

The background of the slide is a close-up photograph of an antique book cover. The cover is heavily worn, with a mottled texture of brown, tan, and blue-grey. A large, dark, stylized number '3' is embossed or painted on the left side. Below it, a quill pen is visible, and further down, a large letter 'A' is partially seen. The overall lighting is dramatic, highlighting the textures and imperfections of the old leather or parchment.

Dr. Craig P. Scott

Lectures on the
**Book of
Revelation**

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The Book of Revelation

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The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Chapter One

“Write the things which thou hast seen” -
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Introduction to the Book of Revelation

Background information

Revelation means unveiling “to uncover” or “unveil” precious hidden truth – truths that otherwise would be concealed. The emphasis of this book is on future events “which must shortly come to pass” (Rev. 1:1). It is the only apocalyptic book in the New Testament.

The Theme

The theme of the book is the revelation of Jesus Christ (1:1).

It presents Jesus as the Son of Man in the midst of the church during this present dispensation (Chapters 2-3). It then shows Jesus coming back as Judge and King (Chapters 4-20) followed by the eternal state (Chapters 21-22).

The book of Revelation is a revelation of instruction to believers (1:3). Blessed are those who read it, hear it, and heed its instruction.

Revelation is a book of symbols. Every symbol used in Revelation is explained or alluded to somewhere else in the Bible. Examples: seven stars (Rev. 1:16) represent seven angels (Rev. 1:20), seven lamp stands (Rev. 1:13) represents seven churches (Rev. 1:20), etc.



Revelation is the crowning book of the Bible. Genesis is the book of (Earth's) beginnings; Revelation is the book of (Earth's) future consummation. (See Revelation in comparison to Genesis).

The Author

The Apostle John is the author [Rev. 1:1, 4, 9; 22:8]. He was the last living apostle. He was the son of Zebedee. He wrote five books of the New Testament [the Gospel of John, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John and Revelation]. John expresses himself as a servant [1:1], a brother [1:9] and a companion [1:9].

The Date

The place and date of the writing of the Book of Revelation.

Conservatives date the book at 95-96 A.D. Domitian was the Roman Emperor who ruled between A.D. 81-96. He banished John to the Isle of Patmos [1:9] because of his testimony for Jesus Christ. Domitian was known for his harsh and cruel treatment of Christians.

John was given the revelation at one of two places: 1) While in prison on the Isle of Patmos. 2) After his prison release when he went back to Ephesus.

Chronology of Revelation

- The period of the Church [Chapters 1-3]
- The Tribulation period [Chapters 4-19]
- The Millennium reign [Chapter 20]
- Eternity [Chapters 21-22]

Various Millennial Views to Revelation

Amillennial – There is no literal reign of Christ on earth for a literal thousand years. Rather, it is a spiritual reign of Christ with the saints in heaven at the present time.

Postmillennial – The second coming of Christ is at the end of the Millennium. The Millennium is not necessarily a literal thousand years, and we are presently living in it. The Church's work is to subdue evil and restore righteousness to the Earth so that Christ can return.

Premillennial – Christ will come to reign on the Earth for a literal thousand years with His saints [Isaiah 11:1-9]. Satan is bound during this time [Rev. 20:1-3]. This is the view we hold.

Various Schools of Thought (Interpretation)

(Preterist) – The content of the book relates only to the day in which it was written. It has no bearing on the future. It was completely fulfilled by the time of Constantine in A.D. 325.

(Idealist) – The book is a symbolic picture of the enduring struggle between good and evil, and between Christianity and paganism. The text is spiritualized and allegorized and there is no predictive prophecy.

(Historical) – The book outlines the entire course of the church from Pentecost to the Second Advent of Christ. This is a panorama of church history. The book is being fulfilled throughout the whole Christian Era. This, of course, calls for the juggling of historical events to fit the prophecy. This is historically unsound and tends to distort the plain or literal meaning.

(Futurist) – The book from chapter 4 on is yet to be fulfilled. No judgements or events of history have equaled the descriptions found in these chapters. Plain interpretation is to be used but this view also recognizes the presence of symbols. This is the view of this writer.

The Book of Revelation

Chapter One

The Content and General Character of Revelation

The central theme of Revelation is introduced in the opening verse and that is Jesus Christ in His present and future glory. It is a revelation of truth about Himself and the disclosure of future events, namely His second coming.

This revelation was given by God the Father to Christ the Son to reveal truth unto God's servants. It was carried by an angel to the servant John [vs. 1] who was an eyewitness [vs.2]. The content of the message was concerning "things which must shortly come to pass" regarding the last days. It does not mean that the event may occur soon, but when it comes to pass, it will happen very quickly.

This revelation was given for our instruction [2 Thess. 2:10-12] and edification [1 Cor. 15:57]. This is the only book in Scripture that begins and ends with a blessing pronounced on those who read and keep what is written therein [Rev. 1:3; 22:7].

The Salutation [4-5]

Greetings from the Trinity to the Seven Churches.

1. **"He who was, and who is, and who is to come"**. This speaks of God's eternality [Rev 1:8, 4:8, 11:17].
2. **"The seven Spirits"** Many Bible scholars relate this phrase to the seven Spirits described in Isaiah 11:2-3. This portion of Scripture talks about the seven-fold ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of the Lord, of

Wisdom, of Understanding, of Counsel, of Might, of Knowledge, and of Fear of the Lord.

*Although this is the most accepted view, some believe "the seven Spirits" represent the seven angels who are before God's throne [Rev. 8:2].

3. **"From the Son, Jesus Christ."** This message is the revelation of the Messiah and His ministry as prophet, priest and king. He is "the faithful witness" and the "Anointed One" [John 7:7; 8:18].
 - a. **"The first born of the dead"** refers to the resurrection victory over sin [Eph. 1:7; Rev. 1:5b] and death [1 Cor. 15:55-57] and represents Christ's present priestly ministry as intercessor. This speaks of His glorified body – first to receive immortality [1 Cor. 15:20-23]; enabling him to be the only mediator between God and man [1 Tim. 2:5; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Heb. 12:24].
 - b. **"The prince of the kings of the earth"** [future] – This speaks of Christ's sovereignty over the Millennial Kingdom [Rev. 11:15; Isaiah 9:6-7; Zech. 14:9].
 - i. He is victor over the Antichrist and the False Prophet [Rev. 19:20].
 - ii. He is victor over Satan [Rev. 20:10].Because of the finished work of Christ, He has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father [Rev. 1:7]. Believers are of a royal priesthood [1 Peter 2:9-10] and believers shall reign with Him in His Millennial Kingdom [Rev. 20:6]. Christ is worthy of all our praise and worship.

The first behold announcement [Rev. 1:8]. Everyone will see Christ “when he cometh in the clouds.”

1. At Christ’s ascension [Acts 1:9-11] – clouds removed Him from sight.
2. At the rapture – we will meet him in the air [clouds]. There is no indication the world will see him at this time; Scripture speaks of only believers meeting Jesus in the air [1 Thess. 4:16-17].
3. At the second coming, all will see Christ as he comes to establish His kingdom. Not only those who pierced Him [Zech. 12:10] but “all peoples of the earth” [Matt. 24:30].

The Alpha and Omega

Christ is called here “the Alpha and Omega” [the first and last letter of the Greek alphabet], “the beginning and the ending”. This speaks of Christ’s eternity. Jesus Christ is the central figure of verse 8. Up to now Revelation gives us a clear picture of Christ. It gives a tremendous statement of the Person and work of Jesus Christ.

1. The source of Revelation [vs. 1].
2. The blessings revealed through His Word [vs.3].
3. The faithful witness, ruler and firstborn [vs. 5].
4. The source of grace [vs. 5].
5. The source of our royal priesthood [vs. 6].
6. The deliverer [vs. 7].
7. The Almighty one [vs. 8].

The Blessings

There are seven beatitudes in Revelation to recognize – “Blessed are those who . . .”

1. Read [Rev. 1:3].
2. Die in Christ [Rev. 14:13].
3. Watches [Rev. 16:15].
4. Called unto the marriage supper [Rev. 19:9].
5. First resurrection [Rev. 20:6].
6. Keep God’s Word [Rev. 22:7].
7. Do His commandments [Rev. 22:14].

Background of John’s Vision

In this book, John refers to himself as “brother and companion” of the seven churches [vs. 9], bound by spiritual life and kinship and a partaker or sharer in tribulation.

He, himself, was facing persecution – exiled to Patmos for the testimony of Christ and the preaching of the Word. There he was forced to do hard labor in the mines. Upon Domitian’s death in A.D. 96, early sources claim that the next emperor allowed John to return to Ephesus.

It was in this circumstance that God gave John the most extensive revelation concerning future things. Though men could restrict John’s physical activities, men could not bind the Spirit of God nor the testimony of Jesus Christ.

The apostle John was carried beyond a normal sense – “being in the Spirit” – into a state where God could reveal supernatural truths to him [Ezek. 2:2; Acts 10:10-11; Acts 22:17-18]. The term “the Lord’s Day” here does not mean

the first day of the week [Sunday], but it is referring to the O.T. expression, “the day of the Lord” when God [Christ] comes in that future day to bring judgment and sovereign rule over the earth.

John hears a great [authoritative] voice identified in verse 11 as Christ [Rev. 1:8; 17]. John is commanded twelve times in Revelation to write down what he sees after each vision, except in Rev. 10:4. John is also instructed to send the revelation of the entire book to each of the seven churches mentioned in verse 11.

The Contents of the Vision

The Seven Golden Candlesticks

1. A source of light:

As John turns to see who is speaking to him, he sees a vision of seven golden candlesticks, better translated seven golden lampstands. One of the items found in the Tabernacle and the Temple was a seven-branched lampstand [menorah]. It was to give forth light. By the description found in this passage, there are seven separate lampstands arranged in a circle. These lampstands represent churches [see vs. 20]. A fitting description for the chief function of the church is to give forth the light of the Gospel. Just as the lampstands need oil to bring forth light, so the power of the Holy Spirit must empower us to spread the Gospel and be a testimony for him.

2. Entirely gold:

The gold represents the deity and glory [presence] of God, just as the golden candlestand [menorah] did in the Tabernacle and Temple.

Description of the Glorified Christ

– ten characteristics

“Someone like the Son of Man” – This one is human in appearance. The “Son of Man”, a frequent title used in the four Gospels, emphasizes Christ’s humanity and Messianic character [Micah 5:2; Dan. 7:13].

“Garment down to the foot” – this is the type of clothing used by the high priest to minister in the Holy Place of the Temple. It represents Christ’s priestly ministry. Hebrews 4:14-16 tells us that Jesus Christ is our high priest.

“Girt about the paps [chest] with a golden girdle [sash]” – this is a symbol of strength and authority. Only those in authority wore a girdle, and it corresponds to the girdle of the high priest. The girdle also represents service of the high priest – our intercessor. This girdle was made entirely of gold which represents the somber presence of Christ in His role as priest and judge.

“His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow” – this conveys the thought of antiquity and reminds us of Daniel’s description of the “Ancient of Days” [Dan. 7:9]. It also represents Christ’s purity, holiness, and eternity.

“His eyes were as a flame of fire” – literally can be translated “his eyes shot fire”. Christ is indignant over something – perhaps the indifference of the apostate churches and/or the rebellious hearts of unredeemed people [Isaiah 59:16-19]. His fiery eyes speak of perfect righteousness [omniscience] and divine judgment on all that are impure. Yet regarding the righteous believers, he has eyes of compassion and forgiveness.

“His feet like unto fine brass [bronze], as if they burned in a furnace” – this signifies divine judgment. Christ will carry out God’s wrath and judgment [pure righteousness] as He stands in the midst of the churches and again at His Second Coming to earth. Christ will place His feet on everything contrary to truth and righteousness. Everything unholy will be stamped out in judgment.

“His voice as the sound of many waters” – this describes the thundering voice of the Son of God, revealing the majesty and power in which all human authority must bow [Phil. 2:10-11]. No one will dare to talk back to a voice such as this.

“He had in his right hand seven stars” – stars [in verse 20] is interpreted as angels which means messengers. There are two views on the meaning of angels – either it is talking about the appointed messengers of the churches [pastors] or it is indicating there is an appointed angel over each church. The right hand of God represents the place of honor [Ephesians 1:20].

“Out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword” – the sword is referred to as the Word of God [Ephesians 6:17]. In Ephesians 4:12, the Word of God is said to be “sharper than any double-edged sword” against which no defense will be given in the day of judgment. Even the Antichrist will stand indefensible at Christ’s coming.

“His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength” – this speaks of the divine glory [nature] of Christ. Peter, James and John saw for a brief moment the divine glory of Christ at the Transfiguration [Matt. 17:2]. The Transfiguration gave the disciples a preview of Jesus’ future exaltation and the coming kingdom.

John’s reaction to the vision of Christ

Although John had a personal relationship with Christ during Jesus’ earthly ministry [the beloved apostle who laid his head upon the bosom of the Savior], now faces Christ as the glorified Son of God whose power and majesty are no longer veiled and whose righteousness is revealed as by a consuming fire. He falls at Christ’s feet “as though dead”. Anyone who is truly touched with the Spirit of God will instinctively bow in adoration of Jesus Christ.

Christ’s response – “Fear not.”

Believers in Jesus Christ should not fear. Even today as we live with the threat of nuclear weapons, biological warfare and chemical weapons in America and abroad, we should not fear if we have Christ’s personal presence with us.

Christ gives us four reasons we should not fear [Rev. 1:17b-18]:

“I am the first and the last” – this speaks of Christ’s eternity. He is before all things and after all things. No matter what happens Christ is in control of all things.

“I am he that liveth, and was dead” – this speaks of His sacrificial death for our sins and of His resurrection. We worship a risen, living Savior [1 Cor. 15:3-4].

“I am alive for ever and ever!” – Christ “died for sins once for all” [1 Pet. 3:18]. He will not die again. He will live forever and ever. Our decision to accept or reject Christ is an eternal decision for He will eternally save those who trust Him or He eternally damn those who reject Him [Matt. 25:46].

“I hold the keys of death and Hades” – The believer need not to fear death or Hades. It is Christ who holds the keys that unlock the door to this terrible place [1 Cor. 15:55-57; Heb. 2:14-15]. Those who have not trusted Christ as their sacrificial Lamb have a right to fear for, they have no covering for their sins and no one to release them from the grips of hell and Death [Rev.20:14-15]

Christ’s commission to John [vs. 19]

John is commanded again by Christ to write down what he has seen in three areas – “the things which thou has seen” [the past-chapter 1], “the things which are” [the present-chapter 2-3], and “the things which shall be hereafter” [the future -chapters 4-22].

Christ’s interpretation [vs. 20] – the stars and candlesticks are in His hands. The seven stars are the seven angels. The seven candlesticks are the seven churches.



Introducing THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Revelation 1:1-6

The book of Revelation gives the most detailed look into the future of all the books in the Bible. It unveils the future history of the world, all the way to history's climax in the return of Jesus Christ and the glorious setting up of His earthly and eternal kingdom.

IN THE INTRODUCTION JOHN LISTS ELEVEN CHARACTERISTICS OF THIS BOOK. LET'S TAKE THIS HOUR TO EXAMINE THEM.

(1) IT IS A REVELATION - v. 1a

- The term Revelation (*apokalupsis*) appears 18x in the New Testament It means **“to become visible.”**
 - i. In Luke 2:32 the term “Revelation” is translated as **“light.”** A light **to reveal** to the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

- ii. In Rom. 8:19 the term “Revelation” is translated, **“manifestation.”** Or “The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the sons of God to become visible.”
- iii. In the book of 1Cor. 1:7 the term “Revelation” is translated as **“coming.”**

“So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the **coming** (revelation) of our Lord Jesus Christ

Or,

“So that ye come behind in no gift; **waiting for our Lord Jesus Christ to become visible.**”

THE BOOK OF REVELATION CONTAINS TRUTHS THAT HAD BEEN CONCEALED, BUT NOW IT HAS BEEN REVEALED, OR MADE VISIBLE.

Though it does not directly quote the Old Testament, 278 of its 404 verses refer or allude to the Old Testament.

(2) ITS CENTRAL THEME IS “JESUS CHRIST” - v. 1b

It is a revelation **FROM** Jesus Christ - Rev. 22:16. In Revelation 1:1 it is also a revelation **ABOUT** Jesus Christ

- a. Rev. 2-3 He is revealed as “Lord of the Church.”
- b. Rev. 4-22 - “He is revealed as the true Ruler of this world where we have a detailed look at His second coming.”
- c. Rev. 1:5a He is revealed as the faithful witness
- d. Rev. 1:5b He is revealed as the first begotten (born) of the dead “the first begotten of the dead.”

- e. Rev. 1:5c – He is revealed as “the prince of the kings of the earth”
- f. Rev. 1:8a – He is revealed as the “Alpha and Omega”
- g. Rev. 1:8b – He is revealed as that “which is, and which was, and which is to come”
- h. Rev. 1:8c – “the Almighty”
- i. Rev. 1:17 – the first and the last
- j. Rev. 1:18 – the living One
- k. Rev. 2:1 – He that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand
- l. Rev. 2:12 – He which hath the sharp sword with two edges
- m. Rev. 2:18 – The Son of God
- n. Rev. 2:18b - Who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet *are* like fine brass
- o. Rev. 3:1 - He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars
- p. Rev. 3:7 - He that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth
- q. Rev. 3:14 - the Amen, the faithful and true witness
- r. Rev. 5:5 - the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David,
- s. Rev. 5:6 – The lamb of God 12 x
- t. Rev. 6:10 - O Lord, holy and true
- u. Rev. 19:11 - Faithful and True,
- v. Rev. 19:13 - The Word of God
- w. Rev. 19:16 - KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.
- x. Rev. 20:6 – The Messiah

y. Rev. 22:16 - the bright and morning star.

(3) ITS DIVINE SOURCE - REV. 1:1C

“which God gave unto him” Rev. 1:1c

(4) ITS HUMAN RECIPIENTS

“to shew unto his servants” – Rev. 1:1d

(5) ITS PROPHETIC CHARACTER

“things which must shortly come to pass” – Rev. 1:1e

(6) ITS SUPERNATURAL DELIVERY

“sent and signified *it* by his angel” – Rev. 1:1f

(7) ITS HUMAN AUTHOR

“unto his servant John. Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.” – Rev. 1:1g-2

(8) ITS PROMISED BLESSING – Rev. 1:3

“**Blessed** is he that readeth, and they that **hear** the words of this prophecy, and **keep** those things which are written therein:”

There are seven blessings associated with this book.

- 1) Rev. 1:3 – Blessed is he who **Reads, Hears** and **Keeps**
- 2) Rev. 14:13 – Blessed are those that die in the Lord
- 3) Rev. 16:15 – Blessed is he who **watches and keeps** his garments
- 4) Rev. 19:9 – Blessed are they which are called to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb

- 5) Rev. 20:6 - Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection:
- 6) Rev. 22:7 - Blessed is he that **keepeth** the sayings of the prophecy of this book.
- 7) Rev. 22:14 - “Blessed are they that **do his commandments**, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.”

