over the Saijo area. Suddenly a blinding blue light and an onymous mushroom cloud told the world that Hiroshima had ushered in a new age of nuclear warfare.

In the 1990's there were at least 15 nations that had nuclear weapons and 25 nations that were trying desperately to obtain them. The President of the United Nations General Assembly, Ismat Kittani in late 1983 said,

“What have the governments of the world done to respond to the fervent demands of the peoples of the world that this insane arms race be stopped?” He gave his own reply “You and I know that answer but I want to state it for the world to hear – nothing!”

Not a single weapon had been destroyed between 1979 and 1983. It was calculated that in 2002 alone over \$1 trillion had been spent on armaments. Albert Einstein predicted that in a full-scale nuclear exchange, at least a third of the population of the world would die. Winston Churchill recalled in his memoirs how in the 1930s that people laughed at him as he warned about a coming war. No one is laughing now after experiencing WWII.

“Acknowledged experts in international and military affairs agree [that] unless present trends are reversed, chances are 4 in 5 that a nuclear war will destroy our civilization in the next decade.”

Jules Masserman, MD
Honorary Life President of the International
Association for Social Psychiatry

God’s Word is also clear on this matter.

*“War will continue until the end and desolations
have been decreed.”*

Daniel 9:26

*“You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see
it to it that you are not alarmed.”*

Matthew 24:6

*“If those days had not been cut short, no one would
survive . . .”*

Matthew 24:22

Now let us consider how all of this will come to pass. There has been a progressive change of thought in how this will take place. Although there will be at least 2 major wars to come (Armageddon; Gog and Magog) yet there are strong leanings to adopting a peace plan. There is also clear indications that local and national unrest will continue to bring about much bloodshed.

6: 3 – “When the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say ‘Come!’

Notice that it is the Lamb that is ultimately in control of what takes place and when it is to begin. These 7 years of events that will take place beginning with the opening of the first seal are set forth by God. It is a revelation of His control over world affairs. Mankind has turned away from God’s mercy and therefore must drink of the cup of His wrath.

6:4 – “Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make men slay each other. To him was given a large sword.”

“a fiery red one” - This color represents the slaughter and bloodshed that will take place. Although, this particular rider could usher in another world war. It is more likely that he will bring internal strife to its zenith. It will likely play itself out in local skirmishes much like we are presently seeing in the Middle East as well as in civil wars.

During the time of Herod the Great (67-37 BC.) there were over 100,000 men who died in the revolutions and rebellions in the area of Palestine alone. In the one year period of AD. 68 – 69 alone, Rome had been ruled by four different emperors. John had lived through this and now was writing during a time when there was continual internal strife.

It is also important to note that the Roman Empire brought in the Pax Romano which brought peace to the Mediterranean world (Armenia to Spain). The Roman army crushed every resistance and ruled by force – peace by force.

“Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth” - Even though the rider carries a sword, we are not told that he uses it. He simply takes peace from the earth and men proceed to do all the damage to themselves. II Thessalonians 2:6,7 tells us that once the restraining one(s) is removed, then lawlessness will prevail (compare Matthew 24:12 *“increase in wickednesses (lawlessness) the love of most will grow cold.”*)

“On that day men will be stricken by the LORD with great panic. Each man will seize the hand of another, and they will attack each other.”

Zechariah 14:13

“To him was given a large sword” - This word **“large”** is a bit deceiving. Other versions use the word **“great.”** It is speaking of the scope of its influence and not its physical size. This particular Roman short sword was used only in close combat. This offers further support to the belief that this rider is able to release an outpouring of internal upheavals resulting in national conflicts that bring about much bloodshed and death. Our world is setting itself up for the breaking of this second seal.

“Our first goal is the liberation of all occupied territories and return of all refugees, self-determination for the Palestinians and the establishment of a Palestinian state whose capital is Jerusalem.”

Yasser Arafat
Speaking to 19 Arab foreign ministers
Dispatch from Jerusalem
December 1993

“I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that sends all the surrounding peoples reeling. Judah will be besieged as well as Jerusalem.

3. On that day, when all the nations of the earth are gathered against her, I will make Jerusalem an unmovable rock for all the nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves.

4. On that day I will strike every horse with panic and its rider with madness,’ declares the Lord. ‘I will keep a watchful eye over the house of Judah, but I will bind all the horses of the nations.’

5. Then the leaders of Judah will say in their hearts, ‘The people of Jerusalem are strong, because the LORD Almighty is their God.’”

Zechariah 12:2-4

THE BLACK HORSE AND ITS RIDER
The Third Seal
Revelation 6:5-6

The Bible is clear that deception and false religion will lead to war, and that war in turn will lead to famine and pestilence. The black horse and its rider are a warning from God of human suffering that awaits those who refuse to obey His commands.

In New York City's Museum of Modern Art, Umberto Boccioni's "*The City Rises*" depicts the four horseman of the Apocalypse in a contemporary, urban setting. This huge six – by-nine-foot oil on canvas captures the horror of the third horse and its rider. Boccioni's black horse rises like a tornado, whirling above the other horseman.

6:5 – “When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creatures say, ‘Come!’ I looked, and there before me was a black horse! It’s rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand.”

“a black horse!” - This clearly symbolizes the time of great famine (Lamentations 4:8,9). Too often famine follows major wars.

“It’s rider was holding a pair of scales” - This indicates a scarcity when even the basic commodities of life are measured out at greatly inflated prices. The prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel 4:16; cf. - Leviticus 26:26) speaks of eating *“bread by weight [and] drink water by measure.”*

6:6 – “Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, ‘A quart of wheat for a day’s wages, and three quarts of barley for a day’s wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!’

“quart of wheat for a day’s [denarius] wages, and three quarts of barley for a day’s wages” - It will take an entire day’s wage to gain one quart (possibly litre) of wheat. Even the cheaper barley would be 10 - 15 times its normal price. This is highly inflated. Today a man making \$30,000/year would be reduced to \$2000/year.

This would bring in a survival diet for a worker (2600 calories could not be reached). There would not be enough food for a man’s wife and family. A man would be working just to eat. The elderly would suffer. Our Social Security System will not be able to keep up with the increasing demand.

“and do not damage the oil and the wine!” - Wheat and barley are the food of the poor. Oil and wine are the food of the rich. Poverty and luxury will coexist. There will be famine (Matthew 24:7) and luxury (Matthew 24:37, 38) during the time of The Tribulation. Oil and wine are among the normal necessities of life even for the poor (Deuteronomy 7:13; Nehemiah 5:11; Joel 2:19).

It is important as well to note that the roots of the Olive tree and of the vine groves go deeper than that of the wheat. They would not be affected as much by a temporary drought.

Sixty percent of those living in Europe and America are overweight. We spend well over \$15 billion on diet formulas and \$22 billion on cosmetics every year. In times of war the powerful and rich often store up their riches. The problem is not the quantity of food but rather the distribution of it. Only three countries annually produce more wheat than they consume (U.S.A., Canada, Australia).

“Forget about using the word **crisis** when talking about world production of food. Crisis suggests a severe temporary shortage. The correct word now is **climaxed**, meaning the final and irreversible shortage. The earth is no longer a sustainable society.”

Ross Howard’s critique of Lester Brown
President of Worldwatch Institute

The Washington Post called this group *“the most respected and independent think tank in the world.”*

We have grown immune to the warnings. We throw this “junk mail” out.

Statistics (2005)

- Each year, more than 8 million people around the world die because they are too poor to stay alive.
- Over 1 billion people—1 in 6 people around the world—live in extreme poverty, defined as living on less than \$1 a day.
- More than 800 million go hungry each day.
- Over 100 million primary school-age children cannot go to school.
- Based on definitions established by the World Bank, nearly 3 billion people—half of the world's population—are considered poor
- Half the people who live in absolute poverty live in South Asia (India and Bangladesh).
- 125 million children die before their first birthday.
- Millions in North America live below the poverty line

Europe/America
1 doctor/572 people

East Asia
1 doctor/2106

Southern Asia
1 doctor/14,956

East Africa
1 doctor/17,480

Is there anything we can do to delay this horseman?

- 1. Nutrition** – We can supply them with nutritional meals for a fraction of our cost.
- 2. Water and Sanitation** – Four out of five children in rural areas in developing nations have no safe water supply. In Africa alone 90 percent have no piped water. Their rivers are full of germs and infections.
- 3. Health Care** – Seventy percent of children in Third World Countries never see a doctor. None of them see a dentist.
- 4. Stop the Arms Race** – *“The arms race kills without firing a shot.”* Just think how a trillion military dollars could have been used?

Nikita Khrushchev once said *“The survivors will envy the dead”*

“Blessed is he who is kind to the needy.”

Proverbs 14:21

“He who is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward him for what he has done.”

Proverbs 19:17

“The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern.”

Proverbs 29: 7

“It’s better to light one candle than to curse the darkness.”

[James Kelly](#)

Why do millions die from starvation and the effects of malnutrition every year? Both the National Academy of Engineering and the Institute of Medicine as well as the National Research Council agree that there are four major reasons for world hunger.

1. There Is an Inefficient Supply of the Right Food Where and When it Is Needed

There is a problem of inadequate production and low crop yield in areas where people are starving. There is also an inadequate transportation system that hinders the supply. Often the storage systems fail to keep the food in edible conditions.

2. There Is Poverty

According to the World Bank, there are approximately 1 billion people living in “*absolute poverty*.” This accounts for almost 40 percent of the total population of the world’s developing nations.

3. There Is the Population Explosion in Third World Countries

In 1900 there were about 1.6 billion people on earth. In the early ‘80s it grew to about 4.5 billion. In the year 2000 we broke the 6 billion barrier.

4. There Is an Unstable Food Supply Throughout the World

Some of the root causes of this includes pests – both animal and insects. It also is affected by irregular water sources, poor soil conditions, wars, and weather conditions.

Yet there is still one other problem which we must address.

5. Human Selfishness and Greed

Why do we not take more deliberate steps to root out corruption and overturn political policies which favour the rich over the poor? Many people and nations are making money on the backs of the poor and dying.

The Church needs to balance its **passion for God** with **compassion for people**. We have been placed as the only true stewards of God’s resources. We are accountable to Him for what we do. We will never stop (or probably even delay) this from happening. Yet we cannot sit back and do nothing.

Can you hear the horsemen approaching?

THE PALE HORSE AND ITS RIDER
The Fourth Seal
Revelation 6:7-8

Three horses have now galloped their way onto the pages of Scripture. No one will be able to interfere with them carrying out the judgment that God ordained for them to do.

Here we come to the final horse and horseman of the apocalypse. Things will not improve as this horseman makes his way to earth. His lethal weapon of pestilence and death will affect billions of people.

6:7 – “When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creatures say, ‘Come!’”

“Come!” - Each one will begin only as the Lamb is able to break the seal that holds them back. It is important to notice that Jesus tells them to **“Come!”** before they set forth. They cannot begin on their own. God is in full control of what takes place during the Great tribulation - not the devil or the antichrist.

6: 8 – “I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague and by the wild beasts of the earth.”

“a pale horse!” - The word **“pale”** comes from the Greek word **“chlorus”** which we derive our word **“chlorine”** from. Chlorine is a deadly gas. It is yellowish-green in colour. It has been described as **“a corpse like colour”** – LaHaye; **“the colour of ashes”** – Godspeed; **“the colour on the face blanched with terror”** – Barclay & Mounce; **“bloodless colour of a corpse”** – Moffatt; **“pale gray”** – Ladd.

“and Hades was following close behind him” - Hades is the underworld or the grave. There does not appear to be a horse for Hades but Hades does follow closely behind Death.

“They were given power over a fourth of the earth” - This would be approximately 1.6 billion according to today’s figures.

******* In the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, England there is a painted reproduction of a series of seven tapestries that were woven in the 14th century. It was originally a series of seven tapestries. When woven together, they took up 472 feet. This 4th rider is symbolically shown as a skull wrapped in grave clothes sitting on a pale horse and carrying a Roman broadsword. *******

“to kill by sword, famine and plague and by the wild beasts of the earth” - These are the same types of destruction that are listed in Ezekiel 14:21. These four judgments were also brought upon those who were disobedient to God.

“Wild beasts will rob them of their children, and destroy their cattle and make them few in number.
The sword will avenge their breaches of the covenant.
When they are gathered in their city, the pestilence will be among them.
He will break the staff of the bread and they will eat and not be satisfied.”

William Barclay
“The Revelation of John”
Volume II, pp. 11–12

“to kill by sword” - One-quarter of the population of the earth is precisely the prediction that a Soviet scientist said (May 1983) would perish in the first major nuclear exchange between two superpowers.”

Isaac Asimov (the most widely respected science writer as noted by the New York Times) published a best-selling book called *“A Choice of Catastrophes.”* He expects man to destroy himself sooner or later, probably sooner – as he presents several worldwide scenarios. If we trust in our armaments, we will die.

“Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who rely on horses, who trust in the multitude of their chariots and in the great strength of their horsemen, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel, or seek help from the LORD.”

Isaiah 31:1

“Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.”

Psalm 20:7

“The day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.”

II Peter 3:9,10

“famine” -

“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink . . .”

Matthew 25:35

Jesus definitely has the power to feed everyone on the earth. This was one of the temptations of Satan toward Jesus in the wilderness when he said to Jesus to *“If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.”* (Luke 4:3)

We can enter dangerous ground in our feeble attempt to satisfy man’s physical appetite and yet forsake his spiritual needs. Jesus told us *“the poor you’ll have with you always”* (Matthew 26:11. Famine is a sign of God’s judgment that is often in such a magnitude that we cannot eliminate it.

“and plague (pestilence)” - This is speaking of any infectious sickness that becomes fatal. Even with all our advances in medical science, we have certain infectious diseases that are lethal with no known cure. We’re being warned today of bacteria, viruses, pandemics and insects that are highly resistant to radiation, antibiotics or insecticides. In the mid-1980's millions of toads overran whole counties in Florida. A reputable national news magazine had as its cover story a frightening article titled *“The Insects are Coming.”*

“If the meek don’t inherit the earth, the cockroaches will.”

[One Scientist’s Perspective](#)

Global Warming

Another of our recent *“plagues”* is global warming. The Union of Concerned Scientists have recorded . . .

- Since the beginning of the 20th century the earth's mean surface temperature has increased by about 1.1°F (0.6°C).
- Over the last 40 years, which is the period with the most reliable data, the temperature increased by about 0.5°F (0.2-0.3°C).
- Warming in the 20th century is greater than at any time during the past 400 to 600 years.
- Seven of the 10 warmest years in the 20th century occurred in the 1990s. In fact, the hottest year since reliable instrumental temperature measurements began was 1998, when global temperatures spiked due to one of the strongest El Nios on record.

In addition, changes in the natural environment support the evidence from temperature records.

- Mountain glaciers the world over are receding.
- The Arctic ice pack has lost about 40 percent of its thickness over the past four decades.
- Global sea level is rising about three times faster over the past 100 years compared with the previous 3,000 years.
- A growing number of studies show plants and animals changing their range and behaviour in response to shifts in climate.

Herpes Simplex II - Herpes II has become the sexual leprosy of our generation.

“for better or worse herpes is the disease of the year.”

“Life”
1982

The human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) which causes AIDS has brought about a global epidemic far more extensive than what was predicted even a decade ago. UNAIDS and WHO now estimate that the number of people living with HIV or AIDS at the end of the year 2000 stands at 36.1 million (5.3 new cases in 2000) and 21.8 million have died since its inception. This is more than 50% higher than what WHO’s Global Programme on AIDS projected in 1991 on the basis of the data then available.

HIV/AIDS - Since the onset of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the late 70's, the virus has infected more than 47 million people in the world. With more than 3 million deaths in 2000, HIV/AIDS has now become the fourth leading cause of mortality and its impact is going to increase. Over 95% of all cases and 95% of AIDS deaths occur in the developing world, mostly among young adults and increasingly in women.

Sexually Transmitted Infections - An estimated 340 million new cases of curable Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) in adults have occurred throughout the world in 1995. STIs and their complications rank in the top five disease categories for which adults seek health care. The long-term consequences of untreated STIs can be very serious. In addition, there is a strong link between STIs and increased transmission of HIV.

Legionnaires’s Disease - Medical experts have still not figured out how this disease came about in the hotel hosting the Legionnaire’s convention.

“by the wild beasts of the earth” - The animal kingdom has been greatly affected by man’s sinfulness. Hundreds of whales beach themselves every year in what appears to be a sign of how we are damaging our environment.

LESSON 16

These are the warning that God gave to the children of Israel if they chose not to obey His Word. Are we foolish enough to believe that we will escape God's judgement if we don't turn from our wickedness?

“However, if you do not obey the Lord your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all of these curses will come upon you and overtake you.”

Deuteronomy 28:15

“ . . . The Lord will plague you with diseases [wasting, degenerative diseases]. ”

Deuteronomy 28:21

“ . . . The Lord will strike you with wasting disease, with fever and inflammation [communicable diseases?] With scorching heat and drought with blight and mildew, which will plague you until you perish. ”

Deuteronomy 28:22

“ . . . The Lord will turn the rain of your country into dust and powder ”

Deuteronomy 28:24

“The Lord will infect you with the boils of Egypt and with tumors [cancer?] festering sores [scurvy, deficiency diseases] and the itch, from which you cannot be cured [eg., Herpes II, AIDS]

Deuteronomy 28: 27

“The Lord will inflict you with madness [mental diseases?] blindness [birth defects?] and confusion of mind [emotional trauma]

Deuteronomy 28: 28

This brings a variety of judgment. This is part of God's wrath upon an evil generation.

MARTYRDOM
The Fifth Seal
Revelation 6: 9-11

The first four seals have to do with the events on earth while the fifth seal will take place back in heaven. There will be no one who says “*Come.*” Instead, we are brought before a different scene where the focus is not upon what will take place to the ungodly on earth but rather to those who were faithful to God and His Word and are in heaven.

Before studying this portion, it is important to understand the events that will lead up to this time.

- 2250 years before the cross, God made a covenant with Abraham
- He separated a nation onto Himself
- He gave them the land of Canaan as an inheritance as long as they remained faithful to the covenant He made with them
- He gave them a Law to live by -- a Holy Law
- Their obedience would give them the right to be the head of all nations and the witnesses of the entire earth
- If they disobeyed, they would be scattered until they turned from their sins and remembered the covenant
- They failed miserably and were overcome (10 tribes were taken by the Assyrians; 2 tribes were taken by the Babylonians)
- After the final 70 years of captivity by the Babylonians, they were allowed to return to Jerusalem and Canaan
- Only a few (a remnant) chose to return to rebuild the city of Jerusalem and its temple
- They rebuilt the temple and the walls and then waited for their Messiah
- After 400 years of silence the Messiah came
- The nation of Israel stubbornly rejected Him

Summarizing

- 2250 BC. – The Abrahamic Covenant
- 722 BC. – The 10 Northern tribes were taken into captivity
- 586 BC. – The final siege of the two Southern tribes took place by the Babylonians
- 538 BC. – The first group returned under the leadership of Zerubbabel
- 432 BC. – The last group returned under the leadership of Nehemiah
- 30 AD. – Christ’s crucifixion/ascension/the time of the Gentiles began

According to Daniel's 70th week

70 weeks	= 490 years
7 weeks	= 49 years (to rebuild the streets and walls)
62 weeks	= <u>434 years</u> (until the appearing of the Messiah and He be cut off) 483 years

From 30 AD. until now, God has chosen to work out His plan with the Gentiles nations (known as The Time of the Gentiles). The last week (seven years) is still to be completed. When? It will take place during the seven years of The Tribulation.

H. A. Ironside believed . . .

- The first six seals refer to the first 3 ½ years of The Tribulation
- The first 3½ years may introduce the "*beginning of sorrows*"
- The seventh seal will unleash the last 3 ½ years of The Great Tribulation

This is how he determines what he believes to be true

- **The White horse** - the first seal – false Christ/false hope - Matthew 24:5
- **The Red horse** - the second seal – wars and rumours of wars - Matthew 24:6
- **The Black horse** - the third seal – famine - Matthew 24:7
- **The Pale horse** - the fourth seal – pestilence - Matthew 24:7
- **Martyrdom** - the fifth seal – great persecution - Matthew 24:9
- **An Earthquake** - the sixth seal - Matthew 24:7

6:9 – *“When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained.”*

“the altar” - This may either be symbolic of the brazen altar or the altar of incense. In the O. T. the blood of the bullock was poured out at the base of the brazen altar (Leviticus 4:7; Exodus 29:12). We must remember that this blood contained the life, or the soul of the flesh (Leviticus 17:11). The souls of the martyrs are seen as a sacrifice before God

“For I am already being poured out like a drink offering . . .”

II Timothy 4:6

“who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained” - Their walk matches their talk. They are willing to die rather than deny God’s Word.

“John’s words are a reminder that throughout history there has been a persistent hostility towards deeply-committed Christians on the part of those wielding power.”

Leon Morris
“The Revelation of St. John”
The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
p.108

6:10 – *“They called out in a loud voice, ‘How long, Sovereign LORD, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?’”*

“Sovereign LORD” - (Gr. - ***“ho despotēs”***) is a term used to describe the master of slaves.

“avenge our blood?” - The O. T. commonly speaks of avenging the righteous (Psalm 109:12; 37:8f). This is not a Christian prayer. It is much more like the Imprecatory Psalms that cry out for vengeance (Psalm 35:1-8; 58; 59; 69; 109). The prayer of Israel is often one of avenging the injustice they were facing.

*“Why should the nations say, ‘Where is their God?’
Before our eyes make known among the nations that
you avenge the outpoured blood of your servants.”*

Psalm 79:10

In the N.T. there is a different tone when dealing with injustice

1. Stephen (Acts 7:60) *“Lord do not hold this sin against them”*
2. Jesus (Luke 23:34) *“Father, forgive them, for they . . .”*

“And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones [elect], who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off?”

Luke 18:7

This verse is speaking of Israel once again. This is not so much avenging as it is vindication and justice (Romans 12:19). Jesus’ blood speaks of better things than of Abel’s (cf. Genesis 4:10; Hebrews 12:24).

6:11 – “Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.”

“was given a white robe” - These robes symbolize not some glorified body but rather the blessedness, purity, peace and rest found in heaven. Those who will gather around the throne are to be dressed in these garments (Revelation 7:13-14)

“and they were told to wait a little longer” - This is not an attempt to control their patience as much as it is to allow them to enjoy the blessedness of their reward in heaven.

“until the number of their fellow servants and brothers” - These are clearly others who have served the Lord and were numbered NOT with the transgressors but rather with the other servants of the Lord.

“who were to be killed as they had been was completed” - This should not be understood as some mathematical figure. God has determined the time period for the total number of His people to be martyred. It is the time not the number that will be the controlling factor.

So this seal unleashes incredible acts of martyrdom toward the elect of God. If these would surrender to God during the present time of grace, they could spare themselves the agony of The Tribulation period. There is always a great cost when we choose to turn away from the true Messiah. Fortunately, these Jewish believers will finally see the wrong of their way and surrender to the clear will of God.

AN EARTHQUAKE
The Sixth Seal
Revelation 6:12-17

One of the wonderful truths of the Bible is that God is in control of everything in heaven and earth, and even under the earth. When these very heavenly bodies begin to vastly move from their orderly fashion, it becomes a clear reminder that God is bringing about an end to the natural order of His creation. God has used earthquakes in the past to gain attention of those who are wayward (Exodus 19:18; Isaiah 2:19)

I. THE PROPHETS FORETOLD IT

Haggai wrote

“This is what the LORD ALMIGHTY says: ‘In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land.’”

Haggai 2:6

Isaiah saw the day of the Lord as a time when,

“The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light.”

Isaiah 13:10

“All the stars of the heavens will be dissolved and the sky rolled up like a scroll: all the starry host will fall like withered leaves from the vine, like shrivelled figs from the fig tree.”

Isaiah 34:4

Consider the overwhelming words of Ezekiel,

“When I snuff you out, I will cover the heavens and darken their stars; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon will not give its light.”

Ezekiel 32:7

Jeremiah also described this event as,

“I looked at the earth and it was formless and empty; and at the heavens, and their light was gone.”

24. I looked at the mountains, and they were quaking; all the hills were swaying.

25. I looked, and there were no people; every bird in the sky had flown away.

26. I looked, and the fruitful land was a desert; all its towns lay in ruins before the LORD, before his fierce anger.

27. This is what the LORD says: “The whole land will be ruined, though I will not destroy it completely.

28. Therefore the earth will mourn and the heavens above grow dark, because I have spoken and will not relent, I have decided and will not turn back.”

Jeremiah 4:23 – 28

II. IT COULD BE TAKEN LITERALLY (Tim LaHaye)

“Although there is some conjecture to the contrary, this would seem to be a description of the physical shaking of the earth caused by earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. Such things have happened before. Earthquakes in Northern Peru in 1970 took almost 67,000 lives. A professor once stated in the last 4,000 years, earthquakes have caused a loss of 13 million lives, and he claimed the most awful earthquake is yet to come. Dr. Robert Thieme tells of the eruption on August 27, 1883, of Krakatau on an island in the Dutch East Indies. The explosion was heard in Rodriguez, South America, 3,000 miles away. As a result of the earthquake, the sun was blotted out. Volcanic ash seems to make the moon look red and blots out the sun, for after the eruption of Krakatau, it is said that the sun was blotted from view at Batavia, 100 miles away. At Bondune, 150 miles away, the sun was blotted out and the moon appeared red. Tidal waves travelled as far as Cape Horn, 7,000 miles away, and in all 36,000 people were killed.

“And the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from the fig tree when shaken by a strong wind.” (Revelation 6:13). Verse 13 indicates that meteors will fall to the ground and hit as hard, unripe things.

“The sky receded like a scroll rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.” (Revelation 6:14). This catastrophe will apparently bring about fantastic changes on the physical earth.”

Tim LaHaye
“Revelation: Illustrated and Made Plain”
p. 107

III. IT COULD BE SYMBOLIC (H. A. Ironside)

Ironside considers it to be the destruction of this present order – political, social, and ecclesiastical. He sees it as a breaking up of all established permanent institutions.

6:12 – *“I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned red blood,”*

“The sun turned black” - The sun symbolizes the source of life and light for our planet. It speaks of a supreme authority (cf. Malachi 4:2).

“the whole moon turned red blood” - The moon gets its light from the sun just as *“the powers that be are ordained by God.”*

6:13 – *“and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from the fig tree when shaken by a strong wind.”*

“and the stars in the sky fell to earth” - Most believe that it is unlikely that this is referring to a physical manifestation of literal stars. It is believed that this could be indicating a spiritual downfall of apostasy and of religious leadership. In the book of Daniel those who turn many to righteousness shine as the stars (Daniel 12:3). The stars in Revelation 1:20 are the messengers of the churches. After the Church is taken away a host of false religious leaders will manifest themselves with no opposition.

6:14 – *“The sky will recede like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.”*

“The sky will recede like a scroll” - The whole fabric of Christendom will be rolled up like something obsolete.

“and every mountain and island was removed from its place” - Nothing will be left untouched. What man believes to be unshakable will be totally shaken.

6:15 – *“Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains.”*

“the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man” - John does not attempt to include every aspect of our society. Instead, he addresses those who normally feel secure during times when others are living in fear. The rich and the strong will join in an attitude of increasing panic.

“hid in caves” - This will bring about the “greatest prayer meeting of all history” it will not be a prayer meeting of repentance. It will rather be a prayer for escape from the *“dread of the LORD and the splendor of his majesty.”* (Isaiah 2:10,19,21; cf. - Hosea 10:8)

“What sinners dread most is not death, but the revealed Presence of God.”

H.B. Swete
“The Apocalypse of St. John”
 p. 94

Since the time of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:8) mankind clearly recognizes when they are outside of the will of God. Their guilty conscience turns them into fugitives.

6:16 – “They called to the mountains and the rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!’”

“the wrath of the Lamb!” - A lamb is not usually known for its violence. It is a gentle animal. Yet we will see the time when a day of judgment for the wicked will be initiated by the Lamb of God. The “day” is also called,

1. The day of the Lord – II Thessalonians 2:2
2. The day of Christ – Philippians 1:10
3. The day of the Lord Jesus Christ – I Corinthians 1:8
4. The day of the Lord Jesus – II Corinthians 1:14
5. The day of God’s wrath – Romans 2:5

There is both a present wrath of God against iniquity (Romans 1:18) as well as future time that will bring about a consummation of God’s anger (Revelation 19:15). It will be recognized as both a great and terrible day to be alive (Joel 2:11, cf. vs. 31)

6:17 – “For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?”

Notice that it will be the day of **“their wrath.”** There is an appointed day of judgement for this earth. It will not be prevented by any superpower. No one will stand on the day of God’s wrath. The next seal will begin the sounding of the seven trumpets.

SEALING OF THE 144,000**Revelation 7:1-17**

We saw in the last chapter the completion of the sixth seal and the first half of Daniel's 70th week (3 ½ years). During this time the wrath of the Lamb will be poured out on guilty Christendom and upon apostate Judaism.

Before opening the seventh seal we are told of the sealing of 144,000 Israelites. John would often take time to unfold a wider perspective into future events. Nothing is recorded without a purpose. Let's take a closer look at these next two visions (7:1-8; 7:9-17).

THE FIRST VISION (7:1-8)

7:1 – *“After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth to prevent any wind from blowing on the land or on the sea or on any tree.”*

“four corners of the earth” - The number four is often considered the number representing the compass points of the world (N. S. E. W.). Therefore, these four angels are given the power to control events that will affect the entire world.

“four winds . . . land or on the sea or on any tree” - Those dwelling on the earth are going to receive a short time of refrain from God's wrath but then the judgement will come with a vengeance. Trees are very vulnerable to wind damage.

7:2 – *“Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea:”*

“angel coming up from the east” - Due to John's location on the island of Patmos, the angel would have come from the direction of the land of Palestine.

“the seal of the living God” - The symbolism of this is much like a signet ring that was used by Oriental kings to authenticate and protect official documents. Ownership also meant protection.

God's Mark

Lamb's name
& the Father's name (7:2,3)

Antichrist's Mark

Beast's name (14:11)
& the # of his name (13:17)

7:3 – “Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of God.”

“a seal on the foreheads” - This is much like Ezekiel 9:4 where God instructs a man with an inkhorn to place an “X” on the forehead of those who are deeply troubled over the sins of Jerusalem in order to protect them from the coming judgment. (**Note:** The last Hebrew letter **“tav”** originally looked like an **“X”** but now it looks like **“ט”** and has a **“t”** sound.

“the servants of God” - Who are these who are sealed? The word **“servants”** is **“doulos”** The word signifies **“someone who is in bondage.”** When speaking metaphorically, God’s people are bound morally, spiritually and ethically to His commands. Therefore, these servants can only be God’s chosen remnant of Israel. They are to be sealed before the final outpouring of the wrath of God.

7:4 – “Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel.”

“144,000 from all the tribes of Israel” - The Bible makes it clear that these are not Gentiles. There is also no confusion of the composition of these Israelites. Many weird and wonderful interpretations have risen from this portion of Scripture.

1. Seventh Day Adventists - These are the ones who are faithful to their communion who observe the Jewish Sabbath.

2. Jehovah Witnesses - Charles Taze Russell (also Samuel Rutherford) taught that he was one of them and that after his death would come **“the faithful and wise servants class”** the **“little flock”** totalling 144,000. Of this **“mystery class”** Rutherford said there were still 50,000 living in 1926. These also would be the kings and priests.

7:5 – “From the tribe of Judah 12,000 were sealed, from the tribe of Reuben 12,000, from the tribe of Gad 12,000.

7:6 – “from the tribe of Asher 12,000, from the tribe of Naphtali 12,000, from the tribe of Manasseh 12,000,”

7:7 – “from the tribe of Simeon 12,000, from the tribe of Levi 12,000, from the tribe of Issachar 12,000,”

7:8 – “from the tribe of Zebulun 12,000, from the tribe of Joseph 12,000, from the tribe of Benjamin 12,000.”

There are 18 lists of the 12 tribes recorded in the O. T. and none of those agree with this one in the Book of Revelation - but we need not be concerned.

NOTE:

1. Judah not Reuben is mentioned first. Yet Christ belonged to the tribe of Judah (Hebrews 7:14; Genesis 49:10) which should give this tribe preeminence.
2. Dan is omitted (yet also omitted in Chronicles).

Several interpretations ($\Delta\alpha\nu$ - Dan; $M\alpha\nu$ - Man).

- a. Was incorrectly copied " $M\alpha\nu$ - Man" which is an abbreviation for Manasseh
- b. Dan was omitted because of their early involvement in idolatry (Judges 18:30; I Kings 12:29)
- c. Ireneus (2nd century) noted that it was due to a tradition that the Antichrist would come from the tribe of Dan. This was based upon a Rabbinic interpretation of such passages as Genesis 49:17 and Jeremiah 8:16).

THE SECOND VISION (7:9-17)

This next scene (vision) is definitely a portion of Scripture that has gained widely diverse interpretations.

Mid-Tribulation - This view believes that the raptured church is taken up to heaven in the middle of the great tribulation

Post-Tribulation - This view believes they are part of the church that have suffered during the great tribulation and died (not necessarily martyred) and who are waiting for their fellow brethren (cf. - Revelation 6:11)

Pre-Tribulation - This view believes these are believers (Saints) who were converted after the rapture and are brought to heaven to enter into God's blessing.

As we take a closer look at this 2nd vision, it is clear that there are several contrasts between the two visions. Instead of a limited number of 144,000 we now come into a vision which encompasses a great multitude that cannot be numbered. Also, instead of being sealed for the impending persecution, these are a group that have come out of great tribulation. This vision takes place in heaven not upon the earth. Here the faithful from every age join together to worship the Lamb who has redeemed them by His precious blood.

7:9 – *“After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.”*

“a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language” - Notice that they are from every nation, tribe, people and language (cf. - 5:9; 7:9; 11:9; 13:7; and 14:6). This seems to clearly suggest that they must be both Gentiles and Jews alike. These would include the faithful from every age not just those coming out of the 7-year tribulation. Biblical history clearly shows that the people of God have faced severe persecution and martyrdom throughout the ages. Even since the end of the writing of the New Testament, there has continued to be vicious attacks against Christianity.

“They were wearing white robes” - The word used to describe these white robes is the word *“stolas.”* This indicates *“a glorious garment.”* This righteousness is common to all and made available only by the blood of the Lamb (7:14). It is a reward and a victory gained through a total commitment and sacrifice to God alone.

“and were holding palm branches in their hands” - These indicate a joyous triumph. We still celebrate Palm Sunday to commemorate the day of our Lord’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem (John 12:13).

7:10 – *“And they cried in a loud voice: ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.’”*

“Salvation belongs to our God” - No wonder they will cry out in such a loud voice. The inhabitants of heaven cannot withhold their appreciation of being delivered from sin and all its consequences. They realize that it is because of the fact that the Lamb was willing to be slain. Weymouth translates this portion as *“To our God . . . and to the Lamb, we owe our salvation!”*

7:11 – *“All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshipped God.”*

– *“All the angels were standing around the throne”* - Those who are redeemed will not be the only ones given the privilege to worship God. These created beings have witnessed the salvation of those around the throne throughout the ages. They rejoice when even one sinner comes to repentance (Luke 15:7).

“They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshipped God” - This prostrate position is one that many who confess to be worshippers of God have never yet found themselves in. It is the privilege that the angels in heaven recognize has been given to them that makes this act so appropriate.

7:12 – “saying: ‘Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honour and power and strength be to our God forever and ever. Amen!’” - Here we have a sevenfold doxology of praise.

“Preston and Hanson defined blessing as ‘that spontaneous act of thanks which men utter when they realize more vividly than ever before their happiness’ (p 47). Glory is the radiance of the divine Person. In this context wisdom is the divine knowledge God exhibited in his plan of redemption (cf. Ephesians 3: 10). Thanksgiving is the appropriate response for salvation, and honour its public acknowledgment. If power is God’s ability to act, might is his redemptive presence in the events of history. This ascription of praise is apparently directed both to God and the Lamb although the latter is not specifically mentioned here (cf. vss. 12, 14, 17).”

Robert H. Mounce
“The Book of Revelation”
 William Eerdmans Publishing Company
 p. 172

7:13 – “Then one of the elders asked me, ‘These in white robes – Who are they, and where did they come from?’”

“*Then one of the elders asked me*” - This elder asks a question that John was most likely ready to ask himself. There are other times in Scripture when questions are asked for us (Zechariah 4:5).

“*Who are they, and where did they come from?*” - This question continues to bring differences of opinion by Bible scholars.

7:14 – “I answered, ‘Sir, you know.’ And he said, ‘ These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.’”

“*These are they who have come out of the great tribulation*” - The tense of the Greek word makes it highly unlikely that they are still coming out of the great tribulation. There will come a time when the final persecution of God’s people will end. There have always been times of incredible tribulation and persecution.

“they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” - The tense of these verbs (aorist) makes it clear that this is the once-for-all action that took place in the past.

7:15 – ***“Therefore, they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them.”***

“they are before the throne of God” - This word is used to describe the inner place of God not the outer precinct.

“and serve him day and night in his temple” - Since there is no night in heaven (22:5) we can see that John is simply saying that there is an unceasing act of service toward God. The temple is simply another way of expressing the sanctuary of heaven. This is not some type of Levitical service but rather a work of spontaneous adoration and praise.

“and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them” - This thought would no doubt bring back memories of The Tabernacle of Moses (Exodus 26). In the Old Testament the Shekinah glory of God hovered over His people (Exodus 40:34–38; II Chronicles 7:1–3).

7:16 – ***“Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not be upon them, nor any scorching heat.”***

“Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst” - These were constant threats to the children of Israel in the wilderness. Heaven is a place that we can be insured that we will neither hunger nor thirst (Matthew 5:6; John 6:35). We will be totally satisfied in heaven.

7:17 – ***“For the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”*** -

“For the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd” - This change from the Lamb to the shepherd is quite interesting. Yet the Lord has been called our Shepherd elsewhere in Scripture (Psalm 23:1; Isaiah 40:11; John 10:1–30; 21:15–17). This portrays the Lord as one who is gentle, protective, and committed to provide for all our needs.

“he will lead them to springs of living water” - These waters are a wellspring of life (Psalm 36:8–9). Jesus spoke of this spring of water that would well up into eternal life (John 4:14; 7:38).

“And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes” - These are not tears of sorrow. They are rather the response that comes from being brought into a place of total delight from a place of total destruction.

We have been often asked if a backslider can repent during the time of the great tribulation. It seems like some are waiting to get saved during the tribulation. This is playing a dangerous game.

Seriously Consider:

Noah - God closed the door after repeated warnings (Genesis 7:16).

Jeremiah – *“Give glory to the LORD your God, before he brings the darkness, before your feet stumble on the darkening hills. You hope for light, but he will turn it to thick darkness and change it to deep gloom”* (Jeremiah 13:16).

5 Foolish Virgins – When the master of the house rises up and shuts the door (Matthew 25:10), who will be able to open it? The great tribulation is for Jews not for Gentiles. Notice that 144,000 Jews are sealed. This is more than triple the gospel workers on the mission field today.

“The purpose of the vision is to grant a glimpse of eternal blessedness to those about to enter the world’s darkest hour. For a brief period John is privileged to look beyond this age to the hour of ultimate triumph . . . Without doubt it is one of the most exalted portrayals of the heavenly state to be found anywhere in Scripture.”

Robert H. Mounce
“The Book of Revelation”
 William Eerdman’s Publishing Company
 p. 171

**THE SEVENTH SEAL &
THE FIRST FOUR TRUMPETS**

Revelation 8:1-13

INTRODUCTION:

There are four groups of sevens in the Book of Revelation

- 1). Seven letters**
- 2). Seven seals**
- 3). Seven trumpets**
- 4). Seven vials/bowls**

There is a pattern to the opening of the seals and the sounding of the trumpets.

- 1). The first six seals open with a time period intervening before the seventh seal is opened (chapter 7).
- 2). The seventh seal begins the seven trumpets.
- 3). After six trumpets sound there will be another time period intervening before the vials/bowls are poured out (Chapter 10 –11:14).
- 4). Then six bowls will be followed by another intervening time (one verse 16:15) followed by the seventh bowl described in detail in chapters 17 and 18.

“Chronically, we are as far along when we reach 11:18 as when we reach the Great White Throne Judgment in chapter 20. Therefore, there are certain time periods that are duplicated. From chapter 4 to 11 the truth is presented in an orderly fashion. It is a prophetic outline from the time of the rapture to the time of the end. From chapter 12 to 13, God gives us another view of the events – this time from the viewpoint of Israel. Then chapter 14 again interjects another view of the final issues.”

H. A. Ironside

Again I must emphasize that we should not encourage people to wait and depend upon some false opportunity to arise during the tribulation for their salvation. Consider the following:

1. Jude speaks of people who take lightly the salvation of God.

“They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame; wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever.”

Jude 13

2. Paul told the church at Thessalonica . . .

“The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, 10. and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. 11. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie 12. and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.”

II Thessalonians 2:9-12

THE SEVENTH SEAL

8:1 – “When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.”

“opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven” - This can be likened to the calm before the storm. It is similar to the awesome silence that precedes a tornado or a hurricane. Yet both eventually deliver their intense destruction . This time of quietness is very short. Heaven is not known for its silence. Heaven is a place of joy and worship.

“for about half an hour” - This half an hour period of silence deepens the suspense. It is a dramatic pause that will make the upcoming judgment even more “impressive.”

8:2 – *“And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets.”*

“the seven angels” - The use of the definite article *“the”* indicates that this is a group of special angels. We can only speculate whom they may be. In non-canonical writing (I Enoch 20:2-8) there are seven angels named. 1). Uriel 2). Raphael 3). Raquel 4). Michael 5). Saraqâel 6). Gabriel (cf. Luke 1:19; Daniel 9:21) 7). Remiel

“seven trumpets” - You may be reminded during the days of Joshua of the seven trumpets that were sounded on the seventh day (Joshua 6:15–20) by the seven priests before all the people were told to shout at the overthrow of Jericho. Everyone had to remain silent for the previous six days and just march around the city.

Trumpets were used for many purposes by the children of Israel.

- 1). To call the people together - (Numbers 10:3)
- 2). To move the tribes on their journey (Numbers 10:5-6)
- 3). To sound the alarm for war (Numbers 10:9)
- 4). To celebrate days of sacred feasts (Numbers 10:10)
- 5). To sound in the New Year [Tishri] (Numbers 29:1; Leviticus 23:24)
- 6). To celebrate the coronation of a king (I Kings 1:34,39; II Kings 9:13)
- 7). To herald the day of the Lord’s wrath (Zephaniah 1:14-16)

8:3 – *“Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar before the throne.”*

“Another angel” - This angel is not named so we must be careful in identifying him. Some think . . .

- 1). He is Christ (H. A. Ironside; John Walvoord) but it would be a very strange way of introducing our Lord.

Their Argument

- 1). Only Jesus is worthy to receive the prayers of the saints since He is the only mediator between God and man (I Timothy 2: 5)

However

1). The four living creatures and the 24 elders had golden bowls full of incense which were identified as the prayers of the saints (Revelation 5:8). If Jesus is mentioned as an angel in Scripture, He is usually qualified by a phrase such as *“ the Angel of Jehovah”* or *“the Angel of God.”*

“had a golden censer” - This was also called a fire-pan. They were normally made of brass (Exodus 27:3) although the ones used in Solomon’s temple were made of gold (I Kings 7:50).

“He was given much incense to offer” - There are two interpretations for this.

- 1).The incense is mingled (mixed) with the prayers. In other words the prayers will not be acceptable until the mixture is complete
- 2). The incense consisted of the prayers of all the saints.

“the golden altar” - This is most probably symbolizing the altar of incense (Exodus 30:1-10). We must remember that the incense was never effective (burning) without having a hot coal from off of the brazen altar. Once the hot coal was on the altar, then and only then was the incense added.

8:4 – *“The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, went up before God from the angel’s hand.”*

“together with the prayers of the saints” - The Bible indicates that both the believer and his prayer enter before God by the way of the altar.

“from the angel’s hand” - The angel is simply a servant carrying out a task that will have widespread implications.

8:5 – *“Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake.”*

“the angel took the censer” – The prayers of the saints play a vital part in the upcoming judgment. They may give the evidence for the judgment of heaven’s court. God is about to answer the prayers that called out for judgment (6:9–11).

Are these Judgements literal?

Perhaps we need to consider the 10 plagues listed in Exodus 7–11.

- 1). The Nile River turned to blood
- 2). Frogs
- 3). Gnats/Lice
- 4). Flies
- 5). Plague on livestock
- 6). Boils
- 7). Hail
- 8). Locusts
- 9). Darkness
- 10). Death of the firstborn males

God also rained down fire and brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19). The saints pray for justice, so their prayers play an important part, but it is totally in the hands of God as to the timing and the severity of the judgement.

Joel said that just before the “*day of the LORD,*”

*“And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood, and fire and billows of smoke.
31. The sun will be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.”*

Joel 2:30,31

“and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake” -

This was the same response as when God’s presence came before the children of Israel at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:16ff).

8:6 – “*Then the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to sound them.*”

“prepared to sound them” - When we watch an event that opens with the sounding of trumpets we usually have our expectations rise especially when the trumpets are raised to the lips of musicians to begin the event.

Once again we see that God is in control of each and every event of judgment that will take place in the book of Revelation. This emphasizes the fact that this is a Revelation of Jesus Christ. Since He is the only One who can open the seven seals, He is also the only One who can set these judgments in their proper order.

THE FIRST TRUMPET
(Hail, fire, mixed with blood)

8:7 – *“The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down to the earth. A third of the earth was burned up, a third of all the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.”*

“The first angel sounded his trumpet” - This will begin the second major series of calamities. The first being the breaking of the seven seals.

there came hail and fire mixed with blood - Some believe this fire will be a severe electrical storm. Compare this with the seventh plague that was sent against Egypt (Exodus 9:13-35) except that blood is added to this judgement (see also Zechariah 13:8-9).

“A third of . . . was burned up” - The term 1/3 occurs 12 times in the following verses (8:7–12). These first four trumpets are also separated from the last three as in the case of the seven seals. The result of just this single trumpet sound will be enough to destroy a third part of the earth, the trees (especially fruit trees which are more vulnerable) and the green grass.

THE SECOND TRUMPET
(A huge mountain cast into the sea)

8:8 – *“The second angel sounded his trumpet and something like a huge mountain, all ablaze, was thrown into the sea. A third of the sea turned into blood.”*

“The second angel sounded his trumpet” - This second angel will usher in a catastrophe that deals with the sea not the land.

“and something like a huge mountain, all ablaze, was thrown into the sea” - This is not referring to a volcanic eruption because something like a mountain itself is hurled into the sea. This could be referring to a meteorite or a comet hitting the sea. The Psalmist offered comfort when would this takes place (Psalm 46:2).

“A third of the sea turned into blood” - Compare this with the first plague that was sent against Egypt (Exodus 7:14-24). This is not pollution because a third of all the ships will also destroyed.

8:9 – *“a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.”*

The final result of the second trumpet will be enough to turn a third of the sea into blood, kill a third of the water creatures and destroy a third of the ships travelling on the sea. This will be once again sent as a warning against the wickedness of mankind.

THE THIRD TRUMPET
(The Great Star Wormwood)

8:10 – *“The third angel sounded his trumpet, and a great star, blazing like a torch, fell from the sky on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water –*

“and a great star” - Once again this could be a large meteorite that lands at the headwaters of three great rivers that feed many streams.

8:11 – *“the name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters turned bitter, and many people died from the waters that had become bitter.”*

“the name of the star is Wormwood” - This is also the name of a plant that has a very bitter taste. The Old Testament (Proverbs 5:3 – 4) uses it as a symbol of bitterness and sorrow. Although Wormwood is not poisonous, its bitter taste suggests death. It is often associated with gall (cf. Lamentations 3:19; Jeremiah 9:15; 23:15). Here we find the reverse action that took place at the bitter waters of Marah (Exodus 15:25).

“A third of the waters turned bitter” - This once again reminds us of the first plague of Egypt where the water was affected (Exodus 7:20).

THE FOURTH TRUMPET
(Darkness)

8:12 – *“The fourth angel sounded his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them turned dark. A third of the day was without light, and also a third of the night.”*

“a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars” - This plague will fall on heavenly bodies.

“so that a third of them turned dark” - Darkness is a symbol of judgment (Isaiah 13:10; Joel 2:2; Amos 5:18; Matthew 8:12; Mark 13:24). This reminds us of the 9th plague that was sent against Egypt (Exodus 10:21-23).

“A third of the day was without light, and also a third of the night” - Both the daytime and nighttime will be affected. Daytime and nighttime will be reversed (16 hours of darkness, eight hours of the light).

8:13 – “As I watched, I heard an eagle that was flying in midair call out in a loud voice: ‘Woe! Woe! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the trumpet blasts about to be sounded by the other three angels!’”

“I heard an eagle that was flying in midair” - This eagle will be sent out as a warning of the final three trumpets that will bring in an even greater intensity of judgment. An eagle is one that combines both strength and speed.

“Woe! Woe! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth” - Each of the three trumpets are preceded by a “Woe.” This will be a declaration that God’s wrath is about to become very severe upon the pagan and wicked world.

**THE FIFTH TRUMPET
(THE FIRST WOE - LOCUSTS/SCORPION)**

Revelation 9:1-12

One of the greatest difficulties when interpreting the Book of Revelation is to discern whether John is writing using symbolic meaning or using a literal meaning. The correct way of Biblical interpretation is to take the meaning literally unless it cannot be done or if other Scriptures point to a clear symbolic meaning.

- 1). The first task of the exegesis of the Revelation is to seek the author's and therewith the Holy Spirit's original intent. As with the Epistles, the primary meaning of the Revelation is what John intended it to mean, which in turn must have been something his readers could have understood it to mean.
- 2). Since the Revelation intends to be prophetic, one must be open to the possibility of a second meaning, inspired by the Holy Spirit, but not fully seen by the author or his readers.
- 3). One must be especially careful of overusing the concept of the "analogy of Scripture" in the exegesis of the Revelation.
- 4a). One must have a sensitivity to the rich background of the ideas that have gone into the composition of the Revelation.
- 4b). When John himself interprets his images, these interpreted images must be held firmly and must serve as a starting point for understanding others.
 - i). *"one like the son of man"* – Christ (1:13,17–18)
 - ii). *"golden lampstands"* – seven churches (1:20)
 - iii). *"seven stars"* – seven angels (1:20)
 - iv). *"great Dragon"* – Satan (12:9)
 - v). *"seven heads"* – seven hills (17:9)
 - vi). *"harlot"* – the great city of Rome (17:18)
- 4c). One must see the visions as a whole and not allegorically press all the details (i.e.. – like the parables)
- 4d). Apocalypses in general and the Revelation in particular, seldom intend to give a detailed, chronological account of the future.

Gordon Fee & Douglas Stuart
"How to Read the Bible for all its Worth"

The following trumpets again emphasize the results of anyone spurning God's message of salvation. These nonbelievers will now become the prey of horrifying demonic forces that are allowed to bring increasing suffering. Nonbelievers must accept the result of their choices.

THE FIFTH TRUMPET

(Demonic locusts)

9:1 – “The fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. The star was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss.”

“*The star was given the key*” - Many interpretations have been given for this verse. Here are a few examples:

- A) Some see “*fallen*” as “*fallen from heaven*” suggesting the apostate leader who will bring a strong delusion of false testimony (cf. II Thessalonians 2:8-12). [H. A. Ironside].
- B). A good angel that will be entrusted with a grave responsibility by God (cf. Revelation 20:1) [Robert Mounce; Tim LaHaye; George Ladd]
- C). Nero [Weymouth]
- D). An evil spirit [Kiddle]
- E). Satan [Hendriksen]
- F). The Word of God [Torrance]
- G). Our Lord Himself [Berkeley]

It's difficult to be dogmatic when the experts are so divided, yet I tend to believe that (B) is the closest to the truth.

It is important to note that this “*star*” is “*given*” the key to the abyss. This indicates once again that God is in control of everything that happens. No angel retains permanent possession of any key to unlock any events. We need to be careful thinking that we can decide what to lock or unlock (cf. Matthew 16:19). This is too often rooted in pride rather than a sincere desire to overcome the work of Satan.

“*a star*” – This star is identified as something or someone that is able to use a key and open the Abyss. There are a number of cases in Scripture where people as well as spiritual beings are identified as stars (Isaiah 14:12; Luke 10:18; Revelation 12:4).

“**saw a star that had fallen from the sky**” – Some believe that this refers to a fallen angel (Revelation 12:4). But it is more likely to be one of God’s angels that is given the task of carrying out His will. The Word “**fallen**” simply means “**to descend.**” He could be the same angel as is mentioned in Revelation 20:1 who will also be given the key to the abyss.

“**to the shaft of the Abyss**” - The word that is often translated “**the bottomless pit**” is “**abyssos.**” The Bible uses it to describe many places.

- A). LXX – “**deep waters**” – Genesis 1:2; 7:11
- B). LXX – “**depth of the earth**” – Psalm 71:20
- C). “**who shall descend to the abyss, that is to bring Christ up from the dead.**” – Romans 10:7
- D). The abode of the beast or Antichrist before he appears on earth – Revelation 11:7
- E). The temporary abode of Satan during the thousand years – Revelation 20:3

It is not a “*place of punishment*” but rather “*a place of confinement.*” The Lake of Fire is the place of eternal punishment. Of the nine references to the abyss, seven are found in the Book of Revelation. This is not the abode of all evil spirits today. Some are placed there (II Peter 2:4 – “*tartarus;*” see also Jude 6) waiting for their final judgement, but not all.

Satan is called the “*ruler of the kingdom of the air*” [NIV] or “*prince of the power of the air*” [KJV] (Ephesians 2:2). Demons are “*the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms*” (Ephesians 6:12).

9:2 – “When he opened the Abyss, smoke rose from it like the smoke from a gigantic furnace. The sun and sky were darkened by the smoke from the Abyss.”

“*smoke rose from it like the smoke from a gigantic furnace*” – Smoke is sometimes used in the Revelation when referring to holy sayings (8:4; 15:8) but more than often it is connected to thoughts of judgment and torment (9:17,18; 18:9,18; 19:3). (See also Genesis 19:28).

“*The sun and sky were darkened*” –This may be symbolic of the rapid increase in delusion (II Thessalonians 2:9,11). The stage is already set for this with secular humanism, evolution, New Age, Satanism, false religions/cults and materialism. Many of these things are sweeping into the churches of our nation. The darkness we are now seeing will get much darker. Here is the climax of apostasy. It will try to blow out all remaining light.

9:3 – “And out of the smoke locusts came down upon the earth and were given power like that of scorpions of the earth.”

“out of the smoke locusts came” – Locusts in the Old Testament are a symbol of destruction that the people were helpless to defend themselves against (Deuteronomy 28:42; I Kings 8:37; Psalms 78:46). Locusts breed in the desert and invade cultivated areas in search of food. They travel in a column 100 feet high and up to four miles long. They are normally indiscriminate of anything in their path.

“given power like that of scorpions” – It was a lobster-like creature that had a claw on the end of its tail that secreted poison. Although painful, it was rarely fatal. The scorpion feeds on its prey at night. They strike with great speed. They are hostile to man. Notice that these have the power, not the appearance of a scorpion.

9:4 – “They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads.”

“not to harm the grass of the earth” – Either the grass of Revelation 8:7 regrew after its previous destruction or only all of the 1/3 of the grass was originally burnt up.

“did not have the seal of God” – Only the ungodly will be hurt (Revelation 7:3 ff; cf. Exodus 8:22ff; 9:4ff; 10:23). The demonic world has no power over God’s elect. This may seem like a severe type of punishment to bring people to repentance, but when we consider that some Jews may turn and be delivered from an eternal hell, it appears much less severe (Matthew 5:29,30; 10:28).

9:5 – “They were not given power to kill them, but only to torture them for five months. And the agony they suffered was like that of the sting of the scorpion when it strikes a man.”

“They were not given power to kill them” - This will be a plague of pain not of death. Those inflicted will wish they were dead (9:6) but will not witness death.

“but only to torture them” – The word used to describe this kind of torture entails acute physical (Matthew 8:6), mental (Matthew 8:29; II Peter 2:8) or metaphorical pain (Matthew 14:24; Mark 6:48).

“five months” – This is the life cycle of a locust. It also corresponds to the length of the dry season (May through to September) when the danger of a locust invasion is always present. This time period will become a vivid reminder that God does bring retribution to those who are wicked.

9:6 – *“During those days men will seek death, but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them.”*

“men will seek death . . . but death will elude them” – Death will not just be hard to find, it will literally *“keep running from them.”* They will not be brought to repentance, but rather they’ll try to escape the punishment of their judgement. What a contrast to Paul’s desire – *“to depart and be with Christ”* (Philippians 1:23). One type of death leads to eternal life and blessing while the other “escape” leads to eternal torture in a Lake of Fire.

The Locust’s Description

9:7 – *“The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle. On their heads they wore something like crowns of gold, and their faces resembled human faces.”*

“The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle” – These locust-like creatures will be of considerable size. They will be fully equipped in protective armour. Horses are known for their high-speed.

“something like crowns of gold” – The word *“crowns”* is *“stephanos”* which is symbolic of success. An Arabian proverb is often quoted to support the following description that says a locust has a head like a horse, a breast like a lion, feet like a camel, has a body like a serpent, and antennae like the hair of the maiden.

“their faces resembled human faces” – He begins with the head and eventually moves to the tail. The reference of human faces symbolizes man’s intelligence.

9:8 – *“Their hair was like women’s hair, and their teeth were like lions teeth.”*

“Their hair was like women’s hair” – This is normally symbolic for seductive attractiveness (a woman’s hair is her glory - Song of Songs 7:5). But in this case there doesn’t appear to be anything seductive in their looks.

“like lions teeth” – A lion is known for its fierceness. Locusts do not tear apart their prey. These teeth are most likely an attempt to add to their ferocious look much like the war planes used to do.



9:9 – *“They had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the thundering of many horses and chariots rushing into battle.”*

“breastplates of iron” - This would be much the same as what Goliath wore (I Samuel 17:5). They will be protected no matter which direction they strike from.

“and the sound of their wings” - Warfare is fought in both the physical realm as well as the psychological realm.

9:10 – *“They had tails and stings like scorpions, and in their tails they had power to torment people for five months.”*

“They had tails and stings like scorpions” – It is well-known that the sting of the scorpion is very painful. Its venom sets a person’s nervous system on fire. It can last for several days.

“their tails they had power to torment people for five months” – Unlike typical locusts, these do not harm the vegetation but rather they induce pain upon men. Their infliction is not meant to kill, simply to torment for five months.

9:11 – *“They had as king over them the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon.”*

“Abaddon” –This word means *“destruction”* (Job 31:12).

Apollyon” –This word means *“destroyer.”* During the fifth century BC., the Greek god Apollo derived his name from this word.

9:12 – *“The first woe is passed; two other woes are yet to come.”* – As the end draws to a near there will be a marked increase in both intensity and severity of these upcoming plagues. We really cannot be too sure as to what these locust-like creatures truly represent, but we do know it will be a time of unprecedented demonic torment.

**THE SIXTH TRUMPET
(THE SECOND WOE - 200,000,000 ARMY)**

Revelation 9:13-21

We can clearly see how the intensity of judgment increases as the final trumpets are sounded. We have studied the effects of breaking open the seven seals and now we will proceed to see the effect of the second last trumpet.

God is right now blowing a trumpet across the land. It is a trumpet of warning. It is clearly sounding across the nations of the world. Many are taking heed and will be spared from the upcoming judgment.

“Blow the trumpet in Zion sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming. It is close at hand.”

Joel 2:1

“Put the trumpet to your lips. An eagle is over the house of the LORD because the people have broken my covenant and rebelled against my law.”