(9) ITS COMPELLING URGENCY

“for the time *is* at hand.” - Rev. 1:3

(10) ITS BENEDICTION - Rev. 1:4-5a

- a. To the seven churches in Asia (modern Turkey)
- b. Seven Spirits depicts the fullness of the Holy Spirit (Is. 11:2; Zech 4:1-10)
- c. Three titles of Jesus (Faithful, First-begotten, and Prince of the kings of Earth)

(4) ITS EXALTED DOXOLOGY - Rev. 1:5b-6

Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

Rev. 1:6 - “And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him *be* glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”



The True Ruler of the World

Revelation 1:4b-9

The world is at war with God. It has been for a long time. The battle over who's in charge is as old as creation itself. It began in heaven when Lucifer, then the son of the morning, the angel of light determined in his heart to overthrow God. In that day he said in his heart,

"I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: ¹⁴ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High." – Isaiah 14:13-14

"And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth" Rev. 12:4.

His war against God spread to the earth when he deceived the woman.

Genesis 3:4-5 – "And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: ⁵ For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and **ye shall be as gods**, knowing good and evil."

"And **Adam** was not deceived" (1 Tim. 2:14a) but chose to disobey. His disobedience revealed man's sinful bent and the depravity of the human nature. Thus, "sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12).

And the world fell into darkness.

And "the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of God who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set

free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God” Romans 8:20-21.

This present world is still on a darkened path away from God. Psalm 2:1-7 - sums up the battle.

“Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? ² The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, ³ Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. ⁴ He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. ⁵ Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. ⁶ Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. ⁷ I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.

This pagan darkness espousing a godless utopia has lifted its head in a variety of forms though-out the ages.

During the anti-diluvian period (*before the Noahic flood*) we find (Gen. 6:5):

“GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

Then later in Genesis 11:1, 4, 6 where we find:

“The whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. . . . *and the leaders of world said*, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. . . . ⁶ And the LORD

said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.”

Then later in the days of the Israeli kings we find:

Ahab and Jezebel introducing the nation of Israel again to this pagan enlightenment. Their departure from God ended with them killing the prophets, defiling the temple and seducing the people.

And finally, in our day . . .

We see the revival of paganism in the form of a worldwide non-religious chiliastic movement announcing global renewal and world purificationism with the abandonment of God’s standard.

In a recent lecture given by Andrew Cohen, a global leader in this transformationalist movement he declared,

“all problems stem from the ignorance arising from twoness (*that is those who believe in a Creator and creation*).

The discovery that there is **only one not two** (*that is, the discovery that Matter is eternal and there is no Creator God*) is the solution to our problems. This is the fundamental nature of reality. This is the absolute profound mystical shift. This has to come first.”

This **oneness future** will evolve if only the enemy, **the cause of all problems, twoism**, can be restrained and eventually eradicated. This means eliminating the

gospel and silencing Christian discourse – to save human well-being and the planet.

This growing threat is just not seen by a small group of Christians holding a premillennial worldview but is widely held among leading Christians and seen by nearly all theologically conservative Christians regardless of their eschatological view.

Let me just cite one leader who falls within the broadest spectrum of Christianity who has been blowing a horn on the dangers of this encroaching pagan utopianism spreading throughout the Western World.

In 2012, at the US conference of Catholic bishops, Cardinal Francis George, Archbishop of Chicago and former president of the United Conference said, *because of today's rising of pagan utopian ideology –*

“I expect to die in bed, my successor will die in prison and his assessor will die a martyr in the public square.”

Things have not changed much throughout the ages. Pagan utopianism has been held at bay, it has always been lurking in the background waiting for its chance to resurface.

Such was the problem in the 1st Century.

- **The Roman historian** Tacitus describes Christians as “a class hated for their abominations.”
- **Politically**, Rome viewed Christians as disloyal because they refused to acknowledge Caesar as the supreme authority.

- **Religiously**, Christians were denounced as atheists because they rejected the Roman gods and worshiped an invisible God instead of idols.
- **Socially**, Christians were often despised since many came from the lower classes of society.
- **To the affluent Romans**, Christians were seen as a threat that undermined the cultural structure because they taught all people were equal which would initiate concerns of a slave revolt.

Therefore, Christianity was soon recognized as an illegal religion. Tertullian, a Christian apologist, later summarized how these items impacted Roman thought when he wrote,

“If the Tiber reaches the walls,
If the Nile does not rise to the fields
If the sky doesn't move or the earth does
If there is famine
If there is plague
The cry is at once, “Christians to the lions!”

The first Christian persecution began on July 19, AD 64 when Nero blamed the Christians for burning Rome. This resulted in many Christians being executed. As a result of this persecution, it soon spread empire-wide.

Thirty years later, Domitian instigated an official persecution of Christians, which extended to the province of Asia (Asia Minor) where the seven churches mentioned in Revelation resided. Domitian and his family had a long history of Anti-Semitic and Anti-Christian sentiments.

Domitian's father, Vespasian and his brother Titus despised the Christians and Jews.

His Father, Vespasian:

- led the Roman army against Judah in AD 66. Before he finished taking Jerusalem, He was made Emperor leaving his son Titus (Domitian's brother) to finish the job of dismembering Israel in AD 70.
- Vespasian built the great Roman Coliseum in Rome and his son Domitian was the first Emperor to bring the Christians to the Coliseum to face the lions.

Domitian's brother Titus:

*Tore down the walls of Jerusalem and destroyed the temple.

Domitian:

- Saw himself as the new Augustus, and enlightened depot destined to guide the Roman Empire into a new era to brilliants.
- During his 15-year reign (*among the longest of any Roman Emperor*) was the first to demand that he be addressed as *dominus et deus* "master and god." He was ruthless and was hated by the Roman senate. He was finally assassinated in AD 96.
- It was Domitian who sentenced the Apostle John at 90 years of age to be exiled on Patmos

Revelation 1:9 speaks of this.

"I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, **was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.**"

Note the three things regarding suffering in this passage.

1. He was a fellow sufferer for Christ (a companion in tribulation).
2. He was companion in the kingdom (not the pagan utopian kingdom, but the real kingdom to come.)
3. He was a companion in the patience of Christ. Patience means, "to remain under" or "to patiently endure difficulties without giving up."

In John's case he was exiled as a common criminal to an island 10-miles off the coast of modern-day Turkey. According to the Roman historian Tactius, this type of exile involved harsh exhausting labor under the watchful eye of a Roman guard. John no doubt had insufficient food and clothing and had to sleep on the bare ground. This must have been extremely difficult for a 90-year-old man.

The reason for his imprisoned exile was two-fold (Rev. 1:9d) –

1. "For (*because of*) the Word of God and
2. "For (*because of*) the testimony of Jesus Christ."

Why would someone want to go through such a difficult situation?

1. Revelation 1:9 – “He as a companion in the kingdom of God.” He was patiently waiting the Lord’s rule to come. Jesus is the rightful heir to the throne of the world.
2. In Revelation 1:5 - Jesus is the prince of the kings of the earth.
3. In Revelation 1:4 – Jesus is the One “which was, and which is to come.”
4. “He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end” (Rev. 1:8, 11, 17b, 18).

So, it is wonderful to see the true ruler sitting on the throne. Jesus, who is the Prince of the kings of earth.

John then is overcome with joy as he gives praise to Jesus (Rev. 1:5b-6).

“... Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, ⁶ And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Note three things mentioned in the passage above. He loved us, He washed us from our sins in His own blood, and He has made us kings and priests.

He then reminds us of His return in Revelation 1:7 “Behold, he cometh with clouds.”

1. Despite the scoffers who deny the Second Coming, the Bible repeatedly affirms that Jesus will return. This truth appears in more than 500 verses throughout the Bible.

It has been estimated that one out of every 25 verses in the New Testament refers to the Second Coming. Jesus repeatedly spoke of His return. He warned believers to be ready for it. The return of Jesus Christ is a central theme of the New Testament.

2. John refers to two Old Testament passages in this verse. Daniel 7 and Zechariah 12. “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him.”

In the first verse - Daniel 7:13-14 Daniel says, *“I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. ¹⁴ And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”*

The second Old Testament verse referred to is Zechariah 12:10,

“... and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him.” – Rev. 1:7b

“And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.” – Zech 12:10

In this Zechariah passage we find the nation of Israel mourning in genuine repentance. This is referring to an event. Many will be saved in that day.

John divides those who will see the Second Coming ["and every eye shall see him" – v. 1:7a] into two groups. (1) "They also which pierced him" v. 1:7b is a reference to the Jewish people. (2) The Gentiles are referred to in Rev. 1:7c when it says, "And all kindreds (*tribe or nation*) of the earth shall wail because of him."

The above is a reference to the unbelieving Gentile nations. Many will mourn over Christ. Some related to their repentance and others for their failure to turn to him.

Revelation 7:9-10, 14 speaks of believing Gentiles,
*"After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, **of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; ¹⁰ And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.. ¹⁴ And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."***

But the general mourning at the time of Christ's return will not be a result of repentance but of despair, terror and grief. They will be mourning over their doom because they had rejected Christ. Because Revelation 9:21 tells us that many people

"Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts."



The Mystery of the Seven Stars and Candlesticks Revelation 1:10-20

If we are not looking in the right places, it is easy to say, "Where is God?"

I know we are told . . .

"If . . . *we are* . . . risen with Christ, . . . *we are to* . . . seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. *We are to* ² Set *our* affection on things above, not on things on the earth. ³ For *we* are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

But it is easy to look away from Christ, much like Peter did when he was walking to Jesus on the water.

When we look and see Christian churches embracing unbiblical practices, such as opening holding hands with Shamanists, Wiccans, Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims. Even joining in worship with them. It discourages us and causes us to shake our heads in wonder Lord when will you bring an end to these things.

Or when we see mainline churches and church councils endorsing and encouraging unbiblical practices such as gay marriage, ordaining gay and female priests, bishops and ungodly ministers, we ask ourselves, "what happened to the biblical commands in Scripture?" If we are not careful, we can stumble and ask where is God?

When we see parts of the church teaching false and unholy things It can deeply discourage us and cause us to wonder. When Lord will you step in?

John at the age of ninety was exiled to the island of Patmos. He wrote because of the perils the Christians faced.

The first Christian persecution began on July 19, AD 64 when Nero blamed the Christians for burning Rome. This resulted in many Christians being executed. As a result of this persecution soon spread throughout the empire.

Thirty years later, Domitian instigated an official persecution of Christians, which extended to the province of Asia (Asia Minor) where the seven churches mentioned in Revelation resided.

Revelation 1:9 – “I John, who also am your brother, and **companion** in tribulation, and in the kingdom and **patience** of Jesus Christ. . .”

1. Companion - John described himself as their fellow partaker.

He, like the churches of Asia Minor, was suffering severe persecution for the cause of Christ. They were not alone.

He was “a **companion** in tribulation.”

2. He also identifies with them in the area of **patience**. Literally

“to remain under” or to “patiently endure difficulties without giving up.”

He was exiled as a common criminal to an island 10 miles long, 4 miles wide and 40 miles off the coast of modern-day Turkey.

3. According to the Roman historian, Tacitus, this type of exile involved harsh exhausting labor under the watchful eye of a Roman guard. John no doubt had insufficient food and clothing and had to sleep on the bare ground.

This must have been extremely difficult for a ninety-year-old man.

Hence the blessing of this amazing revelation. It gave John and his readers great comfort. Christ will one day return in glory to defeat His enemies. More importantly this book does not begin with Jesus in His future glory. Rather it depicts Him in the present as the glorified Lord of the church. Thus, in spite of all the disappointments that John and the churches suffered, the Lord reminds them that He had not abandoned them or His promises.

So . . .

Today, I would like to show you seven ways God is actively working behind the scenes of the church.

And in this, I will give you four important reasons why we should not fear. Instead, we should rejoice.

In our passage, the Lord gives us various reasons to keep our eyes on Him. He tells us where He is and what He is doing.

The Context:

1. Revelation 1:19 - “Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter; ²⁰ The mystery of the seven stars . . .”
 - Notice the three key items in this passage.
 - i. The things which thou hast seen

- ii. The things which are
 - iii. The things which shall be hereafter
2. This passage breaks down the outline of the book of revelation.
- a. **Chapter one:** We read the things which John had seen
 - b. **Chapters two and three:** We read the things which were happening in John's Day, and in some way has continued on in our day.
 - c. **In Chapters four through twenty-two** we read the things which shall be hereafter. Future things that shall come upon the world and the return of Christ with His church to set up His kingdom.
3. Also note that the passage does not end with Revelation 1:19 but it continues in verse 20 after the semi-colon with

Write the . . . "The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches."

4. The Revealer of this revelation is Jesus Christ our Lord. His purpose in this writing is to help us understand where He will be as the world grows darker around us.

John was told to write to seven churches in Asia Minor, now western Turkey.

The seven churches form a geographic circle beginning with the Church of Ephesus and moving clockwise till you get to the last one in the city of Laodicea.

They each were suffering from some problem. Let me generally list them in order.

- a. The church of Ephesus lost their first love
- b. The church of Smyrna was experiencing persecution
- c. The church of Pergamum was compromising with evil. They were mixing the world into the church.
- d. The church of Thyatira had a woman called Jezebel at their helm. Any church would be very interesting and very wicked with a Jezebel at the wheel.
- e. The church of Sardis was dead.
- f. The church of Philadelphia was small, but revival was happening.
- g. The church of Laodicea was physically rich, but they were wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked. They had nothing redeemable – They were disgustingly lukewarm and worthless.

Does this sound like any churches in our day? Do we not see dead churches, compromising assemblies, persecuted churches, wild and wicked churches, reviving churches, and churches which lost their first love?

I also believe these churches systematically and chronologically speak of seven periods of the church until the time the Lord snatches the church to be with him.

The last of the periods is the Laodicean age where the church is rich but spiritually it has become wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked. They had nothing redeemable – They were disgustingly lukewarm and worthless.

5. In Chapter 4:1 - John is taken up into heaven to see future things.

“Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.”

The church is never mentioned or referred to after that time until Chapter 19 where she is found in heaven waiting to return with the Lord to the earth. So, the Lord has given us a clear picture of what is to come in the pages of the book of Revelation. Again, this is part of the mystery that was hid before and is now revealed. Our Lord is Sovereign, and He does it for a purpose. But more specifically, God wants us to understand what He is doing for His children.

Seven Specific Ways Our Lord Provides For Us:

We are given seven specific items in our Revelation passage that explain where our Lord is in the midst of the wickedness enveloping the church.

1. Christ is standing in the midst of His Church - Revelation 1:12-13a, 20b

- a. The voice behind the Apostle John was a voice of power and authority – Good news Our Lord is powerful and in control.
- b. What John saw.
 - i. John saw seven golden candlesticks
 - ii. We are told that they symbolize seven churches. They are candlesticks because our Lord desires us (His assembly) to be “lights to the world.”

We are to be “. . . blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a

crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world” -- Phil 2:15.

- iii. We are told we are precious in His sight. The candlesticks are golden because gold is a precious metal.

Meaning, every local assembly of saints is God’s most beautiful entity on earth. We are getting a picture of how God views us – this assembly and other like us in this world.

- vii. Seven is the number of completeness and no doubt the seven churches of Asia Minor – which are actual churches - represent the kinds of churches that exist through church history.

- c. The vital thing of this revelation is that **in the midst of suffering, persecution, and even a broken church the Lord is standing in our midst in all His glory and power.**

He is not sitting still but He is standing in the midst of His churches. The standing is showing that He is willing to take action.

- d. Jesus promises us His continual presence within His church. In Matthew 28:20 He said,

“Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

He desires us to brightly shine. He sees us as precious. He wants us to know that He is standing in our midst.

2. **He is interceding for us** – Rev. 1:13b

- a. In our passage the clothing Jesus has on flows to His feet. It is a **robe of royalty** and that of a **High Priest**.
- b. He is described as an active High Priest interceding and presenting the prayers of His people before the throne.
- c. We know that Christ is able to sympathize with us in all our sorrows and temptations.

Hebrews 4:14 “Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. ¹⁵ For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

So Jesus is not only standing in our midst but He is actively interceding for us.

What a comfort to be reminded that in the midst of persecution and in the midst of waffling men that Christ is standing in the midst of His church interceding for us.

- d. **Like he did for Peter** – **Luke 22:31-32** – “And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: ³² But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.”

- e. **John 17:20-21** – “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; ²¹ That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”

3. **He is Purifying His Church** - Revelation 1:14-15 –

- a. A similar scene is found in Daniel 7:9 when Daniel wrote . . .

“I beheld . . . the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool.”

- b. **His Head and Hair**

“His Head and Hair were white like wool” – Rev. 1:14. This points to Him being eternal, wise, and pure

- c. **His Eyes**

Rev. 1:14b - His eyes were as the flame of fire.

They were searching and penetrating to the very depths of His church. He sees all that is going on.

- d. **His Feet**

Rev. 1:15 - His feet were “like fine brass as if they burned in the furnace.”

His feet represent His marching to judgment. So, the Lord is seen as moving about His church exercising His holy scrutiny.

He will tolerate sin for only so long. Think even **in the extreme case of the church were someone** with the spirit Jezebel was claiming to be a prophetess.

He said in Revelation 3:21-23

“And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. ²² Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. ²³ And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.”

4. **We see Christ speaking to His church with authority** - Revelation 1:15b – “and his voice as the sound of many waters.”
5. **We see Christ in control of His church** - Revelation 1:16a, and 20a
 - a. He is in the midst of His churches (the local assembly’s)-
 - b. He has the seven stars in His hand. They are either angels or messengers like Pastors. In my opinion they are the pastors of the local assembly’s.

My reason for that view is simple. There is no other place in Scripture where men are instructed to write instructions to an angel. He is either writing to the Angel or to messenger (Pastor) in each of the seven churches. Angels usually deliver God’s message, but they do not receive messages delivered by men. Therefore, it must be referring to Pastors. The main idea of this passage is that Jesus is showing His authority over the churches. He is in control. The

Pastors are to be instruments through which Christ mediates His rule. This is why the standards are so high for leadership in the New Testament church.

6. **Jesus is defending His church from threats without or within.** - Revelation 1:16b

Those who attack His church by sowing lies, creating discord, or otherwise harm the church and will be personally dealt with by Him.

His Word is potent –

“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. ¹³ Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.” – Heb 4:12-13

His Word is Powerful

“And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:” – 2 Thess. 2:8

7. **Jesus is the glory in and through His Church - Revelation 1:16c**

Four important reasons why we should not fear but rejoice.

Believers in Jesus Christ should not fear. Even today as we live in times were evil seems to be on the rise. Even globally we are faced with terrorism and the threat of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons. Yet, we should not fear. If we have Christ’s personal presence with us, He is near us.

Christ gives us four more reasons we should not fear Rev. 1:17b-18

Rev. 1:17b – “Fear not; **I am the first and the last:** ¹⁸ **I am he that liveth, and was dead;** and, behold, **I am alive for evermore,** Amen; and **have the keys of hell and of death.**

1. “I am the first and the last”

This speaks of Christ’s eternity. He is before all things and after all things. No matter what happens Christ is in control of all things.

2. “I am he that liveth, and was dead”

This speaks of His sacrificial death for our sins and of His resurrection. We worship a risen, living Savior [1 Cor. 15:3-4].

3. “I am alive for ever and ever!”

Christ “died for sins once for all” - [1 Pet. 3:18]. He will not die again. He will live forever and ever. Our decision to accept or reject Christ is an eternal decision for He will eternally save those who trust Him or He eternally damn those who reject Him - Matt. 25:46.

4. “I hold the keys of death and Hades”



Message to the Seven Churches

Chapters Two & Three

“Write the things which are”
- Revelation 1:19

The Seven Churches of Asia

There are four different schools of interpretation of the book of Revelation

The symbolic view:

It sees the book of Revelation only as a series of pictures teaching spiritual truths. It sees no prophecy or specific historical events in Revelation [Jensen's Survey of the NT by Irving L. Jensen, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981.) p. 498]. Chapters 1 and 20-22 in Revelation discredit this view.

The preterist view:

They see the book of Revelation as historically fulfilled in the first century, with eternal destinies taught in the last two chapters (Jensen, p 498).

This view falls short in evidence and the holders of this view substitute the literal, historical-grammatical interpretation of scripture for allegory. Hence, they spiritualize many of the OT and NT prophetic passages to make their position.

The continuous-historical view:

They apply the prophecies of Revelation to all the centuries since the time of Christ. Only chapters 19-22 foretell events after Christ's second coming (Jensen, p. 498-9).

This view spiritualizes the text and falls short of a sound literal, historical-grammatical interpretation of Scripture.

The futurists' view: (Entail several closely related views)

- First are those who hold to the seven churches of Revelation 2-3 as representative periods of church history up to the time of the rapture.

Ephesus (AD 30 -100) – name means “desirable” The Apostolic Church - Revelation 2:1-7

Smyrna (AD100 – 313) – name means “Myrrh” The Martyr Church - Revelation 2:8-11

Pergamos (AD 313-600) – name means “marriage.” The Compromising Church - Revelation 2:12-17

Thyatira (AD 600-1517) – name means “continual sacrifice.” The Roman Catholic Church - Revelation 2:18-29

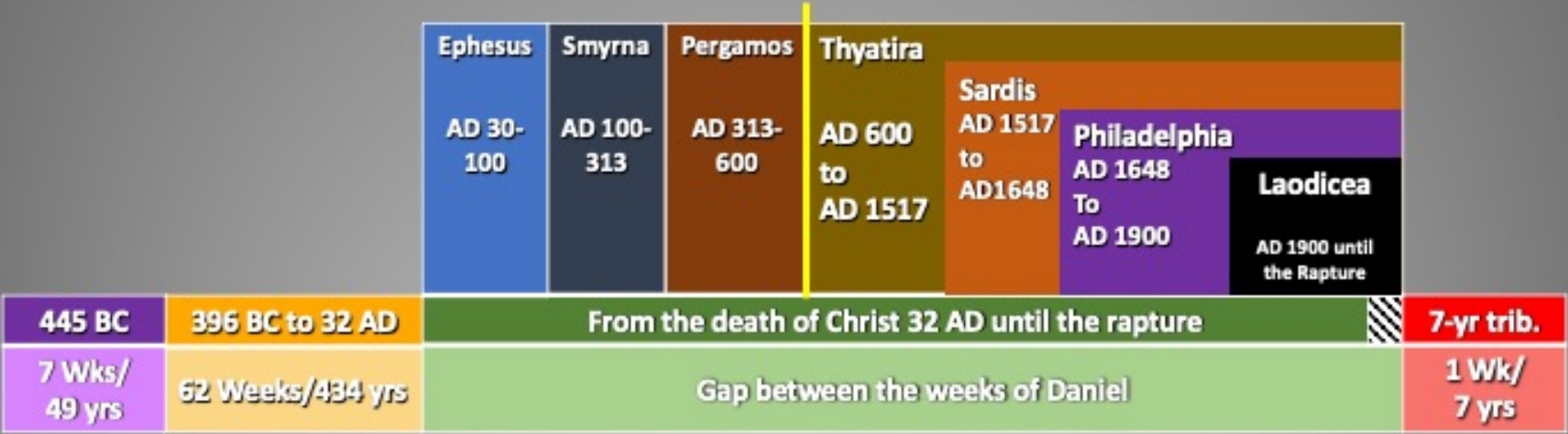
Sardis (AD 1517-1648) – name means “remnant.” The Reformation Church - Revelation 3:1-6

Philadelphia (AD 1648-1900) – name means “brotherly love.” The Revival Church - Revelation 3:7-13

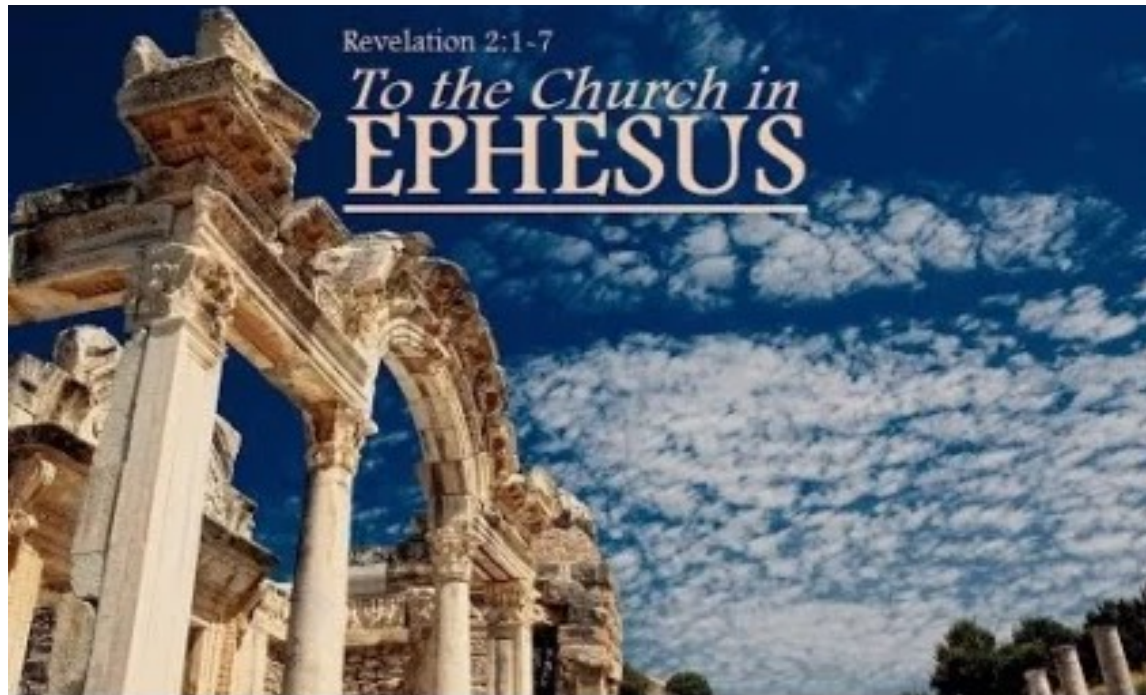
Laodicea (AD 1900 – rapture) – name means “people's rights.” The Worldly Church - Revelation 3:14-22

- Second are those who hold that chapters 2 to 3 are intended to describe churches in John's day as well as descriptive of local churches of all ages, up to the end times.
- Finally, are those who hold that chapters 2 to 3 generally describe churches in both John's day and churches throughout the ages, however they also see that each church seems to chronologically represent a period of church history until the church is raptured. This is the view of this author.

Understanding the Church Age



The 70 Weeks of Daniel 9



The Church of Ephesus – “The Desirable One”

– Rev. 2:1-7 Introductory Thoughts

This church was known for its deep spirituality. Ephesus was planted by the Apostle Paul [see Acts 18:19-20]. It was a wicked city caught up in the worship of Diana, the goddess of fertility.

This church is the largest and finest of the New Testament churches. It is the only church connected with the apostles and is often known as the Apostolic Church. Approximate time of existence was from A.D. 30-100. This church was known for their fervent evangelism. Because of this church, the Word of God was preached around the known world.

The Ephesus Church was mostly made up of Jewish believers. There was more widespread preaching of the Gospel under the church leadership of the Jews than has been done since by the church predominately under Gentile leadership. There will be another great worldwide preaching of the Gospel under Jewish leadership in the future when God selects 144,000 Jewish believers to preach the Gospel in the Tribulation period.

Characteristics of the Ephesus Church

A working church [vs. 2]

God commends them for faithful works of Christian service. Every believer is given a spiritual gift[s] to be used to edify the church body [1 Peter 4:10]. Dr. De Haan said “To come to Christ costs nothing, to follow Christ costs something, but to serve Christ costs *everything*.” [See Matt. 10:39].

A separated church [vs 2]

This church was *in* the world but not *of* the world. The Ephesus Church refused to fraternize with worldly Christians. They kept themselves pure from the world and from false prophets. We are to test people to see if they are of God [1 John 4:1-3]. If the teachings of a church or individual is not *consistent* with or *faithful to the Word of God*, they should be rejected.

An enduring church [vs. 3]

Not only was this church faithful in evangelism, but they did not become fainthearted. They were courageous in standing for truth and rejecting false teaching [Isaiah 40:31].

An autonomous church [vs. 6]

They did not depend on a church hierarchy or church council. It was a local, independent body of believers that governed the church.

1. The deeds of the Nicolaitans.

Nicolaitian in the Greek language is made up of two words. *Niko* means to “conquer, overthrow” and *laos* means “the people, laity” – to conquer or overthrow the people or laity.

2. There are two views regarding them:

- a. First view – the Nicolaitans practiced sensuality by separating one’s spiritual and physical nature. Therefore, giving these people a license to sin. [See 2 Tim. 3:1-5, 7].
- b. Second view – they were creating an oppressive ecclesiastical order that ruled over the people or laity.
 - 1) This causes men to be enslaved to one man or a small group of men for their spiritual life. The Bible teaches that every believer should be independently responsible for their abiding relationship with Christ [2 Tim. 2:15, 3:16-17].
 - 2) The practice of the Nicolaitans also causes men and women to look to human beings instead of looking to God [John 16:13-14]. It is by God’s Spirit – Although Ephesus was successful against the

Nicolaitans, the church of Pergamum later accepted the Nicolaitans [Rev. 2:15].

Christ’s condemnation

They lost their first love. This was a very serious charge against the church. Remember they did not have a Bible to read every day to keep their spiritual life alive like we do today. The faith of these believers became routine and commonplace. They became indifferent about spiritual things. They became less faithful and lost their zeal for God. They lost their spark and became cold in their love of God.

Christ’s counsel to gain their first love.

1. Remember – recall your faithfulness of earlier years. Take inventory of your spiritual life. If your faith is stagnant or has regressed, then you have a serious spiritual problem.
2. Repent – turn back from your indifference and coldness toward God.

Do the things you did first – Be fruitful [Matt. 7:16-17], faithful and obedient [1 Cor. 15:58]. The best way to retain your first love is found in Col. 3:16 – “let the word of God dwell in you richly”.

Christ’s challenge

1. Hear what the Spirit says

“He that hath an ear,” this is not talking about physical ears [since all of us have ears] but it is talking about spiritual ears.

This is talking about three types of ears:

- a. Those who do not know Christ personally and do not have spiritual ears to hear God [1 Cor. 2:14].
- b. Dull of hearing – those who have spiritual ears but are not willing to hear and obey [Hebrews 5:11]. They refuse to listen and to submit God’s mastery in their lives.
- c. Those willing to hear – spiritually minded believers.

The true test of those that hear will show in their conduct [James 1:22]. If you are truly God’s sheep, you will hear his voice [John 10:27].

To “him that overcometh”

1. An overcomer – 1 John 5:4-5 tells us that an overcomer is one that is born of God. Faith in Jesus Christ is the only way to become an overcomer.
2. Tree of Life – a aspect of eternal life. Only believers will partake in the Tree of Life [Rev. 22:2].

Revelation 1:20, John gives us the key to interpreting this passage.

The stars represent the angels, or the pastors who considered the messengers of the local churches.

The candlesticks represent the local assemblies of believers.

Therefore, Jesus has John write to the Angel or Pastors at Ephesus to tell them that He is examining their works. Ephesus used to be one of the glowing churches in Asia minor, and Jesus was standing in their midst.



The Church of Smyrna: “The Persecuted Church”

Introductory Thoughts – Rev. 2:8-11

THE TRAPPINGS OF SMYRNA:

It was a beautiful city.

Today, if you were to visit Smyrna it is a city of 200,000 people located in Turkey. The city is called Anatolia. It is an old city with twisting roads, and disheveled. Yet in the time of this letter, it was a beautiful city. Rich in industry and trade, beautiful in setting and design.

Its chief product of trade were spices. Myrrh its main product. In fact, that is what Smyrna means, Myrrh. Myrrh is used for indigestion, ulcers, colds, cough, asthma, lung congestion, arthritis pain, cancer, leprosy, spasms, and syphilis. It is also used as

a stimulant. It is applied directly to the mouth for soreness and swelling, inflamed gums (gingivitis), loose teeth, canker sores, bad breath, and chapped lips. It is also used topically for hemorrhoids, bedsores, wounds, abrasions, and boils. In foods and beverages, myrrh is used as a flavoring component. In manufacturing, myrrh is used as a fragrance, in incense, and as a fixative in cosmetics. It is also used in embalming.

It was a beautiful city with a bright history.

The city was designed by Lydia (an Ancient Asia Minor empire that emerged from the Hittites) in 6 B.C. It was later rebuilt in 2 B.C. by the Romans. Literally, it was a city raised from the dead. It has been a prominent city in trade through the ancient world.

They had bazaar worship practices.

Along with the usual pagan worship they built a temple to Tiberius who ruled Rome from AD 14 to AD 17. It was the second such temple built in Asia for emperor worship. From this rose the sinister Caesar-cult which was manifesting under Domitian who demanded to be called master and god. He and others that followed brought years of suffering to the church at Smyrna.

THE TRIALS OF SMYRNA

She had two types of trials

1. Trials from without – Rev. 2:10

The pagan cults were well organized, and they caused a great deal of havoc in this church including imprisonment, death and economic havoc.

“I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich)” - Rev. 2:9.

It seems that from long periods they experienced poverty. The term “*poverty*” is not the usual word used for poor. It is a word used to describe abject poverty. (extreme and long-lasting suffering.

Apparently, the pressures from the pagans were extreme. When one became a Christian, he lost his job, his family, his security and sometimes his life. This was compounded by the Caesar-cult.

2. Pressures from within –

The inside pressures came from the Judaizers – Rev. 2:9b

“I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.”

The Judaizers were infiltrating their ranks. They were saying they were Christians but were not. It seems Judaizers embraced parts of Christianity but also held to a sacrificial system, a legalistic system of circumcision and more.

They blasphemed God and raised much havoc and confusion. History tells us much about the Jewish and

Judaizer population in Smyrna. They caused much havoc and persecution for the true assembly of believers.

THE TRIALS OF THE BELIEVER

Why did God permit the trials to come to this church? Why did they have to suffer years of struggle and death? I can think of six reasons for suffering:

1. Suffering eventually comes to all, “for death passed upon all men, for all have sinned.” – Romans 5:12.
2. Suffering can point the lost to Christ, because the cross is the only thing that makes sense out of death.
3. Suffering sometimes comes to the believer – for correction (1 Cor. 11:30-32; Heb. 12:3-13).
4. Suffering can come to the believer as a preventative measure (2 Cor. 12:7 – Paul’s thorn in the flesh; 2 Cor. 1 – We suffer so we can comfort others).
5. Suffering can be used by the believer for instruction (Romans 5:3-5 – Tribulation worketh patience; Heb. 5:8 – Even Christ is said to have learned obedience unto death).
6. Suffering often bears with it a powerful testimony of Christ’s presence.

Though the suffering of those at the church of Smyrna was severe. It was used by the faithful to spread the gospel.

We are given two exhortations to those who suffer – Rev. 2:10.

Stop being afraid

“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days.”

Be faithful unto death.

“be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

THE TESTIMONY OF THE CHURCH AT SMYRNA

Rev. 2:9 – “I know thy works . . .”

No specific works are mentioned – only their poverty. So, I suggest their works were . . . **Endurance:** They were so committed, in the face of poverty and death. Eternity with Christ was worth it all. **Steadfastness:** Doctrinally they had to be clear on the issue of the atonement. Seldom does one die or suffer for no reason. They were steadfast against idolatry.

INSIGHTS

How are we with endurance and steadfastness? If we are not committed on the little things, we will never be committed on the big things. If we are turned upside down over a ding on our car door, how will we handle real problems when they come.

One of my favorite pastors in the early church was Polycarp. He pastored this church in Smyrna around AD 100. He was a disciple of John. He pastored this church for 60 years. Remember there was no church building in those days. The members met in homes, in the woods, in caves and on boats. His entire congregation was extremely poor and continually despised. Yet Polycarp continued to pastor them.

During an uproar over Christians in Smyrna they rounded up the believers and placed them in the arena. Soldiers were sent out to capture Polycarp. At first, he hid, but was found and calmly walked with the soldiers into the arena.

He was asked to renounce Christ and proclaim the emperor-cult of Rome as God. He refused by saying, *(So all could hear*

him), “Four score and six years have I served the Lord, and He never wronged me; how can I blaspheme my King and Savior.” They burned him at the stake.

Another story goes along with this. He was a member of this great church. A small boy was led out into the arena with his father to be given over to the wild beasts. As the cages were opened and the animals appeared the little boy said, “will it hurt, Father?” and the father placing his arm around the boy’s shoulders while looking off to the invisible and said, “Perhaps for one swift moment, but he that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.”

THE TREASURES OF SMYRNA

They Were Spiritually Rich – “Thou Art Rich” (Rev. 2:9).

The treasures of Smyrna lay in a powerful God who knew their trials and needs. Endless times they were protected. Their prayers were answered. They had riches in spiritual treasures that most of us know nothing of.

They are the opposite of the Laodicean church which was 212 miles to their east (as the crow flies). “Because *they said*, ‘I am rich and increased with goods: and have needs of nothing.’” But Jesus said, they “knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked” (Rev. 3:17).

I wonder how many of us would sneak off into the woods to worship in order to avoid the eye of the government. How many of us would secretly walk to a small house with no air-conditioning or heat in order to worship, knowing that at any minute you could be rounded up and imprisoned for your faith.

They were promised a shortened tribulation – Rev. 2:10

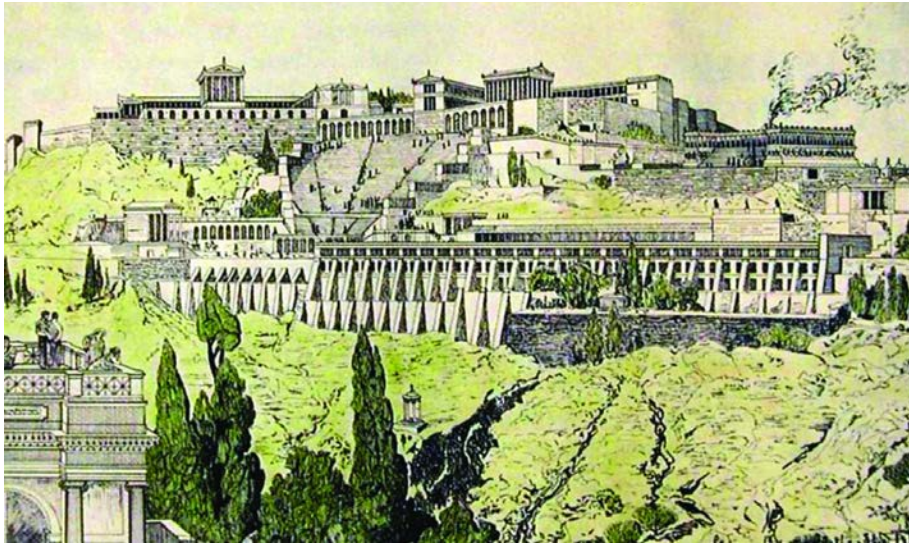
Two views regarding this phrase. Ten days refers to a shortness of time. As in 2 Cor. 4:18, “For our affliction which is **but for a moment**, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” 2 cor. 4:18

But most Christians and conservative scholars believe that this phrase prophetically referred to the ten edicts that the Romans made to persecute the church. The promise was that after the tenth edict persecution would end.