Hosea 8:1

If we respond to the warning trumpet that is now sounding, we'll not have to hear the judgment trumpet that is soon to summon in the time of “The Great Tribulation.” The reason for this judgment is that sin will abound to the point of intense Satan-worship. The effect of it will not be peace but war – nation against nation, kingdom against kingdom, man against man.

When the fifth angel sounds there will be unleashed a host of locusts (whatever that may represent). They will only be able to torture mankind. Even with the torture there will be no change of heart. The warning of tormenting locusts will be followed by widespread death.

9:13 – “The sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from the horns of the golden altar that is before God.”

“a voice coming from the horns of the golden altar” – Only one altar in Moses’ Tabernacle was made of gold. It was symbolized the prayers of the people. Here we have a voice (“a solitary voice” - Berkley). In Revelation 6:10 there was a combined voice of judgement coming from the altar. They had been martyred and were crying out for justice.

Now only a single voice of prayer is heard. This single prayer will unleash an intense judgement. Don't forget that there is a mighty force unleashed when God's people pray.

“The effectual fervent prayer of righteous man availeth much.”

*James 5:16
KJV*

One holy saint on his knees is more powerful than all of hell's angels combined.

9:14 – “It said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, ‘Release the four angels who are bound at the river Euphrates.’”

“Release the four angels” – Notice that it will be a single voice that will cause these angels to be released. Good angels are never bound (II Peter 2:4; Jude 6; Revelation 20:1ff). These are a very specific group of fallen angels (notice – the four angels).

“who are bound” – This clearly shows us that they are evil (fallen) angels who are being restrained. They will not be able to carry out their evil intentions until one prayer sets them loose.

“For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who holds it back will continue to do so until he is taken out of the way.”

II Thessalonians 2:7

We must be assured of the fact that God is in total control of the events that take place during the great tribulation. We hear that “all hell will be loosed.” We should qualify that statement and say, “Everything that God allows of hell's angels will be loosed.”

“at the river Euphrates” – Great events took/take place at the Euphrates

1. The boundary of the Garden of Eden
2. The first sin was committed close by it
3. The first murder was committed close by it
4. The first war was fought near it
5. The tower of Babel was erected close to it
6. Nimrod built Babylon close by it
7. Here idolatry found its origin
8. Here the children of Israel were taken captive
9. Here the final sin of mankind will culminate
10. It is the eastern limit of the promised land

“On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram and said, to your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates.”

Genesis 15:18

(See also Deuteronomy 1:7; Joshua 1:4)

Be careful not to mistake this event with the one recorded in Revelation 16 when the kings of the East will come to the battle of Armageddon at the pouring out of the sixth bowl.

9:15 – “And the four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind.”

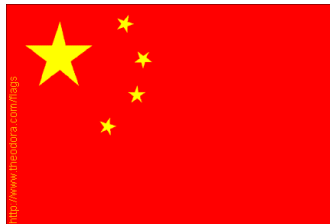
“kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released” – There are examples in the Old Testament of the specification of time by day, month, and year (Numbers 1:1; Haggai 2:10) but none of them include a time period noted as **“this very hour.”** This once again emphasizes the fact that it will be the exact moment decreed by God for these angels of destruction to be released upon mankind. This emphasizes the fact that we are dealing with the closing end of time.

“to kill a third of mankind” – God will use this evil-spirit-controlled army to bring judgment upon a large portion of the earth’s population. It is quite likely that this one third of the earth’s population will not be any larger than the one-quarter that will have already been slain. Yet proportionately it will be a significantly larger percentage of the earth’s population. The ones who will be sealed by God (144,000) will not be touched by God’s judgment (cf. – 9:4,20).

9:16 – “The number of the mounted troops was two hundred million. I heard their number.”

“The number of the mounted troops was two hundred million” – Some think this represents an innumerable amount (Ladd). But if God took time to give their number, He must have meant it to be a literal number. Depending upon the earth’s population at this time (cf. – 6:3,4,8,11; 8:11) these horsemen would only have a few people each to kill.

Time magazine had a report in the 1980s that the Peoples Republic of China boasted a militia of over 200 million men and women. The Peoples Republic of China flag is bright (blood red, with a large star (yellow – five pointed) in the corner with four smaller stars (yellow) with an arch around the main star. The Nationalist China flag is mostly blue with a white sun in the middle of it.



9:17 – *“The horses and riders I saw in my vision looked like this: Their breastplates were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow as sulfur. The heads of the horses resembled the heads of lions, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and sulfur.”*

“Their breastplates were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow as sulfur” – The description given here is to emphasize their ferocity and destructiveness. It should also be noted that it is the fire that comes out of the mouths of the horses that will do the destruction.

9:18 – *“A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulfur that came out of their mouths.”*

“Fire, smoke and sulfur” – These are intended to be three separate types of plagues. The first Woe will bring about torment; while the second Woe will bring about death.

9:19 – *“The power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails were like snakes, having heads with which they inflict injury.”*

“The power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails” – The Parthians of John’s day were in the habit of twisting their horse’s tails so that they looked like snakes. They also were skilful enough to shoot arrows behind themselves (with accuracy) as they rode along. We can only guess what this could mean or represent today.

“for their tails were like snakes” – This detail would have been especially meaningful to the church at Pergamum where the temples in honour of the gods Zeus and Asklepios emphasized the role of snakes in their worship. Yet it needs to be mentioned that their tales will be *“like snakes”* or will have a function similar to that of serpents

9:20 – *“The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshipping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood – idols that cannot see or hear or walk.”*

“plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands” – God has a purpose in judgment and that is repentance. They will not learn their lesson. Once a heart is set in a bitter hostility toward God, even the scourging of death will not lead someone to repentance.

“they did not stop worshipping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood” - Mankind has a built-in desire to worship. There are only two directions for worship. We will either worship God or Satan. When men worship idols they actually are worshipping the spirits that indwell those images. It is futile to worship idols (Deuteronomy 4:28; Psalm 115:5–7; 135:15-18; Daniel 5:23).

We seem to often hear about the ungodly judging God for destroying idol worshippers. But remember that many people in the nations of our world are dying premature deaths on an increasing scale simply because of their religious beliefs. Rats are allowed to live (and are worshipped) and eat the food that is required to prevent their malnutrition.

9:21 – “Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts.”

Three of the four signs mentioned were prohibited in The Ten Commandments (6th, 7th, and 8th – Exodus 20:3–17).

“Nor did they repent of their murders” – Wherever the influence of the Gospel is unknown, human life is cheapened. (ie. - Buddhist, Hindu countries of the world). Ungodliness brings about all kinds of unrighteousness and wickedness.

“their magic arts” – Some versions of the Bible use the word **“sorcery.”** It is the only time in the New Testament that this word is used “Θαυμακον.” It was the word used to describe the Asiatic vice of **“magic spells inciting to illicit lust.”** The word has also been translated **“poison.”** It is better to understand it as **“the use of magic potions, charms and incantations that are commonly used in rituals of Satanism.”**

It also blends its actions with the use (addiction to) mind-altering drugs. In John’s day it was part of the practise of heathen idolatry. In Revelation 22:15, sorcerers are included with fornicators, murders, idolatries, and liars who will have no part in the new Jerusalem (21:8).

“their sexual immorality” – This is most often called **“fornication.”** It is singular in form. This does not mean that it will be less frequent. It simply means that its many acts will be summed up into one. Quite likely there will be so many different types of sexual immorality that John didn’t choose to take the time to list them all.

“or their thefts” – They will also disregard the value of another’s property. They will not repent from these things even during times of intense tribulation. Repentance begins in our mind. If we choose not to repent, our heart will seldom change its hardened attitude toward God.

THE ANGEL AND THE LITTLE SCROLL

Revelation 10:1-11

We now come to another parentheses – a brief intermission. We have noted earlier that the same thing took place between the sixth and seventh seal and it will take place again between the sixth and seventh vial/bowl. Before the sounding of the seventh trumpet, this revelation once again turns our attention to the place of Israel in the mind of God concerning future events.

10:1 – “Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven. He was robed in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs were like fiery pillars.

“another mighty angel” – This mighty Angel is none other than the glorious Angel of the Covenant whom we already saw before the Golden Altar officiating as the Angel–Priest in the heavenly sanctuary. No other angel in heaven is worthy of the words that John is told to write.

“He was robed in a cloud” – It is not merely **“a”** cloud but more correctly **“the”** cloud. This cloud is symbolic of His divine glory (Psalm 97:2; Exodus 16:10). This is the same cloud that led God’s people through the Sinai wilderness (Exodus 19:9,16; 40:34,38). We are told that the cloud was the Angel of the Covenant. This glory cloud dwelt between the cherubim, in Moses’ Tabernacle, above the mercy seat.

When Solomon built his temple and dedicated it to Jehovah, the same glory cloud came and dwelt in the house to the Lord (II Chronicles 5:13,14). The prophet Ezekiel watched this cloud of God’s glory (Ezekiel 10) as it lifted from the Most Holy place. It delayed for a moment over the door of the sanctuary before departing. It then hovered above the city wall before moving to the Mount of Olives and finally returning to heaven.

This same cloud appeared when Jesus was transfigured before His disciples when He spoke with Moses and Elijah (Matthew 17:5). This same cloud hid the presence of the Lord as He ascended into the heavens (Luke 21:27; Acts 1: 9). We shall someday witness our Lord returning in this cloud of glory and every eye shall see Him (Revelation 1:7).

“with a rainbow above his head” – Once again we are told about a rainbow (Revelation 4:3; Ezekiel 1:28). Although this time it will be wrapped, as it were, around the head of this mighty Angel. It is a profound message that here stands the One who keeps His covenants to ALL generations.

“his face was like the sun” – This was the same light that Saul of Tarsus saw shining like the brightness of the sun in the Person of the once crucified Son of God (Acts 9:3).

“and his legs were like fiery pillars” – This vivid description brings the reader back to Revelation 1:15 where the Son of Man who was called the First and Last, and the Living One was described as having feet that glowed like the bronze into furnace. Daniel saw this same One as recorded in his prophetic book (Daniel 7:9,10).

10:2 – ***“He was holding a little scroll, which lay open in his hand. He planted his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land,”***

“He was holding a little scroll” – This scroll has been described by some to be the title-deed to the earth. So we see the Lord descending to earth with all the evidence of His divine majesty, along with His title deed (Psalm 2:6-8).

“which lay open in his hand” - This ***“little scroll”*** is different from the scroll that was written about earlier that was closed up with seven seals (Revelation 5:1-4).

“He planted his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land” – This is a clear indication that He is taking possession of His own inheritance. He purchased the earth and all that is within it through the shedding of His precious blood.

10:3 – ***“and he gave a loud shout like the roar of a lion. When he shouted, the voices of the seven thunders spoke.”***

“a loud shout like the roar of a lion” – We must remember that both the Angel and the Lion of Judah (Hebrews 7:14; Hosea 11:10; Joel 3:16; Amos 1:2) are one and the same.

“the voices of the seven thunders spoke” – This clearly indicates that God will speak forth judgment upon the inhabitants of the earth who have turned from worshipping the true and living God and followed after idols.

10:4 – ***“and when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven say, ‘Seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down.’”***

“Seal up what the seven thunders have said” – There are many things that are kept from our knowledge. It is not important for us to know what will be thundered at this time. Someday we will know why this was kept a mystery. We are often inquisitive about things that God has chosen to keep secret. The men of Bethshemesh were foolish enough to lift up the mercy seat and try to look into the Ark of the Covenant. They were struck dead immediately by God.

The Bible tells us that the secret things belong to the Lord our God. We must be careful not to quickly pass over the truth of sanctification and other blessings in order to look into the ***“hidden things”*** of God. When the apostle Paul was caught up into the third heaven he saw many ***“inexpressible (unspeakable) things”*** (II Corinthians 12:4).

10:5 – *“Then the angel I had seen standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven.”*

“raised his right hand to heaven” – The right hand of the Lord is often referred to as His strong arm of blessing (Genesis 48:18; Exodus 15:6).

10:6 – *“And he swore by him who lives for ever and ever, who created the heavens and all that is in them, the earth and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it, and said, ‘There will be no more delay!’”*

“There will be no more delay!” – Some versions incorrectly translate this as *“no more time”* or *“time is no longer.”* The main thing we must see is at this time that God will no longer delay in bringing about the fulfilment of His final plans and promises.

10:7 – *“But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets.”*

“the mystery of God will be accomplished” – The mysteries of the struggle between light and darkness and good and evil will approach their consummation (Isaiah 11:9). The mystery will quickly be resolved (I Peter 1:10,11).

10:8 – *“Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me once more: ‘Go, take the scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land.’”*

The latter part of this chapter leads us into a very different thought of God. You may recall that a very similar incident took place with the prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel 3). It is only when we feed upon and digest the Word of God that we can be nourished and built-up in truth. (Psalm 119:11). It is important that we get into the Bible, but it is also important that the Bible get into us. John did exactly what he was told to do.

10:9 – *“So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, ‘Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey.’”*

“Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey” – Prophetic truth is quite often sweet and attractive to those who are just beginning to devour its truth (Jeremiah 15:16; Psalm 119:103). But for those who take time to dig deeper into its full revelation, there comes a time of self judgment and separation from evil which can be likened to the souring of the stomach.

Its bitter-sweet contents bring us to a parallel of God’s servants who experience triumph through suffering (Revelation 11:1-13).

10:10 – *“I took the little scroll from the angel’s hand and ate it. It tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour.”*

“It tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour” – Consider how sweet the message of the Return of Christ was when we first read it. But then we begin to realize that many will never enjoy the wonderful blessings of heaven because they have never surrendered to God’s will. This shocking truth begins to call us to a greater level of discipleship. We soon find that many people do not want to accept the message of the Risen Saviour (Mark 16:16b). This can sicken our stomachs when we begin to realize that these people are heading to an eternal hell.

10:11 – *“Then I was told, ‘You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings.’”*

You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings” – John is about to receive a prophecy about these peoples, nations, languages and kings. He is not about to prophesy to them but rather to receive a prophecy about them.

The next chapter contains the reading of the scroll from the other side. This scroll was written on both sides. God now confirms the former outline and begins to fill in the details that were omitted. Hence a clearer and fuller understanding of these awesome events that are to take place will begin to unfold.

THE TWO WITNESSES

Revelation 11:1-14

There are about 4 thoughts of interpretation on this chapter.

1. It was written before 70 AD. while the Temple was still standing and therefore it is to be considered literally and historically.

But – According to what happened in 70 AD. the events were quite different.

2. Dispensationalists see a literal restoration of the Jewish Temple at the end of the age and that there will be a struggle between the restored Jews and the antichrist (Beast).

Note – Can all things can be taken literally (ie. Holy City, Temple)?

3. It may be a symbolic picture of the church and its fate in a hostile world. That although the church will suffer persecution and martyrdom, God will preserve His people and assure an ultimate triumph.

4. It may be a prophecy depicting the preservation and ultimate salvation of the Jewish people. (ie. *“Has God rejected His people? – Romans 11: 1*). Jews (natural branches) broken from the olive tree (the people of God) would be grafted back into the tree (*“and so all Israel will be saved.” – Romans 11:26; see also Luke 21:24*).

11:1 – *“I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, “Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshippers there.”*

“Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshippers there” - The word *“temple”* (*“naos or sanctuary”*) denotes the Temple proper in distinction to the outer courts. The Temple had the central sanctuary that the Holy of Holies and the Holy Place.

There were three courts –

1. The Court of the Priests containing the altar of burnt offering. Only the priests were permitted there.
2. The Court of Israel.
3. The Court of the Women.

In Herod’s Temple the three inner courts were separated from the Court of the Gentiles by a barrier with inscriptions threatening death to anyone who passed beyond who were Gentile.

Some see this as a way of dividing (symbolically) the professing church who, like the followers of Balaam (2:14) and Jezebel (2:20) had compromised with the world.

The reason for the measurement can only be two possible things:

1. To preserve the Temple against spiritual danger (not security from physical suffering and death).
- 2 A symbolic act indicating destruction rather than preservation (II Kings 21:13; Isaiah 34:11).

11:2 – “But exclude the outer court; do not measure it , because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months.”

The outer court (The Court of the Gentiles) was not to be measured (protected/judged?). The faithful will be trodden underfoot by paganism for 42 months (The Time of the Gentiles – Luke 21:24).

Note: 42 X 30 equals 1260 days; 11:3 = 3 ½ years; 12:6 = time, times, half of time

11:3 – “And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1260 days, clothed in sackcloth.”

“my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1260 days” – Two witnesses may be:

1. Symbolically indicating the need for two witnesses for any death sentence to be issued (Deuteronomy 17:6).

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. <u>Moses</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – turned water into blood (Revelation 11:6; Exodus 7:14–18) – plagues (Exodus 7-11) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. <u>Elijah</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – consumed his enemies with fire (Revelation 11:5; II Kings 1:10 ff) – stopped rain (I Kings 17:1; James 5:17,18) |
|--|---|

Note: Both Moses and Elijah appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mark 9:4)

3. Enoch and Elijah who both ascended up to heaven supernaturally.

4. Zerubbabel (king) and Joshua (priest) – (Zechariah 4:14)

5. Symbolically representing:
 - i). The Law and the Prophets
 - ii). The Law and the Gospel
 - iii). The Old Testament and the New Testament

“my two witnesses” – This word derives its name from the Greek word for **“martyr”** (cf. Acts 1:8).

11:4 – **“These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.”**

“that stand before the Lord of the earth” – This may be an allusion to Zechariah 4:14. It would clearly explain the source of their power. Their nearness to the Lord shows their readiness to hear His voice and serve Him in whatever He requires or requests of them.

11:5 – **“if anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die.”**

“fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies” – God once again will use literal fire to protect those He has called to speak to His people. Interestingly, James and John requested this ability with a vindictive spirit during the Lord’s earthly ministry but He refused them their request (Luke 9:54-55).

11:6 – **“These men had power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want.”**

“These men had power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying” – This is similar to the power God had given Elijah (I Kings 17:1,7;18:1; James 5:17,18).

“and they have power to . . . as often as they want” – Moses had to wait for the command of God. These witnesses will themselves determine what time is right for any plague to come.

11:7 – **“Now when they had finished their testimony, the beast that comes from the Abyss will attack them and overpower and kill them.”**

“finished their testimony” – The word **“finished”** tells us that they will complete their goal. They were not killed prematurely.

“the beast” – This is the first mention of **“the beast.”** Our thoughts go back to the prophet Daniel in chapter 7 where the four successive empires are symbolized as beasts. The fourth beast had ten horns out of which grew another horn which was greater than the others (Daniel 7:20). It **“made war with the saints and prevailed against them”** (see also Daniel 7:8) **“shall speak words against the Most High and shall wear out [oppress] the saints of the Most High and . . . they shall be given into his hand for a time, two times, and half the time”** (Daniel 7:21,25).

Jesus foretold us that *“the abomination that causes desolation standing where it does not belong”* (Mark 13:14) will usher in a time of great persecution. If God doesn’t shorten that time no one will survive (Mark 13:20).

“will attack them” - It is better to be translated *“make war against them.”* It seems to indicate that we are dealing with two witnesses that represent those fighting for God in an intense spiritual conflict. This *“war”* means *“a type of conquest by whatever means, not necessarily by military weapons”* (cf. – Daniel 7:21). It may be speaking of a short time when Jewish public and official testimony will be silenced.

11:8 – *“Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.”*

“figuratively called Sodom and Egypt” – These figuratively stand for:

1. **Sodom** – Wickednesses
2. **Egypt** – Oppression

Both of these cities felt God’s judgment. Many commentators refer to the *“great city”* as Jerusalem because it was there that *“their Lord was crucified.”* Yet all other references point to Rome (16:19;17:18;18:10,16,18,19,21). It may well be that John is using Rome as a symbol for universal dominion and oppression of God’s people.

11:9 – *“For three and a half days men from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial.”*

“men from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial” – Only since the technology of satellite communication could this be done (ie. - CNN). It will probably be used as a sign of triumph. Burial was and still is a very important act among Jewish people (cf. – I Samuel 31:8–13). It has always been a shameful act not to bury the dead.

11:10 – *“The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth.”*

“will celebrate by sending each other gifts” – This is a perverse counterpart of the Jewish feast of Purim a *“day for gladness and feasting . . . a day on which they send choice portions to one another . . . and gifts to the poor”* (Esther 9:19,22). This also parallels the time of Christ during His crucifixion and burial when the disciples were told they would *“weep and mourn, while the world rejoices”* (John 16:20).

“these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth” – Faithful preaching is never soothing to an unrepented heart.

11:11 – ***“But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them.”***

“and they stood on their feet” – It is often noted that John continues to speak in the past tense. We have no record of this event ever taking place throughout history. It reminds us of Ezekiel 37 (“The Valley of Dry Bones”). Since he saw these things taking place before his eyes he uses both the past and present tense in describing the events that unfold.

“and terror struck those who saw them” – Since murder is man’s last resort, what can be done with those who rise from the dead? The resurrection is our assurance of God’s ultimate authority over life and death. The world has no way of dealing with a resurrected being.

11:12 – ***“Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, ‘Come up here.’ And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on.”***

“Then they heard a loud voice from heaven” – There is no such thing as a secret/silent rapture (cf. - I Thessalonians 4:16-17).

“And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on” – During the Lord’s ascension His disciples looked on (Acts 1:9-11). Here the enemies of God will view the ascension of the two witnesses.

11:13 – ***“At that very hour there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city collapsed. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.”***

“a tenth of the city collapsed” – Even though this will be a severe earthquake, there will be a limited effect upon the city. We may wonder whether it will be the earthquake or the ascension that will catch more of their attention.

“the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven” – This will be true repentance and not merely remorse. It will be a change from the normal hardening of their hearts. It will probably begin a Jewish revival.

11:14 – ***“The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming soon.”*** – These woes will be so severe that there will be a clear indication of when they pass.

THE SEVENTH TRUMPET
The Third Woe
Revelation 11:15-19

We have been waiting since Revelation 8:13 for this third woe to take place. The blowing of the seventh trumpet proclaims Christ's long-awaited public reign. Along with it John's focus returns to heaven. Before we witness the results of "*the rise of the antichrist*" we will witness the revelation of "*the reign of Christ.*"

Just as the breaking of the seventh seal began the sounding of the seven trumpets, now the sounding of the seventh trumpet will begin the outpouring of the seven bowls/vials upon the earth.

11:15 - "*The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever."*

"*The seventh angel sounded his trumpet*" - John now summarizes what is still to come with the remainder of this chapter.

"*and there were loud voices in heaven*" - These next verses quite often use the aorist tense of the verbs which note that without question these events will take place not that they have already happened. Its interesting that the shouting begins even before the final victory takes place. These voices are made up of the host of heaven.

"*The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ*" - The Church clearly knows that the Lord is their Christ. That is why these voices must be the heavenly host.

Daniel predicted the day when God's kingdom will utterly destroy the kingdoms of this world (Daniel 2:31-45). Other prophets spoke of the day when He would be King over the whole earth (Zechariah 14:9). God's kingdom was never given over to Satan (Matthew 4:8,9). Jesus does reign today in many ways (cf. - Hebrews 7:1,2).

"*and he will reign for ever and ever*" - Even though the Son will be subjected to the Father (I Corinthians 15:28), He will share in this eternal reign. The word "*he*" is singular showing the unity of their reign.

11:16 - *“And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God,”*

“And the twenty-four elders” - See the note on 4:4.

“who were seated on their thrones before God” - The last time we have them mentioned they were kneeling in praise and worship before the throne (7:11).

“fell on their faces and worshiped God” - Their normal position was one of being seated on their thrones before God but it is not unusual to find them also on their faces before God (4:10; 5:8,14; 19:4).

11:17 - *“saying: ‘We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign.’”*

“saying: ‘We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty’” - Once again thanksgiving is a predominant theme from the lips of the elders.

“They gave thanks for three special blessings: That Christ **reigns supremely** (Revelation 11:17), that He **judges righteously** (Revelation 11:18), and that He **rewards graciously** (Revelation 11:18).”

Warren W. Wiersbe
“The Bible Exposition Commentary”
Vol 2, p. 600

“the One who is and who was” - Notice that the phrase *“and who is to come”* is not included. The fact is at this time it will not be needed because The Lord God Almighty will have come to reign forever (cf. - 1:4; 16:5) and time will seem to vanish into eternity.

“because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign” - There are times in the history of the church that it has appeared that God’s throne was empty. The fact is that Jesus has been given all authority to reign and has done so for thousands of years (Matthew 28:18).

11:18 - *“The nations were angry; and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great— and for destroying those who destroy the earth.”*

“The nations were angry; and your wrath has come.” - It is clear that God will set up His eternal kingdom against a defiant world (Psalm 2). Even though the nations will rage and the rulers will take counsel against God, they will not succeed.

“and your wrath has come” - There are two words used for ***“anger”*** in the Greek language. One is ***“thumos”*** which means ***“rage or passionate anger”*** while the other is ***“orgé”*** which means ***“indignation, a settled attitude of wrath.”*** The latter is used here.

“The time has come for judging the dead” - There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under heaven to take place (Ecclesiastes 3:3; 8:6; Galatians 4:4).

“and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name” - The office of the prophet is highly respected in this book (10:7; 11:10,18; 16:6; 18:20,24; 22:6,9). It could be said that it replaces the office of the apostle which is only mentioned once (18:20).

“and for destroying those who destroy the earth” - God repays people for what they do (II Thessalonians 1:6,7). Those who destroy others can expect to receive an outpouring of God’s wrath upon them (Romans 2:5). Yet this word takes on a different meaning here.

The word for ***“destroy”*** carries different meanings which are seen here. The first means ***“to destroy completely”*** while the other refers to those who ***“corrupt morally”*** or lead people into moral depravity. God will destroy those who deprave mankind through their moral corruption.

11:19 - ***“Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm.”***

“and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant” - The chapter began with a temple on earth and here we end with God’s temple in heaven.

“the ark of his covenant” - It symbolized the ever-abiding presence of God among His people. We have no record of the ark after the invasion by Nebuzaradan in II Kings 25:8-10. There is a record in II Maccabees 2:4-8 that states that Jeremiah took it along with the Tent of Meeting and the altar of incense and hid them in a cave in Mount Nebo which cannot be substantiated. It has not been brought forward in order to prove its existence.

“And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm” - Thunder and lightning have often appeared as symbols of divine anger (8:5; 16:21). Earthquakes are a common occurrence in this book (6:12; 8:5; 11:13; 16:18) as well as hail (8:7; 16:21).

THE WOMAN AND THE DRAGON
PART I
Revelation 12:1-9

Chapter 12 marks a major division in the Book of Revelation. John sees this as the underlying cause of the great persecution that is directed toward God's people. Jesus warned us,

“Remember the words I spoke to you: ‘No servant is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you.”

John 15:20

This chapter highlights the worst wave of anti-Semitism that the world has ever observed. Although the crucial battle was won at Calvary, the struggle still goes on. It's like the after effects of a war. This intense struggle of our defeated foe will bring about a severe tribulation. The outcome is certain.

- A. God destroys our enemies – Chapters 15 – 19
- B. God rewards His Saints – Chapters 20 – 22

Seven main characters are noted in this battle

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------|
| 1. The Radiant Woman | 12:1 |
| 2. The Dragon | 12:3 |
| 3. The Man-child | 12:5 |
| 4. Michael the archangel | 12:7 |
| 5. The Seed of the Woman | 12:7 |
| 6. The First Beast | 13:1 |
| 7. The Second Beast | 13:11 |

12:1 - “A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head.”

“A great and wondrous sign” - The word for “*sign*” speaks of a great spectacle pointing toward a concluding event. It refers to the miracles of Jesus most of the time in John's gospel. Some see it as pointing to a significant person rather than to a significant event (Morris).

“*in heaven*” - This limits any weird interpretations that point to these events as happening on earth.

“a woman” - There are a number of different interpretations of who this woman represents:

1. Some see her as Mary the mother of Jesus (Catholicism). In 1678 the Spanish artist Murillo painted **“Mystery of the Immaculate Conception.”** It depicted a woman clothed with the sun. He did not show the moon or the stars. It has been used to teach of Mary’s bodily assumption into heaven.

2. Mary Baker Eddy said it represented herself. She taught the **“manchild”** was the birthing of Christian Science. She believed the **“dragon”** represented our mortal mind, attempting to destroy her new religion.

3. It is the Church of Christ – (Ladd).

4. It is faithful Israel – (Morris, Walvord, LaHaye, Mounce).

There are four different women pictured in the Book of Revelation:

1. Jezebel, the high priestess of paganism – 2:20
2. The woman sitting on the scarlet beast as the high priestess of apostasy – Chapter 17
3. The Lamb’s bride or the true Church – 19:7
4. True Israel – as in this text

“clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet” -

“She comes standing on the O.T. revelation of reflected light and clothed with the N.T. revelation which is as the sun shining in his strength.”

Torrance

“and a crown of twelve stars” - These possibly represent the 12 patriarchs or the 12 tribes of Israel. They are symbolic like that of Joseph’s dream (Genesis 37:9–11).

12:2 – “She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth.”

“cried out in pain as she was about to give birth” - Israel has often had **“birth pains”** (Isaiah 26:17; 66:7–8).

12:3 – “Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads.”

“an enormous red dragon” - There is no doubt who this is (ie.-- the devil or Satan - cf. vs 9). The colour red may speak of his murderous (bloodshed) acts. -- John 8:44 (cf.- the whore is also depicted in scarlet - 17:3).

Other O. T. references . . .

1. Leviathan is Egypt – Psalm 74:14
2. Assyria and Babylon – Isaiah 27:1
3. Pharaoh – Ezekiel 29:3-5
4. Behemoth - Job 40:18
5. Rahab - Psalm 89:10

“and ten horns” - cf. Daniel 7:7,24. This speaks of great power. No one has ever or will be able to kill the devil. When defeated in one place, he will simply rise up in another. That is why it is so important to fight our battles never on own and only with the help of God.