The church was plagued with persecution or over 300 years: (1) Nero – AD 64; (2) Domitian – AD 85; (3) Trajan – AD 108; (4) Marcus Aurelius – AD 163; (5) Caracalla – AD 200; (6) Maximins Thrax– AD 235; (7) Decius – AD 249; (8) Valerian – AD 257; (9) Aurelian – AD 270; and (10) Diocletian – AD 303.

Revelation 2:8, 10c-11 promises that they would be cared for by the risen Lord.

“And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive. . . ¹⁰ be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. ¹¹ He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.”



When the Church Compromise

The Church of Pergamos – Revelation 2:12-17

The message to the Church of Pergamos is to a church that moved away from Jesus Christ through intermarriage (that is, mixing corrupting and ungodly practices in with their faith). When a church or an individual reasons that a little bit of worldliness won't hurt, they are at the beginning of their downward slide away from God.

Degeneration is the law of all life apart from God. Rust, decomposition, decay and corrosion are a common event in the material universe. The sun, rain, and even the atmosphere carries elements of destruction. Even the stars in the heavens grow old. The only One who never decays in all existence is God.

The risen Lord, Jesus Christ speaks to the churches in Asia Minor and shows us that the same law is at work within the Church. Jesus says,

“Apart from Me, ye can do nothing.” (John 15:5)

The church or the individual that stands apart from Christ is in danger of degenerating in their spiritual walk and fellowship with the Lord.

Life never stands still. The further we remove ourselves from God's truth and the practice of His Word, the more rapid our spiritual decline. At Pergamos the church mixed their pagan culture into their worship and into their way of life.

Pergamos means, “through marriage” or “mixed marriage.” It is a compound Greek word comprising, *Per* meaning “mixed” or “through” and *Gamos* meaning, “marriage.” Because the church at Pergamos mixed parts of the pagan world system around them into the church, they began to degenerate in their fellowship with God.

Ephesus was the first church mentioned in Revelation. A church of great desire unto the Lord. It had zeal with a simple structure and their sole strength was resting on the Lord. But their attitude of love began to slip. This was a literal 1st Century church, but it also represented the common problem that plagued the 1st Century – they were losing their first love.

Smyrna was the second church mentioned. It was a church of myrrh because many faithful believers were suffering and dying for their faith. Though this church literally existed in John's day, history shows us that the church universally suffered through ten periods of persecution between AD 100 and AD 313 (Rev. 2:10). Then edicts of the Roman persecution ended.

Pergamos is our third church. It existed in the apostle John's day, yet the problems of hierarchal government within the church, and divided allegiance became a prominent problem for most churches, from AD 313 to about AD 600.

PERGAMOS' HISTORY

It's Beginnings

The city has ancient roots and predates 600 BC. The residents were a powerful tribe, which resisted Persian dominion. When Babylon fell in 539 BC a very interesting thing happened. Many of the Babylonian Magi migrated to Pergamos to establish their occult system of worship in the city. They were trained in the deep arts of the occult and for centuries dominated the rule of the city.

I suspect this is the reason for the title Jesus gave x History traces the movement of the "Seat of the first false religions." It was first established by Nimrod in Babel and remained in Ancient Babylon before it migrated to Pergamos in 539 BC.

The first fruits of this demonic move to Pergamos were the explosion of pagan cults. Unlike Ephesus, which had the shrine to Diana. Or Smyrna, with the temple to the emperor. Pergamos was filled with the occult. They had **Dionysus** – A feminine sexual cult. The Greek god of wine, dying and the resurrection. **Asclepius** – A snake wrapped around a pole and was the medical cult, the god of healing, reincarnated as a snake. **Athena**, the god of Mt Olympus and skilled trader and practice of **Emperor Worship**. **Zeus** was the most prominent god in the city. The altar of Zeus was the largest altar in the world.

The intellectual library built by the Magi was the second largest library in the world at that time with over 200,000 books. They had the largest medical center in the world dedicated to Asclepius. It was a city of cultural beauty and was a city of barbarism and intolerance to Christians.

In Revelation 2:13 we find a believer by the name of **Antipas** killed in the city. We know nothing about him, but we suspect he had a real struggle with the hostile cults ruled by Satan.

Antipas means, "*against all*" and his stands must have appeared to be against a whole city teeming with idolatry.

PERGAMOS - A MIXED CHURCH

It was a church of faithfulness and a church of falsehood.

The Faithful Part of the Church – Rev. 2:13

They preached the gospel in the face of oppression. Revelation 2:13a says, "***They held fast to Christ's Name.***" They preserved under pagan pressure "***And hast not denied my faith***" (Rev. 2:13). They stood up and said, Yes, I'm a believer in Jesus, even when it meant being mocked or were beaten for their faith. They increased in size and new believers were added . . . so they never gave up.

The False Part of the Church – Rev. 2:14-15

Two things were happening within the walls of their assembly.

The Doctrine of Balaam:

The sole strength of the Church was being mixed with an allegiance with the world. Instead of trusting Jesus, they tended to trust the world. It was a practical compromise of the faith. Jesus called it the **Doctrine of Balaam**.

Balaam was a prophet who was hired by a nation to bring a curse upon Israel. Every time Balaam set out to curse Israel, God interfered and made Balaam only pronounce a blessing on the nation. Frustrated that he could not earn the fortune the Nation of Moab was offering him Balaam then proposed another plan – a simple plan.

He encouraged the king of Moab to send beautiful women to work in the marketplace outside the camp of Israel. He encouraged the Moabite maidens to flirt with the young

Hebrew men. And eventually these young men began to chase after them.

The Moabites promoted intermarriage and invited the Hebrew men to their worship rituals. Thus, Israel unwittingly practiced false worship. Balaam knew this would arouse God's anger and cause His wrath to fall on Israel. Israel compromised their faith.

Apparently, this was the tactic of the cults to bring the Christians into their camp. Therefore, believers were invited to their "feasts." The Christians began to marry unsaved spouses. Tolerance was encouraged. Open dialog was promoted with the cult Priests. They looked for things in common, and the church became defiled.

This is not just a problem with those indigenous to Pergamos – Everyday Christians face decisions of compromise or faithfulness. Today's world is challenging the church to compromise in numerous ways – Such as in all sorts of purity issues, fidelity in marriage, gender identity, creation, divine design, theology, ecumenicalism, and much more.

Many Christians have mixed themselves with the world so that there is little influence of Christ left in their lives. Many have adopted humanistic thinking. They lack spiritual conviction. They hold to a watered-down version of Christianity

Those who have let down their walls of purity, set their eyes on improper things. This creates a spiritual bond with the world. A marriage of **ideas**. A marriage of **values**. A marriage of **faiths**. In doing so **it breaks our bonds with Christ**.

The doctrine of compromise has penetrated today's church. Seminaries have dialog with apostates. Religious leaders who openly deny the doctrines of God are permitted to lead in prayer and to take part in evangelistic campaigns.

Today believers think it is OK to visit bars, night clubs, casino's, see sensual and provocative movies etc. This is the doctrine of Balaam in practice. You want to know how Jesus feels about this? Note the demeanor of Christ in Revelation 2:12. "And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things **saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges.**"

Christ reveals Himself to the Pergamos church as "he which hath the sharp sword with two edges." This "sword" refers to the Word of God -- [Heb. 4:12].

Christ has no tolerance with pagan practices and false teachings that are infiltrating the church. The cure for the Pergamos Church is the Word of God. The Word sanctifies the church [John 17:17]. Jesus prayed to our heavenly Father to, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." He also declared in John 15:3 – "ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you."

His word brings joy, for Jesus said, in John 15:11 "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." And in John 16:33 Jesus said His Word brings peace. "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

The Dark Ages could have been avoided had the Word of God been heeded.

Parliamentary Compromise (Rev. 2:15).

The Nicolaitans were within the church at Pergamos. At Ephesus the Nicolaitans were outside the church and recognized as false apostates. But at Pergamos these rulers over the people were coming into power.

This also is considered a compromise, because when there is a hierarchy beyond the local church people tend to lose sight on sin, worship and spiritual exercise.

The eldership becomes unaccountable to the people and God. Rather they usually become accountable only to their organization. The eldership in time tends to separate themselves from the people and eventually assumes all the spiritual responsibility. The people under this system lose their concern for a relationship with God. "Let the professional's do it." "Let the Priests tell us."

THE HISTORY OF PERGAMOS

It was a Cultic Center. It was barbaric in nature and hostile towards Christianity. The Pergamos church had a faithful nucleus. They also had a number of compromising Christians and a growing number of false believers. But the practical compromises were overthrowing those who sought to follow the true faith.

Between AD 313 to AD 600 the Pergamos compromise spread into many of the churches in the Roman Empire.

After the Roman Emperor, Diocletian died on May 1, A.D. 305, Constantine and Maximinus II contended for the throne of Rome. Constantine marched outside the city of Rome to the Milvian Bridge and camped on the east side of the river.

During the night before the battle Constantine said he had a vision of a cross in the sky with the words written on it "By this sign conquer." He called together the Christians elders that night and was supposedly converted to Christianity. He won the battle the next day and immediately set the Christians free.

The Christians came out of the catacombs to find that they were now popular. They no longer had to hide when they

worshipped. Pagan temples and priest once on Rome's payroll were cut back. The church was now paid by Rome. They now had state money to build their churches. Church leaders who were once poor and poorly clothed were set on gold thrones with nobles and robed in beautiful garments. During the early part of this marriage with the state the church was wildly accepted.

But doctrinal problems soon arose with the followers of Arian who declared Jesus was created by God and not eternal. He said Jesus was of like substance but not the same substance as God.

They created a great council were Constantine, now the Pontifex Maximus and High Priest of the Pagan and Christian faiths, presided over the council in A.D. 325. The whole council stood as Constantine marched to the head of the assembly and sat on a golden throne.

In the midst of the discussion Arian swayed the council to the point that they would have voted to deny the eternity and deity of Christ. Then one man named Athanasius, a hermit from Africa sprang to his feet in his chiefly tiger skin robe. He stood against the whole council.

He tore back his cloak and disclosed the great scars from being thrown into the arena among the wild beasts. He cried, "These are the brand-marks of the Lord, Jesus Christ and I cannot hear this blasphemy any longer."

He proceeded to defend so clearly the doctrine of Christ, His deity and His eternity that no one doubted for a moment that God had sent this man. Had not Athanasius stood against all the compromising church it could have cast a fatal blow.

Still spiritual deadness prevailed. Worldliness of all sorts began to fill the churches and hierarchy gradually formed over all the churches.

THE PROCLAMATION TO PERGAMOS

Repent or else (Rev. 2:16).

Jesus is calling to them to remember, repent and return to Him. In Rev. 2:17 Jesus gives a two-fold promise to those who stand against compromise. (1) Eat of the Manna and you will find “Spiritual Strength” – Return and keep the Word of God (cf. John 15:4-5). (2) Repent and return to me and you will find a “White Stone with a New Name” that is, you will receive “spiritual life” and a special reward.



A Letter to a Corrupt Church

Thyatira – Rev. 2:18-29

by Dr. Craig P. Scott

Jesus addresses real problems in the first three churches of Revelation. These were problems associated with those local churches that existed in his day. These problems are issues that manifested itself though out church history.

For example ... the term “**Ephesus**” means “desire.” In other words, it was a zealous local church, which spread the gospel around the world. They were separate from worldly affairs, doctrinally sound and full of life. The only problem was the loss of their first love. It is also a general problem with many churches in the 1st Century.

The term, “**Smyrna**” means “myrrh.” They were a very poor church. They suffered serious persecution. The most prominent problem they faced was backing down when persecution arose. Though suffering and persecution was a

general problem within the church of Smyrna it later became a global problem with most Christians during the 2nd and 3rd Century.

The term “**Pergamos**” means, “mixed marriage.” This church attempted to mix the pagan culture with the true faith. They were also guilty of allowing their leadership to assume an unbiblical authority over them. This was a general problem within the local church at Pergamos during the 1st Century. However, it became a universal problem within the Christian churches during the 4th to the 6th Century.

So, from this point in history the church incorporated many more false doctrines and practices into its assembly. By the end of the 6 Century AD the church was plunging into an age of spiritual darkness. True Christianity was in peril.

It was called a *dark age* because of the cultural and spiritual oppression brought on by the rulers of the day. Out of this time-period rose a universal mindset within the churches that was much like that of the 1st Century church of Thyatira.

SO, LET’S LOOK AT THYATIRA

It was a real 1st Century church. What they did in the 1st Century is typical of what took place in most of the churches between AD 590 to AD 1517. This covers nearly 1000 years of history.

It is also interesting to note that Jesus indicated that this type of church would continue until He returns. For He exhorts this church to hold fast to that which is good among them “**till I come**” – Revelation 2:25

In fact, notice the language used in this passage is reflected in the last four churches.

To Thyatira (*a church where many in the leadership were corrupt and many of their doctrines were tainted*) Jesus said, “But that which ye have already hold fast **till I come**” – Revelation 2:25.

To Sardis (*a spiritually dead church*) Jesus said, “I will come on thee as a thief” – Rev. 3:3.

To Philadelphia (*a revived church*) Jesus said, “I come quickly” Rev. 3:11.

To Laodicea (*the Lukewarm church*) Jesus said, “I stand at the door, and knock” – Rev. 3:20.

This has led many to believe that the problems reflected in the church of Thyatira are mirrored today in the Roman and East Orthodox Churches. The problems in the church of Sardis (*which was a spiritually dead church*) is mirrored today in the mainstream liberal churches. The issues within the Philadelphian church (*the revived church*) are reflected in the older independent evangelical churches and the problems within the Laodicean church is reflected today in a church that practices neo-paganism and humanistic doctrines. It is neither hot nor cold for Christ.

Though each movement emerged at different times in history, all forms of these churches still exist in the world today. Hence the present tense admonition to each of them. (1) “hold fast **till I come**” – Rev. 2:25; (2) “I will come on thee as a thief” – Rev. 3:3; (3) “I come quickly” Rev. 3:11; (4) “I stand at the door, and knock” – Rev. 3:20.

Let’s look at Thyatira’s History:

Thyatira was a church in a small town of little importance. There Alexander the Great later established the city as a Macedonian colony.

Thyatira’s Industry:

Much like Youngstown OH which was known for the steel it produced or Waterbury CT which was known for the brass it made, Thyatira was noted from purple dye.

It was not the political, cultural, intellectual, and social center. It was a blue-collar town made up of trade guilds that manufactured textiles and dye.

Thyatira’s Christian Beginnings:

A woman by the name of Lydia is found in Acts 16:13-15. She was a seller of purple.

Acts 16:13-15 – “And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither. ¹⁴ And a certain woman named **Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira**, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. ¹⁵ And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.”

She was traveling in order to sell her purple dye and heard the gospel preached by Paul when she passed through Philippi. She was from the city of Thyatira. Many believe Lydia brought the gospel message back to Thyatira.

By the time John was writing this letter to the seven churches, 40 to 50 years had passed since Paul’s encounter with Lydia. By the time John wrote this letter, Lydia was most likely with the Lord. He is now addressing a key problem that grew within the church at Thyatira over those years.

Thyatira's works – Rev. 2:19:

The church at first sounds like the grandest of all churches.

“I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.”

They progressively became more impressive as they increased in: love, service, faith, patience and good works. It must have been wonderful to see a church where love increasingly abounds, where forgiveness and jealousy and bitterness are set aside. Here people were dedicating their lives to help others. They were a people with a simple faith, full of patience and tolerance to all, with boundless energy to do good.

If you lived anywhere in the ancient world. You'd probably want a Thyatiraian Christian to be your neighbor.

Yet the Lord addresses this church severely in verses 18, 23, & 27.

Rev. 2:18 – “And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath **his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass.**”

- 1. “The Son of God”** -- This name represents Christ's deity – Jesus is the Son of God and He is God [John 1:1-3]. False teachers are prone to teach Christ's human nature at the exclusion of His divine Nature.
- 2. “Who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass.”**

Christ will come with piercing, righteous judgment on the Church for permitting false doctrine to creep in and mislead God's servants.

“And **I will kill her children with death**; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and **I will give unto every one of you according to your works**” - Rev. 2:23.

“And **he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers**: even as I received of my Father” - Rev. 2:27.

The idea is that the very wrath of God is against some of them. Worldly faith says the church must always be love, service, and good works. But there is something seriously wrong if this is all that there is. Two reasons are given for Thyatira's judgment 1) Corrupt leadership; 2) The promotion of idolatry.

Thyatira's Corrupt Leadership - Revelation 2:20:

“Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.”

The Original Jezebel:

In the OT she was the most wicked queen of Israel who brought with her the pagan worship of the Phoenicians. She was the daughter of Ethbaal, King of the Zidonians. Jezebel was the wicked wife of King Ahab who brought in Baal worship and false teaching to God's people.

She is the epitome of wickedness [1 Kings 21:25]. Only her daughter, Athaliah superseded her in wickedness by killing all her grandchildren [the royal seed] to gain the throne [2 Kings

11:1]. This 1st Century false prophetess must have caused many in the church to fall into some sort of idolatry.

There are two forms of false teaching that Jezebel brought in:

a. Fornication/adultery – Revelation 2:20.

The original Jezebel brought in Baal and Ashtaroth worship.

Whatever this woman did, she caused the people to worship idols and to commit spiritual adultery and perhaps even physical adultery and fornication. Exodus 20:3-5 and Ezekiel 14:6-8 condemn such practices.

Ex. 20:3-5 – “Thou shalt have no other gods before me. ⁴ Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: ⁵ Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: **for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.**”

Ezek. 14:6-8 - “Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations. ⁷ For every one of the house of Israel, or of the stranger that sojourneth in Israel, which separateth himself from me, and setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to a prophet to inquire of him concerning me; I the LORD will answer him by myself: ⁸ And I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people; and ye shall know that I am the LORD.”

God will set his face against anyone who worships or bows down to graven images.

Eating of food sacrificed to idols – Revelation 2:20b – “and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.”

Apparently, many forms of pagan practice were accepted in this church. God’s word says that the kingdom of God is not of this world [John 18:36; 1 John 2:15-17].

Heresy falls into two categories:

1. A false concept of the personal deity of Christ.

The church of Thyatira could not be accused of abandoning this doctrine for they taught the deity of Christ in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

They believed in the Trinity. They believed that Jesus Christ is God’s only begotten Son, born of the Spirit and born of the virgin.

2. A false concept of the sacrificial work of Christ.

Thyatira means “continual sacrifice”. This heresy has produced numerous forms of false doctrines. Historically we know that the AD 6 Century church began to deny the finished work of Christ and encourages the practice of continual sacrifice of Christ in their worship.

This practice is directly opposed to God’s word [see Romans 6:10; Hebrews 9:28; 10:10, 12, 14].

Rom. 6:10 – “For in that he died, **he died unto sin once**: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.”

Heb. 9:28 – “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.”

Heb. 10:10 – “By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”

Heb. 10:12 – “But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God”

Heb. 10:14 – “For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.”

Further problems from a continual sacrifice. It causes people to try to earn their own salvation through their works.

“If Christ’s work on the cross is not enough, then you must do something to complete the payment for sin.”

The Bible states that Christ is the full payment of sin [Rom. 3:24-27; Heb. 7:25, 9:12; 1 Peter 1:18-21]. Also Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 2:5.

Heb. 7:25 – “Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

Heb. 9:12 – “Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.”

God’s grace – He gives them an opportunity to repent [2:21]:

God in His mercy gives this church a period of time to repent, but if they consistently refuse to turn from their ungodly ways then they will be judged.

Christ’s judgment [2:22-23]:

This false prophetess will face suffering and death and so will those who associate with her unless they repent [more mercy]. They will face great tribulation because of their false worship [vs. 22].

“I will strike her children dead” [vs. 23]:

Perhaps a refers to the second death [Rev. 10:15]. This will happen to all unbelievers no matter what church affiliation they may have [Matt. 25:46; Rev. 21:8].

“I will pay you according to your deeds.”

This seems to refer to the Great White Throne Judgment [Rev. 20:11-15]. All unbelievers [who do not accept God’s sacrifice] will be judged by their works because there is no sacrifice for their sins their names were not written in the book of life.

Christ’s counsel [vss. 24-25] - “Hold fast until I come.”

Christ is speaking to those who were faithful in this church who were not deceived by false teachings, traditions, and rituals.

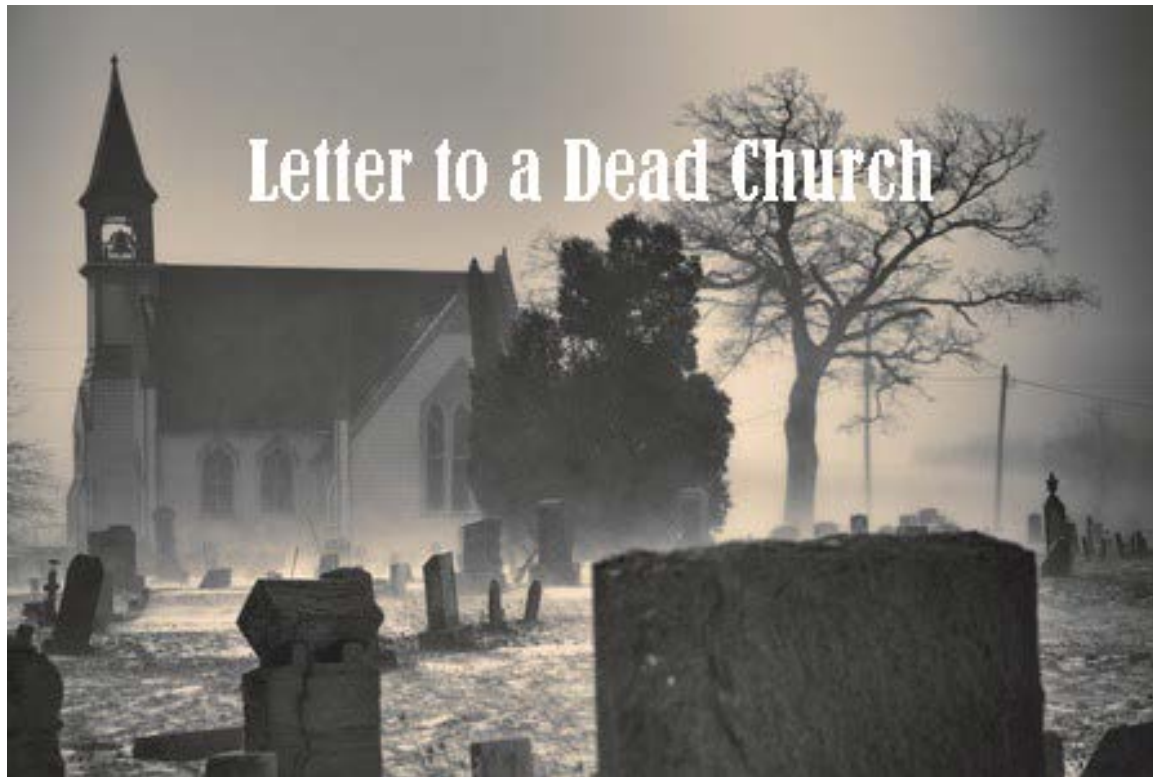
Christ’s challenge [vs. 26-28] is “To him who overcomes.”

He is speaking to those who do not give in, who do not bow down to the false religious system found in our day. Christ says to two things to those who overcome in this church -He will give them a position of leadership and authority.

He will give the morning star.

Jesus is the bright and morning star [Rev. 22:16]. It is referring to the promise of Christ to come and abide if you overcome. Who are the overcomers? 1 John 5:1-5 states, it is “. . .he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God.”

“He that hath an ear.” Not physical ears but spiritual ears. This is talking of believers [John 10:27] and these promises are only for those who overcome through their belief in the Lord Jesus Christ.



Letter to a Dead Church

A Letter to A Spiritually Dead Church

“Dear Sardis - You are Dead”

Revelation 3:1-6 – by Dr. Craig P. Scott

AMAZING STATISTIC: Imagine a company that has more than 500 employees and has the following record: 29 accused of spousal abuse, 7 arrested for fraud, 19 accused of writing bad checks, 117 directly or indirectly bankrupt, 3 did time for assault, 71 cannot get a credit card due to

their poor credit, rating 14 were arrested on drug related charges, 8 were arrested for shoplifting, 21 are currently defendants in lawsuits, and 84 arrested for drunk driving in past year.

WHAT BUSINESS? What organization? Who would hire such a group? That portrays the 535 members of the United States Congress in 2018. Now I’m not bashing America. But what this shows us is that sometimes the most respected of groups don’t live up to their reputation.

The church should be one of the most respected of groups in society, but unfortunately, many do not live according to what they should be. Many churches today are dead.

This morning, we are going to be looking at a letter of Christ written to a church found in the book of Revelation. It is a church on a life support system, just barely clinging to life. In fact, many parts of its body are already dead. It is the letter to the church at Sardis and it goes a bit like this. Dear Sardis, you are Dead.”

Well . . . actually, there is a bit more to it, and we are going to read it together now in Rev 3:1.

Dear Sardis, “I know your works, that you have a name that you live, and are dead.” The emphasis is on the words, “You are Dead!”

They were spiritually dead. They were a corpse, physically present, but dead. They had no spiritual life in them. No breath. No pulse. No color. Unfortunately, there are many churches meeting today in the world which are just as dead as Sardis. They're going through the motions, like religious robots. But it's all a sham because there is no spiritual life in their hearts.

We have been looking at the seven churches in Asia Minor. We visited the church of Ephesus – Rev. 2:1-7. We found an assembly that lost its first love towards the Lord.

We visited the church of Smyrna – Rev. 2:8-11. There we found a persecuted body of believers, but their testimony was very much alive. They were exhorted to stay faithful unto the end.

We then visited the church of Pergamos – Rev. 2:12-17. They were a struggling assembly. Some were martyred for their faith. While others were compromising vital biblical doctrines and had undertaken corrupting practices.

We were awed by the church of Thyatira – Rev. 2:18-29. It had some warm and redeeming qualities: good works, charity, service, and patience. But as we dug deeper, we found the church was entertaining many false teachings after the manner of Jezebel the prophetess, who the in the Old Testament era had led many of the God's people into abominable pagan practices.

This morning we are going to examine a church that Christ considers it to be spiritually dead. Its heart had stopped. There is no pulse, no breath, and a "code blue" is issued. It

was in serious need of immediate attention or within the next few moments all hope for it would be lost.

THE CHURCH OF SARDIS

500 years before John wrote this letter Sardis was one of the richest and most powerful cities in the world. A man named Croesus lived there and was considered the wealthiest man in the world - the Greeks called him Midas.

Geographically, Sardis was virtually unassailable by enemies. It was a city built on a mountain spur, 1500 ft about the valley floor. You could only approach the city from the south. And to gain entrance to the city you must travel a very steep and difficult path to reach the main gate. On three sides were cliffs.

But despite its natural defenses, it was defeated twice in its history. First by the Persians and again by the Greeks. It is interesting that both times Sardis fell, was not from the front, but from the cliffs at her back. Each time the people of Sardis become overconfident with their natural defenses and didn't feel it necessary to guard the three cliffs around their city.

The Persians under Cyrus, attacked the city for a year without any success until one night a Persian soldier saw a soldier from Sardis drop his helmet over the cliff. Thinking no one was watching, the Sardis soldier made his way down the cliff to retrieve the helmet. The Persian traced his path and then that night took a band of soldiers and entered the sleeping city uncontested.

What an illustration of how Christians often fall. We can become so confident that we feel secure when we are not.

THE PICTURE OF CHRIST

Revelation 3:1 – “And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars.”

As with all the letters Christ sends to his seven churches, this one begins with a description of the Author. In fact, as you may recall, the description Jesus Christ gives of Himself in the opening line of each letter. His appearance to each is different with every church. His appearance it is a critical part of the message that He is giving to the church. So, there is a need for us to understand why Jesus presented Himself in this way.

Jesus describes himself as holding 2 things.

The first is the Seven Spirits of God:

This phrase only appears in the book of Revelation and it appears four times (1:4, 3:1, 4:5, 5:6). The phrase is a reference to the Holy Spirit. To the Sardis Church, Christ revealed two characteristics of His nature – “the seven spirits” and the “seven stars”. This characteristic suggests they were not relying on the Holy Spirit.

The Seven Stars:

The Seven Stars indicates that they were not delivering God’s Holy Word correctly – His message. The symbol of

the seven stars is interpreted for us in 1:20 where we are told that the 7 stars are the 7 angels of the 7 churches.

The word “Angel” can also translate “messenger.” Whichever meaning you choose, Christ is saying, that the message given to the Angel or the Pastor of the church comes from Him as He has them in his hand.

COMMENDATIONS AND CONDEMNATIONS

The letter to Sardis is unique in that there is nothing at all Christ commends them for. There are no positives here, only negatives. And that negative is this: **“although they had a great past and a fantastic reputation, they were dead.”**

Rev 3:1-3 - “I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.”

How do you know when a body that once was full of life is dying? Well, organs cease to function, or they begin to shut down: kidneys, lungs, and heart. One thing after another just stops.

Dying churches are the same. Praying stops, giving stops, God’s Word is no longer delivered or received, and the biblical ways are no longer relevant. There is no sharing of

faith, spiritual services are lifeless and irrelevant. People attend out of habit or for social interaction.

People and churches like that offer nothing to a lost world.

An artist was once asked to put on canvas what he considered to be the picture best symbolizing a decaying and dying church. After several months, he returned and reported that he had finished the task. The hour finally arrived when the painting was to be unveiled. Several people standing around the easel had already given their description of what they thought the church would look like.

Some had said it would be a rundown building in great need of repair and paint. Weeds would be growing in the church yard, and there would be some broken windowpanes.

Everyone in the group seemed to have a similar picture in mind. However, when the cloth was removed, a hush fell over the group. Everyone was stunned. Before their eyes was an absolutely beautiful church building. The grounds were well kept, and the exterior of the building was in excellent condition. After a few minutes, one person stepped forward and said to the artist, "I thought we asked you to paint a dying church?"

The artist smiled and invited everyone to step closer to the painting. He pointed through the windows to the empty pews and to the collection plate on the table. There was nothing in the plate but "cobwebs."

The church that has empty pews and cobwebs in its collection plate is a church that is decaying and dying. Without the giver, there is no giving. Without the giving, ministries cannot be conducted by the church. Without ministries being conducted, the mission of the church cannot be carried out. If the mission of the church is not carried out, the church is purposeless and dead.

Sardis had a great reputation as a church. They had a fantastic name and if we were church shopping in that day, we would have no doubt have visited Sardis based on their past reputation.

We are not told why they had a good name or how they got it. It may have been because of their lovely building, their vast numbers, their comprehensive programs, their inspiring worship. We are not told, and so we can assume that it doesn't matter.

What does matter is that Christ said to Sardis that reputation means nothing. It doesn't matter what happened in the past and it doesn't matter what other people think about your congregation. What matters is what Christ thinks.

They had a name all right, but they were dead. What is your reputation? Are you known as a Christian at work? Do others see you as a righteous and good person? Be careful, because although you have a name, you may still be dead in God's eyes.

So why was Sardis dead?

Notice that we can't find any reference to Sardis having problems with persecution or false teaching. Apparently, Sardis was not aggressive in its witness to the city. There was no persecution because there was no invasion of the enemy's territory.

This church in Sardis was "a perfect model of inoffensive Christianity." The city saw the church as a respectable group of people who were neither dangerous nor desirable. They were decent people with a dying witness and a decaying ministry.

Satan didn't need to send any attacks on the church or any false teachers there to lead them astray because the church just wasn't a threat ... Are we a threat to Satan? Is he keenly trying to hinder our advances for the gospel by sending persecution and false teaching into our midst? Or are we on our death bed like Sardis, posing no threat at all.

Someone once said that the hospital is not on the initial hit list for an invading army. The invalid and the infirmed usually don't pose much of a threat.

We can find some other hints about the problem if we look at the commands given by Christ to this church.

Christ gives 5 sharp imperatives to the church as a solution to their deadness. They are not just instructions - they are urgent commands. Listen again as I read and see if you can pick them up.

Revelation 3:2-3 – **“Be watchful, and strengthen** the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. **Remember** therefore how thou hast received and heard, and **hold fast, and repent**. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.”

Did you see them???

They are all imperatives. – They are commands spoken in the active voice which means the people of Sardis must actively do these things, not someone else.

They must 1) BE watchful 2) Strengthen, 3) Remember, 4) Hold fast “Keep” and 5) Repent. Three are spoken in the present tense which means that they require continuous activity. In other words, it is not a case of waking up and then going back to sleep or remembering and then forgetting or even obeying once-in-a-while and then not worrying. They must all continue to happen.

The words Hold Fast and Repent are in the aorist tense and are therefore to be a once and for all action. This is the way to escape from the graveyard. Once you hold fast and repent, don't let go, don't turn back.

1. Be Watchful v. 1

First, we must wake up and be on the alert, ever watchful. The term “watch” is a participle indicating that the action is in the now), its voice is active (which indicates that the subject performs the action, instead of just receiving it). The first word in verse one is **“Be.”**

That is the imperative command. You **BE**. . . *watchful*. This would be particularly relevant to a city who suffered two defeats from failure to keep a watch. The church of Sardis and possibly some of us here this morning needs to wake up and see the seriousness of our condition.

2. **Strengthen v. 2!**

Once awake, we need to **strengthen** those things which may lead us astray, we must watch out for those things which can lull us into a state of compromise and finally watch for Christ's return. The word, "**Strengthen**" is the second imperative command. Now you are watching **strengthen those things**.

Rev. 3:3 says, "If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee."

Apparently, this church will be sleeping when the Lord returns.

This was a common theme of Christ.

Matt. 24:50 – "The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for *him*, and in an hour that he is not aware of."

Matt. 25:13 – "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."

Mark 13:32-33 – "But of that day and *that* hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in

heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. "

They lacked instruction in Bible prophecy and separation. Those believers who are taught Bible prophecy and are reminded of Christ's imminent return are more apt to be separated, and consecrated.

You Strengthen! - We are to strengthen or literally "establish" what life is left. Even in Sardis there was some hope - some things had a few remaining breaths left. The fire had gone out, but there were still some hot coals among the ashes.

How do you start a fire from a few coals? You blow upon it. They needed the wind from Heaven to blow upon them and revive them before it was too late. The life of a Church is not in its popularity - programs - possessions - personality. The life of a Church is in a Person - the person of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

When He is gone the fire will go out. When He comes, He will fan the dying embers into a mighty flame. How do we know that the Holy Spirit is available to us? Christ has promised he will send him - remember Christ holds the 7 spirits.

3. **Remember!** - Remember what you heard – v. 3.

Remember what made you turn to Christ. Remember the basics of the faith and practice them. Return to searching the Scriptures and depend on God instead of some government program or church ritual [1 Tim. 3:15-17].

1Tim. 3:15 - "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. ¹⁶ And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

4. **Hold Fast** or Keep- verse 3c

Obedience is always a key. Obeying what we know to be true - those things which we remember as being important. Remember what you heard and KEEP IT, HOLD FAST TO IT.

5. **Repent!**

They needed a change in mind. A change in direction if they were going to survive and it needed to be now. That is what repentance is.

The dead church will be caught off guard. Are you being watchful, remembering that which is important and obeying God's instructions. Or are you like the church in Sardis with a need to be awakened, strengthened, remembering, holding fast and repenting?

PROMISES TO THOSE WHO OVERCOME

The letters of Christ always end on a positive note with promises for those who overcome. For even though most in Sardis were dead, there were some who were alive.

Revelation 3:4-6 - "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. ⁵ He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. ⁶ He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

For those who are found alive, who have not compromised their stand and are not stained by the things of this world, they will walk with Christ - He will welcome their fellowship and they will be dressed in white clothes fitting of their moral purity. The word used for "white" here is the same as that used of Christ's appearance when he was transfigured - he was bright and shone like the light (Mt17:2).

"I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels."

Not ever, never, never, ever, under any circumstances have their name removed from the book of life. That's the meaning here - it is the strongest negative available - talk about security in Christ!

Those living will also have their name acknowledged before God and his angels. My name will come from Christ's lips as being righteous.

Mt 10:32 - "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in

heaven. ³³But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven”.

So how are we as a church going? Is our corporate pulse strong? Are we living or dead? Not sure? Well, here is a bit of a checklist.

- Living churches are constantly changing. Dead churches don't have to change.
- Living churches have lots of noisy kids. Dead churches are fairly quiet.
- Living churches are always desperate for more money, so they can make a difference in the kingdom. Dead churches take in more than they ever dreamed of spending.
- Living churches are constantly improving for the future. Dead churches worship their past.
- Living churches move out in faith. Dead churches operate totally by human sight.
- Living churches focus on people. Dead churches focus on programs.
- Living churches are filled with tithers. Dead churches are filled with tippers.
- Living churches don't have "can't" in their dictionary. Dead churches have nothing but.

- Living churches dream great dreams of God. Dead churches relive nightmares.
- Living churches strategize about reaching the lost. Dead churches focus on the mundane.
- Living churches evangelize. Dead churches fossilize.

How are we doing as a church? Remember that the church is made up of individuals and it can never be spiritually strong unless the individuals within it are spiritually strong.

So, what is your spiritual pulse like today? Is it beating strongly or is it nearly gone? Are you facing the same criticism that Sardis faced today - that of having a name, but being nominal or dead? - that of not being a threat to Satan, because we are a perfect model of inoffensive Christianity? Is Christ calling you to Wake Up and keep watch, establish what little life you have left, Remember the basics of the faith, obey them and Repent of our failings?

Be warned that if we fail to take seriously this message, we can end up like the church of Sardis. We need to listen and take on board the criticisms leveled at Sardis, because I think that many of them are applicable to us to some extent. But for those of us who are alive and living pure, Christ promises a wonderful reward - eternal life and all that it brings. The choice is ours - life or death, which will you take? He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.



The Church of Philadelphia

“The Missionary Church” - Rev. 3:7-13]

History of the Church

As you study this church, you would want to be associated with this assembly.