“seven crowns on his heads” - The word for **“crowns”** is **“diademata”** and not the wreaths of victory **“stephanos.”** These seven crowns speak of his presumptuous claim of victory over the King of kings and Lord of lords on whose head are many diadems (Revelation 19:12,16). The dragon is seen as immensely powerful and exercising sovereignty. All his wisdom (Ezekiel 28:12) will be no match for God even though he is called by many powerful titles (John 12:31; II Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2).

12:4 – “His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born.”

“His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth” - This reminds us of Antiochus Epiphanies as identified in Daniel 8:10 as the little horn who casts some of the stars down and tramples on them. One-third is a significant minority. This is not likely referring to the initial casting out from heaven of the one-third fallen angels.

“devour her child” - This explains why Jesus faced such violent opposition.

- a). King Herod killing babies (Matthew 2:16)
- b). Crucifixion

Consider also:

- a). Cain and Abel (Genesis 4)
- b). Egyptian bondage (Exodus 1,2)
- c). Decree of Haman (Esther 3:8-15)
- d). Mohammedanism
- e). Dark Ages

The “*child*” here can only mean Jesus – not the church.

“At this point, one may ask why we use these text to discuss past, present and future history. The answer is simple. This scene we are about to witness speaks of the entire age long conflict from beginning to end. Its details are squeezed into these few verses before us. The same devil who attempted to destroy the woman’s [Israel’s] Son in centuries past (Genesis 3:15) is now about to strikeout against the woman herself via the greatest anti-Semitic purge in history. Hitler’s murderous and barbaric attempt at Jewish annihilation will seem like a Sunday school picnic compared to this Holocaust!”

Jack Van Impe
“*Revelation Revealed*”
p. 131

12:5 – “*She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron sceptre. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne.*”

“*She gave birth to a son*” - This is referring to the incarnation or birth of Jesus Christ.

“*who will rule all the nations with an iron sceptre*” - The word “*rule*” is literally “*to shepherd.*” It speaks of an absolute authority. The “*iron sceptre*” speaks of firmness but not tyranny.

“*snatched up*” - This word can also mean “*caught up*” which speaks of the ascension of Christ. No details are given from between Christ’s birth to His resurrection. Satan is defeated not only by God’s birth but also by His ascension and exaltation. Between verses five and six there is around 2000 years of history.

12:6 – *“The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days.”*

“The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God” - Some see this as a reflection of the Palestinian church fleeing to Pella at the outbreak of the Jewish war in AD. 66. It may be speaking of another wilderness experience (ie. - Sinai Peninsula), but it seems more like a spiritual refuge. It could be a time of spiritual detachment from the world. This is not the first time that this has taken place.

“Come out from among them and be separate.”

II Corinthians 6:17

“My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.”

John 17:5

“1,260 days” - God will protect His Church during times when His witness is to go forth. He will also allow persecution to prevail for a period of time as well (11:2,3; cf.13:5). God has promised to ultimately protect His people in the midst of even devious plots to murder them (Isaiah 33:15,16).

12:7 – *“And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back.”*

war in heaven - It is an all out attempt of Satan to regain his position in the presence of God which he lost because of his previous rebellion.

“Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back.” - Here we see Michael’s position as an archangel (Jude 9). He has also been seen as being warlike (Daniel 10:13, 21). The *“angels”* are *“messengers”* making it clear to Satan that he is a defeated foe. Satan will try to once again to foolishly lay claim to being an archangel.

12:8 – *“ But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven.”*

“lost their place in heaven” - Satan continues to make claim to territory in heaven. From this time on he will no longer be able to return. He has no ground to stand on. He will have lost it forever.

12:9 – *“The great dragon was hurled down – that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.”*

“The great dragon was hurled down” - Jesus saw this event happening earlier in time (Luke 10:18). The title of *“dragon”* is used throughout this section.

“that ancient serpent” - This reminds us of the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:1–5).

“the devil” - The word *“devil”* (*“diablos”* - I Peter 5:8) means *“slanderer.”* There is little difference between an accuser and a slanderer.

“or Satan” - The word *“Satan”* means *“adversary.”* During John’s day there was a well-known and well-hated figure according to William Barclay called *“delator”* who was a paid informer. He made his living accusing people before the authorities.

“hurled to the earth” - This explains why the violent opposition will begin. Satan’s time is limited. Satan’s demise began when he was cast out of the third heaven (Isaiah 14:12-14).

*“Now is the time for judgment on this earth; now the prince of this world will be driven out.
32. But I, when I am lifted out from the earth, will draw all men to myself.”*

John 12:31,32

Everything mentioned in this chapter is a result of the sounding of the 7th trumpet (11:15).

THE WOMAN AND THE DRAGON
PART II
Revelation 12:10-17

We should not be surprised that directly after the expulsion of Satan from heaven that we read about a sudden outburst of praise. The inhabitants of heaven enjoy praise and worship. It doesn't take much to bring about times of enthusiastic praise in heaven.

12:10 – *“Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: ‘Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before God day and night has been hurled down.’”*

“a loud voice – Once again, the speaker is not identified. Some have suggested that it is a combination of voices of God's people (possibly martyred saints) because it mentions *“our brothers”* (brethren). But angels also call men their brothers (Revelation 22:9). Yet it is more probable that these are the martyrs who will lead during this time of praise.

‘Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ’ – This is only possible because of the fact of Christ's death, burial and resurrection (5:9; 12:11). Notice that these three entities (salvation, power, authority) belong to God.

“the accuser of our brothers – We need to remember that the name *“devil”* is *“diabolos”* or *“slanderer.”* His accusations come with a slanderous tone. We see this type of action in other scriptures as well (Job 1:6 – 12 ;2:1–6). These accusations have not stopped *“day and night.”* His accusations find no foothold by virtue of Christ's death (Romans 8:34,35).

Paul writes (Titus 2:3) to encourage the older women to teach the younger women *“not to be slanderers”* or not to literally be *“she-devils.”* Slandering is a form of lying that God hates (Proverbs 6:16-19).

It is like a legal battle in which the opposition stands as counsel on behalf of the defendant. The loser of the court case is disallowed from making any further legal stand.

“has been hurled down” – Here the devil will get a taste of his own medicine (Revelation 12:4; cf. 12:9).

12:11 – *“They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.”*

“They overcame him – Not only will he be defeated by Michael, but also by the faithful believers. It is emphasized that *“they”* did it. His cunning trickery will not end in victory. It is a spiritual battle which is won even through martyrdom will take place.

“by the blood of the Lamb – This will be the primary bases for his defeat. It was the blood that established the Lamb’s right to reign.

“and by the word of their testimony – Their testimony link them up with the work of Jesus Christ. The redeemed bear the witness of their Redeemer.

“they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death” – This verse gives a foundation for the reason behind the martyrdom. They loved their Lord more than life itself. This quality of devotion is required of all of us (Luke 14:26; John 12:25). To be willing to die for our faith is the ultimate test of our faithfulness to God.

12:12 – *“Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short.”*

“you heavens – The word *“heaven”* is used 52 times in the Book of Revelation but this is the only time that the plural form is used. Perhaps it indicates that the stars in heaven will join in this festive praise (Isaiah 44:23; 49:13).

“who dwell – The word *“dwell”* (*“skeno”*) originally meant a temporary dwelling (from *“skene”* meaning *“tent.”*). It is also translated *“tabernacle.”*

“But woe to the earth and the sea” – While the heavens rejoice that Satan is cast down, the earth and the sea receive a great woe. This is not the third woe yet (cf. - 16:1). Satan will begin a concentrated effort of martyrdom hoping that by conquering he may also compel the Israelites to deny their faith. Even though he knows his power is broken and his doom is sure and soon, he will not stop until his final destiny is doomed (Revelation 20:10).

“He is filled with fury” – He will attack with great wrath. His great anger further proves not so much that he is strong, but that he is beaten and being forced into his final corner.

“because he knows that his time is short” – This is speaking of *“a suitable time”* (cf. - 1:3; 11:18) not so much that the length is shortened.

12:13 – “When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child.”

“he pursued the woman – This woman represents the true Israel. She gave birth to the Messiah earlier, now she shares hostility against her. The apostle Paul also discovered that in persecuting the church he had actually persecuted Jesus (Acts 9:4–5). Christ does not separate Himself from His people (Matthew 25:45).

The major theme of this paragraph is the persecution of the woman and her seed. It has many parallels in the story of the exodus of the children of Israel. Both speak of the pursuit of the children of Israel. It has interesting parallels in the Bible.

1. Two wings - *“I bore you on eagles wings”* – Exodus 19:4; Deuteronomy 32:11)
2. Drowning children in the Nile river – Exodus 1:22
3. The households of Korah (the earth opened) – Numbers 16:31–33

12:14 – “The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent’s reach .”

“The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle – During times of great persecution, God protects His own. This does not mean that Christians have never died for their faith. But at this time their lives will be spared. If they were not protected they would surely die.

where she would be taken care of – This woman (faithful Israel) will be taken to a **“desert”** place of protection where she will also be **“taken care of”** or nourished (perhaps trained). This will be much like that of Elijah who received miraculous food from God. This will be critical because any trading or purchasing of food during this time will require the mark of the beast for 3 ½ years.

“for a time, times and half a time” – This is another way of saying 3 ½ years, 42 months or 1260 days.

12:15 – “Then from his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river, to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the torrent.”

“the serpent spewed water like a river – This is an O. T. metaphor which describes an overwhelming evil (*“the floods of ungodliness”* – Psalm 18:4 [ASV]; *“when you pass through the waters I will be with you.”* – Isaiah 43:2). This river of deceit will lie in contrast to the River of Life that flows as clear as crystal in the New Jerusalem.

“with the torrent – There is no doubt that this phase of persecution will be with great intensity but it will never reach its intended victim.

12:16 – ***“But the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that the dragon had spewed out of his mouth.”***

“But the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth – Israel’s help once again comes supernaturally from God. This proves that the gates of hell are not able to prevail against God’s people (Matthew 16:18).

12:17 – ***“Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring – those who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.”***

“the rest of her offspring” – When the dragon fails at this attempt, he will redirect his assault at others of an Israelite background (perhaps the 144,000 sealed ones of chapter 7). He will be unable to attack them all at one time. His result will be equal in effect – he will fail.

13:1 – ***“And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea.”***

This verse is often included as the last verse of chapter 12. It shows that the dragon will stand at the sea (probably speaking of a *“sea of humanity”*) after being defeated. He will then be ready to call forth the beast (or anti-christ) to begin his final persecution.

of the sea – The sea is a place of restlessness. It is therefore appropriate to describe humanity in such terms.

THE BEAST OUT OF THE SEA
The Antichrist
Revelation 13:1-10

We just looked at what John saw in the heavens as the intense anger of Satan unleashed against the nation of Israel. Satan will no longer be allowed to return to the heavens. He therefore will choose to direct all his anger against the faithful remnant of Israel.

This chapter shows us whom he will use to accomplish his evil work. With all Christian leadership raptured, there will be no one to stop this evil ruler from accomplishing his work. When we read of the chaotic conditions before the flood of Noah we get an understanding of what will prevail here. This lawlessness has already begun (Matthew 24:12).

In our day, although the enemy has come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord has raised up a standard against him. The secret power (“*mystery*” – KJV) of lawlessness is already at work (II Thessalonians 2:7).

13:1 – “*And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea. And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. He had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns; and on each had a blasphemous name.*”

“*a beast*” – Due to the description of this animal, we are left with no other option but that of recognizing that this is not a literal interpretation. It may be speaking of a religious organization; or perhaps not of a king but a kingdom or perhaps both a king and a kingdom.

Dr. David L. Cooper suggests that it can be likened to a floodlight and the spotlight. When the Holy Spirit focuses on the kingdom he uses a floodlight; but when he looks to the king he uses a spotlight. Therefore, both are most likely described in this portion of Scripture depending upon the context. The dragon goes into the background in order to work out from the beast that he empowers.

“*coming out of the sea*” – The ancient world commonly associated the “*sea*” with things that were evil. It has been suggested that it can also be a symbol of “*disturbed and storming social and political conditions of which tyrannies commonly arise.*” The word “*sea*” is also commonly used to describe a great mass of people. It could also mean the Mediterranean Sea.

“*ten horns*” – We will reserve the main discussion of the heads and horns until chapter 17. The ten horns are similar to those of Daniel 7:7 in which he described the fourth beast. They represented the ten kings that rose out of the fourth kingdom (the Roman Empire). They were originally identifying the Seleucid rulers between Alexander the Great and Antiochus Epiphanes (the little horn).

“and seven heads” – The seven heads could refer to the final (7 being the Biblical number of completion) enemy of the nation of Israel. There were six Roman kings up to the time of John (Domitian was the last king). The seventh king clearly seems to be the antichrist.

A common blasphemy will be sounded out from this final leader. The greatest blasphemy that can ever take place is when someone claims to be God. The Roman emperors often assumed titles of a deity.

- 1. **Augustus** – was paid divine honours. At his death he was proclaimed to be *“one like the gods”*.
- 2. **Nero** – On his coins he was called *“Saviour of the World.”*
- 3. **Domitian** -- was addressed as *“our Lord and God.”*

During Jesus’ temptation He declared to Satan *“you shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve”* (Luke 4:8). To assumed a title of a deity was considered blasphemy. To John the “beast” was no doubt representing the Roman Empire. Yet it was more than just this Empire.

“with ten crowns on his horns” - The **“crowns”** are **“diadems.”** They are on the ten horns because this leadership will conduct its affairs through brutal force.

13:2 – **“The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority.”**

“that looked like a leopard” – cf. Daniel 7:6

“which looked like a bear” – cf. Daniel 7:5

“ was like a lion” – cf. Daniel 7:4

John’s order is reverse of that found in the book of Daniel. John looked back in time while Daniel looked ahead.

Daniel described:	A lion	➤	Babylonian Empire
	A bear	➤	Media/Persia Empire
	A leopard	➤	Grecian Empire
	A beast	➤	Roman Empire

“The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority” – It is interesting that through the eyes of man these governments and kingdoms are depicted as a great image (Daniel 2). On the other hand, God sees them as a beast (Daniel 7). This beast will work under the power and authority of Satan. This final authority will be demonstrated through a power that will incorporate all the elements of Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome.

13:3 – *“One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was astonished and followed the beast.”*

“One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound” – According to 13:14 it will come about by the stroke of a sword. The beast will survive this death stroke and the whole world in their amazement will turn and worship the beast.

Some teach that this refers to Nero who took his life during the month of June 68 AD. Many people thought his death was false. For 20 years after his death pretenders arose claiming to be Nero. Two men even received recognition in Parthia. At the end of the first century they stopped believing Nero was still alive. They then began to think that he would rise again from the dead.

The statement that one of the heads had *“a fatal wound”* was also used of the Lamb in Revelation 5:6 (*“had been slain”*). Here again Satan will continue his abomination of the story of Jesus’ death burial and resurrection.

13:4 – *“Men worshipped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they worshipped the beast and asked, ‘Who is like the beast? Who can make war against him?’”*

“Men worshipped the dragon” – This is the reason for the recovery – worship. This is the first time in scripture that Satan is credited for raising anyone from the dead. The world will believe that it will be futile to resist this beast. It is not his moral greatness but rather his brute force that will command this worship.

“Who is like the beast?” – cf. – Exodus 15:11

13:5 – *“The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty – two months.”*

“The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies” – Satan has always led the way for blasphemy of God. This blasphemy will lead its unsuspecting followers into Satanic worship. It’s interesting that Jesus was crucified for supposedly being a blasphemer. This beast will be worshipped under the same conditions.

“forty – two months” – The antichrist (beast) *“was given”* only 42 months to carry out his evil work. He is always controlled by God. He will work like the little horn of Daniel 7.

“A mouth that spoke boastfully.” – Daniel 7:8,20

“He will speak against the Most High” – Daniel 7:25

“He will exalt and magnify himself about every god and will save unheard-of things against the God of gods.” – Daniel 11:36

13:6 – “He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven.”

“his dwelling place” – This *“tabernacle”* can either mean God’s holy temple or else those in whom God dwells (cf. 21:3; 7:15).

13:7 – “He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation.”

“He was given power . . . he was given authority” – Universal authority will be given to the beast. This universal kingdom is already being set up in the spiritual realm as well as in the natural realm.

13:8 – “All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast – all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.”

“All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast” – Once the antichrist sets up his religious control over mankind he will demand worship. The same type of temptation that Jesus faced will reappear (Matthew 4:8–10).

“all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb” – A true test to tell whether our name is included or not in this book is to see whom we worship. It is imperative that we do not just give lip service to God. Their destiny will be established if they don’t repent.

Those whose names are found in the Book of Life will be secure in God. Moses spoke of this divine register (Exodus 32:32 – 33). Paul spoke of this book (Philippians 4:3). The Psalmist recorded it (Psalm 69:28). It is referred to six times in the book of Revelation (3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12,15; 21:27). Here and in 21:27 it is said that this book belongs to the Lamb.

13:9 – “He who has an ear, let him hear.”

“let him hear” – This is the contemporary way of saying *“Now here this!”* (2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22; cf. Matthew 11:15; Mark 4:9). This alerts the reader to what follows.

13:10 – “If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed. This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints.”

“If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go.” – The first part of this first teaches us to accept some realities of life. Some of God’s elect may go into captivity (cf. Jeremiah 15:2).

“If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed” – The second part deals with requital. We are not to use violence against violence (cf. – Matthew 26:52). We cannot establish our faith through violence. This attitude of humble submission is known as the patience and faith of the saints.

This will be a very difficult time for the God’s elect. There will definitely be those who will die for their allegiance to the Lamb.

THE BEAST OUT OF THE EARTH
The False Prophet
Revelation 13:11-18

Our world is waiting for an authoritative figure – a religious leader. In the world of many doubts, people are looking for someone who can speak on ethical, religious and political questions.

Christians know that God has already spoken on these issues, but the “*spirit of this world*” is opposed to God’s inspired Word. The world therefore, will look elsewhere for its answers. There is a great possibility that this second beast (or false prophet) is already in our world preparing for his inaugural address. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. God’s Word has prophesied the definite coming of this false leader. No student of the Bible can deny that the shadow of the antichrist and false prophet is already increasing over our earth.

The biggest question is who is this person or thing that is referred to. Is the antichrist a person or a system?

COMPARE

➤ Christ is a person	➤ antichrist will be a person
➤ Christ manifested Himself	➤ antichrist will manifest himself
➤ through an authentic body of Christians	➤ through an apostate religious system
➤ True Christ – True Church	➤ false christ – false church
➤ Based upon God’s authoritative Word	➤ based upon lies and deception (I John 2:22)

13:11 – “Then I saw another beast, coming out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb but he spoke like a dragon.”

“*Then I saw another beast*” – There are three main figures in this portion of Scripture. Each passes power onto the next one.

1. The dragon, Satan, Lucifer
2. The first beast – the antichrist
3. The second beast – the false prophet

Read Revelation 16:13; 19:20; 20:10

“coming out of the earth” – The antichrist will come out of the sea probably meaning a disturbed state of social and political systems. This beast will come from the *“earth or the land”* which is probably speaking of the land of Palestine. Some scholars believe that he may well be a Jew (Daniel 11:37).

“He had two horns like a lamb” – This compares with the antichrist who will have ten horns (13:1). The two horns of this second beast represent power under the disguise of gentleness (a lamb). This will most likely be a form of religious power. Jesus gave us a warning about this type of leader.

“Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.”

Matthew 7:15

We need to beware of universal secular humanism which is clearly a religion that is growing in our day. This second beast will have a spiritual voice of authority in a religious setting.

13:12 – *“He exercised all authority of the first beast on his behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed.”*

“and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast” – This second beast will exercise the authority that he has been given. Here we see that he will have religious loyalty combined with political power. This combination will appear unbeatable.

13:13 – *“And he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of men.”*

“And he performed great and miraculous signs” – We must judge (discern) the source of every miracle (II Thessalonians 2:9–12). We need to be careful about having an unhealthy desire after miracles and wonders. Satan has already begun his working of counterfeit miracles (Deuteronomy 13:1–5). Jesus warned us that even the elect could be seduced or led astray (Mark 13:22).

“fire to come down from heaven” – This fire will not intended to destroy – it will rather be another attempt to deceive. It will arouse admiration.

13:14 – *“Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he deceived the inhabitants of the earth. He ordered them to set up an image in honour of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived.”*

“he deceived the inhabitants of the earth” – Deception IS the ongoing work of Satan (12:9; 20:3, 8). It will be a shared deception (19:20). All those who are unregenerated will fall into this deception – none will be able to escape its grip! This needs to come as a warning to the elect (Mark 13:22).

“set up an image” – This is in direct opposition to God’s Ten Commandments (#1, #2 see Exodus 20:3–6; Mark 12:30).

13:15 – *“He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed.”*

“He was given power” – This once again speaks of his delegated authority.

“to give breath to the image of the first beast” – Simon Magnus (Acts 8:9 ff) was reputed to have power to make images speak. Some considerate this to be a form of ventriloquism – but this is very unlikely. It will be Satan’s claim to create life in something that was lifeless, but as always it will be deceptive in nature.

“cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed” – Nominal saints will not die for something they do believe. This may account for the apostasy mentioned in II Thessalonians 2:3.

“We are ready to welcome any man as our Messiah who will lead us back to our land and established us there in prosperity.”

Max Nordau
Speaking at a Zionist Congress

13:16 – *“He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead,”*

“small and great, rich and poor, free and slave” – This is a way of stressing the fact that all of mankind will be included (11:18; 19:5,18; 20:12).

“to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead” – No one will be exempt from having to receive this mark. During times of past slavery, people were often branded. Soldiers were also branded to identify them with their favourite general. Religious tattoos are still widespread in the ancient world. Jews were branded with an ivy leaf under Ptolemy Philopator.

This could also refer to a seal that was attached to commercial documents and stamped with the name and date of the emperor. It is Satan's counterpart of Christ's seal of protection.

13:17 – *“so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name.”*

“one could buy or sell” – It will be a total prohibition, an economic boycott. Anyone who opposes the beast will starve to death.

“Think of all the great religious leaders who have come out of the East. Moses arose in the East; Buddha; Confucius; Jesus and Mohammed have all arose in the East. And we say to you people in the West, with confidence, that if you restore the Jew to his ancestral home it will not be long until we will give you another great leader who will perhaps transcend all who have gone before.”

Dr. Mosinson
Hebrew College of Jaffa
While touring America on
behalf of the Zionist Movement

“unless he had the mark” – Some believe this may refer to the ancient practice of gematria (1st nine letters 1-9; next nine letters 10-20 and so on). Since there were not enough letters in the Greek alphabet, certain obsolete letters and signs were used. (i.e. - “Iesous” or Jesus is 888 I = 10; H = 8; Σ = 200; O = 70; Υ = 400; Σ = 200).

13:18 – *“This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number. His number is 666.”*

“This calls for wisdom” – There is no consensus as to whom or what John meant by this statement.

“If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number” – We are to count up or calculate the name. The commonly accepted answer of who this represented during John's day was Nero Caesar. Some see it as a symbolism – *“failure upon failure upon failure.”* One writer sees it as the trinity of imperfection – Torrace

The evil trinity of 666 always falls short of the Holy Trinity 777. Some have used the name Hitler to represent this name because the letters of Hitler's name also totals to 666 using gematria. There is no doubt that these kinds of evil men will be represented in this number. In more than 1900 years of guessing, we have not come any closer to the truth of whom or what this number represents. We will only know for sure when he makes his inaugural entrance.

LESSON 29

Until this time arrives we need to be vigilant in our sensitivity to what is of God and what is not of God. The closer we remain to God, the less likely we will become deceived by the spirit of antichrist already at work in our world.

THE LAMB AND THE 144,000
The First Vision
Revelation 14:1-5

Chapter 14 continues with the interlude between the 7 trumpets and the 7 bowls/vials. Here we deal with seven visions of which each are complete in and of themselves. Both the antichrist and the false prophet will have taken their position of deceit the events of this chapter unfolds. After reading of the rise the antichrist to world leadership we need to once again be encouraged that God is in control. We must be assured that the wicked will fall under divine judgement. God's elect will be spared.

Anyone who is concerned with proper Biblical interpretation must always keep in mind the time period and location of any events that are recorded. This portion of Scripture is one that has brought about a few different viewpoints that have seriously affected a person's interpretation. Therefore, we must examine these viewpoints before proceeding.

14:1 - *"Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads."*

"Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb" - It is important throughout this book that we keep our focus upon the Lamb of God who came to take away the sin of the world (John 1:29). It is this same Lamb who will be honoured at the marriage feast that is described in Revelation 19.

Mount Zion

First View - Seen Symbolically

Mount Zion is a place of deliverance and victory (Psalm 2:6,7; Joel 2:32; Hebrews 12:22). It is symbolically seen as the heavenly Jerusalem - a city above (Galatians 4:26). [Mounce, Ladd, LaHaye, Morris].

Second View - Seen Literally

Mount Zion is on earth. The Lamb will return to the city that once rejected Him. It is the famous location that King David built his palace on.

144,000

Two Views

1. Same as 7:4. In 7:14 they were sealed and here they are saved (None have been lost). They represent the total body of the redeemed.
2. Different then 7:4.

**A COMPARISON OF THE 144,000 IN CHAPTER 7
AND THE 14,000 IN CHAPTER 14**

144,000 in 7:1-9

144,000 in 14:1-5

vv. 1-3 - A scene on earth

v.1 - A scene in heaven. The Lamb is with them on Mount Zion.

v. 3 - Servants of our God, in their foreheads

v.1b. - *“Having his name and the name of his Father sealed foreheads” (ASV)*

v.4 - 144,000 of all the tribes of Israel

v.3 - Sing a new song before the elders and the four living creatures which only they knew.

vv. 5-8 They represent 12,000 from each tribe

v.3b - *“Who were redeemed from the earth.”*

v. 4 - *“These are those who did not defile themselves with women; for they kept themselves pure (virgins).”*

v. 4 - *“They follow the Lamb wherever he goes”*

v. 4b - *“These were purchased (redeemed) from among men.”*

v. 4c - *“The were . . . offered as firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.”*

v. 5 - *“No lie was found in their mouths.”*

v. 5b - *“They were blameless.”*

The Similarities of the Two Groups

Two basic reasons are usually used for thinking that the two groups are similar: (1) both groups total 144,000, and (2) both groups have something written on their foreheads.

The Differences of the Two Groups

1. The Revelation 7 group is specifically Jewish – 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes. The Revelation 14 group comes *“from the earth”* (14:3) and *“from among men”* (14:4).
2. The Revelation 7 group is sealed with the Father’s seal. The Revelation 14 group has the name of both the Father and the Son.
3. The scene of the Chapter 7 occurs on the earth. Chapter 14 takes place in heaven, but only halfway through the tribulation. This can be explained in that the 144,000 witnesses of Revelation 7, like their converts of verse 9, are slain and under the altar by the middle of the Tribulation Period. Thus they are described in chapter 14 as before the throne, in their spirit or “soulish” state – *“absent from the body, and . . . present with the Lord.”* (II Corinthians 5:8).
- 4 The additional qualifications for being a member of this group, found in verses 4 and 5, are not recorded in Chapter 7. The 144,000 of chapter 7 are *“servants of our God,”* the 144,000 chapter 14 are *“redeemed from among men, the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb.”* This indicates that their selection was not for the propagation of the Gospel on earth during the Tribulation, but for a special position at the throne of God before Him and the Lord Jesus Christ.
5. Verse 4 tells us *“these are they who follow the Lamb wherever He goeth.”* which could well indicate that as a select group, they had been faithful in completely abandoning their will to the will of Christ during their lifetimes.

Tim LaHaye
“Revelation Illustrated and Made Plain”
Lamplighter Books, p. 192

14:2 - “And I heard a sound from heaven like the roar of rushing waters and like the loud peal of thunder. The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps.”

“I heard a sound from heaven” - John uses three similes (like) to describe this sound. This sound will be coming from heaven.

1. *“like the roar or of rushing waters”* (cf. 1:15; Ezekiel 1:24). It is like the voice of God approaching in His glory (Ezekiel 43:2).
2. *“like a loud peal of thunder”* (cf. 6:1; 19:6)

3. *“like that of harpists playing their harps”* - Here we will have a melody not just a loud noise.

14:3 - *“And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth.”*

“new song” - As like the new songs of Psalm 96:1; 98:1; 144:9 the theme will be deliverance. Only those who have paid the price of endurance in their faith will be equipped to join with the choir in this anthem of victory.

“redeemed from the earth” - This does not mean that they will be removed from the earth but that they will be separated from its evil onslaught.

14:4 - *“These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among men and offered as firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.”*

They are described in three ways:

A. Virgins who had not defiled themselves with women.

Some see this as:

i). Those who had renounced marriage with its distracting sexual relationship (Matthew 19:12; I Corinthians 7:1,32).

But - God made marriage, and man is not to put it asunder (Matthew 19:4–6). Marriage is used as an illustration of the intimate relationship between Christ and His church (Ephesians 5:31–32).

ii). Others believe that it is rather those who have kept themselves from immoral sexual relationships. (ie. - temple prostitutes at Ephesus).

iii). It is speaking symbolically

a). *“Virgin daughter of Zion”* (II Kings 19:21);
“virgin of Israel” (Jeremiah 18:13); *“pure virgin to Christ”*
 (II Corinthians 11:2)

b). Speaking of the promised bride of Christ (cf. 21: 9) who will keep themselves pure from the pagan world system.

B. “follow the Lamb wherever he goes” - This is not an “*on-again off-again*” experience. John first spoke of their fidelity while here he speaks of their discipleship. They were redeemed or purchased at a price – the blood of the Lamb.

C. “firstfruits” - This speaks of their sacrificial offering. The first fruits were holy unto the LORD (Deuteronomy 18:8; Joshua 7:11,20,21; Romans 11:16). They were kept for God alone.

14:5 - “*No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless.*”

“*No lie*” - The pagan world “*exchanged the truth of God for a lie*” (Romans 1:25). Perfect honesty is a clear sign of a servant of the Lord (Isaiah 53:9). No habitual liar (either by words or actions) will be accepted into heaven. They will be cast into the Lake of Fire for an eternal death - the second death (Revelation 21:8).