The church of Philadelphia literally means “brotherly love”. It was located in Asia Minor and was the center of Greek civilization. This church had a considerable influence in that part of the ancient world. It remained a believing church until the Turks conquered the city at the end of the fourteenth century.

There are four aspects of Christ’s character [two of which are not mentioned in Rev. chapter 1] that are now revealed to the Philadelphia church:

1. He is “Holy”

God is holy; therefore, we should be holy [1 Pet. 1:16]. Christ may have singled this characteristic out because the church of Philadelphia practiced separation from the world unto holiness [Rom. 12:1-2; 1 John 2:15].

2. He is “True”

Christ is referred to as truth [John 14:6]. Christ is not only truth, but the ultimate truth. God’s truth, no doubt, let the Philadelphia Church toward doctrinal separation [it did not compromise its beliefs for the sake of unity].

3. He “. . . holds the key of David”

This refers to the authority of Christ, and that one day He will rule the world. Although God allows rulers freedom to govern, He undoubtedly controls all things [Luke 1:52; Rom. 13:1].

4. “What He opens one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.”

Jesus controls the opportunities for preaching the gospel [Matt. 28:18]. The Lord Jesus gave us a commission [Mark 16:15], and no world ruler can close the door to the preaching of the Gospel unless it is Christ's will. God is not limited. He is able to open any door.

CHRIST'S COMMENDATION [VS. 8]

Christ commended the Philadelphia Church for four things:

1. "I know thy works"

Christ is the one who gives us an open door of opportunity to proclaim the Gospel [1 Cor. 16:9]. The apostle Paul considered an open door as an opportunity for service. The Philadelphia age was one of evangelism and service.

2. "...for thou hast a little strength"

The Philadelphia church age was characterized by small congregations. By human standards, this is viewed as weak. Human wisdom says that a large church indicates God's blessing and a small church lacks success; however, that is not always true [1 Cor. 1:26-31; 2 Cor. 12:9-10]. God often works in small numbers [Judges 7:2-7]. Though the Philadelphia church age is filled with small churches, they did mighty things for God by spreading the Word throughout the world.

3. "...and hast kept my word"

This church age is portrayed by obedience to the Scriptures. Although the Sardis Church believed the word of God, they did not obey it. Thereby, falling short in the eyes of God [Rev. 3:2b]. However, the Philadelphia age will endure sound doctrine until the end [2 Tim. 4:2-5].

4. "...and hast not denied my name"

The greatest number of false religions and occults have sprung up during this church age and continues to the present [1 John 4:1-3]. Nevertheless, the Philadelphia Church refused to deny the Lord's name and will continue to remain faithful to Christ until Jesus comes for the church.

CHRIST'S PROMISE [VSS. 9-10]

1. Christ will vindicate

"Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan. . . I will make them to come and worship before thy feet and to know that I have loved thee."

Christ promises this church age that someday all false religions and false teachers will humble themselves before this church. In His love for this church age and their devotion to Him, God will vindicate them before the eyes of these false deceivers.

2. Christ will preserve

"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation. . ."

The word translated "from" in our English Bibles is actually "ek" in Greek and is best understood as "out of" rather than simply "from." This is a promise from God that He will preserve this church from going through the Tribulation Period. The churches represented in this Philadelphia age will be raptured before this worldwide tribulation takes place [Matt. 24:21].

CHRIST'S COUNSEL [VS.11]

"Behold, I come quickly; hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

The church age of Philadelphia will be in existence until Christ come in the air [1 Thess. 4:13-15]. He advises them to be faithful to the end. This church is characterized by evangelism and sending out missionaries to all parts of the world. This church age, like Ephesus and Smyrna, preached the imminent return of Christ which in turn unites the fire of evangelism in the hearts of a congregation through dynamic preaching on Christ's promised return. People will wax cold before Christ comes [Matt. 24:10-13]. Therefore, remain true to Christ til the end and to those things you have learned, and you will receive a crown - reward.

CHRIST'S CHALLENGE [VSS. 12-13]

Christ gives a three-fold challenge only to the overcomers in the Philadelphia Church. As stated before, overcomers are those who place their trust in Christ [1 John 5:4-5].

1. "I will make a pillar in the temple of my God and he shall go no more out"

A pillar speaks of stability – stability [eternal security] Christians can have only through Christ. Although Christians may experience rejection and persecution in this life, they will have an eternal home in Heaven.

2. "I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God"

Believers will be identified with God through the name that Christ will give them which will entitle them to enter the Holy City [Rev. 21:9, 22:6]

3. "and I will write upon him my new name".

The believers of the Philadelphia church age will also have the name of Christ which entitles them to be his servants and to

see his face [Rev. 22:3-5]. The curse of sin and darkness will be removed forever [Rev. 21:4].

The Philadelphia church age began around 1750 and will continue until the rapture.

The church of Philadelphia was marked by its spiritual vitality of life. As God worked through this church age, revivals happened in Europe and the British Isles, which then spread to America. This period began what is now known as the modern missionary movement. In 1793, William Carey became the first missionary to India. This led to many more missionaries being sent out to all parts of the world.

There are two reasons for the missionary movement:

1. The printing of the bible in the language of the people. Ordinary people upon reading their Bibles tend to take it literally, thus inspiring many to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" [Mark 16:15].
2. The increase interest in the doctrine of the second coming. Around 1800, there was a revival in the teaching of the premillennial return of Christ [not taught since the 3rd century - the Smyrna Church.] This teaching contributed to a consecrated, separated church dedicated to evangelism and holy living.

More Thoughts on This Important Church.

Revelation 3:7-13 – by Dr. Craig P. Scott
A Committed Church

“What does God think of His church?” In Revelation 1, the disciple John, was living on an island off the coast of Turkey, writing about AD 95, some 65 years after Jesus died and rose again. He was given a vision for seven churches in Asia Minor, the area we know today as Turkey. In it, Jesus has words of encouragement and words of rebuke.

We are looking at these churches to see what message God might have for us as well.

1. Ephesus was a large ACTIVE church.

They were well-taught and were able to weather hard trials. Along with various commendations Jesus issues a harsh rebuke.

We often look at large, active churches as healthy churches, but often they are not. Jesus told the church at Ephesus **they had lost their passionate love for God**.

A passionate heart for the Lord is often more important than what we DO.

When we looked at the church at Smyrna.

2. It was a CRUSHED church and a CROWNED church.

They faced pressure and poverty and putdowns, but they faithfully endured, and so they received commendation from the Lord.

The Lord tells them that persecution will come, but in the midst of trials they were to be faithful, and He would reward them greatly. We want to be faithful, even when life gets difficult.

3. Then we looked at the church at **Pergamum. It was a COMPROMISING church**. It was a city where Satan had set up camp; but the church had tolerated Satan’s presence. We want to make sure that we do not compromise or tolerate evil.
4. We are then awed by the church at **Thyatira**. It was a generous church, filled with good works, but internally **it was a CORRUPT church**.

The people were following a self-proclaimed prophetess who taught them to deny the biblical practices of the Word of God, and the people accepted her teaching.

In this church we learn the need to discern truth. We cannot allow ourselves to follow any teaching that would lead us away from our Lord, or to embrace sin. Rather, we need to lead holy lives. We are to be in the world, but not of the world. We are to live as witnesses of truth before this dying world.

5. In the previous lesson we looked at the church at **Sardis. It was a CRIPPLED church**. This was a church that looked good from the outside, in fact it had a great past, but Jesus saw them as they really were, dying and almost dead.

In this chapter we want to look at one of the best of the seven churches, the church at Philadelphia.

IT WAS A COMMITTED CHURCH. REVELATION 3:1-6

Imagine being the man who delivered these letters to the churches. He has a lot of walking to do. After he left Sardis, he

had to walk about 28 miles southeast to come to the city of Philadelphia. The city was about 75 miles from the Aegean coast. He no doubt travelled on an ancient highway linking routes to the east and west. Philadelphia stood on the border of three nations, Lydia, Phrygia, and Pisidia.

It was founded about 140 BC, making it one of the youngest of the seven cities in these two chapters.

Philadelphia was named after Attalus II, the king of Pergamum. He had a great love for his brother Eumenes, and so he nick-named his new city Philadelphia meaning, “brother lover” or “brotherly love.”

But it is important to understand the purpose of this city. Attalus founded this city in this spot to be a missionary outpost to the uncivilized regions beyond Lydia, to show them the splendor and glory of Greece. And the city succeeded so well in its mission of spreading the Hellenic culture, that by AD 19, the native language to that region had been replaced by the widespread usage of the Greek language.

King Attalus’ desire to spread the Hellenic culture to the world is much like God’s desire for us to be a witness for Christ, a city on a hill, a people uniquely loved by God.

God’s missionary plan remains the same. 1 Peter tells us,

“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; **that ye should shew forth the praises of him** who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” – 1 Peter 2:9.

Far too many Christians think that God’s plan is to bless them, so they are happy and well off and successful. That is what we often pray for. We love to pray for blessing and freedom from pain. **But how many of us are willing to pray for God to use us, no matter the cost?**

The city of Philadelphia had succeeded in its missionary endeavors to convert a Lydian culture to adopting the Greek lifestyle. Now God comes to this missionary city and calls the church to do the same: to be a missionary people, who model to their community the love of God in such a way that others are drawn to believe the gospel and turn their lives over to following the one true God.

Jesus Presents Himself to the Church of Philadelphia

As Jesus comes to these Christians, we see how He presents himself in Revelation 3:7,

“These things **saith he that is holy, he that is true**, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.”

To these early Christians they would have identified Jesus as the only person who fits this description. For only Jesus is holy and true: their God.

As Jesus speaks to this church, **He again reminds them of His deity.** Isaiah 43:14 states this truth:

“Thus saith the LORD, your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.”

Jesus gives His message as the supreme authority in their lives. **He writes to them as the One who holds the key of David.** The reference to David reminds them that He is the Messiah, the righteous branch who springs from David’s line. Jesus is the king of the Jews.

The Story Behind the Key of David:

A key indicates control or authority; therefore, having the Key of David would give one control of David’s domain, i.e., Jerusalem, the City of David, and the kingdom of Israel.

In Isaiah 22:21-22 we find the story of a corrupt Jewish leader, named Shebna. He was the palace secretary. God promises to replace him with an honorable man by the name of Eliakim. It says in that passage:

“I will commit your government (Shebna) into his (Eliakim’s) hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. And the key of the house of David I will lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.”

Jesus now holds a similar key. It shows that He is the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant, the ruler of the New Jerusalem, and the Lord of the kingdom of heaven. He is supremely in charge of opening and closing all doors.

And so, as we continue in our reading Jesus says.

Revelation 3:8 – “I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.”

What are some of the closed doors of life? Couple struggles with the pain of childlessness. An athlete striving to qualify for the Olympic team, only to be disqualified by a technicality. The feelings of rejection after being passed over for promotion. The pain of those who are not hired because they are “too qualified.” These are some of the closed doors of our lives.

But if we truly believe that God is in control, we will believe that He has the power to open and close doors of opportunity for us. As Christ speaks to the church at Philadelphia, He reminds them He is the one who opens and closes doors. Whether these are open doors for salvation or open doors of ministry, or open doors of service, one thing is clear. God is the God who places opportunities in our path.

In the Greek, the term “open door” could be translated, “**a door having been opened.**” The fact is that God has already created the open door for us. But we often fail to see it.

We go to the store, and we are in such a hurry that we fail to notice the troubled look of hurt on the face of the cashier. We want to get to our car quickly, so we briskly rush past the widow struggling to carry her bag of groceries to her car.

A friend calls up with a burden, but we are so busy that we put them off with some pat answer so we can get back to work, or often, so we can get back to watching the TV show we are in the middle of. We value our pleasure and comfort above the needs of others. And as a result, we miss the open doors that God has given us.

Jesus tells them they have an open door -- no one can close that door of opportunity. And then Jesus says,

I know that you have little strength.

Apparently, the church at Philadelphia **was not a big church**, they did not have a lot of resources, there probably weren’t a lot of wealthy patrons giving large amounts to the church. They only had little strength. But Jesus does not rebuke them for being small.

Jesus told the church in **Ephesus that He knew their works**, to the church in **Smyrna that He knew their worries**. He told the church in **Pergamum that He knows their whereabouts**, He knows where they live. He told the church at **Thyatira that He knows the woman in their midst**. He knows her immoral practices. He told the church at **Sardis that He knows their withering** and He told the church at Philadelphia that **He knows their weakness**.

But even though they were small, **He knew their FAITHFULNESS**, and Commitment!

There's no shortage of open doors, but there is a shortage of Christians that will enter them.

In Luke 10:2 Jesus says,

“The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore, pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. The church at Philadelphia was small, but they were doing what they could for the Lord.”

The reality is that most churches are small in size. They have little strength. They can't put on big theatrical productions like some of the larger churches in the country. They don't have a big bus ministry, or a deaf ministry, or a big counseling ministry. There are MANY things they CAN'T do; but **they should never forget that there ARE many things they CAN do.** God has opened a door for us. Will we step through that open door?

Far too often we focus on the things we can't do, and we use that as an excuse to do nothing. Maybe you can't reach people in the way larger churches do, but there IS someone that you can reach for Christ. But we often allow ourselves to think that somebody else will reach them.

Fred Somebody, Thomas Everybody, Susan Anybody, and Joe Nobody were neighbors, but they were not like you and me. They were odd people and most difficult to understand. **The way they lived was a shame.**

All four belonged to the same church, but you would not have enjoyed worshipping with them.

EVERYBODY went fishing on Sunday or stayed home to visit with friends.

ANYBODY wanted to worship but was afraid

SOMEBODY wouldn't speak to him. So, guess who went to church

NOBODY.

Really, NOBODY was the only decent one of the four.

NOBODY did the visitation. NOBODY worked on the church building. Once they needed a Sunday school teacher. EVERYBODY thought ANYBODY would do it, and ANYBODY thought SOMEBODY would do it. And you know who did it? That's exactly right . . . NOBODY!

It happened that a fifth neighbor (an unbeliever) moved into the area. EVERYBODY thought SOMEBODY should try to win him for Christ. ANYBODY could have made an effort. You probably know who won him: NOBODY!

This little parable brings to focus again the fact that each of us is personally responsible in doing God's work. If we leave it for somebody or everybody or anybody, nobody will end up doing it.

The church at Philadelphia had little strength, but they did what they could. They were committed. And they worked faithfully.

Jesus said, I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. **In the day when other churches, many of them larger and more active, were compromising with the world, trying to justify sacrificing to Caesar and saying Caesar is Lord** - these Christians at Philadelphia stayed true to the word of God. They did not try to fit in and blend with their surroundings. Instead, they were willing to be identified by the name of Jesus Christ.

Think about how easy it is to hide your identity. At work, when someone is telling a story filled with sexual innuendo's, you just smile and say nothing. When the boss wants you to do a little extra work, you give out a few choice expletives. When a co-worker of the opposite sex is near you, you let them know you are attracted, but you try not to be too obvious. And the result is that those we work with have NO CLUE that we are Christians. Because they see nothing different about our lives! We are just

like them! But these Christians at Philadelphia had a faithful testimony. They followed the word of God.

I heard of a church that has this motto: “His Word, Our Walk. We live according to what the Word of God says.”

Opposition

But the passage here is clear that these Christians did not have it easy. Revelation 3:9 tells us they faced opposition:

“Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.”

The church at Philadelphia faced opposition from the Jews. Just like the church at Smyrna.

Some scholars think that the church started out meeting in the Jewish synagogue, and then the Jews locked the doors on them - keeping them from meeting there. That may be why Jesus refers to giving them an open door that no one can shut.

Often it is religious groups who offer some of the greatest attacks.

The church at Philadelphia was faithful, and so Jesus told them He would give them three things.

1. **Recognition:** He would make the Jews admit that the church was loved by God. We don't know what all transpired in that church, but we remember the truth of Proverbs 16:7 – “When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.” Then God promises . . .
2. **Relief:** Revelation 3:10 – “Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.”

This may be a deliverance from a trial the church faced in the first few centuries. There were many earthquakes in Philadelphia, and possibly this was a short-term deliverance.

It may have to do with the lifespan of the church. Of all the seven churches, the church at Philadelphia lasted the longest.

The church had such an impact in Philadelphia that long after the rest of Asia had fallen to the Muslims, Philadelphia remained a Free Christian City amidst a sea of pagan people.

Philadelphia was the last bastion of Asian Christianity, standing firm throughout the Moslem invasion, until the city fell to the Turks in 1392 AD, long after the surrounding area had succumbed to the militant forces of Islam. It is one of only two cities that still remains today, and here we can see ruins that date back to when this letter was written alongside of relatively modern apartment buildings.

But the most likely interpretation of this, consistent with many other passages of scripture, is that this trial coming upon the whole world is a future time of tribulation, a time of the outpouring of the wrath of God upon the world in the days when the antichrist rules on the earth. What is God's promise? He will keep the church FROM the hour - these Christians will not go through the tribulation. This is a picture of the rapture of the church - God taking the Christians out of this earth before He pours out His wrath. But God promises recognition, relief, and . . .

3. **Reward** - Look at Revelation 3:11 – “Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.”

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.

Jesus says faithful Christians will be like pillars in His temple. When the earthquakes hit the city, often the only thing standing were the pillars of the different temples. Jesus promises security to these faithful believers.

But even more than this, in the first century when a prominent citizen did something noteworthy and worth memorializing, they would inscribe this on a pillar in one of their temples. Jesus says HE will take note, He will make these faithful Christians pillars. Jesus said in Mark, If anyone gives you even a cup of water because you belong to the Messiah, I assure you, that person will be rewarded. Jesus assures us that He will reward us for our faithful service.

Summary:

Why aren't we active in serving the Lord? Because we really don't believe that our God is a generous rewarder. We have to take it on faith. Hebrews 11:6 - And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he *exists* and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him."

If I said, I'll give you \$500 if you call an unsaved relative and share the gospel today - probably everyone here would do it. But if I said, "If you call an unsaved relative and share the gospel today, God will reward you - we probably wouldn't do it - because we don't really believe God is faithful to reward us.

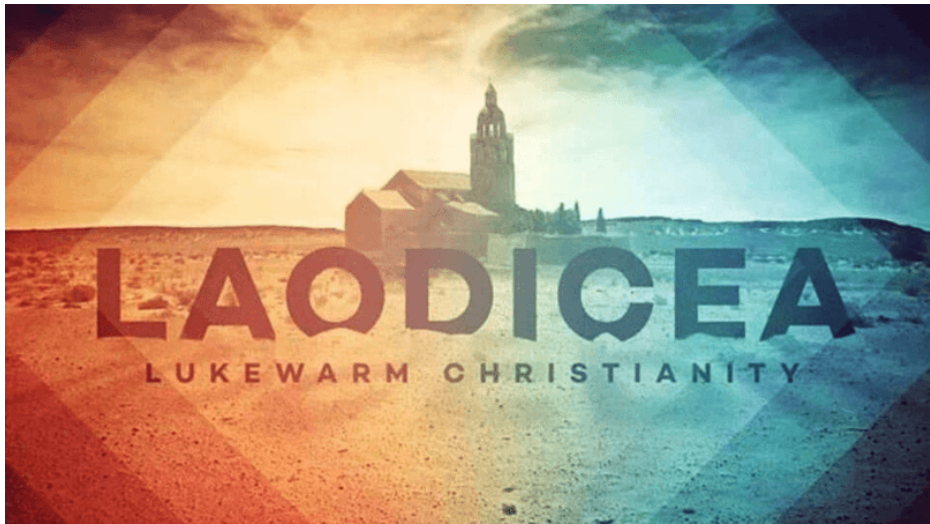
But notice one last thing about our reward. Jesus says I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name. To those Christians who are not ashamed to identify

with Jesus, Jesus is not ashamed to identify with them. He places his seal, His stamp, His mark of identification on them. Everyone will see that we belong to Jesus.