THE THREE ANGELS & THE FALL OF BABYLON
The Second Vision
Revelation 14:6-13

There has been much speculation that the ancient city of Babylon in Mesopotamia will be rebuilt. Saddam Hussein began rebuilding the city until the city of Baghdad, Iraq was captured on April 10, 2003 and this tyrannical leader was dethroned. He considered himself as the second King Nebuchadnezzar. He never completed the rebuilding the ancient city. He came to the same outcome as others who have disobeyed the Lord. Remember that there was an oath placed upon anyone who would attempt to rebuild Jericho.

*“At the cost of his first born son will he lay its
 foundation at the cost of his youngest will he set up
 its gates.”*

Joshua 6:26

According to I King 16:34, Heil of Bethel paid the consequence for disobeying God’s word. I believe there will be a great cost to anyone who also attempts to rebuild the ancient city of Babylon as well. It is to remain an uninhabited place (Isaiah 13:19–22).

14:6 - “Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth – to every nation, tribe, language in people.”

“another angel” - No angel is previous mentioned in this passage. The closest one is found in 11:15 which is too far away (also in 12:7). There is no clear reason for using this term. There are five more angels mentioned after this.

“eternal (everlasting) gospel” - This should indicate the same gospel that has always been preached (Galatians 1:6–9). It is the *“gospel of the circumcision”* (Jew) and the *“gospel of the uncircumcision”* (Gentile).

“to those who live on the earth” - God has previously given adequate warning prior to His acts of judgment (ie. - Noah, Sodom and Gomorrah, Nineveh/Jonah). Some believe that this indicates that salvation will take place among the Gentiles throughout the tribulation.

NOTE – There is no indication that any Jewish believer will be any more successful at proclaiming the gospel to the Gentiles than was Noah or Lot. The term “unregenerated mankind” is often used to describe this lost condition. There is also nowhere in Scripture where an angel is responsible for leading someone to Christ. Although they are often involved in administering judgment toward those who do not respond to the warning they give on behalf of God.

“Every nation, tribe, language, people” - Some believe this also proves that there will be a time of great salvation among the Gentiles. They believe that this will be a time for those who have never heard the message before to repent. There is no record of any response to this proclamation (cf. - I Peter 3:19). It is one thing to preach the message while it is another to have people respond through a repentant heart as both Noah and Lot found out.

Those of Jewish descent have been found in nations, tribes, languages and people. This does not have to be limited to Gentiles.

14:7 - “He said in the loud voice, ‘Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and all the springs of water.’”

“Fear God and . . . Worship God” - There must be a reverence of God before true worship can begin. It is based upon recognizing God as the Creator of the earth (in total contrast to the ‘spirit of the age’ – based upon evolution that worships man and all he has created – Romans 1:21).

These people who repent will have to make a total change of heart as well as a new commitment, which is very unlikely. They are simply told once again what they should be doing and ultimately what they will be judged upon for not doing. Notice that there is no invitation to believe but only to fear God who will bring about their impending judgement.

14:8 – “A second angel followed and said, – ‘Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries.’”

“A second angel followed” - This is the second of six angels to be mentioned. Each angel in succession will add to the dramatic scenes that will begin to be unveiled. The message that this angel will bring clearly shows that there will be no repentance to the proclamation of the first angel.

“Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great” – This is the first mention of Babylon in the Book of Revelation. The verb ***“Fallen”*** is repeated twice in the aorist tense in order to emphasize the certainty of its action.

Babylon has always symbolized:

1. Pride of man
2. Heathen city empire (false religion)
3. Community totally opposed to God
4. Idolatry
5. Commercialization that causes men to become materialistic

It is therefore a symbol of the final union of Christendom in a Christless church. It is godlessness that tries to lure men away from the worship of the Creator. Today, it can be clearly seen in secular humanism which has now branched off into the New Age Teachings.

*** The Anglican Magazine according to the Toronto Star (April 29,1989) had to move advertisements of the Vicki Waspe's Jungian psychology seminars to a less prominent location in the magazine due to strong objections. Her teachings on New Age Universalism and pantheism were contrary to God's Word and to many parishioners. ***

“made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries” – The reason for Babylon's original fall was the terrible influence it made on the nations around it. The wine of Babylon is a symbol of not only sexual licentiousness but also of all types of actions that are in direct rebellion to the known will of God.

14:9 – ***“A third angel followed them and said in the loud voice: ‘ If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand,’”***

“A third angel followed them” – The third angel pronounces a much worse fate for those who choose to worship the beast and bear his mark.

14:10 – ***“he, to, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb.***

“He will be tormented” – Although God's people are now suffering temporary persecution, those who follow the beast will suffer eternal judgment.

poured full strength” – The word ***“poured”*** means ***“mixed unmixed.”*** The wine of the day was usually mixed with spices, water etc.. John was saying that God's wrath will be ***“mixed without mixing.”*** It will therefore be prepared without diluting it. It is to be poured out full strength. There will be no evidence of mercy or grace during this time.

“the cup of his wrath” – The word used for ***“wrath”*** (Gr. ***“thumos”***) describes an anger of a more passionate type, like a vehement fury. The word ***“anger”*** (Gr. - ***“orgé”***) represents the type of ***“anger that arises out of a settled disposition or indignation.”*** God will unleash the white heat of His wrath that has been restrained for a long time. This is therefore not some quick reaction of God like that seen in human emotions. It is rather a concise active judgment based upon a chosen condition of rebellion and evil.

“in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb” – There is no indication in the Book of Revelation that the damned ones will suffer in the presence of martyred believers. As the believers were martyred before bloodthirsty crowds; these will agonize before heavenly beings.

14:11 – ***“And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image or for anyone who receives the mark on his name.”***

“for ever and ever” – The punishment of those who are damned will not a temporary measure (cf.- 20:10). This endless trail of smoke will be a constant reminder of the permanence of their misery. Many churches are trying to change this doctrine of hell to appease their people. Jesus spoke more on hell than anyone in the Bible. (Mark 9:44; Luke 16:19–31).

“The usual word describing the fate of the lost in the New Testament is *geenna* or Gehenna, while the intermediate state is referred to by the word *hades* (Old Testament *sheol*). *Geenna* does not appear in the Revelation; *hades* occurs four times where it is practically synonymous with the grave (1:18; 6:8; 20:13,14). The AV badly confuses the situation by translating *hades* in these four passages by the word “*hell*.” In fact, the AV usually translates both *geenna* and *hades* by the word “*hell*,” whereas they have very different meanings.

Geenna comes from the Hebrew *ge-hinnom* which means “*the Valley of Hinnom*” and refers to a ravine south of the city of Jerusalem where in the days of the monarchy apostatizing Jews adopted the cultic practices of Palestine and cremated children in honor of Baal and Molech (II Kings 23:10; II Chronicles 28:3; 33:6; Jeremiah 32:35). Thus the Valley of Hinnom became, in Jewish tradition, a place of destruction by fire. Jeremiah sees the valley transformed into a valley of slaughter (Jeremiah 7:31–32; 19:5–6) in the day of vengeance. Our Lord himself made use of this metaphor to describe the fate of the wicked. He warned his hearers to the employ any measures necessary to remove obstacles to avoid this fate:” it is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go to hell (*geenna*), to the unquenchable fire” (Mark 9:43). Elsewhere, Jesus described the fate of the lost as final separation from God and from Christ (Matthew 7:23; 25:12).”

I. T. Beckwith
“The Apocalypse of John”
 Grand Rapids: Baker Book House
 Reprinted 1967, p.659

14:12 – *“This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God’s commandments and remain faithful to Jesus.”*

“This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints” – God’s saints can stand in the face of great opposition knowing that their troubles are temporary whereas those of their tormenter will be eternal.

In John’s day any steadfast allegiance to Christ involved a rejection of the claims of Caesar and resulted in a widespread martyrdom. This admonition to steadfastness was a warning to those who may have contemplated defecting to beast-worship as well as an encouragement to those who were remaining faithful as they persevered in their faith in God.

14:13 – *“Then I heard a voice from heaven say, ‘ Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’ ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them.’”*

“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on” – This is the second of seven beatitudes (cf. - 1:3; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7,14) also known as the *“Beatitudes of the Martyrs.”*

“they will rest from their labor” –This means labour to the point of weariness due to the harsh treatment they experienced.

“for their deeds will follow them” – It is literally their *“works.”* These would include their endurance, obedience to the commandments of God and faith in Jesus. This is the second beatitude in Revelation (cf. – 1:3; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7,14). Those who toil for the purpose of Jesus will be rewarded greatly.

THE HARVEST OF THE EARTH
The Third Vision
Revelation 14:14-20

The next part of John's vision deals with a vision of harvest upon the earth. John sees the events as they transpire from heaven with respect to earth.

There are two basic opinions toward this action. The first, believes that this is the two-stage reaping that Jesus spoke about ("Sheep and Goats" – Matthew 25:31-46; "Wheat and Tares" – Matthew 13:24 ff). They see "*the harvest*" as indiscriminating while "*the vintage*" is selective judgment. Therefore, there is both a separation of godly Israel from ungodly Israel as well as the other nations for judgment.

The second view sees this as one form of judgment stated in two distinct ways.

14:14 – *"I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, seated on the cloud was one 'like a son of man' with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand."*

"a white cloud" – This is quite possibly speaking about the Shekinah or "*the glory of God*" (Exodus 13:21,22; 19:9; Matthew 17:5; Acts 1:9; I Thessalonians 4:17; Revelation 1:7).

"like a son of man" – Some writers believe that this must be an angel because he receives orders from an angel (14:15) and that Jesus would know the time has come without being told. It appears though that there is more support that He is the Son of Man.

1. cf. - Revelation 1:13
2. cf. - Daniel 7:13–14
3. His "**crown**" is that "**stephanos**" or a victory wreath.
4. The "**angel**" is simply a messenger not to reveal the hidden time but to deliver the command to begin the harvest.

"a sharp sickle in his hand" – Some have problems seeing Jesus involved in this type of judgment (Read Revelation 19:11–18).

14:15 – *"Then another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the cloud, 'Take your sickle and reap, because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.'"*

"Then another angel came out of the temple" – This temple is the most holy place of the presence of God (Revelation 7:15).

"Take your sickle and reap" – (cf. – Joel 3:13)

2 Views:

A. The Harvest is usually referring to God's people (Matthew 9:37–38; Mark 4:29; Luke 10:2; John 4:35–38) BUT

1. Wheat and Tares (Matthew 13:30) were both harvested.
2. The O. T. Harvest is usually symbolic of divine judgment (Jeremiah 51:33; Hosea 6:11).

B. The Harvest is a general picture of coming judgment.

14:16 – *“So he who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested.”*

“and the earth was harvested” – It is clear from the Scriptures that there is both a time of sowing and the time of reaping when speaking of ungodly actions (Numbers 32:23; Job 4:8; Galatians 6:7,8).

14:17 – *“Another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle.”*

“he too had a sharp sickle” – If 14:14–16 is general judgment then 14:17–20 will offer a more vivid picture that stresses the violence of this upcoming judgment. This is not the final judgment (20:11–15) but rather the victorious return of the Son who will smite the nations (19:11–21 especially in vs 15).

14:18 – *“Still another angel, who had charge of the fire, came from the altar and called in a loud voice to him who had a sharp sickle, ‘Take your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes from the earth’s vine, because its grapes are ripe.’”*

“Still another angel, who had charge of the fire” – This action is much like the angel of 8:3-5. Fire is a common form of judgment (Matthew 18:8; Luke 9:54; II Thessalonians 1:7).

“gather the clusters of grapes” – Joel 3:13 offers a similar description of both wheat and grapes being harvested for wrath. Remember that Israel has been called the vine even in its apostate state (Psalm 80:8–19).

14:19 – *“The angel swung his sickle on the earth, gathered its grapes and threw them into the great winepress of God’s wrath.”*

“the great winepress of God’s wrath” – In Biblical days, grapes were trampled by foot in a trough which had a duct leading to a lower basin where the juice was collected (Isaiah 63:3).

14:20 – “They were trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed out of the press, rising as high as the horses’ bridles for a distance of 1600 stadia.”

“They were trampled in the winepress outside the city” – The “city” is most likely Jerusalem. The judgment of nations according to Joel 3:12–14 will take place in the Valley of Decision (Jehosphaphat – “judgment”). Tradition tells us that this is the Kidron Valley which runs between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives.

Jesus was judged “outside the city” to spare us the second judgment. We must face one or the other (John 19:20; Hebrews 13:12).

“rising as high as the horses’ bridles” – This depth of blood (about four feet high) would indicate the widespread greatness of this judgment.

“for a distance of 1600 stadia (“furlongs” - KJV)” – A measurement of 1600 stadia could refer to the length of the land of Palestine (184 miles).

Symbolically it could mean:

A. 4^2 (4 is the number of the earth – ie. “four corners” 8:1; “four winds” 20:8).

$$\begin{array}{rcl} 4^2 & = & 16 \\ 10^2 & = & 100 \text{ (10 is the number of completeness } 7+3) \text{ [5:11; 20:6]} \\ 16 & \times & 100 = 1600 \end{array}$$

B. It could represent the whole earth (as the square of 40 which is the number of testing and punishment – Numbers 14:33; Deuteronomy 25:3)

$$40^2 = 1600$$

Whichever way we understand this, we can clearly see that the judgment of God will be extensive. No one will want to be included as the wrath of God is poured out upon the inhabitants of the earth. Are you fully convinced that you are ready to be with the Lord?

SEVEN ANGELS WITH THEIR SEVEN PLAGUES
The First Vision
Revelation 15:1-8

This is the shortest chapter in this book.

We need to be careful not to attempt to fit the chapters of the book of Revelation into exact chronology due to the way they are recorded. This chapter precedes the final outpouring of God's wrath upon a sinful world during the Great Tribulation period (last 3 ½ years). This is not when all "hell breaks loose" but rather when God reveals Himself through His wrath.

God has inflicted judgment upon the earth before:

1. The Tower of Babel
2. Noah's flood
3. Sodom & Gomorrah
4. Jerusalem (70 AD.)
5. Israel (for 2000 years)

15:1 – *"I saw in heaven another great and marvellous sign: seven angels with the seven last plagues – last, because with them God's wrath is completed."*

"I saw in heaven" – We must understand that the source of this judgment is from heaven. Part of God's "perfect gifts" are judgment to remove sin from the world. The devil cannot be blamed for this wrath. He doesn't even appear in this chapter. He's been cast out of heaven – never to return.

another great and marvellous sign – The word *"sign"* is used 77 times in the New Testament. God's signs are not to create confusion or hide His revelation. It is rather a symbol of divine revelation. God's present signs are to turn man back toward to Him. These signs will also turn man away from Him as their hearts become hardened (i.e. - Pharaoh).

"God's wrath is completed" – God's wrath will have reached its end or its aim during this time. The word **"completed"** is the Greek word **"telos"** which is likened to a telescope that is fully extended.

15:2 – “And I saw what looked like a sea of glass mixed with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name. They held harps given them by God”

“a sea of glass mixed with fire” – It is interesting to note the similarity to the account of Moses (Exodus 15). (ie. – plagues; crossing the Red Sea; engulfing the enemy; the song of Moses; giving of the Law amid the smoke of Sinai; the erection of the Tent of Testimony).

This **“sea of glass”** is has been likened to **“the Sea”** or **“brazen sea”** of Solomon’s Temple. It was an Old Testament topology for the Word of God. (i.e. – the need for cleansing before and after approaching God and ministering onto Him).

Some see it as the heavenly **“Red Sea”** that only God’s people are safe to cross. Others see it as symbolizing God’s judgment based upon His unchangeable Word. Some see it as the fiery trial that God’s people have to cross.

“standing beside the sea” – This indicates that both these “seas” are different. This one most probably is that of 4:6 which is described as **“clear as crystal.”**

“who had been victorious” – Most identify these as the martyrs of the tribulation period. They will refuse to worship or accept the mark of the Beast. They are the overcomers and therefore they will receive their reward:

1. Eat from the Tree of Life (2:7)
2. Protection from the second death (2:11)
3. Given hidden manna and a white stone with a new name (2:17)
4. Authority over the nations (2:26)
5. White garments and never blotting out their names (3:5)
6. Become a Pillar of the Temple of God (3:12)
7. The right to sit with Christ on His throne (3:21)

No wonder they will begin singing. This will bring about the final defeat of their enemies.

“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”

56. The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the Law.

57. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

I Corinthians 15:55 –57

15:3 – “and sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb: ‘Great and marvellous are your deeds Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages.’”

“the song of Moses” – This was originally recorded in Exodus 15:1-18. This song was sung every Sabbath evening in the Jewish synagogues.

- Consider:
- Pharaoh released the children of Israel
 - repented of his decision and then pursued with troops
 - Moses looked to God
 - Israelites walked across on dry land
 - the channel pathway that was salvation for the Israelites became a channel of death for the Egyptians

“the song of the Lamb” – The Law and the Lamb are combined. Whether men on earth are confused over who Jesus is or not, heaven is not.

15:4 – “Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.”

Note what is attributed to God in these past few verses:

1. Creation – **“Great and marvellous are your deeds”**
2. Justice – **“Just and true are your ways”**
3. Eternal reign – **“King of the ages”**
4. Worship – **“Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name?”**
“All nations will come and worship before you”
5. Holiness – **“For you alone are holy”**
6. Righteousness – **“for your righteous acts have been revealed”**

No one will escape making these and many other declarations (Philippians 2:9-11).

Note: Although this is sung by the victors, there is no glory or credit given to them. The “I” is removed when “He” is exalted.

15:5 – “After this I looked and in Heaven the temple, that is, the tabernacle of the Testimony, was opened.”

“the temple, that is, the tabernacle of the Testimony” – The word **“temple”** is used 15 times in the Book of Revelation. This was the abiding place of The Ark of the Covenant in the O. T. It is out of the divine covenant that the next events will take place. Because of God’s faithful covenant relationship with Israel, its enemies must be judged.

15:6 – “Out of the temple came the seven angels with the seven plagues. They were dressed in clean, shining linen and wore golden sashes around their chests.”

“Out of the temple” – We may find it difficult to accept that a God of love would allow such destruction and death to take place. Remember though, God didn’t attack first – the devil did. God’s defence is always to stop further bloodshed (ie - Iraq/Kuwait; USA/terrorists).

“seven angels with the seven plagues” – Note also of the seven churches, seven seals, seven trumpets, seven bowls (vials) mentioned thus far.

“dressed in clean, shining linen” – This points to the noble and sacred office they hold.

“golden sashes around their chests” – This symbolizes their royal and priestly functions.

15:7 – “Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls filled with the wrath of God, who lives for ever and ever.”

“Then one of the four living creatures” – These are the ones who are given the closest access to God’s throne (4:6; 5:6; 6:1; 7:11;14:3).

“seven golden bowls” – This is not some narrow-necked vial but rather a wide, shallow bowl (**“phialas”**). A similar (if not identical) bowl will be used to hold the prayers of the saints (5:8). John may be calling our attention to the relationship between prayer and divine retribution.

15:8 – “And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.”

“And the temple was filled with smoke” – This symbolizes the fulness of God’s presence, glory and power (i.e. - Exodus 19:18; 40:34; Isaiah 6:4).

no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed” - When this judgement begins, no one will be able to stop it. God will no longer stand knocking; He will enter to bring in the final judgement of the inhabitants living on earth.

THE SEVEN BOWLS OF GOD'S WRATH
The First Vision
Revelation 16:1-11

What we are about to study is NOT a bedtime story. When the vents of this chapter begin to unfold, the countdown to the end of time – the time of severe judgment will begin. Everything preceding these final bowls have been pointing to this very important moment.

Remember that this book is THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST (1:1). The seven angels with seven plagues held in seven bowls are totally controlled by God (16:1). Chapter 15 simply introduced the events of this chapter. Now the details of what will take place are unfolded.

There are several similarities to the Egyptian plagues and those of the seven trumpets and yet there are also many differences.

Exodus (Egypt)//Seven trumpets

- no harm to man by first five plagues
- trumpets affect only 1/3

Bowls/Vials (Worldwide)

- harm to mankind is immediate
- this plague affects the whole world

NOTE: There will be no interlude between the sixth and seventh bowl as there was noted in the previous judgments.

16:1 – “Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, ‘Go pour out the seven bowls of God’s wrath on the earth.’”

“a loud voice from the temple” –

*“Hear that uproar from the city, hear that noise
from the temple! It is the sound of the LORD
repaying his enemies all they deserve.”*

Isaiah 66:6

No one will be allowed in the temple until the angels complete their mission therefore, this must be the voice God (cf. - Revelation 15:8). The elaborate preparation that will have taken place in heaven will explode during this final outpouring of the wrath of God. Nothing will stop this from taking place. It will come like an avalanche descending upon those who choose to be consistently disobedient to the Word of God.

16:2 – *“The first angel went and poured out his bowl on the land, and ugly and painful sores broke out on the people who had the mark of the beast and worshiped his image.”*

The first angel . . . and ugly and painful sores – Those who bear the mark of the beast will also bare God’s mark of judgement. The sixth Egyptian plague was boils. The Old Testament translators of LXX used the same word to translate the *“boils”* of Egypt’s six plague as they did to identify these *“ugly and painful sores.”* Job (Job 2:7, 8) spoke of the painful affliction of such a type of sore.

“on the people who had the mark of the beast and worshiped his image” – Those who receive the mark of loyalty to the Antichrist will in turn be marked by God with this painful disease. What takes place during this time is then is the rebellious ones receiving the wrath of God (cf. - 14:9–11).

16:3 – *“The second angel poured out of his bowl on the sea, and it turned into blood like that of a dead man, and every living thing in the sea died.”*

“The second angel poured out of his bowl on the sea . . . it turned into blood” – Water is one of man’s basic requirements for life. Scientists are working hard to make polluted and undrinkable seas fit for consumption. Even oceans are being looked toward to become suitable for drinking.

This judgement will make sea water undrinkable. It will signal the death of our planet. Without life in the seas, life on land cannot exist for long. This will be a rotting and putrefying image.

There is no 1/3 limit mentioned of here(cf.- Exodus 7: 7 – 21). These bad and decaying fish will discharge an unbearable stench and unquenchable disease. Those who shed blood will be left with nothing but blood to drink.

16:4 – *“The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood.”*

“The third angel . . . on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood.” – Without drinking water man has no future. Our present treatment plants are not designed to remove infectious blood. Again it is not mentioned that only 1/3 of the waters will be damaged (cf. - Psalm 78:44). This will similar to the first plague on Egypt during the time of Moses (Exodus 7:14–24) – but spread over a much greater area.

16:5 – *“Then I heard the angel in charge of the water say: ‘You are just in these judgments, you who are and who were, the Holy One, because you have so judged;’”*

“You are just in these judgments” – No one can make the claim that God is whimsical or becoming inconsistent in His actions. His holiness requires Him to fully judge sin.

“you who are and who were, the Holy One” – God will remain unscathed by sin even while He pours His wrath out during this time of final judgment.

16:6 – *“for they have shed the blood of your saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve.”*

“for they have shed the blood of your saints and prophets” - God keeps an accurate record of every violent death of righteous martyrs at the hands of those who are wicked. Not one death goes unnoticed.

“and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve” – The 20th-Century N.T. says *“it was what they deserve.”* Their punishment will fit their crime. Those who shed the blood of the redeemed will have to accept the punishing judgement of their deeds. Probably there will be more blood added – each other’s. The forces of evil are not as united as is often suggested (cf. - Isaiah 49:26).

16:7 – *“And I heard the altar respond: ‘ Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments.’”*

“And I heard the altar respond” – This is the only place in the Book of Revelation where the altar is said to speak. The altar is where the prayers of the saints (8: 3 – 5) and the testimony of the martyrs (6: 9) will be directed.

“true and just are your judgments” – God judges righteously by not forgetting an evil deed that has been done even though it has been overlooked by earthly judges. This second part of the doxology expresses a wonderful truth that we must never forget.

16:8 – *“The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and the sun was given power to scorch people with fire.”*

“The fourth angel . . . the sun was given power to scorch people with fire.” – The first three angels will pour out their bowls *“into”* while this one will be poured *“upon”* or *“on.”* Even though a third of the sun is previously darkened, what is left will still contain a great amount of heat (Malachi 4:1). Fire is commonly associated with judgment (Deuteronomy 28:22; I Corinthians 3:13; II Peter 3:7). The power contained in the sun will be much more damaging and widespread than that of nuclear weapons.

16:9 – *“They were seared by the intense heat and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify him.”*

“they cursed the name of God . . . they refused to repent and glorify him” – *“They had taken upon themselves the nature of the fallen angel they serve.”* – Caird. The word used for *“cursed”* can be translated *“blasphemed.”* This is the same type of speech that the Antichrist will continue to spew out from his mouth (13:6).

“they refused to repent and glorify him” – They will worship the Lord only when they are forced to do so (15:4).

16:10 – *“The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom was plunged into darkness. Man gnawed their tongues in agony.”*

“The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast” – The second, third and fourth bowls will be poured out on the natural elements: land, sea, waters, and the sun. At this point God will turn to the throne of the beast which is the place of his authority. In John’s day it was recognized as the city of Rome. This is the exact opposite of the previous bowl. (cf. - Amos 5:18; Nahum 1:6,8; Zephaniah 1:15). Jesus prophesied as well about this time (Mark 13:24).

“and his kingdom was plunged into darkness” – Since the beast’s kingdom will be the source of evil and darkness it is a natural judgment for it to face. Unlike the three-day darkness of the ninth plague of Egypt (Exodus 10:21–23), the duration of this darkness is not mentioned.

6:11 – *“and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores but they refused to repent of what they had done.”*

“but they refused to repent of what they had done” – Mankind will refuse to change not because of doubts or unexplained answers but because they know the truth, suppress the truth (Romans 1:18), and become hardened in their hearts through their love for sin. Despite their misery they will cling to their evil.

Note: This punishment does not bring about repentance. It takes a change of heart to change an action or habit. We’ve all seen people who have become hardened during times of suffering. God help us to reach them while their hearts are still pliable!

THE SEVEN BOWLS OF GOD'S WRATH (Contd.)
The Second Vision
Revelation 16:12-21

This section unveils the final outpouring of God's wrath. It is difficult to be dogmatic in our interpretation of this section. John Walvoord notes that there are as many as 50 different interpretations set forth to explain this section alone. They run anywhere from historical, mythical, literal, mystical (i.e. - spiritualising, plus a host of others) or a combination of any of the above.

In the drama set before us, John describes in greater detail than the previous five bowls what will take place as the sixth bowl is poured out upon the earth. Without being dogmatic, perhaps we can at least discover some meanings as to the words and context of this writing.

16:12 – “The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great River Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings of the East.”

“The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great River Euphrates” – This important river marks the eastern boundary of the promised land (Genesis 15:18; Deuteronomy 1:7-8). It also separated the Roman Empire from the Parthians (who were experts as cavalry bowmen). During John's time, the land east of the Euphrates was for the most part unknown to those living in the land of Israel. Many stories were told of kings with their great armies who were preparing for an invasion. There was constant fear of invasion.

This bowl does not inflict punishment but rather it prepares the way for a great battle to follow. The area in question was the boundary of the Turkish dominion which became established later in history. Luther said *“When the Turk is driven out of Europe, then comes the day of judgment.”* The *“unspeakable Turk”* was an intruder of Europe and the enemy of both God and man. Turkey has been named the *“sick man of Europe.”* Daniel said of the Turks (depicted as the antichrist), *“He will pitch his royal tents between the seas at [or “the seas and] the beautiful holy mountain. Yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him”* (Daniel 11:45).

“and its water was dried up” – No other time in history could this be done without a miracle. But now due to the construction of several dams, the entire flow of the Euphrates River can be stopped for a limited period of time. The problem is not the stopping of the water but rather the drying up of the riverbed. Other miracles of drying up river beds were associated with God (Exodus 14:21,22 – Egyptians at the Red Sea; Joshua 3:16f the Jordan River). Isaiah (11:15,16) foresaw a day when the waters will dry up to offer access for the Israeli exiles to return home.

“to prepare the way for the kings of the East” – The ***“East”*** is literally ***“the sun-rising.”*** John’s readers would have immediately thought of the Parthians. For over a millennium, Japan has been known as ***“the kingdom of the sun rising.”*** According to world history it would be difficult for any one nation to staff, maintain and support such a large army. At one time it would have needed China, India and other nations of the Orient to join together.

Time, May 21, 1965, p. 35 - Red China claimed to have a man and woman militia engaging in serious training numbering 200 million. This of course, includes the home guard. The Word of the Lord is now ready and able to be fulfilled. No matter how large they are, they will not escape the hand of God (Psalm 2:2-4).

16:13 – ***“Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet.”***

“Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs” – Some suggest that the frogs were due to the drying up of the Euphrates. But there would be a vast number if that were the case. They could better symbolize the gods that they served. Frogs have evil associations (slimy, ugly, meaningless croaking; no solid achievements). Frogs were considered by the Jewish people as an unclean animal (Leviticus 11:10). The only time they are mentioned in the Bible is during the Egyptians plagues (Exodus 8:1-15) and in this passage.

“out of the mouth of the dragon” – The devil.

“the mouth of the beast” – The antichrist. Also called the beast from the sea (Revelation 13:1).

“the mouth of the false prophet” – This is the first time the second beast is mentioned by this name. He is also known as the beast that came out of the earth (Revelation 13:11).

16:14 – ***“They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle of the great day of God Almighty.”***

“They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs” – God uses signs to often declare His glory. The devil uses signs to bring warfare. There is the big difference between signs and miracles.

“to gather them for the battle” – Historians have been often perplexed by the reason for this war. It seems like something will seize the minds of leadership of ALL the nations. There will definitely be another ***“world war”*** according to the Scriptures.

16:15 – “Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed.”

“Behold, I come like a thief!” – This is the first time we hear of Christ speaking since Revelation 4:1 in what has been called *“the second vision.”* This speaks of being sudden and without warning; when everyone least expects it to take place (cf. - I Thessalonians 5:2,3). This is proof again that the church will not be here because they will not be overtaken by a thief (I Thessalonians 5:4).

“Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked” – According to the Jewish Mishnah, the captain of the temple in Jerusalem went on his rounds of the precincts during the nighttime. If a member of the temple policeman was caught asleep at his post, his clothes were taken off and burned, and he was sent away naked in disgrace.

“and be shamefully exposed” – This is a euphemism for *“private parts.”* Christ’s people are to keep their focus on the return of the LORD rather than on the forces of evil that are coming against them. This once again reinforces that this is *“the Revelation of Jesus Christ.”*

16:16 – “Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.”

“in Hebrew is called Armageddon” – There is no place that is identified by this name today. The name **“Har-Magedon”** or **“Har-Megiddo”** means **“the mountain of Megiddo.”** The problem is that the present a Megiddo does not have a mountain. The Bible does mention the **“plain of Megiddo”** (II Chronicles 35:22). It is located on the north side of Mount Carmel’s ridge. It commands the strategic pass between the coastal plain and the valley of Esdraelon. The ancient city of Megiddo sat on a hill about 70 feet above the valley. From that ancient city one could look down the Jezreel Valley all the way to Mount Tabor. The valley of Megiddo has witnessed some well-known conflicts.

1. Barak & Deborah vs. Sisera (Judges 4–5)
2. King Ahaziah of Judah (wounded by Jehu’s arrow - II Kings 9:27)
3. Gideon and the Midianites (Judges 7)
4. Saul and Josiah both died in this valley (II Kings 23:29; I Samuel 31:1-6 - Mount Gilboa is located on the north-eastern edge of the Plain of Jezreel)
5. Lord Allenby (in 1917)

Napoleon Bonaparte stated **“this is the ideal battleground for all the armies of the world.”** Yet I must emphasize John may NOT have been referring to this area of land. Some think it may have been a “code name” like “Operation Desert Storm” was for the Gulf War.

16:17 – *“The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and out of the temple came a loud voice from the throne, saying, ‘It is done!’”*

“The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air” – The bowl will be poured into the air which is the abode of evil spirits (Mark 4:4; Ephesians 2:2). The only element escaping the plagues up to this point was the atmosphere. This is the most essential ingredient for man’s survival. This bowl therefore, will pronounce the final consummation of God’s wrath.

“It is done!” – This phrase is only one word in the Greek language indicating a completed action. This is the completion of the Great Tribulation, the conclusion of God’s wrath to ungodly mankind as well as the end of Jacob’s trouble. This is God’s final word. It is like He is saying *“It is finished once and for all.”*

16:18 – *“Then there came flashings of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake.”*

“Then there came flashings of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake.” – A similar thing took place during the sounding of the seventh trumpet (11:19). It has been called *“a theophany storm.”* It has also been called *“the quake of all quakes.”* Special stress is placed upon this earthquake. Haggai is the only prophet (2:6,7,21; cf. Hebrews 12:26-29) who writes about an earthquake at the end of the world.

16:19 – *“The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon that Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath.”*

“The great city split into three parts” – Several interpretations have been given for this city.

1. Jerusalem
2. Rome
3. Symbolizes the pride of human achievement, the godlessness of those who put their trust in man. The great city is now completely shattered.

“and the cities of the nations collapsed” – Everything will be destroyed and collapse in a moment of time. This reminds us of II Peter 3:10.

“God remembered Babylon that Great” – The first time that “God remembered” was on behalf of Noah (Genesis 8:1; 9:16). At that time He rescued Noah and his family from the ark that carried them above the flood waters. At this time He will pour out His wrath and tread upon the wild grapes with great fury.

16:20 – *“Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found.”*

“Every island fled away” - cf. Zechariah 14:4,5,10

“and the mountains could not be found” – Could anything be any worse?

16:21 – *“From the sky huge hail stones of about a hundred pounds each fell upon man. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible.”*

“From the sky huge hail stones of about a hundred pounds each fell upon man” – They will be the weight of a *“talent.”* This weight may range anywhere from 45 pounds to 135 pounds. The Greek talent weighed 86 pounds; the Troy talent was 96 pounds and the Jewish talent was 120 pounds. It is often agreed that these are probably about 100 pounds. This would be about 1 cubic foot of ice or about 12 gallons of water. They would have to be about 12 inches in diameter. God used hail against His enemies before (Exodus 9:13-35; Joshua 10:11; Ezekiel 38:18-23). Hail is God’s arsenal (Job 38:22, 23).

“And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail” – After the 4th, 5th and 7th final plagues (bowls), mankind will foolishly blaspheme God (16:9,11,21). Judgment of this nature is not designed to lead people to repentance. They are beyond that stage. They have become apostates.

“because the plague was so terrible” – (Greek - *“sphroda”*). This word is used nowhere else in the Book of Revelation. It is *“a decisive disaster.”*

God is in charge of this outpouring from the beginning to the end. Even the worst of punishment for sin is not enough to cause to some people to repent. Every political and military power will be ultimately defeated. Is anyone prepared to escape so great a time of tribulation? There is a way. It will not be found during the time of great tribulation. One must escape before it begins. Make sure you will escape by accepting Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour and live your life for Him!

THE HARLOT AND THE SCARLET BEAST DESCRIBED
The Third Vision
Revelation 17:1-6

This chapter prepares us to understand the judgment that will be directed toward Babylon. The “*great whore*” stands in direct contrast to the “*bride of Christ*.” This “*whore*” represents a system that is founded in an area built upon seven hills. This contrast unfortunately displays the finest product of human technology and achievement that has separated itself from “the True and Living God.” The New Jerusalem, on the other hand, displays the wonderful product of God’s abundant grace. What a contrast indeed. This begins what has been titled the third vision.

17:1 – “*One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, ‘Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute who sits on many waters.’*”

“*One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came*” - We once again see how God connects these portions of Scripture together. During the fourth and final vision of this series of visions we see another of these seven angels involved (21:9-10).

“*the punishment of the great prostitute*” – The harlot is none other than Rome with its system of power both religiously and politically. Many cities in the ancient Roman Empire were famous for their harlots. This prostitute is one that depicts spiritual harlotry (Isaiah 23:15-18; Jeremiah 3:20-25).

“Adorned in luxury and intoxicated with the blood of the saints, she stands for a dominant world system based upon seduction for personal gain over against the righteous demands of a persecuted minority.”

Robert H. Mounce
“The Book of Revelation”
P. 307

“*who sits on many waters*” – Babylon was renown for its many waters (Jeremiah 51:13). A little later in this chapter (17:15) we see this thought of waters used in a symbolic manner representing the peoples, multitudes, nations and languages of the world. The Roman Catholic Church sees itself as connected to all these and yet does not see anything wrong taking its place. She continues to have control over international human affairs.

“ . . . hence, one understands the central place of Rome in the life of the Church today and the significance of the title, Roman Catholic Church, the Church that is universal, yet focussed upon the ministry of the Bishop of Rome. Since the founding of the Church there by St. Peter, Rome has been the center of all Christendom.”

“*Our Sunday Visitor’s CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA*”
(Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division)
1991, p. 842

17:2 – “*With her the kings of the earth committed adultery and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries.*”

“*With her the kings of the earth committed adultery*” – Here we clearly see that this “*great prostitute*” will be a corrupting agent of both politics and religion. The Old Testament prophets (Isaiah 23:15-17) often symbolized wicked cities as prostitutes. This spiritual adultery began with the Roman Emperor Constantine in 312 AD. Constantine brought a flood of idols and statues into the Church.

Why would a “city” be called “the great prostitute” and be accused of committing adultery with the kings of the earth? This would not make sense of any other city in the world but that of Rome, and more precisely, Vatican City. Although Rio de Janeiro is located on seven hills, it could not be accused of committing spiritual harlotry with the kings of the world. Many churches/cults have their headquarters in a city (Mormons - Salt Lake City), but none can say that the city is the headquarters of the church except for the Roman Catholic Church. Vatican city also has a representative on the United Nations Council.

“*the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries*” – This harlot commits her fornication with those representing all levels of society. Jeremiah also spoke of this same state of drunken madness that ancient Babylon was involved in (Jeremiah 51:7). This is one reason why we are cautioned to keep separate from the world (Romans 12:1,2) and we are also warned not to love the world or anything in it (James 4:4; I John 2:15). It doesn’t take long to get caught into the deceitful web that “Babylon” is spinning.

17:3 – “*Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into the desert. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blaspheme names and had seven heads and ten horns.*”

“*Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into the desert*” – This angel brings John to a new location to offer him a different vantage point. As with all of the visions recorded in the Book of Revelation, they are inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit.

“There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast” – Earlier John had seen a red-coloured horse preparing for war (6:4) as well as a red dragon (12:3). This colour represents a bloody assault against the world that is to be conquered with the help of this adulterous woman. What will begin as a peace treaty will quickly turn into a bloody assault (Daniel 9:26,27). Her position on top of the beast indicates her influence of power (religiously).

“that was covered with blaspheme names” – This is similar to the earlier mention of blasphemous names on each of the seven heads of the first beast (13:1). The one difference is that this scarlet beast is covered with these blasphemous tattoos-like names.

The past Roman Emperors made claim to deity by some of their names as well - [***“theios”*** (divine), ***“sōtēr”*** (saviour), and ***“kyrios”*** (Lord)].

17:4 – ***“The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with the abominable things and the filth of her adulteries.”***

“The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet” – During the first century the common people wore clothing made of natural fibres which were dull and drab (earth colours). Dyes were used only by those who were rich. Therefore, to be dressed in both these colours must be referring to incredible riches. This clothing may appear as elegant to some, but those born of the Spirit, who understand its implications, find it repulsive. This was the same combination of colours that they mockingly placed upon Jesus during His crucifixion (Matthew 27:28; Mark 15:17,20; John 19:2,5).

Purple was often used for royal garments (Judges 8:26; Daniel 5:7) while scarlet was considered the colour of victorious magnificence (Nahum 2:3).

Cappa Magna - “A cloak with a long train and a hooded shoulder cape . . . [it] was purple wool for bishops; for cardinals, it was scarlet watered silk (for Advent, Lent, Good Friday, and the conclave, purple wool); and rose watered silk for Gaudete and Laetare; and for the pope, it was red velvet for Christmas matins, red serge at other times.”

Cossock (also Soutane) - “The close-fitting, ankle-length robe worn by the Catholic clergy as their official garb . . . The colour for bishops and other prelates is purple, for cardinals scarlet.”

“Our Sunday Visitor’s CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA”
(Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division)
1991, pp. 175, 178

This woman will represent the world Church during the tribulation. It will quickly encompass everyone left from the rapture representing every carnal denomination imaginable. They will have been either doctrinally or morally corrupted (Titus 1:16; II Peter 2:1-3; Jude 8-21).

“glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls” – There is nothing wrong with being adorned with riches. The bride of Christ will one day be adorned in extravagant splendour (19:7). One is worn with carnal pleasure while the other is embellished with holy splendour.

This harlot though, gains her riches through her ungodly acts. Most of the Roman Catholic Church’s riches were gained through the sale of salvation (indulgences). The Roman Catholic Church is by far the wealthiest institution in the world today. It owns innumerable sculptures by masters such as Michelangelo, paintings by the world’s greatest painters, art treasures, ancient documents, priceless collection of chalices, diamond-studded crucifixes, silver and precious stones.

When Cardinal Cajetan, a sixteenth-century Dominican scholar, complained about the sale of dispensations and indulgences, the Church hierarchy was indignant and accused him of wanting

...

“to turn Rome into an uninhabited desert, to reduce the Papacy to impotence, to deprive the pope . . . of pecuniary [monetary] resources indispensable for the discharge of his office.”

J. H. Ignaz von Dollinger
“The Pope and the Council”
 London, 1869
 pp. 307-308

I see that the words of Jesus warning not to lay up treasures on earth where moth and rust will corrupt them and thieves will break and steal means little to a Church with this type of inestimable value. We must be very careful how we get rich. If we gain it at the cost of ungodly acts, these riches will be consumed by the fire that will try them (I Corinthians 3:12-15; I Timothy 6:3-10; II Timothy 2:20,21; II Peter 3:10-13).

Nino Lo Bello, a former Business Week correspondent in Rome and Rome's bureau chief for the New York Journal of Commerce, wrote that the Vatican is so closely allied with the mafia in Italy that . . .

“Many people . . . believe that Sicily . . . is nothing more than a Vatican holding.”

Nino Lo Bello
“The Vatican Empire”
 Trident Press
 1968, p. 167

“She held a golden cup in her hand” – The golden cup (chalice) is the most important of the sacred vessels used by the Roman Catholic Church. It is made of either gold or silver, but if made of silver on the outside, the inside must be made of gold. Outwardly everything will look splendid. Unfortunately, it contents as the angel showed John are abominable filth (cf. - Jeremiah 51:7). We must not make the mistake of looking on the deceitfulness of outward appearance while neglecting the purity of our heart (I Samuel 15:22-29; 16:7).

“filled with the abominable things and the filth of her adulteries” – The contents of the beautiful cup will be vulgar and repulsive. The use of the word **“abominable”** denotes **“ceremonial and moral impurity and especially of idolatrous rites”** (Deuteronomy 18:9; 29:17,18; I Kings 14:24).

“and the filth of her adulteries” – This phrase contains brutally graphic sexual terms much like that mentioned in 14:8. It may even include cult prostitution which has often been given the term idolatry in the New Testament (Ephesians 5:5). Much of this adultery is caused by the dogmas that were added throughout the centuries.

“The Roman Catholic Church however, has insisted upon celibacy even though many popes, among them Sergius III (904-11), John X (914-28), John XI (955-63), Benedict V (964), Innocent VIII (1484-92), Urban VIII (1623-44), and Innocent X (1644-55), as well as millions of cardinals, bishops, archbishops, monks and priests throughout history, have repeatedly violated such vows. Not only has celibacy made sinners of the clergy who engage in fornication, but it makes harlots out of those with whom they secretly cohabit.”

Dave Hunt
“A Woman Rides the Beast”
 Harvest House Publishers, 1994
 p. 78

“Popes had mistresses of fifteen years of age, were guilty of incest and sexual perversions of every sort, had innumerable children, were murdered in the very act of adultery [by jealous husbands who found them in bed with their wives] . . . In the old Catholic phrase, why be holier than the pope?”

Peter de Rosa
“Vicars of Christ: The Dark Side of the Papacy”
 Crown Publishers, 1988
 pp. 396-397

Perhaps this explains the Latin equivalent of the Greek “*anti*” which is “*vicarius*.” from this root we gain our word “*vicar*.” Thus the “*vicar of Christ*” literally means “*Antichrist*.” What was originally meant to signify a substitute or representative soon took on the opposite.

17:5 – “*This title was written on her forehead: MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.*”

“*This title was written on her forehead*” – Roman prostitutes were known to wear their names on a headband. In this case she will have a three-part title.

“**MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT**” – It could be that the word “MYSTERY” should be used to describe the three-part title that follows. This mystery is about to be explained beginning in 17:7.

The name “**BABYLON THE GREAT**” appears four times in the book of Revelation (14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2). The ancient city of Babylon was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was also famous for murdering the Old Testament people of God and demolishing the city of Jerusalem in 586 BC (II Kings 25). This name became symbolic with Rome (I Peter 5:13) because of Roman’s murdering the followers of the Lamb of God. Apparently, Tertullian late in the second century, was the first church father to use “Babylon” as a name for Rome.

For an extensive explanation on this portion of Scripture I recommend that you read “**Revelation Revealed**” By Dr. Jack Van Impe (pages 193-197).

“**THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES**” – This is another way of saying that she is the “*source of idolatry and evil*.” These offspring of this “mother whore” will comprise with not only cultists and the unconverted but also those who never really knew God from every denomination imaginable (Matthew 7:21-23).

“THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH” – In other words, she will be the source of every abominable thing around the whole earth. Just as Babylon began with its false religion (Genesis 10:9,10; 11:1-9) so once again it will take a place of influence religiously, commercially and politically at the closing of this age.

17:6 – ***“I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus. When I saw her, I was greatly astonished.”***

“was drunk with the blood of the saints” – Not only does this woman represent immorality and idolatry but she will also have a lust for the blood of God’s true saints. She is described as staggering under her hideous desire for the death of God’s people.

History is full of accounts of the intensive persecution placed against those who refused to accept the teaching and practises of the Church of Rome. During the Inquisition of 30 years over 900,000 believers were brutally killed. On August 24, 1572 at least 70,000 Huguenots were massacred. Another 200,000 died in horrible ways under the direction of the Roman Catholic Church during 1573-1598.

At the beginning of the 17th century 3,200,000 Bohemians were slain for not denying their faith in the True and Living God. History also records tens of thousands of Spaniards who gave their lives at the hands of these intolerant religious leaders. History proves that “religion” never has tolerated anything but its own abominable viewpoint.

“of those who bore testimony to Jesus” – Martyrdom will become the immediate reward of their faithfulness to God followed by an eternal reward in heaven.

“I was greatly astonished” – John was not admiring these acts of merciless killing. Instead he stood breathless, finding it difficult to believe what he was seeing. We should have the same response to the worldwide persecution that we are witnessing today that Jesus said would take place just before He returns (Matthew 24:9-12).

More Christians have been killed in the 19th century than all the centuries combined from the time of Christ until now. The majority of these were killed by those of different religious beliefs. Recently we are seeing an uprising of Islamic radicals who are butchering those with Christian beliefs.

Be very careful about what and who you believe. The time is too short to make a mistake and follow the wrong leadership.

INTERPRETATION OF THE HARLOT'S DESTRUCTION

Revelation 17:7-18

The angel gives a more extensive explanation of the beast than he does the woman who sits upon it. It appears that this is necessary in order to eliminate further confusion.

17:7 – *“Then the angel said to me: ‘Why are you astonished? I will explain to you the mystery of the woman and of the beast she rides, which has the seven heads and ten horns.’”*

“I will explain to you the mystery of the woman and of the beast she rides” – The angel cannot separate the woman and the beast because they are so closely linked together. The revelation concerning the beast has several parts: the beast himself (v. 8), his heads (vs. 9–11), his horns (vs. 12–14), the waters (v. 15), and the horns again (vs. 16–17).

“she rides” – The beast will supply her with her motive, force, purpose and direction.

17:8 – *“The beast which you saw, once was, now is not, and will come up out of the Abyss and go to his destruction. The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast, because he once was, now is not, and yet will come.”*

“The beast which you saw, once was, now is not, and will come” – The descriptions listed here seem to be used as a way of mimicking the descriptions that were earlier given to God (1:4). This beast will come into power at the beginning of the tribulation period (*“once was”*). He will be seriously injured with a head wound and will die (*“now is not”*). He will also be brought back to life to reign for 3 ½ more years on earth (*“and will come”*) before going to his final destination of everlasting punishment.

“and will come up out of the Abyss and go to his destruction” – His future destination will be the Lake of Fire. It will be the destiny of all who experience the second death rather than an eternal life. He will find himself eternally separated from God instead of entering everlasting fellowship with God.

“The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast”

“will be astonished when they see the beast” – John was astonished by the woman who rode this beast but he was not led astray by her. Unfortunately, most of the world’s inhabitants will be led astray in their astonishment of the beast. These are the inhabitants of the earth who have not had their names written in the book of life (cf. - Psalm 69:28; Revelation 3:5).

17:9 – “This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits.”

“The seven heads are seven hills” – These hills have often been talked about in ancient history as referring to Rome. Rome began as a network of seven hill settlements on the left bank of the Tiber River. During John’s day, it epitomized the antagonism and opposition that it directed toward the Christian faith. The names of these seven peaks were called 1). Aventine 2). Caelian 3). Capitoline 4). Esquiline 5). Palatine 6). Quirinal and 7). Viminal.

17:10 – “They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for little while.”

“They are also seven kings” – These are often listed as seven emperors yet there is often a dispute about whom they represent. Note the thoughts on this that follow.

“Five have fallen” –

1. Julius Caesar [or Caesar Augustus?] (27 BC-14 AD)
2. Tiberius (14-37 AD)
3. Caligula (37-41 AD)
4. Claudius (41-54 AD)
5. Nero (54-68 AD).

The historian Josephus, spoke of a bloody period between the reign of Emperor Nero and Vespasian and named both Galba and Otho as Emperors. He also spoke of the trouble under Emperor Vitellius before the civil war was brought to an end.

Another approach is to take the seven kings as a succession of secular or Gentile empires. The five that have fallen would therefore be Egypt (neo-Babylon - Genesis 10:8-11), named above, Babylon, Assyria, Persia, and Greece. The one that is would be the Roman Empire followed by the Christian Empire beginning with Constantine.

Another slightly different way of listing the final kingdom would be to compile all the governments between the fall of Rome and the final Empire of the antichrist. The one main problem with this interpretation is that the Bible is speaking of a group of kings not their kingdoms.

“one is” – The identity of this next one depends upon one’s interpretation. Some suggest Galba (who assumed power in June of 68 AD. and was murdered seven months later); Otho (committed suicide in 69 AD.) or Vitellius (who was killed before the end of 69 AD.). Others believe that it was Domitian (81-96 AD.) who was alive and on the throne when John wrote this Revelation.

“the other has not yet come” – After the five that had fallen came Titus (79-81 AD.) followed by Domitian (81-96 AD.) [*“who is”*]. Some see Vespasian [would be] (69-79 AD.) spoken of as ***“the other has not yet come.”*** It is more likely that the angel was referring to the final ruler of the earth who we have been referring to as the Antichrist.

17:11 – *“The beast who once was, and now is not, is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction.”*

“The beast who once was, and now is not, is an eighth king” – Some have incorrectly thought that this eighth king represents Domitian. But three times in this chapter we are told that the beast ***“is not.”*** It therefore makes sense that this king is none other than the Antichrist as well.

“This verse is a thought-twister, but easily understood when one considers it carefully. Who is king number 8 if there are only seven kings in the first place? Number 8 is number 7 resurrected! Notice: And beast that was [before his assassination], and is not [because of his untimely death], even he is [because of his resurrection] the eighth. He is of the seven because Satan, who incarnated his body while dead, also motivated the other seven. As further proof that number 8 is the resurrected Antichrist (number 7), we are again told that he will eventually go into the perdition.”

Dr. Jack Van Impe
“Revelation Revealed”
 Jack Van Impe Ministries
 p. 199

“He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction” – He will find his seat of power in a revived Roman Empire.

17:12 – *“The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast.”*

“The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom” – These have been described as . . .

“purely eschatological figures representing the totality of the powers of all nations on earth which are to be made subservient to the Antichrist.”

I.T. Beckwith
“The Apocalypse of John”
 p. 700

These seem to represent the same alliance of nations that were prophesied about in Daniel 2:33,41-43.

“but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast” – These ten kings will NOT exercise their authority for a very long time.

17:13 – ***“They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast”***

“and will give their power and authority to the beast” - They will collaborate and share the same hostility to Christ and His followers as will be shown by the Antichrist. In the end, they will pass over their entire power and authority to the Antichrist.

17:14 – ***“They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is the Lord of lords and King of kings –and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.”***

“They will make war against the Lamb” – This will be the final conflict between the Antichrist and the Messiah (19:11–21).

“and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers” – These are the ones who will exercise authority over the nations and rule them with a rod of iron along with the Lamb (Revelation 2:26–27).

17:15 – ***“Then the angel said to me, ‘The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages.’”***

“are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages” – This speaks of the universality of the group mentioned.

17:16 – ***“The beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire.”***

“They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked” – This harlot that was once arrayed in purple and scarlet and jewelry (Revelation 17: 4) will be stripped bare. One is reminded of the sordid life of Jezebel that ended in a similar type of disgrace (II Kings 9:30–37).

“they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire”– The Levitical law told that if the daughter of a priest played the harlot, she was to be burned with fire (Leviticus 21:9). These wicked warriors will not be a happy band of brothers. They will give way to jealousy and hatred which will eventually be turned toward mutual destruction.

17:17 – “For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to give the beast their power to rule, until God’s words are fulfilled.”

“For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose” – Ultimately the powers of evil will serve the purposes of God.

“until God’s words are fulfilled” – God’s Word is always the last word. We must remember that it is God who sets up kings and also disposes of them (Psalm 75:7; Daniel 2:21).

17:18 – “The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.” – This woman also represents every great center of power that has prostituted its wealth and influence and thereby restores the spirit of ancient Babylon.

“John’s words extend beyond his immediate setting in history and sketch the portrait of an eschatological Babylon which will provide the social, religious and political base for the last attempt of Antichrist to establish his kingdom.

Robert H. Mounce
“The Book of Revelation”
William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company
p. 320

And so ends this very disturbing and somewhat confusing chapter. Even though we may differ upon its interpretation, we do see that this angel was given an incredible message to deliver to the apostle John for the Church to study.

THE FALL OF BABYLON

Revelation 18:1-24

In this chapter we find a portrayal of a prophetic message detailing the ultimate collapse of the anti-Christian world order which had set its purpose to defeat God and His church. During the time of the apostle John there was a saying,

“When fall the Coliseum, Rome shall fall; And when Rome falls – the world.”

Several suggestions have been made to identify the location of **“*Babylon the Great.*”**

1. New York City - the commercial centre of the world
2. The Ancient City restored. The following have been built by using part of ancient Babylon in their construction:
 - a). Seleucia - Greeks
 - b). Ctesipar - Parthians
 - c). Almaiden - Persians
 - d). Kufa - Caliphs
 - e). Hillah (means **“rest”**) - 20 min walk from ancient Babylon
 - f). Bagdad - 50 miles north of ancient Bagdad
 - g). Ancient Babylon which underwent a renaissance by Suddam Hussein
3. Rome seen as both a location and a political and economic system.

“This Babylon is different from that one just discussed. Chapter 17 concerned religious Babylon, whereas chapter 18 presents political or commercial Babylon. Religious Babylon was called *Mystery Babylon*, but commercial Babylon is referred to as *Babylon the Great*. Religious Babylon was presented as a woman or a mother while commercial Babylon is portrayed as a *city*, a *great city*, a *mighty city* and eventually a [burning] *city*. Religious Babylon was situated on seven hills whereas political Babylon is visible from the sea (verses 17 and 21). Religious Babylon was destroyed by the kings of the earth (17:16), but political Babylon will be destroyed by horrendous judgments from the hand of God. When religious Babylon was destroyed, the kings rejoiced. When political Babylon is demolished, however, the kings and merchants of the earth lament [and weep] for her (18:9–15).”

Dr. Jack Van Impe
“Revelation Revealed”
 p. 203

We must consider O. T. prophecy concerning ancient Babylon (Isaiah 13:19-22; Jeremiah 51:61-64). Some believe this may be referring to a new location that will adopt the spirit of ancient Babylon. It may come to life in both a location as well as a system. It will stand in subtle opposition to the advancement of the kingdom of God.

18:1 – “After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his splendor.”

“*After this*” – This would refer to a time after the destruction of the Babylon mentioned in the previous chapter. This may give further proof to the idea that the religious Babylon must be destroyed before the political Babylon is judged.

I saw another angel coming down from heaven.”

“So recently has he come from the Presence (of God) that in passing he flings a broad belt of light across the dark Earth.”

H. B. Swete
“The Apocalypse of St. John”
 p.226

This reminds us of the return of God’s glory through the eastern gate in Ezekiel 43:1-5.

“*He had great authority*” – This word is often used synonymously in the Book of Revelation with the word “power.”

18:2 – “With a mighty voice he shouted: Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great! She has become a home for demons and a haunt for every evil spirit, a haunt for every unclean and detestable bird.”

“*Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!*” – So certain are the Scriptures to the fact that Babylon will fall (using the past tense of the verb) that it is described as already accomplished. This would bring back to memory the angelic declaration recorded found in Isaiah 21:9.

Ancient Babylon has never fallen as prophesied in Jeremiah 51:6-12 and Isaiah 13:19-22. This is why a number of scholars believe that this end time destruction of Babylon will completely fulfill both of these prophecies.

“*a home for demons*” – This would indicate that it is deserted by men.

“*a haunt for every evil spirit*” – They are not caged as in a prison.

“a haunt for every unclean and detestable bird” – This would bring thoughts of hyenas, jackals and vultures to the minds of the readers. Once again it is not a place of detention but rather symbolic of an undisturbed dwelling. This appears to be a fulfilment of Isaiah 13:20–21 only.

18:3 – ***“For all the nations have drunk the maddening wine of her adulteries. The kings of the earth committed adultery with her, and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries.”***

“For all the nations have drunk the maddening wine of her adulteries” – This would be figurative of other Old Testament teachings on apostasy (Hosea 4:10,11; Jeremiah 3:2,3) during this time it will be seen in the worship of the beast. It will also include an evil seduction led by the political and economic leaders of the day.

“and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries” – Seeking prestige and power often leads men to join these kinds of ungodly alliances.

18:4 – ***“Then I heard another voice from heaven say: Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues;”***

“Come out of her, my people” – This is very similar to other important Scriptures.

“Depart, depart, go out from there! Touch no unclean thing! Come out from it and be pure, you who carry the vessels of the LORD.”

Isaiah 52:11

“Come out of her, my people! Run for your lives! Run from the fierce anger of the LORD.”

Jeremiah 51:45

“The LORD had said to Abram, ‘Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you.’”

Genesis 12:1

“Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?”

II Corinthians 6:14

“Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.”

Ephesians 5:11

The Christians of John’s day had to live in Rome (Babylon) but Rome didn’t have to live in them.

“The persecuted church has always faced the temptation to compromise with worldliness and thus ease the tension of living in a hostile environment.”

Robert H. Mounce
“The Book of Revelation”
p. 324

18:5 – “for her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes.”

“for her sins are piled up to heaven” – This would clearly indicate a lack of repentance. Just think of the significance of gluing together scrolls listing the sins of Rome that reach all the way to heaven. This clearly shows that unconfessed sin will be judged.

18:6 – “Give back to her as she has given; pay her back double for what she has done. Mix her a double portion from her own cup.”

“pay her back double for what she has done” – This is more than just an “eye for an eye, tooth for tooth.” Heaven has declared a double punishment because she knew better but refused to follow God’s law. She must drink double from the cup that she poured out onto others (Revelation 14:8).