Today, it is easy to say I don't have a lot of gifts; I can't preach; I'm not good at sharing the gospel; Our church is small. But let's learn a lesson from the church at Philadelphia. Even though we have little strength, when we use the little that God has placed into our hands, He is pleased.

Shamgar had an ox-goad, David had a sling, Dorcas had a needle, Rahab had a string, Samson had a jawbone, Aaron had a rod, Mary had some ointment, but they all were used for God.

Today, make a commitment that you will look for the open doors that God has given you, and that you will use what God has given you faithfully for His glory.



The Laodicean Age

WHEN JESUS IS NO LONGER WELCOMED

Today we are going to talk about the Laodicean church. It is the last of the seven churches addressed by the Lord Jesus Christ in the book of Revelation. It was the only church with no commendation. Even the church of Sardis is commended for its past reputation of being a good church.

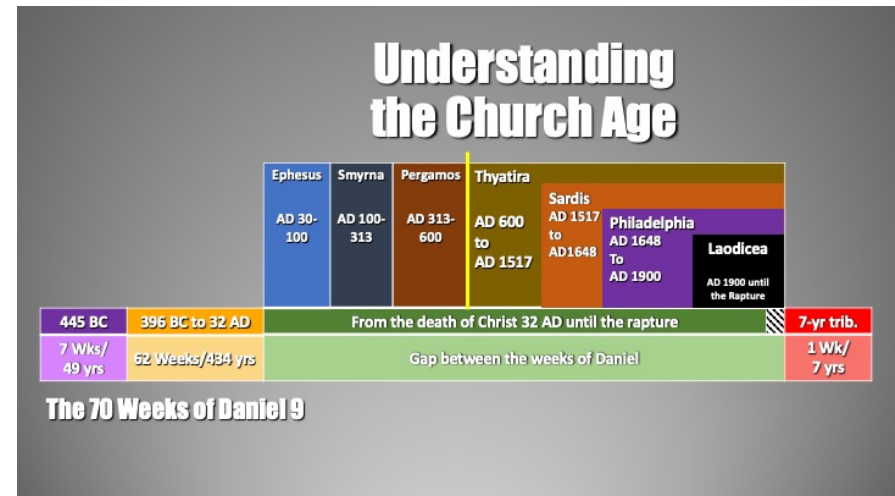
The Laodicean Church had departed so far from its biblical mandates that Jesus is described as being outside the church looking in.

It should be kept in mind that the seven churches of Asia Minor where real churches operating around 90 AD.

But more than that, they appear to be listed in a chronological order which signifies the kind of problems the church will experience in different periods of time until Christ raptures those who placed their trust in Him.

Also note that the letters were delivered in the order of their listing. The messenger began with the church of Ephesus and ended with the church of Laodicea. He traveled clockwise giving the careful reader the impression of time.

The question that has to be asked at this point is why of the hundreds of churches located in cities all over the world by this



time, (about 63 years after the day of Pentecost), were these churches selected? It is suggested that they also represented seven basic divisions of church history. A study of history reveals that the church has gone through seven basic periods or stages. (LaHaye, Revelation Unveiled, pg. 35).

Some prophecy scholars show how the seven churches also present a picture of seven different kinds of assemblies in the world during this entire church age. There are churches today which are warm, and on fire, like the church of Ephesus, and there are others which are cold, and dead, like the church of Laodicea. We know of churches which are like Thyatira are full of ritualism and ceremonialism and differ little from paganism. While others, like Sardis are merely dead in their formalism.

All these applications can be made to the seven churches, but we are reminded in chapter 1 that Revelation is a prophetic book, and so we look for a prophetic meaning, in the description of the seven assemblies in Asia. Now that the present age is almost run out, we can look back and see that the seven churches are a progressive picture of the history of the professing church from the first coming of Christ to his second coming. Each of them describes in unmistakable detail and clearness a certain period of church history. Even the names are prophetic and revelatory. Remember, therefore, the following order, and then see how the name fits in. (DeHaan, *35 Simple Studies on the Major Themes in Revelation*, pgs. 20-21.)

A quick review of the chart given on page four reveals the major problems the historic church experienced during this church age. Also note the problems found in the last four churches indicate that their mode of worship will continue until the Lord returns.

- To the saints in the church of Thyatira, “But that which ye have already hold fast **till I come**” (Revelation 2:25).
- To the saints at Sardis, “hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour **I will come upon thee** (Revelation 3:3).
- To the saints at Philadelphia, “Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, **I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation**, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth” (Revelation 3:10).
- To the souls in Laodicea (the last of the churches), the exhortation ends with, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me;

which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter” (Revelation 3:22-4:2).

What age are we in? Most conservative scholars believe we are living in the Laodicean Age.

THE CITY’S HISTORY:

Laodicea was a wealthy inland city about 40 miles from Ephesus. They were steeped in Greek culture and learning, and it was a thriving center of commerce and industry. The local church must’ve been wealthy, as evidenced by the fact that among present day ruins there are three churches dating back to the early days of Christianity.

In spite of her wealth, nothing is known of the ministry of this church. Their preaching and practice of the gospel was absent.

THREE WAYS JESUS PRESENTS HIMSELF TO THIS CHURCH

1. THE “AMEN” – Rev. 3:14a

Amen is a Hebrew word that means “true” and carries with it the meaning of finality. In this sense, **Christ is the final truth**. That is, all of God’s revelation to mankind is found in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. THE FAITHFUL AND TRUE WITNESS – Rev. 3:14b

The Lord Jesus is Truth and He is the faithful witness of truth. He knows the end from the beginning. His word is absolute for He is God.

THE BEGINNING (RULER) OF THE CREATION OF GOD

The Greek word for “beginning” is ἀρχη/ arche, meaning ruler or first cause. Hence it points to Jesus as being the ruler of creation. Or “the first cause” of creation.

Col. 1:16-17 – “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.”

John 1:3 – “All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.”

He is the first cause of creation, the faithful witness of everything that emanates from God, and the final authority.

THERE WAS NO POSITIVE COMMENDATION GIVEN TO THIS CHURCH:

The church of Laodicea had the distinction of being the only one of all the Churches **to forsake all the truths.**

THEIR CONDEMNATION: -- Revelation 3:15-16

They were lukewarm.

The Lord makes it clear that he was fully aware of their neutral condition. Their works and faith were cold; meaning they are lifeless. They were lukewarm or indifferent. They had no spiritual power.

The Holy Spirit warned in 2 Timothy 3:5 that in the last days many will be characterized as having a form of godliness but denying its power. They were deceived about themselves. – “Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and

have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Revelation 3:17).

THE LAODICEAN DECEPTION

Material abundance is not conducive to spiritual vitality. The Laodicean church then, and in our day is rich. Her churches are the finest. She has fabulous architecture, multi-million-dollar buildings, fundraising organizations, and a large (though unconsecrated) church membership.

THEY ARE WRETCHED, MISERABLE– Rev. 3:17c

The lukewarm church then, and in our day says,

“I don’t want to condemn anyone by telling them Christ is the only way of salvation, that would judge them by saying their believe system is wrong.”

So, the church instead of grappling with the teachings of the truth of the Bible, they spend their time with social causes that have little bearing on truth, justice, and righteousness.

I suspect the Laodicean church of John’s day would have been at the forefront of all the “rights” movements, and they would be for the unity of all faith’s (ecumenicalism). They would be the first ones imagining the feminization of God and the first to ordain people that don’t belong in the ministry.

The message of our Lord is clear to such a Church: “I will spew thee out of my mouth” – Rev. 3:16. “I will have nothing to do with you.”

THEY ARE POOR – Rev. 3:17d

Even though rich in material things, the Laodicean church members were spiritually poor. They did not know Christ. This is in accord with our Lord statement in

Mark 8:36-38, “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? ³⁷ Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? ³⁸ Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

THEY WERE BLIND

Although the Laodicean church member thought they knew and understood God through their sophisticated education and wisdom, they did not understand the ways of God. They abandoned the true teaching from God’s word, for another gospel.

THEY WERE NAKED

They are clothed in expensive church robes, and they enticed people with burning candles, symbols, offering of chants, and the reading of creeds but they are without righteousness. They are without Christ. They are still in their sin.

CHRIST’S COUNSEL TO THEM

1. **“I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried and fire.” – Rev. 3:18a**

Eternal riches are not appropriated by material wealth or by works. They are only appropriated through the blood of Jesus Christ and are available by faith in Him.

1 Peter 1:18-21 “Forasmuch as ye know that ye **were not redeemed with corruptible things**, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers; ¹⁹ But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: ²⁰ Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, ²¹ Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.”

2. **“ that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of that nakedness do not appear.” – Revelation 3:18:b**

Is. 61:10 — “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh *himself* with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth *herself* with her jewels.

3. **“ that thou mayest see.” – Revelation 3:18c**

The Laodiceans were renowned for their eye ointment. What Jesus is telling them to do is to anoint their own eyes so that they may see the truth about the gospel.

WHAT MUST WE DO?

1. **Be zealous and Repent** – Revelation 3:19

He loves them. He rebukes them. He chastens them (disciplines them). He calls on them to repent. That is, to have a change of mind. As the Word of God and the Spirit of God illuminates the truth about Jesus, acknowledge you are on the wrong path and in faith turn to Christ.

2. **Don't Exclude Christ!** – Rev. 3:20

Jesus was outside the Church. **The church and her teachings no longer represent Christ.** The membership was lost. Still in their sins. Jesus' appeal is one of the most beautiful of Scripture. It is the simplest of the plan of salvation.

“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. ²¹ To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.”

The door refers to the door of our heart. That is, the center of our being. The Bible says, above all else guard your heart for this wellspring of life.

IN THIS PASSAGE we find Christ knocking at the door of our heart, the emotional center of our very being, asking for entrance. He does not force his way in, but He is patiently knocking. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in.

HOW DOES HE KNOCK?

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” – John 5:24

1. **Through God's people – Romans 10:14**

How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they

have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

2. **Through the Holy Spirit – John 16:8-11**

“And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: ⁹ Of sin, because they believe not on me; ¹⁰ Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; ¹¹ Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

3. **Through providence**

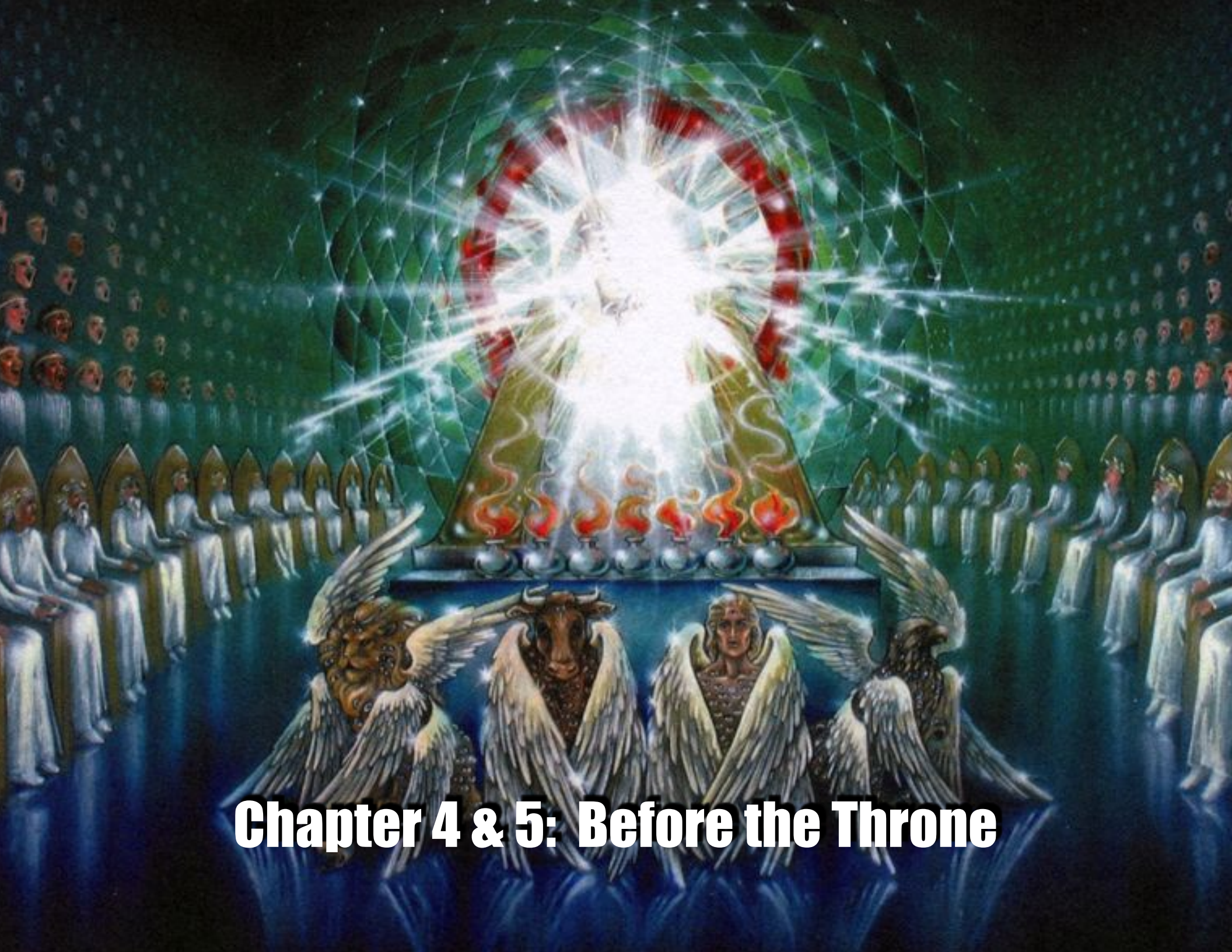
That is God gently aligning the affairs of our life where He lovingly and continually points us to our need of Christ.

TO HIM THAT OVERCOMES – Revelation 3:20b-22

“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. ²² He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”

AFTER THIS THE CHURCH DOES NOT APPEAR AGAIN UNTIL CHAPTER 19.

“After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither; and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.” – Rev. 4:1



Chapter 4 & 5: Before the Throne



Revelation Chapters 4

[Storm Clouds in Heaven]

This chapter begins the third major section of this book of Revelation “the things which shall be hereafter.” This chapter is future, describing prophetic, literal events such as the world has never seen before in history [Matt. 24:4-31].

This last section regarding the future can be divided into four parts

- “The heavenly scene” [chapters 4-5]
- “The coming Tribulation” [chapters 6-19]
- “The Millennium” [chapters 20]

- “The “new heavens and new earth” [chapters 21-22].

The Throne of God

[Chapter 4]

A. “After this . . .” [Rev. 4:1]

It follows John’s vision of the risen, glorified Christ [past - Rev. 1:9-11] and the letters to the seven churches [present - Rev. 2:1-3:22].

It is an important transition from “the things which are” to “the things which shall be hereafter” [future - chapters 4-19]. It moves from the matters concerning the churches on earth to the heavenly scene.

Chapters 4-5 centers on the throne of God and is the prologue to three future historical events, the Tribulation, the Millennial Kingdom and the Eternal State.

B. “. . . behold, a door was opened in heaven” [Rev. 4:1]

Bible Scholars differ over what is meant by this door that is opened up to John in heaven. The two views are as follows:

View One: The open door represents the Rapture of the Church. This passage is located right before the Tribulation begins. They place this event between Christ's messages to the seven churches and before the Tribulation period. Chapter 4 presents a heavenly scene while chapters 6-18 describes the Tribulation period.

Their Reasoning:

There is no mention of the Church during the Tribulation period.

There are 16 references to the Church in Rev. 1-3; however, in chapters 6-18 (which covers the Tribulation period), there is no mention of the Church until Rev. 22.

The following chapters use Old Testament terms and symbols, which refer to Israel and not the Church. Some of the Old Testament symbols are the tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant, elders, censers, cherubim, seals, altar, trumpets and plagues.

There is similarity between events of Rev. 4:1-2 and other scriptural teaching on the Rapture such as 1 Thess. 4:13-18 and John 14:2-3. When a believer dies, his soul goes immediately to heaven [Phil 1:23; Col. 2:5]. Jesus gives the believers a promise that He will come back for them so that they can be with Him – at the end of the church age before the Tribulation [Rev. 3:10].

Note: The concept of the pre-Tribulation rapture was obviously taught during the first three centuries of the Church until the Dark Ages – when God's word was hidden from the people. It wasn't until the Bible was translated into the language of the common people that the teaching of the pre-millennial return of Christ was reestablished in the

Church. What did this produce? It encouraged holy living and a zeal for evangelism and missions.

The Second View: The open door is an invitation by Christ for the Apostle John to receive revelation. In this view, it does not refer to the Rapture where the Church ascends into heaven in her resurrected, glorified state.

Their Reasoning:

John was not actually translated [received his glorified body] for he still had his natural body on earth. He was only temporarily translated to heaven to receive from Christ the unfolding of prophetic events.

It is not necessary that the invitation of Christ in Rev. 4:1 is speaking of the Rapture when the promise of the Rapture was already given to two of the seven churches in Rev. 2:28 and 3:10.

Therefore, by the time you get to chapter 4, some Bible scholars believe the Church is already in heaven. The word "church" so prominent in chapters 2 & 3 does not occur again until Rev. 22:16, though the Church is alluded to as the wife of the Lamb in Rev. 19:7. Also significant is the absence of the Church in Rev. 13:9 compared to Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 22.

C. "And, behold, a throne was set in heaven" [Rev. 4:2]

It is believed that there are three heavens – the atmospheric heaven where the prince of the power of the air reigns [Eph. 2:2], the stellar heaven where the stars and planets [the universe] exists, and the third heaven is God's heaven where the throne of God stands. It is into this third heaven that the Apostle John is taken. This is where Jesus ascended into heaven [Acts 1:9; Eph.

4:10], and where Jesus Christ sits at the right hand of the Father [Mark 16:19].

The throne of God is the central object in Revelation chapters 4-5, and it is mentioned 18 times in these two chapters. God's throne is believed to be the fixed center of the universe, and it is the fixed point in chapter 4 in which John describes everything in heaven in relationship to God's throne. Expressions such as "out of the throne," "before the throne," and "in the midst of the throne" shows its centrality to all things in heaven.

John's vision focuses on the glorious throne of God, standing in heaven. This throne represents God's sovereign rule and authority [Ps. 11:4; 103:19; Isa. 66:1] located in the temple of heaven [7:15; 11:19; 14:15, 17; 15:6-8; 16:17]. The temple is described not as a building but as God the Father and His Lamb [Rev. 21:22]. The throne is standing because God's sovereign rule is fixed, permanent and unshakeable. God is in complete control of His universe.

There are six features in relationship to God's throne:

1. On the throne:

This pictures the sovereign, all-powerful Creator of the universe sitting on His throne as its ruler. The term sitting indicates the posture of reigning – not resting because redemption has been accomplished [1 Pet. 1:18-19] but reigning because judgment is about to take place.