This is similar to the kind of severe sentence given to a corrupt policemen or a minister because they have been placed in an area of trust.

18:7 – “Give her as much torture and grief as the glory and luxury she gave herself. In her heart she boasts, I sit as queen; I am not a widow, and I will never mourn.”

“In her heart she boasts” – The reaping of a boastful pride is never something to adore (Proverbs 29:23; Luke 14:11). There comes the time in God’s perfect judgment when He realizes that the consistent sinful actions of mankind can no longer be tolerated (James 5:1-6). There is both a time of sowing and a time of reaping (Job 4:8; Galatians 6:6-8; II Peter 3:9).

“I sit as queen” – AD. 431 – The worship of Mary began
 – AD. 600 – Prayers were directed to Mary
 – AD. 1508 – Ave Maria approved
 – AD. 1854 – Immaculate conception of Mary
 – AD. 1950 – Assumption of the Virgin Mary
 – AD. 1965 – Mary proclaimed as Mother of the Church/Queen of heaven
 (cf. - Jeremiah 44:17,18,19,25)

Babylon the Great will be greatly affected by the spirit of Mystery Babylon.

18:8 – “Therefore in one day her plagues will overtake her: death, mourning and famine. She will be consumed by fire, for mighty is the Lord God who judges her.”

“Therefore in one day her plagues will overtake her” – Just like the night that Belshazzar (Daniel 5) saw the writing on the wall during his drunken feast, she will fall helplessly.

“death, mourning and famine. She will be consumed by fire” – These four plagues have been a common form of God’s judgement throughout Scripture.

18:9 – “When the kings of the earth who committed adultery with her and shared her luxury see the smoke of her burning, they will weep and mourn over her.”

“When the kings of the earth who committed adultery with her and shared her luxury see the smoke of her burning” – After the collapse of the World Trade Centres on September 11, 2001, we can vividly see how this would take place. For months our nightly news broadcasts focussed on this momentous event and its aftermath. Indeed the kings of the world were affected by their destruction. An even greater day of destruction awaits the political and economic centre of the world.

“they will weep and mourn over her” – Memorials were set up all around “Ground Zero.” It became a place of mourning and prayer. This will happen again at the destruction of Babylon the Great.

18:10 – “Terrified at her torment, they will stand far off and cry: Woe! Woe, O great city, O Babylon, city of power! In one hour your doom has come!”

“In one hour your doom has come!” – The one hour of retribution is in balance to the one hour of persecution. It will happen very quickly and with decisive accuracy. Nothing and no one will be able to stop it. People will stand at a distance feeling helpless as they are stricken in terror.

18:11 – “The merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her because no one buys their cargoes any more”

“The merchants of the earth will weep and mourn” – Extravagance was the order of John’s day. At one of Nero’s banquets the roses brought in from Egypt cost \$100,000.00. Emperor Vitellius had a hunger for peacocks brains and nightingales tongues. In less than one year of his reign he spent \$20 million mostly on food. One Roman Emperor took his life rather than live on the mire “pittance” of \$300,000 that remained after he had squandered the empire’s riches.

“Ten measures of wealth came down into the world. Rome received nine, and all the world one.”

Talmud

18:12 – “cargoes of gold, silver, precious stones and pearls; fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet cloth; every sort of citron wood, and articles of every kind made of ivory, costly wood, bronze, iron and marble;”

“cargoes of gold, silver” – It was recorded that there was a passion for silver during this time. Rich women would bathe only in silver tubs. Generals returning from battle would only eat on silver dishes.

“precious stones and pearls” – It was recorded that Julius Caesar gave a single pearl worth \$18,000 to Servilia during his reign.

“fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet cloth” – Purple was imported from Phenicia. The dye came from a single drop at a time as it was extracted from a shellfish called “*the murex*.” Silk was extremely expensive because it was imported from China.

“every sort of citron wood” – A very expensive dark wood called “*Thyine*” was imported from northern Africa and used to build fine furniture and inlays.

“and articles of every kind made of ivory, costly wood, bronze, iron and marble” – Only the wealthy Romans could eat from ivory plates.

18:13 – *“cargoes of cinnamon and spice, of incense, myrrh and frankincense, of wine and olive oil, of fine flour and wheat; cattle and sheep; horses and carriages; and bodies and souls of men.”*

“cargoes of cinnamon and spice” – Cinnamon was imported from southern China.

“of incense, myrrh and frankincense” – Incense was burnt for its wonderful aroma. Myrrh was used both medicinally and as a perfume.

“of wine and olive oil” – These were also symbols of luxurious living (cf. Revelation 6:6)

of fine flour and wheat – These were generally imported from Egypt.

“cattle and sheep” – The *“cattle”* actually includes any beast of burden.

“horses and carriages” – The *“carriages”* were a four-wheeled carriage that only the Roman aristocrats could afford to use.

“and bodies and souls of men” – Some versions have translated the word used for *“bodies”* as *“slaves.”*

Fifteen of the 29 commodities listed are also found in Ezekiel 27:12-22 at the lament over the city of Tyre. There are six groups of items mentioned:

- 1). Precious metals and gems
- 2). Fabrics from expensive clothing
- 3). Ornamental pieces
- 4). Aromatic substances
- 5). Foodstuffs
- 6). Animals along with men sold as slaves

“ and bodies and souls of men” – It is estimated that there were more than 60 million slaves in the Roman Empire. They were considered as human livestock.

The fall of Babylon affected a number of people who maintained an allegiance to her sin:

- 1). Kings – 18:3,9
- 2). Merchants – 18:3,11
- 3). Sea captains (sea pilots) – 18:17
- 4). Sailors – 18:17

18:14 – *“They will say, ‘The fruit you longed for is gone from you. All your riches and splendor have vanished, never to be recovered.’”*

“The fruit you longed for is gone from you” – This *“fruit”* speaks of *“a ripened autumn fruit.”* The fruit they have given all their time and efforts to harvest will come to nothing.

“All your riches and splendor have vanished” – Once again we are reminded of the foolishness of building up our treasures on earth where moth and rust can eat away at their value (Matthew 6:19-21).

18:15 – *“The merchants who sold these things and gained their wealth from her will stand far off, terrified at her torment. They will weep and mourn”*

“The merchants who sold these things and gained their wealth from her” – Their lament will be over the sudden loss of financial wealth that had been gained through the sale of these luxurious items.

“ will stand far off, terrified at her torment” – They will realize the futile opportunity they have to make any change in the outcome of this hour of destruction. They will finally see themselves as they really are – weak and lacking any resources to stand against the wrath of God.

18:16 – *“and cry out: Woe! Woe, O great city, dressed in fine linen, purple and scarlet, and glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls!”*

“dressed in fine linen, purple and scarlet, and glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls!” – Here we find imagery similar to that of Mystery Babylon (Revelation 17:4).

18:17 – *“In one hour such great wealth has been brought to ruin!’ Every sea captain, and all who travel by ship, the sailors,, will stand far off.”*

“In one hour such great wealth has been brought to ruin!’ – The emphasis once again of the brevity of this destruction seems to indicate that this cataclysmic event will be totally unexpected and overwhelming. They will find it difficult to believe what their eyes behold.

“Every sea captain, and all who travel by ship, the sailors” – This once again gives support for ancient Babylon and not Rome. Ancient Babylon had a seaport while Rome didn’t.

“and all who earn their living from the sea” – This would include divers for pearls as well as common fisherman.

18:18 – ***“When they see the smoke of her burning, they will exclaim, ‘Was there ever a city like this great city?’”***

“Who was ever silenced (destroyed - KJV) like Tyre, surrounded by the sea.”

Ezekiel 27:32

The destruction of the grandiose city will once again captivate the minds of those who witness its destruction. Everyone will be left with a feeling of utter helplessness.

18:19 – ***“They will throw dust on their heads, and with weeping and mourning cry out: Woe! Woe, O great city, where all who had ships on the sea became rich through her wealth! In one hour she has been brought to ruin!”***

“They will throw dust on their heads, and with weeping and mourning cry out” – Throwing dust on one’s head was a sign of utter grief in the O. T. (Joshua 7:6; I Samuel 4:12; II Samuel 1:2; 13:19; 15:32; Job 2:12; Lamentations 2:10). Everyone associated with Babylon the Great seem to be unified for monetary purposes only. The only thing this Babylon is able to do is make men rich – it can’t make men free.

18:20 – ***“Rejoice over her, O heaven! Rejoice, saints and apostles and prophets! God has judged her for the way she treated you.”***

“Rejoice, saints and apostles and prophets!” – This will be the first time that God’s people are told to rejoice. This is not a vindictive outcry. It will come as a result of a longing for justice which will finally be fulfilled (cf. Hebrews 11:35-38). It will contrast and balance the mourning found in the previous verses. What caused those controlled by their carnal nature to sorrow will likewise cause those who are born of the Spirit of God to rejoice.

“God has judged her for the way she treated you” – This would have special meaning for John who lost his brother James through a heartless killing at the hand of Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:1-2).

18:21 – “Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large millstone and threw it into the sea, and said: With such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again.”

“a boulder the size of a large millstone” – Some see this *“millstone”* as representing Jesus (Acts 4:11). Daniel states that a *“Rock”* will be cut out without the help of man and will strike the final empire of the world to bring about its collapse (Daniel 2:34,45).

18:22 – “The music of harpists and musicians, flute players and trumpeters, will never be heard in you again. No workman of any trade will ever be found in you again. The sound of a millstone will never be heard in you again.”

Notice that there will be no more:

- 1). Music - :22 (silence will reign)
- 2). Tradesmen - :22 (economy will cease)
- 3). Light - :23 (perhaps energy deficiencies)
- 4). Weddings - :23 (all reason for hope and rejoicing will disappear)

The reason for this judgement

- 1). Rome’s merchants will have become the leaders (princes) of the world (18:23). The world will be controlled financially and politically by this Babylonian domination.
- 2). Deception by sorcery - a false sense of security (18:23)
- 3). Martyrdom - the streets will run red with their blood. This was typical of John’s day as well (ie. massacre led by Nero AD. 64 as well as later by Domitian).

18:23 – “The light of a lamp will never shine in you again. The voice of bridegroom and bride will never be heard in you again. Your merchants were the world’s great men. By your magic spell all the nations were led astray.”

“By your magic spell all the nations were led astray” – The word used for *“magic spell”* is from the Greek word *“pharmakeia”* which is translated *“pharmacy”* in the English language. This indicates that drugs (most likely illegal street drugs) will be involved.

18:24 – *“In her was found the blood of prophets and of the saints, and of all who have been killed on the earth.”*

“In her was found the blood of prophets and of the saints” – Consider Rome’s opposition to the Reformation:

- 1). The Netherlands** – 1525 – prohibited reading the Bible
1546 – prohibited the printing and possession of the Bible
1535 death by fire of the Anabaptists (100,000 massacred)

- 2). France** – Aug. 24, 1572 – St. Bartholomew’s massacre in which 70,000 Huguenots were massacred

- 3). Bohemia** – In the 1600’s of the population of 4 million, 80 percent were Protestant. After the massacre by the Jesuits only 800,000 were left and all of them were Roman Catholics.

- 4). Spain** – In 18 years there were 10,200 burned and 97,000 imprisoned. From 1481-1808 AD. there were 100,000 martyrs and 1.5 million banished from the land.

No wonder the redeemed of the LORD will rejoice when this evil system is finally destroyed. The day of God’s judgement will come with a swiftness. It is unfortunate that it will be too late for many who have refused to repent when the opportunity was given.

THE TRIUMPHANT LORD

Text: Revelation 19:1-21

This is the chapter that became the inspiration for Handel's famous "*Messiah - Hallelujah Chorus*." He composed the music for all fifty three numbers in an unbelievable twenty four days. The first performance was conducted in Dublin on April 13, 1742. He gave his last presentation the day before he died.

Here we see heaven rejoicing because of the final triumph of good over evil. This is the only place in this book as well as in the N. T. where the word "*Hallelujah*" is used.

It finds its beginnings in the O. T., especially in the book of Psalms. It means "*Praise the LORD*." It is one of the few words that is used worldwide without any change other than accents. This crescendo of praise meets its climax in shouting (19:1,3,6), crying (19:4) and loud peals of thunder (19:6).

19:1 – “*After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting: Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,*”

“what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting” – Some believe this great multitude are the angelic host while others believe it consists of the saints who were martyred for their faith (7:9).

“Hallelujah!” – The word "*Hallelujah!*" occurs only in this passage of the N. T. (vss. 1,3,4,6). It is derived from two Hebrew words "*halal*" and "*Jah*" which means "*Praise Yahweh*." The Hebrew form introduces a number of the Psalms (106,111-113, 117, 135, 146-150). It is often translated "*Praise the Lord*" in the Scriptures.

“Salvation and glory and power belong to our God” – This power and glory is what God exercises in order to bring deliverance from sin through our salvation.

19:2 – “*for true and just are his judgments. He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries. He has avenged on her the blood of his servants.*”

“for true and just are his judgments” – This is a repeat of the accolades given in 15:3 and 16:7.

“He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries” – One of the main reasons for her judgement is because of corrupting others by her evil influence (14:8; 17:2; 18:3). God saves a severe judgement for this sin (Romans 1:28-32; Revelation 18:3).

“He has avenged on her the blood of his servants” - God takes revenge upon all who are responsible for shedding the blood of His saints (Deuteronomy 32:43). Not one drop will go unnoticed. It never has and it never will. The word for ***“avenge”*** is used twice in this book (cf. 6:10) speaking of avenging the blood of God’s martyrs.

19:3 – *“And again they shouted: Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever.”*

“Hallelujah!” – This is not a simple repeat. It is a crescendo of praise that is being offered to God.

“The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever” – This is a way of emphasizing the prolonged period of time that this burning continue. This phrase is not to be taken literally as being eternal. It will rise into the skies as in the days of Edom’s destruction (Isaiah 34:8-10).

19:4 – *“The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God, who was seated on the throne. And they cried: Amen, Hallelujah!”*

“The twenty-four elders” – This is the last time they are mentioned in this book. They end their involvement with a closing doxology. The elders began in worship (Chapter 4) and now they end in worship with all that is within them. Our eyes are now refocused upon the Bride of Christ. Once the harlot church is removed, the Bride of Christ will receive proper focus in all her beauty.

19:5 – *“Then a voice came from the throne, saying: Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both small and great!”*

“Then a voice came from the throne”

“This voice is undoubtedly an angel encouraging the heavenly host to continue the praise session, He is the celestial cheerleader at one of heaven’s most momentous and climactic hours.”

Dr. Jack Van Impe
“Revelation Revealed”
Jack Van Impe Ministries, 1989, p. 212

“Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both small and great!” – This includes every believer from every stratus of society as well as every level of spiritual maturity.

9:6 – *“Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns.”*

“Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude” – Heavenly multitudes will add their voices and the sound will be loud enough to make a thunderous roar.

“For our Lord God Almighty reigns” – Emperor Domitian gave himself the title *“Our Lord and God.”* The word *“Almighty”* speaks of God’s omnipotence. It literally means *“the one who holds all things in His control.”*

Lord	-	<i>His Passion</i>
God	-	<i>His Person</i>
Almighty	-	<i>His Power</i>

19:7 – *“Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.”*

“For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready” – (cf. Isaiah 54:5-7; Ezekiel 16:8 ff; Hosea 2:14 ff).

“In Biblical times a marriage involved two major events, the betrothal and the wedding. These were normally separated by a period of time during which the two individuals were considered husband and wife and as such were under the obligations of faithfulness. The wedding began with a procession to the bride’s house, which was followed by a return to the house of the groom for the marriage feast. By analogy, the church, espoused to Christ by faith, now awaits the parousia when the heavenly groom will come for his bride and return to heaven for the marriage feast which lasts throughout eternity. John is not saying that the eternal festivities have in fact arrived, but is speaking proleptically of the period of blessedness which follows the millennium (cf. the declaration in 14:8 with the actual fall of Babylon in chaps. 17 and 18).”

Robert H. Mounce
“The Book of Revelation”
 William Eerdmans Publishing Company
 p. 340

19:8 – “*Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.*” (*Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.*)”

“Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear”

HARLOT CHURCH

- purple and scarlet
- gold, jewels, pearls

- took upon herself

BRIDE OF CHRIST

- fine linen
- bright
- clean (pure)
- was given to wear

“Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints” – The word used for “*righteous acts*” is plural “*righteousness*’.” This does not oppose justification by faith (Romans 5:18-19). A transformed life is the only proper response to our new birth. Without it we will cannot see God. He enfolds us in His righteousness as we allow Him to have His way.

19:9 – “*Then the angel said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!’” And he added, “These are the true words of God.”*

“Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!” – We now arrive at the fourth of what will be seven beatitudes (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14). What a special invitation. This would include the O. T. saints, N. T. saints as well as the tribulation saints.

The Jews were told to prepare for and expect a time of feasting once their Messiah arrives (Isaiah 65:17-20; Matthew 26:29; Luke 13:29).

19:10 – “*At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, ‘Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.’”*

“I fell at his feet to worship him” – The anticipation of being the Bride of Christ overwhelmed John. His act was undeniably refused by the angel. The apostle Peter responded much the same when he informed Cornelius to stand up since he was also only a man (Acts 10:25).

“Worship God!” – Only God can be worshipped. Our Lord received worship by Thomas as he recognized his resurrected Lord (John 20:28). When all other false christs are proven to be counterfeits will the stage be unveiled to behold the true Messiah. This verse marks the beginning of the final scene of the Great Tribulation.

“For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” – This word *“prophecy”* does not mean prediction of the future but rather *“a forthright proclamation of the true words of God.”* It is speaking of the heart or essence of the words that proclaim the name of Jesus.

The Rider on the White Horse

19:11 – *“I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war.”*

“I saw heaven standing open” - Only twice in the book of Revelation is heaven opened (cf. 4:1). Chapter 4 unveils the **“Rapture”** while chapter 19 displays the **“Revelation.”**

“and there before me was a white horse” – This is NOT the same horse or rider as was found in Revelation 6:2. This is now Jesus riding from heaven as the Prince of Peace.

“whose rider is called Faithful and True” – This is the same faithful and true witness who addressed the church of Laodicea (3:14). The Lord will come to establish righteous judgement and divine authority.

19:12 – *“His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself.”*

“His eyes are like blazing fire” – This symbolizes His readiness to deal with and understand all iniquity. Nothing can escape His penetrating gaze.

“on his head are many crowns” – The word used for *“crowns”* is *“diadems.”* This stands in contrast to:

1. The seven crowns (diadems) of the dragon (12:3)
2. The ten crowns (diadems) of the beast that comes from the sea (13:1)

It indicates our Lord’s unlimited sovereignty over all powers and dominions.

“He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself” – We show our respect by the name we use for people. (ie. - “hey you,” “sir,” “Pastor,” first or last name used).

It may be **“YHWH”** - a name too holy to pronounce so that the vowels of another word for God (**“Adonai”**) are read with the consonants of the holy name with the result of the English word **“Jehovah.”**

19:13 – “He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God.”

“He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood” - This would plant images of the ram skins that were dyed the colour red for Moses’ Tabernacle. It signified the Lord’s consecration even unto death. His blood was the price of our redemption. It was openly displayed for all to see.

There could be a second image as well. Instead of displaying the blood of the sacrifice it could refer to the blood of those whom God has tread out in the winepress of His wrath (Isaiah 63:2-4; cf. Revelation 19:15).

“and his name is the Word of God” – (cf. - John 1:1,2). This authority, **“The Word (logos) of God”** will become the basis upon which He will destroy the nations. To any Hebrew student a word is an active agent that achieves the intention of its speaker (Genesis 1:3,7,9 . . .).

19:14 – “The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean.”

“The armies of heaven” – This army will be composed of angels (Matthew 26:53) as well as those martyred for their faith in God (Revelation 17:14). This army will not be involved in the actual battle although they will be given a front row seat (cf. - 19:15,19,21).

19:15 – “Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. ‘He will rule them with an iron sceptre.’ He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty.”

“He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty” – This imagery is described more fully in Revelation 14:17-20.

19:16 – “On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”

“KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS” – This is the third name given to God. Notice all the upper case letters. This is His official title.

1st Name - Our Lord’s Dignity (19:12)

2nd Name - Our Lord’s Incarnation (19:13)

3rd Name - Our Lord’s Second Advent (19:16)

Antichrist and his Allies Completely Destroyed

19:17 – *“And I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair, ‘Come, gather together for the great supper of God,’”*

“Come, gather together for the great supper of God” – This is in keeping with other O. T. writings of God’s end time destruction of those who oppose Him (Ezekiel 39:17-20).

19:18 – *“so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and mighty men, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, small and great.”*

“so that you may eat the flesh of . . .” – This is one way of saying that Christ’s victory will be totally complete. To remain unburied and become food for predators was considered a dishonouring fate in ancient writings. All kinds of men will be devoured at this vulturous feast.

19:19 – *“Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army.”*

Then I saw the beast and the kings . . . gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army” – This is what is known as the Battle of Armageddon (16:16). This will bring an end to the armies who have risen up against God.

19:20 – *“But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur.”*

“But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet” – They will be seized with a hostile intent. Their deception will come to an end (cf. - 16:17-21). This battle will end as quickly as it began.

“The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur” – The O. T. tells of Enoch and Elijah who passed up into heaven without first dying. Now these two men of unrighteousness in the N. T. will be cast down alive into their fiery, eternal grave.

Many theologians are turning away from what once was clear biblical teaching on hell. Perhaps they are feeling the heat from their parishioners and therefore are trying to quench the fire. One such religious leader is Father Ronald Rolheiser, a Saskatoon-based (at the time of the writing) theologian and Oblate provincial superior. He is a proponent of what more orthodox scholars term *“happy face”* theology. According to article in the Western Catholic Reporter as quoted in the Alberta Report we find that he,

“believes that everything will turn out for the better for everyone and that nobody is really bad. He argues that hell exists as a state of mind, if not an actual place, and that there might not be anybody there and that, if there is, they certainly won’t stay forever. . . In fact, hell isn’t very full at all and, if there’s anyone there, they are not regretting their lives on earth but are looking with disdain and pity at those poor naive folk who have been duped into heaven. . . I don’t necessarily agree with the classical position that seems to say that at death you have no further choices. Perhaps you do have choice and can leave hell after being there. . . Nobody is in hell feeling sorry for themselves. They’ve separated themselves from God and feel sorry for those who are in heaven.”

“Tom Harpur, Anglican pop theologian and author of the this year’s best-selling book *‘Life After Death,’* attacks the idea of hell as ‘so naive that the average thinking person can easily conclude the whole subject is one for children and for lovers of pure fantasy . . . There are few ideas in the entire history of religion that have caused more misery, cruelty and misunderstanding than the concept of a fiery hell.”

Alberta Report
“Paying the Price”
 July 8, 1991
 p. 4

I guess they don’t like the teaching of Jesus on this subject any more than they would like the writings of the apostle Peter (Matthew 8:12; 24:51; 25:30,46; II Peter 2:4-22). It is very unfortunate when leading scholars make statements that are clearly contrary to the Word of God. It will be an eye opening experience when they face this eternal hell themselves. Any who lead people astray from the truth of the Scriptures will find their place in the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:10).

19:21 – “*The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.*”

“*The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse*” – Whatever God uses to destroy these armies will bring about a swift retribution.

“*and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh*” – These vultures will gorge themselves in the flesh of those who have fallen victim of their own hatred against God.

THE THOUSAND YEARS AND FINAL VICTORY

Text: Revelation 20:1-15

Some people object to the word “*millennialism*” being used to describe this portion of Scripture stating that the term is not found in the Scriptures. They state that it is a man-made term and therefore it can’t be trusted. Although the exact word is not found in Scripture, the doctrine of the thousand-year reign of Christ and His saints is clearly described. The same foolish argument could be used for the following words as well:

1. Trinity - Jesus’ Baptism (Matthew 3:16,17)
2. Substitution - “*Wounded for our transgressions*” (Isaiah 53:5; I Peter 2:24)
3. Deity - “*Son of God*” (John 1:49)
4. Fall of man - “*drove him from the garden*” - (Genesis 3:24)
5. Incarnation - “*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us*” - John 1:14)

The word “*millennialism*” derives its name from two Latin words “*mille*” meaning “*thousand*” and “*annus*” meaning “*year.*” By the amount of information in 10 verses of this chapter, we can clearly see that it is an important time period in the history of the world.

Some believe in “*premillennialism*” which believes that, following Christ’s visible return, He will set up a physical kingdom on earth to rule and reign for 1000 years before the final battle of Gog and Magog takes place.

Others believe in “*Amillennialism*” which teaches that Revelation 19 is preceded by the Return of Christ to set up His invisible spiritual kingdom that will last between His first and second coming.

Hopefully we are all in support of I T. Beckwith’s 1919 AD. commentary which promotes a “*promillennialism.*” He promotes that the martyrs will receive a special reward for their faithfulness toward God instead of focussing upon a chronological order of events.

20:1 – “*And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain.*”

“*And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven*” – This is most likely the same angel that was mentioned in 9:1-2 who was also given the key to the Abyss.

“having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain” – These are symbolic terms that are used to describe the inevitable binding of Satan’s power and influence over mankind. The premillennialists believe that the chain symbolically represents God’s power to defeat Satan. The amillennialists believe that it represents the power of the gospel as found in the Scriptures that are able to bind Satan when they are properly applied.

20:2 – *“He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.”*

“He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.”

“the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan” – All of these four names are used elsewhere in this book (*the dragon - 12:7,9, that ancient serpent - 12:15, who is the devil - 12:9,12, and Satan - 12:9*). These names stand in contrast to the four names that are given to Jesus in this chapter as well (Faithful and True; the Word of God; King of kings; Lord of lords).

“and bound him for a thousand years” – This is the number of completeness (10³). This is not yet Satan’s final punishment. It is only to confine and prevent him from deceiving the nations for a period of time. This is not simply curbing his activities, but totally ceasing any of it for that period of one thousand years.

If men sin during the millennium, it will not be because of deceit – it will be because of a self-will and yielding to their own lusts. It is NOT said to be a dispensation of sinlessness.

In the present age those who live a righteous life will suffer. During the millennium age, those who lived a righteous life will reign supreme over the earth’s inhabitants.

20:3 – *“He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.”*

“He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him” – It is sheer nonsense to believe (as some teach) that Satan is presently bound.

“to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended” – Many people have wondered why God would allow Satan to be bound for only 1000 years and then set him free to deceive once more. Why not just cast him into the Lake of Fire and begin eternity right after the Great Tribulation?

The answer to that question does not lie in the scope of man's knowledge. We may try to speculate – but we can never truly answer that question. Perhaps it is best left unanswered until we stand before Him when all the mysteries of this world will be revealed.

“After that, he must be set free for a short time” – It indicates that God's power and goodness are so great that He can allow evil to be loosed once again without being threatened with defeat. It also shows that even a 1000 years (or even eternity) will not change Satan's plan or man's tendency to rebel against God.

20:4 – ***“I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”***

“I saw thrones” – The word ***“thrones”*** is used 47 x's in the Book of Revelation. Except for Satan's throne (13:2) and the beast's (16:10), the other uses of the word keep our focus toward heaven. Once again we see that this is the Revelation of Jesus Christ not of Satan.

“on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge” – Many suggestions are given as to who will be sitting on these thrones. Some believe it is the twenty-four elders (5:8,9; 7:13 ff.; 11:16ff.). Some want to identify them as being the Church. Others limit the seating to those who have been martyred. Probably the most likely occupants would be the saints who comprise the armies of heaven in Revelation 19:14 and who will stand with Christ as He conquers the nations of the world.

“I saw the souls” – These will await the resurrection.

“who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God” – The word ***“beheaded”*** means ***“with one axe.”*** The Roman Republic beheaded with a double-edged axe while the Roman Empire used a sword. It literally means ***“executed”*** not limited to just beheading.

“They came to life” – This is a single word in Greek meaning ***“they lived again.”***

and reigned with Christ a thousand years” – The number 1000 is an ideal number, ten cubed. This (although argued by some) appears to be a time period of a literal 1000 years, not something that is spiritual in interpretation. The teaching of Isaiah (11:6-9; 65:17-25) would correspond with this period of time.

20:5 – *“(The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection.”*

“The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended” – These will comprise of everyone who never accepted the Lord as their Saviour during their lifetime. In other words they are the wicked who have died and are awaiting their time of judgement.

“This is the first resurrection” – This is not the usual word for *“resurrection.”* Some scholars believe that John is limiting his focus to only the martyrs of the tribulation and not to the O. T. saints.

20:6 – *“Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.”*

“Blessed and holy” – This blessedness includes three main parts:

1. There is no second death that has power over them.
2. They shall be priests of both God and Christ
3. They shall reign for 1000 years with Christ

“the first resurrection” – There are two main interpretations of this portion of scripture:

1. The first resurrection includes both the martyrs and the church universal.
2. The first resurrection includes only the martyrs. Therefore, the second includes both believers and unbelievers. These are then judged according to the books (Revelation 20:15).

“The second death has no power over them” – These will simply face the death of their human bodies. No further harm (or death) can come to them. This *“second death”* is explained in more detail in 20:14.

but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years” – This is a compilation and enhancement of the teaching found in 1:6; 5:10 and 20:4a.

Satan's Final Overthrow and Doom

20:7 – *“When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison”*

“When the thousand years are over” – Have you ever wondered what the purpose of the final 1000 years is? God is committed to facing opposition to His sovereignty without fear.

1. One writer suggests that it finishes world history with a convincing time period of victory of righteousness over evil.
2. It could be a special reward for the martyrs.
3. It could simply fulfill God's calendar of events (6,000 + 1,000 = 7,000).

20:8 – *“and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore.”*

“to deceive the nations” – Several scholars place the events recorded in Ezekiel 38 and 39 during this same time period.

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| i.e. - Ezekiel 36,37 | - Israel returns |
| - Ezekiel 38,39 | - Warfare between Gog and Magog |
| - Ezekiel 40-48 | - Symbolic figure of the eternal state of God's people in the rebuilt temple in the New Jerusalem |

Other scholars believe that chapters 38-48 take place before or at the beginning of the millennium period.

It is interesting that a Babylonian legend speaks of Tiamat (the chaos monster) who is released at the end time and once again is defeated by Marduk (the god of light).

“in the four corners of the earth” – This simply expresses the vast regions of the earth like the four points found on a compass.

“Gog and Magog” – This could simply represent hostile nations around the world instead of just an isolated area in what we would describe as the people living around Russia.

“In number they are like the sand on the seashore” – This will be an incredible global force with one purpose in mind - to overcome everything and everyone that stands for God.

20:9 – *“They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God’s people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them.”*

“the city he loves” – What a contrast between Jerusalem and “Babylon the Great” that God destroyed earlier (Revelation 18:16 ff).

20:10 – *“And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”*

“And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown” - The one’s who were most involved with the deception, will not stop until they reach their final destination – the Lake of Fire. Those who were deceived will have to stand before God’s throne of judgement.

“They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever” – There will be no intermission and no end to their suffering.

The Dead Are Judged in the Final Judgement

20:11 – *“Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them.”*

“Then I saw a great white throne” – This is similar to Daniel 7.

“and him who was seated on it” – *“The Father judges no one, but has given all judgement to the Son”* (John 5:22; cf. - II Corinthians 5:10; II Timothy 4:1). Yet we should also take note of the unity between the Father and the Son. The Scriptures speak clearly of this unity, *“I and my Father are one.”* - (John 10:30; 17:22).

“Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them” – The apostle Peter was also given revelation insight into this end of time event (II Peter 3:10).

20:12 – *“And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.”*

“And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne” – No one will be able to flee from the presence of the Lord on this day of judgement (Psalm 139:7).

“the book of life” – This suggests a general judgment of all mankind excluding any martyrs who already received their reward. The rest of mankind are judged according to their actions and the fruit of their doings (Jeremiah 17:10). There always needs to be a balance between faith and works. Judgement is based upon the clear evidence recorded in the books containing our deeds and whether our name is written in the Lamb’s Book of Life .

“The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books” – God knows that anyone with a righteous character will portray righteous deeds. We must keep the horse before the cart. It is good works that are based upon our salvation – not salvation based upon our good works.

20:13 – ***“The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done.”***

“The sea gave up the dead that were in it” - Those who have died at sea even though their bodies were engulfed by the water will stand before God. No one will escape.

“and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them” – Hades is the common destination of both the O. T. saints and the pagans prior to Calvary. Death was their common fate. But those who died in Christ will be judged differently (II Corinthians 5:10). The rewards will either be good or bad according to our deeds.

20:14 – ***“Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death.”***

“the lake of fire” – The lake of fire is not a place of annihilation but a *“torturous existence in the society of evil.”* Beasley-Murray

“The lake of fire is the second death” – Just as there is a second and higher life, so there is a second and deeper death. As after that life there is no more death, so after that death there is no more life. Eternal fire is prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41). Eternal life is prepared for God and His angels and saints (Matthew 25:34).

20:15 – ***“If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”***

“If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life” - No one’s name will be found in this book unless they are born again.

THE NEW JERUSALEM - I**Text: Revelation 21:1-8**

Win the last 25 years we've have heard about the New Age Movement. There is nothing new about the "New Age" except its name. God's New Age is not some revision of an old edition. God is prepared to make everything completely new.

I say unequivocally that our local church has never and will never accept the ungodly teaching of a reprobate mind that attempts to exclude Christ from its teaching. God is at the centre of our life and doctrine. His Holy Word is our source of truth. It is our pattern for life. Anything opposing God's Word or His Spirit is to be rejected even though it may not be popular.

21:1 – “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.”

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth” –

“Behold I will create new heavens and a new earth, the former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.”

Isaiah 65:17

“As the new heaven and the new earth that I will endure before me,” declares the LORD, “so will your name and descendants endure.”

Isaiah 66:22

“But in keeping with His promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.”

II Peter 3:13

Remember the words of our Lord

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.”

Matthew 24:35; cf. Matthew 5:18

Our present heaven (atmospheric, stellar, third heaven) must be removed because it has all been touched by the presence of sinful man. God’s new order will NOT just be a physical transformation but also a spiritual house cleaning. With the devil and all his agents in their eternal hell, there will be no opportunity for evil to ever return.

“and there was no longer any sea” – A sea is never still. The sea is a symbol of continual change. It is also seen as a source of evil (Revelation 13:1). Man never lives on the sea but simply crosses it to reach his destination.

Notice:

No more sea	–	21:1
No more death	–	21:4
No more mourning	–	21:4
No more crying	–	21:4
No more pain	–	21:4
No more curse	–	22:3
No more night	–	22:5

Seven new things:

New heaven	–	21:1
New earth	–	21:1
New Jerusalem	–	21:2
New things (everything)	–	21:5
New paradise	–	22:1-5
New source of light	–	22:5
New place for God’s throne	–	22:3

21:2 – *“I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.”*

“I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem” – The old Jerusalem was to be the city of peace but could never live up to its name because it rejected the **“Prince of Peace.”** This New Jerusalem is described in detail (21:9ff).

“Revelation as a whole may be characterized as *A Tale a Two Cities*”

Beasley-Murray
“The Book of Revelation”

21:3 – *“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.”*

“Now the dwelling (tabernacle) of God is with men” – The word used for *“dwelling or tabernacle”* is (*“skēnē”*) which is closely related to the Hebrew word *“Shekinah.”* It was used to describe the presence and glory of God. John wrote that,

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling (tabernacle - KJV) among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

John 1:14

From this time on throughout eternity God will make His permanent dwelling with us.

21:4 – *“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”*

Now we see God’s “New Order.” It is much different than the “New Order” of this world. God’s “New Order” has no tears, death, mourning, crying. When this time arrives the previous order will become history never to be remembered.

“They will enter Zion singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.”

Isaiah 35:10

“I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more.”

Isaiah 65: 19

“Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

I Corinthians 15:54

21:5 – *“He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”*

“I am making everything new!” – This is one of the few times that God Himself speaks in the Book of Revelation (1:8; 16:1,17?). The cosmos will have to come into line with the change in God’s people (II Corinthians 3:18; 4:16–18; 5:16–17).

“Write this down” – It is like John is so caught up in astonishment that he has to remind himself to record the words that are spoken to him. A record needs to be kept of words that are trustworthy.

21:6 – *“He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life.”*

“It is done” – *“It”* is actually plural in form therefore, it could be written *“they are done.”* All the events that will have had to take place will be completed.

“I am the Alpha and the Omega” – These represent both the first and last letter of the Greek alphabet.

“the Beginning and the End” – He is eternally God. He is the source and origin of all things.

“To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life.” – cf. – Isaiah 55:1; John 4:10,14.

21:7 – *“He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son.”*

“He who overcomes” – This reminds us of Revelation 2,3 where we are told that those who overcome will . . .

- “eat of the tree of life”* 2:7
- “not be hurt by the second death”* 2:11
- “given hidden manna and a white stone”* 2:17
- “receive authority over the nations”* 2:26
- “name not blotted from the Book of Life”* 3:5
- “pillar in the temple of God”* 3:12
- “sit with Christ on His throne”* 3:21

21:8 – *“But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”*

“But the . . .

“cowardly” – These are the ones who fear the threats of the beast more than they trust the love of Christ. It is a lack of genuine commitment and not timidity (or fear) that causes them to back away from persecution.

“For whoever wants to save his life will lose it.”

Mark 8:35

“the unbelieving” – This is not speaking of the pagan world (as in I Corinthians 6:6; 7:12 ff), but believers who have denied their faith during this severe persecution.

“the vile (abominable)” – Those who joined in emperor worship (cf. – 17:4).

“the murderers” – All homicide is included in this thought.

“the sexually immoral” – The Greek word used here is *“ pornos ”* which is used to denote male prostitutes. In the New Testament it referred *“to sexual sin in general.”*

“those who practice magic arts (sorcerer – KJV)” – i.e. Acts 19:19. From good luck charms all the way to the ⇒Black Mass.

“the idolaters” – Those who worship false gods, especially those who worship the beast.

“and all liars” – Those who habitually lie. Falseness is continually condemned in the Book of Revelation (2:2; 3:9; 14:5; 21:27; 22:15).

“in the fiery lake of burning sulfur” – This will not be a 5-star hotel where people go to drink it up with their buddies.

“This is the second death” – There is no escape from this place. They will join the devil, antichrist, and false prophet along with every other demon and those defiant against God and His Word. After death comes the judgment.

THE NEW JERUSALEM - II

Text: Revelation 21:9-27

The glorious vision of the New Jerusalem is beyond our ability to comprehend. It is somewhat like the difficulty faced as missionaries try to describe snow to African tribesmen (Isaiah 1:18). It's also difficult to describe an electric stove to someone who uses an open fire pit or a refrigerator to someone who only uses a cool stream. It would be just as difficult to describe a T.V. to someone who has never seen one.

21:9 – *“One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.”*

“Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb” – This bride is a picture of purity and beauty. The wife normally expresses the intimacy of most relationships.

21:10 – *“And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God..”*

“And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain” – John was in the wilderness when he saw Babylon the Great (17:3) but he was located on a great mountain to gain a view of the New Jerusalem.

- cf. – Exodus 19ff – Moses met with God on Mount Sinai marking the beginning of the Jewish Law system.
Ezekiel 40:1-2 – Ezekiel received the great vision of the restored temple and land atop a “very high mountain.”

“coming down out of heaven from God” – This beautiful city will not be man-made but rather a gift from God. Man will not be able to take even the slightest credit for its existence.

21:11 – *“It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.”*

“It shone with the glory of God” – This “light-giving” city will manifest the presence and glory of God who created it.

“like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal” – Jasper is a stone that is not transparent so it does not normally transmit light. It is usually a red, brown or yellow variety of quartz. Therefore, some believe that John is describing something similar to today's diamond stone . It is not the stone that gives light – it simply reflects the glory of God.

21:12 – “It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel.”

“It had a great, high wall “ – This wall is not to suggest that security needs to be in place. There will be no defence needed because all the enemies of God will be in the Lake of Fire. It will simply stand as an eternal reminder that our lives have been (hidden) with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3).

“with twelve gates” – The prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel 48:30-34) names the gates surrounding the temple after the 12 tribes (Levi and Joseph included). The number twelve also indicates an abundance.

“On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel” – Not only are the twelve gates inscribed with the names of the 12 tribes of Israel but also the foundations will contain the names of the 12 apostles (21:14).

21:13 – “There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west.”

“There were three gates . . . east . . . north . . . south . . . west” – John seems to choose a most unusual order perhaps to discourage any interest his readers may have had in the “zodiacal cycle.”

21:14 – “The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.”

“twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles” – Judas could not be included in this number of twelve apostles. This would either include Matthias (Acts 1:21-26) or Paul (Acts 9:1-6; 22:6-10; I Corinthians 15:3-9).

21:15 – “The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls.”

“measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls” – The rod was slightly more than 10 feet long. In chapter 11, John was given a reed to measure the inner temple, courts and worshippers to distinguish them from the outer courts and city as a whole. This measurement is not for preservation or judgement but simply to capture the beauty of this wonderful city of God.

Since the streets are composed of gold and the city is of pure gold (vs 18), a golden yardstick is also appropriate. Without any thieves there will be nothing to worry about.

21:16 – *“The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long.”*

“The city was laid out like a square” – This has been often termed the city that is “foursquare.” It probably would be referring to a city shaped like a cube. Its length, breadth and height will all be equal. The Greek word is used to describe a huge cube-shaped rock that was used as a building block.

Some believe the city is shaped like a pyramid so the river can flow from God’s throne at its peak. But this interpretation seems unlikely. The inner Jewish sanctuary of the Temple (I Kings 6:20) was that of a perfect cube (20 cubits [30 feet] on each side). It was called as the Holy of Holies because of God’s ever-abiding presence in it.

12,000 stadia – This would work out to about 1,400 miles or 2,200 kilometres. In comparison there are few cities in our world that would be even 100 miles across. This “city” is just too large to conceive. We need to remember that it is also 1,400 miles high! This city alone could contain every person who has ever been born plus billions more.

21:17 – *“He measured its wall and it was 144 cubits thick, by man’s measurement, which the angel was using.”*

“its wall and it was 144 cubits thick” – This would be approximately 72 yards. We cannot say for certain whether this is its width or its height. If it is its height it doesn’t compare with verse 12 (“great, high wall”). If it is its width, it would be small for a wall that is 1,400 miles high if this wall indeed reached to the height of the city.

21:18 – *“The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass.”*

The wall was made of jasper . . . pure gold, as pure as glass” – Neither the jasper or the gold mentioned are anything like we’ve ever discovered on earth - and rightly so. God’s gold is without impurity. It shines like the clearness of a rare crystal glass. Ancient glass was usually very dark. Anything as clear as crystal would have been kept for a king’s palace.

“The wall of jasper represents Christ, in His radiant glory, surrounding His saints. The pure gold city typifies the righteousness of God’s Holy nature, and the precious colourful stones, startlingly brilliant, picture the Lord’s attributes as well as various aspects of His redemptive work.”

Dr. Jack Van Impe
“Revelation Revealed”
 1982. pp. 245,246

21:19 – *“The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald,”*

21:20 – *“the fifth sardonyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst.”*

The original order (given below in the chart) is the order in which the sun passes through the constellations. John has reversed the order. The heavenly city of which he was writing about is not the creation of men’s minds. He is not giving a “Christianized” version of the “city of the gods” or any reference to pagan speculation.

He is rather repudiating or disclaiming all heathen concepts. He is expressing the thought that in the end God will reverse human judgements. God will in the end put things “right side up” once again. The creation of the New Jerusalem will have nothing to do with mankind’s searching for truth. It will be so clear that no one will need to create any further ways to search for the answers of life itself.

Comparison of Foundational Stones with Zodiacal Signs and Jewels

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jasper - crystal green 2. Sapphire - deep blue 3. Chalcedony - pale blue or green 4. Emerald - green 5. Sardonyx - red or white 6. Carnelian (or Sardius) - blood red 7. Chrysolite - golden (ancient) 8. Beryl - sea green 9. Topaz - yellow-green 10. Chrysoprase - shade of green 11. Jacinth - violet 12. Amethyst - purple quartz 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Ram - the Amethyst 2. The Bull - the Hyacinth 3. The Twins - the Chrysoprase 4. The Crab - the Topaz 5. The Lion - the Beryl 6. The Virgin - the Chrysolite 7. The Balance - the Sardius 8. The Scorpion - The Sardonyx 9. The Archer - the Smaragdus (“Emerald”) 10. The Goat - the Chalcedon 11. The Water-carrier - the Sapphire 12. The Fishes - the Jasper
Foundational Stones	Zodiacal Signs & Jewels

21:21 – *“The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass.”*

“The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl” – A rabbinic prophecy promised that God would set up gems and pearls in the gateways of Jerusalem that would measure 30 cubits (45 feet) by 30 cubits and hollow them out 10 cubits (15 feet) wide by 20 cubits (30 feet) high.

In ancient cities the gate was built into the wall as part of a tower. This would be incredibly large if they followed the same pattern here.

21:22 – *“I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.”*

“I did not see a temple” – Ezekiel spent 7 chapters describing the restored temple of Jerusalem. It will no longer be needed in the New Jerusalem. This truth is not opposed in 7:15. The New Jerusalem is not all of heaven it is only the main city in heaven. God’s throne is not limited to just a city. We are the temple on earth (II Corinthians 6:16) while God is the temple in heaven.

21:23 – *“The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.”*

“The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it” – God’s glory is all the illumination that it will need (Isaiah 60:19,20). Jesus is not just the *“light of the world”* (John 8:12) but He is also the light of the eternal city. His radiant splendour and glory will shine forth so magnificently that darkness will be eternally impossible.

21:24 – *“The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it.”*

“The nations (Gentiles) will walk by its light” – God’s plans will not be frustrated. Many people will enter His New Jerusalem.

“the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it” – The kings of the earth will be attracted to the brightness of the glory of God (Isaiah 60:1-3). As these kings arrive they will be immediately struck with an atmosphere of no fear from assassination, terrorism or robbery. They will no longer serve as kings but joyfully revoke any right to their throne as they spend an eternity honouring the One who sits upon the throne in all of His majesty and beauty.

21:25 – “On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there.”

“On no day will its gates ever be shut” – Nothing and no evil will be able to approach it (Isaiah 60:11).

“for there will be no night there” – Darkness will flee away.

21:26 – “The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.”

21:27 – “Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”

“Nothing impure will ever enter it” – God’s place is a holy place.

“only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life” – You must have your reservation accepted to enter. Those who have rejected Christ will be rejected forever.

THE RIVER OF LIFE

Text: Revelation 22:1-6

It is fitting that the first two chapters of the book of Genesis tells us of the heaven-like conditions on earth prepared for all mankind. The last two chapters of Revelation describe the recreated heaven that will be made for the Bride of Christ. All of the stores in between describe the great conflict as man turns away from God and God attempts to draw man back to Himself.

The description of the New Jerusalem actually continues on into 22:5. Chapter divisions were, of course, added as a modern convenience for those reading the Word of God. The more we get close to the centre of the city the more it appears as a garden, far surpassing the Garden of Eden.

22:1 – “Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb”

“the angel” – This is most likely the same angel that guided this tour of heaven since Revelation 21:9.

“the river of the water of life” – cf. - Ezekiel 47:1-12; Zechariah 14:8; Psalm 46:4. This water is crystal clear and pure. It gives meaning to our Lord’s words to the woman that He met at the well at Sychar (John 4:14).

“as clear as crystal” –

“This envisions a river somewhat like a shimmering stream containing sparkling water as it passes over mountain rocks.”

A. T. Robertson
“Word Pictures

22:2 – “down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.”

“down the middle of the great street of the city” – This suggests that the river flows down the middle of the city’s broad street with trees on each side of the river in the middle of the space between the street and each side of the river.

“the tree of life” – This tree was first mentioned in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:9; 3:22-24). If Adam and Eve had been able to eat of it they would have been eternally (immortally) in a state of sin. It was God’s grace that moved it to heaven where this could not take place.

“bearing twelve crops of fruit” – This is to emphasize the variety and unending abundance. Many believe that they will bear a different kind of fruit each month as well.

“yielding its fruit every month” – Without the sun or moon there is really no “month” as we presently know it (Revelation 21:23). It appears that the crops will continue to be abundant.

“And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations” – Since there is no sickness or pain or mourning, the question often arises “Healing from what?” John Walvoord takes the word to mean “health-giving.”

“The leaves of the tree promote the enjoyment of life in the New Jerusalem, and they are not correcting ills which do not exist.”

John F. Walvoord
“The Revelation of Jesus Christ”

Another writer says that it indicates a complete absence of physical and spiritual want. Yet another sees the word ***“healing”*** as an indication of the final healing relationship between Jews and Gentiles.

22:3 – ***“No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him.”***

“No longer will there be any curse” – The word ***“curse”*** is used only here in the Greek Bible. It means the ***“accursed thing”*** not the ***“act of cursing.”*** The ***“curse”*** that tried to be hidden from Adam and on throughout history will no longer exist.

This ***“curse”*** is the last of the seven things that will no longer exist in eternity (sea, death, mourning, crying, pain and night are the others that are mentioned - Revelation 21:1,4,25). Once the curse is removed then only an eternal blessing can remain.

“The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city” – The Garden of Eden had its river and trees but it never contained the Throne of God.

“and his servants will serve him” – The type of service rendered will be strongly linked to worship. The word ***“servants”*** is rendered ***“slaves.”*** It will be a priestly worship (HOLY to the LORD” – Exodus 28:36-38). This is very important to the Jews who had their hope of priestly duties dashed along with the destruction of the temple in 70 AD.

22:4 – “They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.”

“They will see his face” – Adam and Eve hid themselves from God after they had sinned. (Genesis 3:8). Moses was told,

“You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.”

Exodus 33:20, cf. vs 23

Criminals were banished from the presence of kings and not allowed to look upon their face (Esther 7:8; II Samuel 14:24). Only those who live a righteous life can truly see God (Psalm 11:7; 17:15; Hebrews 12:14).

Jesus said,

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.”

Matthew 5:8

John wrote,

“We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”

I John 3:2

“and his name will be on their foreheads” – His name stands for His character. To bear His name was not only a privilege but also a sign of protection (Revelation 3:12; 7:3; 14:1)

“We will be perfectly possessed by God.”

George Ladd

“A Commentary on the Revelation”

22:5 – “There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.”

“There will be no more night” – Nighttime will be incapable of taking place because God is light. (cf. – Isaiah 60:19,20; Zechariah 14:6,7; Revelation 21:23). Heaven will change a lot of things that we presently accept as normal.

1. A Life of Fellowship with Him	I Corinthians 13:12; I John 3:2; John 14:3
2. A Life of Rest	Revelation 14:13
3. A Life of Full Knowledge	I Corinthians 13:12
4. A Life of Holiness	Revelation 21:27
5. A Life of Joy	Revelation 21:4
6. A Life of Service	Revelation 22:3
7. A Life of Abundance	Revelation 21:6
8. A Life of Glory	II Corinthians 4:17; Colossians 3:4
9. A Life of Worship	Revelation 7:9-12; 19:10
10. A Life of Separation from the World	II Corinthians 6:17,18

“And they will reign for ever and ever” – It does not state who they will reign over. We must be careful not to speculate when the Scriptures are silent. One thing is for sure, we will share in the privilege of serving the Royal Office (Revelation 11:15).

One of the promises shared with those who overcame in the seven churches was that they would share in God’s reign (Revelation 2:27; 5:10). Here we find the words of the Lord coming to pass as another fulfilled prophecy.

22:6 – *“The angel said to me, “These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place.”*

“These words are trustworthy (faithful - KJV) and true” – It is saying that the whole Book of Revelation is totally reliable. It contains the compact revelation of the events of the future. This book is a prophecy (cf. – 1:3) and *“Jesus is the spirit of prophecy”* (Revelation 19:10). This was to be a safeguard against any tampering as in Revelation 22:18,19.

“the God of the spirits of the prophets” – The word used for *“spirits”* here means *“hearts”* or *“inner being.”* It is therefore their own spirits that have been enlightened and inspired by the Holy Spirit (Revelation 10:7; 11:18; 22:9; I Peter 1:10-12; II Peter 1:21). The prophets are referring to both those of the Old Testament as well as the New Testament.

“the things that must soon take place” – This reemphasizes the truth of what was said in Revelation 1:1. This *“soon to take place”* has already covered over 1900 years. This thought was commonly used in other portions of Scripture (I Corinthians 7:29-31; I Thessalonians 4:15). Some felt Paul was stating that he would be alive at the coming of the Lord. He was simply teaching on the imminent return of Jesus Christ.

The best council that we can give anyone on this is to be ready at all times for the coming of the Lord (Matthew 24:42-44).

JESUS IS COMING

Text: Revelation 22:7-21

This section could be considered as the greatest invitation known to mankind (22:17). It is an invitation to mankind for Jesus to come to us and invitation for us to come to Him.

Not everyone will enter into this rest that believe they will. Some are misled by false teachers. Some have chosen a way that is displeasing to God. Others do not know the truth because generations before them chose to neglect or turn away from God's Word.

22:7 – “Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book.”

“Behold, I am coming soon” – Jesus made it clear that He would return (Matthew 24:42-44; John 14:1-3; Luke 12:40). This is a warning to every generation to get right with God before He returns. The exact time of Christ's return is not our concern (Luke 12:40; Acts 1:7). The important thing is to be ready always.

This is the first of three times that Jesus announces His return (vv. 7,12,20). It emphasizes the solemn urgency of His promise. He also promised to return to the faithful Christians in the Church of Philadelphia (3:11). It is in keeping with the theme verse for this entire book.

“Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him.”

Revelation 1:7

“Blessed is he” – This is the sixth beatitude found in this book. The first one was focussed upon the one who read it. The last was for the one who kept true to its words. No matter how we interpret certain recorded events, we must acknowledge the fact that we are to keep the commands recorded in it.

“the prophecy in this book” – This specific promise of blessing is limited to this particular book of prophecy (cf. - 22:18,19).

22:8 – “I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me.”

“I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things” – John began by referring to himself in the opening chapter three times (Revelation 1:1,4,9). Now during the epilogue he once again affirms that this was an inspired written report.

“I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel” – It’s a wonder that John once again falls down since he was told in 19:10 not to worship angels. Cornelius did the same thing to Peter in Acts 10:25-26 as Peter was relaying the message God had given to him at Joppa.

22:9 – ***“But he said to me, “Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and of all who keep the words of this book. Worship God!”***

“Do not do it! I am a fellow servant” – The angel was also working in the realm of a prophet (telling forth God’s Word). The word for ***“servant”*** is literally ***“a slave.”***

“and with your brothers the prophets” – This is the only time in Scripture that the word ***“brothers”*** and ***“prophets”*** are so closely linked together. It could correctly be translated, ***“brother-prophets.”*** Even though their role was that of a prophet they were first and foremost brothers in the Lord.

“Worship God!” – This honour is reserved for God alone. It is a positive command in respect to the negative one also recorded in this verse.

22:10 – ***“Then he told me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near.”***

“Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book” – On a number of occasions the prophets received revelations that were not to be fulfilled in their lifetime. They were told to seal up these prophecies until the time that God would open them up (Isaiah 8:16; Daniel 8:26; 12:4,9). Even though John’s revelation was not to be totally fulfilled in his lifetime, it was still needed to be known by every Christian generation for ages to come. If it is left unsealed, anyone can read it.

22:11 – ***“Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy.”***

“Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile” – The first part speaks of the evil deeds while the second deals with their character as being evil.

John appears to see the time of the end as so close that there will not be time to alter the character and habits of men. There will be no time for last minute repentance. The time will come when it will be too late to repent. We need to live as if the day of the Lord’s return is upon us. It is we who choose our fate. We can’t blame God for sending us to an eternal damnation.

22:12 – “Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.”

“Behold, I am coming soon!” – This is saying that it will happen without warning (repeating 22:7.).

“give to everyone according to what he has done” – It speaks of bringing **“wages”** or giving them **“what is due.”** Everyone is included in this – no one will escape or be able to claim spiritual bankruptcy. (cf. – Jeremiah 17:10; Romans 2:6; I Peter 1:7).

22:13 – “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.”

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End” – This description sets God apart from all others in His creation.

22:14 – “Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.”

“Blessed are those who wash their robes” – This is in the present (continuous) tense of the verb while in 7:14 it was in the aorist tense. We are so easily defiled from the world that we constantly need to cleanse ourselves. This is not to say that we need to return to square one (John 13:10; I John 1:9).

22:15 – “Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.”

“Outside are . . .” – This does not teach that the vile ones are just outside the gates of the New Jerusalem. Unlike modern cities where we imprison those we punish for crimes committed, in ancient times criminals were banished from the king’s presence in a sentence of shame (Esther 4:11; 7:8).

“the dogs” – This is speaking of impure or malicious people (Psalm 22:16, 20). In Deuteronomy 23:17-18 it denotes a male prostitute. In Matthew 15:26,27 it speaks of a heathen. In Philippians 3:2 it was referring to the Judaizers that continually troubled the apostle Paul.

“those who practice magic arts” – Or sorcerers. These are people who use witchcraft, spells and drugs to gain power and pleasure over people (cf. - Revelation 9:21; 21:8).

“the sexually immoral” – Or fornicators. This will always stand as a violation of God’s command to keep our marriages as a sacred union (cf. Revelation 9:21; 21:8).

“murderers” – This violates God’s command against the sacredness of life (cf. Revelation 9:21; 21:8).

“the idolaters” – This violated God’s command against His sovereignty.

“everyone who loves and practices falsehood” – These kind follow the devil who is a liar and a deceiver (Revelation 12:9)

22:16 – *“I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.”*

“I, Jesus” – This reaffirms that it was Jesus who gave this revelation.

“give you” This is the plural form of the word “you.” It was not just for John but for everyone who reads this prophecy.

“this testimony for the churches” - It was given by Jesus and accepted by the Churches in John’s day.

“I am the Root” - The ***“Root”*** supplies life to the rest of the tree.

“the bright Morning Star.” – This star appears when the night is almost over.

22:17 – *“The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.”*

“The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” – This is the Holy Spirit who speaks through the prophets in the Church. The Church is the bride. Without the bride’s witness, the Spirit is voiceless; without the Spirit’s witness (John 16:8), the bride is powerless.

And let him who hears say, “Come!” – Whoever comes to the knowledge of their need of God through the witness of the empowered Church are invited to come.

Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life” – This invitation is given to the entire world to come while there is still time. Once the Lord returns it will be too late. Those who have heard and heeded the call will add their voices to the invitation. It is a free gift without any hidden charges.

22:18 – *“I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book.”*

“I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy” – This is a strong warning because it is a prophecy that comes directly from God. This is not something produced by human genius. This is similar warning as those recorded in Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:6; Jeremiah 26:2.

This is not just a warning to the copyist but to *“everyone who hears.”* No one can deliberately pervert God’s message and get away with it.

22:19 – *“And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.”*

“God will take away from him his share in the tree of life” – This clearly supports the teaching that someone can lose their salvation by tampering with the Word of God. It is a warning against a willful distortion of the message (cf. – Galatians 1:6,7). Those who add to it will have judgement added to them as will those who subtract from it will have blessings subtracted from them.

22:20 – *“He who testifies to these things says, **“Yes, I am coming soon.”** Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.”*

“Yes, I am coming soon.” – This means that He will come *“quickly”* or *“at a rapid rate.”*

“Come, Lord Jesus” – This is the equivalent of the Aramaic translation of I Corinthians 16:22 (*“Maranatha”*). This wonderful book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, the last inspired or divine writing ends with a resounding longing for Jesus to return.

22:21 – *“The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people. Amen.”*

“The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people” – All of God’s people need His grace. We need to be reminded of this truth on a constant basis. This was typical but also a very meaningful salutation.

The name *“Lord Jesus”* was used only after the resurrection of Christ. It is written more than ninety times in Acts and the epistles. Sometimes it is recorded in its fuller name *“the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

“Amen” – God has the last word. It means *“so be it.”*