Although John does not name the One sitting on the throne, it is obvious who He is [Isa. 6:1; 1 Kings 22:19;

Ps. 47:8; Dan. 7:9-10; Ezek. 1:26-28]. God is on the throne, ruling in all His majesty and glory [give different views].

Description of the One on the throne

Jasper is described as "crystal-clear." Most Bible scholars describe this as a diamond, brilliantly shining and refracting all the colors of the spectrum. A Sardis stone is identified as a fiery, blood-red ruby. These stones may symbolize God's glory and sacrifice and His coming wrath to be poured out on a sinful, rebellious world.

These stones may also represent the first and last stones on the high priest's breastplate [Ex. 28:17-20], representing the firstborn [Reuben "behold a son"] and the last-born [Benjamin "the son of my right hand"].

2. Around the throne [4:3b-4]

a. A circular rainbow predominantly green in color

In the midst of the fiery flashings of judgment, emanating from God's throne, John sees a circular rainbow. This may represent the eternal nature of God. The rainbow provides a comforting balance for it symbolizes God's covenant faithfulness, mercy and grace.

"God's attributes always operate in perfect harmony. His wrath never operates at the expense of His faithfulness; His judgments never abrogate His promises. God's power and holiness would cause us to live in abject terror were it not for His faithfulness and mercy." The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Revelation 1-11, p. 148.

b. The twenty-four thrones and twenty-four elders

The twenty-four elders which sit on the twenty-four thrones are human representatives not angels for they reign with Christ. Nowhere in Scripture do angels sit on thrones, have crowns on their heads or referred to as elders. Angels are to minister to those who will inherit salvation [Heb. 1:14; Matt. 18:10] whereas the Church is promised to reign with Christ [Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21; 5:10; 20:4; Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:30; 1 Cor. 6:2-3; 2 Tim. 2:12].

Views Regarding the Elders:

- The twenty-four represents the entire heavenly priesthood [1 Chron. 24:4-5, 7-18; 1 Chron. 25]. All believers [O.T. and N.T.] are priests; all worship. Whoever the twenty-four elders are, they represent a larger group who have been redeemed.
- The twenty-four represent two groups – the twelve tribes [Israel] and the twelve apostles [the Church] – saints in two different dispensations.
- The twenty-four represent just those from the raptured, glorified church.

Although angels do appear in white garments, in this passage the garments are referring to the dress of the believers [Rev. 3:5, 18; 19:8. White garments symbolize Christ's righteousness imputed to believers [2 Cor. 5:21].

3. **From the throne [4:5a]** – “lightnings, thunderings and voices”

These are associated with God's presence [Ex. 19:16; Ezek. 1:13].

Lightning and thundering are also associated with God's judgment [Rev. 8:5; 11:19; 16:18]. Since they come from God's throne, they are a prelude of the judgment that is to fall upon the earth – the Tribulation [Rev. 3:10].

4. **Before the throne [4:5b-6a]** – “lamps of fire . . . sea of glass”

- “Lamps of fire”

John describes these blazing torches as the seven Spirits of God. As noted earlier in Rev. 1:4, the seven Spirits of God represent the Holy Spirit in all His fullness [Isa. 11:2; Zech 4:1-10]. Here it speaks of fiery judgment. Torches are often associated with war [Judges 7:16, 20; Nahum 2:3-4]. John depicts God as ready to make war on sinful, rebellious mankind with the Holy Spirit being His war torch. The Holy Spirit is a Comforter for believers [John 14:26] but a consumer to those who reject Christ.

- “A sea of glass like unto crystal”

The word “sea” is used metaphorical since there is no sea in heaven [Rev. 21:2]. What John saw was a pavement of glass, shimmering like sparkling crystal [see Ex. 24:10; Ezek 1:22, 26]. Heaven is not dark [Rev. 21:23; 22:5] but a place of shimmering light and brilliance that defines human imagination [1 Cor. 2:9-10]. There are three views on the sea of glass. It represents: (1) a separation between God and man – it points to God's holiness. All creation is separated from Him by the sea of glass except for the cherubim & seraphim that guard His holiness. (2) The Word of God – taken from the sea of glass in Solomon's temple which symbolized God's Word for

the means of cleansing and sanctification [Eph. 5:26]. (3) The Church at rest – now in her glorified, resurrected state, free from persecution and sin.

5. **In and around the throne** – “the four beasts” [4:6-8a]

The four living beasts [ones] are introduced in this passage and they play a significant role in the end time’s events. These creatures are stationed in the inner circle nearest the throne. They are not animals but cherubim, an exalted order of angels associated with God’s holy power [1 Sam. 4:4; Ps. 80:1; Isa. 37:16]. They guard God’s holiness and attend God’s throne [Ezek. 28:14]. They are very much involved with the coming judgment [Rev. 6:1-2, 6; 15:7].

a. “full of eyes before and behind”

This describes their awareness, alertness and comprehensive knowledge. Although these cherubim are not all-knowing like God, they are exceptional in guarding and doing the will of God with nothing getting past them.

b. “like a lion . . . a calf . . . a man . . . a eagle”

There are several different views regarding the choice of words used to describe the four living ones.

c. Representative of the created world

The Talmud saw these creatures as the four primary forms of life in God’s creation.

- 1) a lion – king of the beasts
- 2) a calf – king of the domestic animals
- 3) a man – the king [pinnacle] of Gods creation

- 4) an eagle – king of the fowls

e. Representative of God’s attributes or qualities

- 1) a lion – majesty & omnipotence
- 2) a calf – patience & continual labor
- 3) a man – intelligence & rational power
- 4) an eagle – sovereignty & supremacy

e. Representative of Israel as they camped around the tabernacle under four banners

- 1) Reuben [symbolized man]
- 2) Dan [symbolized an eagle]
- 3) Ephraim [symbolized the calf]
- 4) Judah [symbolized the lion]

e. Represents Christ in the Gospels

- 1) Matthew – Christ as King [lion]
- 2) Mark – Christ as Servant [calf]
- 3) Luke – Christ as Man [man-humanity]
- 4) John – Christ as God [the eagle]

5. **Toward the throne [4:8b-11]**

This scene in heaven culminates in worship directed toward God on His throne. In this passage and in Chapter 5 are five great hymns of praise. The choir gradually increases in size – vs. 8 - a quartet, the four living ones; vs. 10 - the twenty-four elders join in; chapter 5:8 - harps are added; in 5:11 the voices of angels begin their praises; and in 5:18 - all created beings of the universe join this choir of praise. Chapter 4 is the hymn of creation while chapter 5 is the hymn of redemption.

- a. The living ones give praise to God for his holiness, his power and his eternity. His holiness for He alone is holy, separate and absolutely untainted by an evil, error or wrong doing. His power for no one can oppose Him. His power is seen in creation as well as judgment. God's eternity for He always was and always will be.
- b. The twenty-four elders prostrate themselves before God [Rev. 5:8, 14; 7:15; 11:16; 19:4]. This posture is one of reverence to a holy, righteous God. The elders cast their crowns before the throne and join the chorus of praise with the four living ones. These elders acknowledge God's right to redeem and judge His creation.

Chapter four ends with the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders worshiping in awe and wonder as God prepares for judgment. All creatures owe their very existence to God as their Creator. As chapter four concludes, it is a fitting introduction to chapter five as the increasing choir of praise lift their voices to the glory of God's Son Jesus Christ as Redeemer as they say with one voice "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain"



A devotional view of Revelation 4 Strom Clouds In Heaven

Turn your TV set on, then sit back and watch with a critical eye. You won't have to watch long before some "expert" will give his prediction for the future. First, a scientist is interviewed about the future development in computers. Another on the future of space technology. Then a diplomat is asked to speak on the future of the Middle East. Next a political pundit speculates on the future of an upcoming election. Finally, a woman steps in front of a satellite image of the earth to deliver the most dubious prophecy of all – the weather forecast.

The future is big business. Even though we live in the most scientifically sophisticated age in human history, the occult and prophecy business is booming.

Check the internet. Or as you stand in the check out line at the grocery store you will find pages of advertisements for

palm readers, tarot readers, astrologers, psychics and other assorted soothsayers.

Apps can be down loaded for .99 cents, which will give you a daily horoscope. (*Please don't do this.*) People regularly read books or supermarket tabloids filled with predictions made by Nostradamus, Edger Cayce, Sonia Choquette, and Jean Dixon.

Ironically, our society has largely bypassed the only true source of information on the future: the Bible, especially, the book of Revelation.

As we come to the 4th chapter of Revelation we come to the brink of the third division of the book.

Revelation 1:19 gives us an outline of the book.

1. "The Things Which Thou Hast Seen" – 1:1-20
2. "The things which are" – 2:1-3:22
3. "The things which shall be hereafter" – 4:1f

Notice the phrase "**After this**" (Rev. 4:1). It signifies a shift in events. John is about to see things that are to come. This is a future scene that will take place after the Church has finished its course and has been removed from the world.

John is not the first biblical prophet to have the privilege of standing on earth and looking into heaven (i.e. Ezekiel, Daniel, Isaiah). But John is the only one who was actually summoned into heaven. No prophet in all of Scripture was ever allowed to enter heaven and then report what he saw.

The Apostle Paul was

“caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter” (2 Cor. 12:4).

He did not give us any written or verbal report. John is the only one.

Why is this point significant? I believe this represents what the church will see from its heavenly vantage point after it is caught away to be with Christ.

Many have muddled notions of what heaven will be like. Some actually think we will be living on clouds playing harps. Others project their favorite past time on heaven, for the golfer, it is the endless golfing course; for the fisherman it that celestial fishing hole, and for the cowboy it is “that great roundup in the sky.

Heaven is nothing like that. It is far better than what we can imagine. The scene opens up with John being brought before the Supreme Headquarters of heaven! What John first saw dominates everything else in this scene.

It is the Throne of God.

In fact, this is a central theme seen repeated in the book of Revelation. **Out of 22 chapters** in the book, there are **only five chapters** in which the word, “throne” **does not appear. God towers over all human events.** Everything we read about in the newspapers and see on TV (however awesome, saddening, or triumphant) takes place in the shadow of the sovereign throne of God.

I recently read of a missionary who was speaking at a conference in England. He specifically remembered the song service at the beginning of the meeting. The chapel was filled with Christians, singing heartily to the Lord. One of the choruses they sang with the popular hymn, “Our God reigns.” However, when they typed the song sheet they made a typo. Instead of typing, “Our God Reigns” they mistakenly typed, “Our God Resigns.”

Fortunately, the people knew the song and sang it correctly. But, unfortunately for many Christians today, they sing and live as if their God had resigned and was no longer in power. Thank God, He reigns! He is on the throne! And this is the theme of the Book.

Many in the world hate the idea of divine authority, because this means that there are absolutes which cannot be changed. There are moral and spiritual values that are guaranteed by the One Who sits on the throne. But people in our age want to be their own moral and spiritual authority.

They want to choose whatever sexual behavior suits them. They want to do whatever they desire without guilt or judgment. They want to be free to make up their own religion. They want to invent their own gods, or even become their own gods . . . if it suits them. They want to be free to conduct their business and amass their fortunes without ethical constraints.

Though people rebel; the existence of God’s sovereignty is an unalterable fact of the universe. The operation of His moral law is certain, and irreversible, just as the physical laws of the universe are unalterable.

Jeremiah 17:12 says, that God's throne is "A glorious high **throne** from the beginning."

THE CENTRAL FIGURE ON THE THRONE

a. The figure is God – Revelation 4:2-3.

"And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.
³ And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald."

John is actually permitted to see the Lord of the universe on His throne. What does He see? He sees pure, flashing, jewel like colors. Because of this many believe that John wrote Revelation before writing 1, 2, 3 John. Because in 1 John 1:5 he describes God as light.

"God is light: and Him is not darkness at all."

Moses was told that no man can see the face of God and live. No one, not even John has even seen the face of God at any time. All anyone has ever seen are the manifestations of His Being, which tell of His attributes and His glory.

John saw a figure on the throne, but the features of that figure were lost in the dazzle nimbus of lights that surround the throne. It was not just God the Father whom John sees on the throne. He also sees Jesus, the Lamb of God.

a. The first stone is jasper.

It is a bright crystal. Normally the *jasper's color* is affected by the minerals in the ground. It appears opaque with a tinge of red, yellow, brown or green in color; and rarely blue.

But here it is perfect and crystal clear. **It is often used to describe dominance and holy perfection. His holiness is unaffected by those things around Him. It is perfect holiness.**

b. The second stone is the sardine:

Sardine is a beautiful, glowing, blood red stone. **This stone suggests the Son**, who gave His blood for us as atonement for our sins. He is the Lamb of God.

c. The third stone is an emerald:

John saw a great rainbow encircling the throne. Green as an emerald. This is brilliant in varying shades of emerald circling the throne of heaven, symbolizing the Holy Spirit's administering the holiness and redemption of God to all creation.

When we see a rainbow in the sky we are seeing only part of it. When we stand on the ground and look at a rainbow, half of the refracted image is hidden below the horizon. The best way to view a rainbow is from an airplane, where the entire circle of it is visible.

The Twenty-four Seats and Elders

“And round about the throne were **four and twenty seats**: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, **clothed in white raiment**; and they had on their heads **crowns of gold.**” – Rev. 4:4

The twenty-four elders sat on twenty-four thrones. They are human representatives, not angels, for they reign with Christ. Nowhere in Scripture do we find angels sitting on thrones, having crowns on their heads or referred to as elders. Angels are to minister to those who will inherit salvation [Heb. 1:14; Matt. 18:10]

“Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?”

Whereas the church is promised to reign with Christ [Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21; 5:10; 20:4; Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:30; 1 Cor. 6:2-3; 2 Tim. 2:12].

“Rev. 3:21 – “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.”

Rev. 5:10 – “And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”

Various views regarding the twenty-four elders:

1. The twenty-four represents **the entire heavenly priesthood** [1 Chron.24:4-5, 7-18; 1 Chron. 25]. All believers [O.T. and N.T.] are priests, all worship. Therefore, whoever the twenty-four elders are, they represent a larger group who have been redeemed.

2. The twenty-four represent those who have been raptured. It points to the glorified church.
3. The twenty-four represent **two groups**: 1) the elders from the twelve tribes - representing Israel, and 2) the twelve apostles representing the Church. – Here we have the saints from two different dispensations.

White Raiment – gold crowns.

Although angels do appear in white, the white garments here are referring to the dress of believers [Rev. 3:5, 18; 19:8. White garments symbolize Christ’s righteousness imputed to believers [2 Cor. 5:21]. The crown relate to the promise that the saints will rule and reign with Christ.

From the throne [4:5a]

“And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices:”

These sights are associated with **God’s presence** [Ex. 19:16; Ezek. 1:13].

In the book of Exodus 19:16

“And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled.”

In Ezekiel's vision of the throne in Ezk 1:13

"As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps: it went up and down among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning."

Lightning and thundering are also associated **with God's judgment** [Rev. 8:5; 11:19; 16:18].

Rev. 8:5 – "And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake."

Rev. 11:19 – "And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail."

Rev. 16:18 - "And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great."

Since they come from God's throne, **they are a prelude of the judgment that is to fall upon the earth** – the Tribulation [Rev. 3:10].

Before the throne [4:5b-6a]

"There were **seven lamps of fire** burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. ⁶ And

before the throne there was a **sea of glass like unto crystal**"

a. **"Lamps of fire"**

John describes these blazing torches **as the seven Spirits of God**. As noted earlier in Rev. 1:4, the seven Spirits of God represent the Holy Spirit in all His fullness [Isa. 11:2; Zech 4:1-10].

Here it speaks of fiery judgment. Torches are often associated with **war** [Judges 7:16, 20; Nahum 2:3-4].

John depicts God as ready to make war on sinful, rebellious mankind, with the Holy Spirit being His war torch.

The Holy Spirit is a Comforter for believers [John 14:26] but a consumer to those who reject Christ.

b. **"A sea of glass like unto crystal" – v. 6**

The word **"sea"** is used metaphorically since there is no sea in heaven [Rev. 21:1].

"Rev. 21:1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and **there was no more sea.**"

What John saw was a pavement of glass, shimmering like sparkling crystal [see Ex. 24:10; Ezek. 1:22, 26].

Heaven is not dark [Rev. 21:23; 22:5] but a place of shimmering light and brilliance that defines human imagination [1 Cor. 2:9-10].

Rev. 21:23 And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: **for the glory of God did lighten it**, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

Rev. 22:5 And **there shall be no night there**; and **they need no candle**, neither light of the sun; **for the Lord God giveth them light**: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

There are three views on the sea of glass. It represents:

1) **Separation between God and man.** It points to God's holiness.

All creation is separated from Him by the sea of glass, except for the cherubim and seraphim. They alone guard His holiness.

2) **The Word of God:** This view is taken from the **sea of glass found in Solomon's temple. It was to symbolize God's Word** for the means of cleansing and sanctification [1 Kings 7:23; Eph. 5:26].

3) **The Church at rest:** This view sees the Church in her glorified, resurrected state, free from persecution and sin.

In and around the throne

"And round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. ⁷ And the first beast was like a

lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle. ⁸ And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him" – Rev. 4:6b-8a

a. "the four beasts" [4:6-8a]

The four living beasts are introduced in this passage. **They play a significant role in the end time events.** These creatures are stationed in the inner circle nearest the throne.

They are not animals but cherubim, an exalted order of angels associated with God's holy power [1 Sam. 4:4; Ps. 80:1; Isa. 37:16]. They guard God's holiness and attend God's throne [Ezek. 28:14]. They are very much involved with the coming judgment [Rev. 6:1-2, 6; 15:7].

b. "full of eyes before and behind" – v. 6b

This describes their awareness, alertness, and comprehensive knowledge. Although these cherubim are not all-knowing like God, they are exceptional in guarding and doing the will of God. Nothing gets past them.

c. "like a lion . . . a calf . . . a man . . . a eagle" – v. 7

There are several different views regarding the choice of words used to describe the four living ones.

1) Representative of the created world

The Talmud saw these creatures as the four primary forms of life in God's creation.

- a) a lion – **king of the beasts**
- b) a calf – king of the **domestic animals**
- c) a man – the king [**pinnacle**] of God's creation
- d) an eagle – king of the **fowls**

2) Representative of God's attributes or qualities

- a) a lion – majesty & omnipotence
- b) a calf – patience & continual labor
- c) a man – intelligence & rational power
- d) an eagle – sovereignty & supremacy

3) Representative of Israel as they camped around the tabernacle under four banners

- a) Reuben [symbolized man]
- b) Dan [symbolized an eagle]
- c) Ephraim [symbolized the calf]
- d) Judah [symbolized the lion]

4) Represents Christ in the Gospels

- a) Matthew – Christ as King [lion]

- b) Mark – Christ as Servant [calf]
- c) Luke – Christ as Man [man-humanity]
- d) John – Christ as God [the eagle]

Toward the throne [4:8b-11]

“... and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. ⁹ And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, ¹⁰ The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, ¹¹ Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”

This scene in heaven culminates in worship directed toward God on His throne.

In this passage, and in Chapter 5 we are given five great hymns of praise.

The choir in Revelation 5 gradually increases in size

- a. Rev. 5:8 - it is a quartet, the four living ones
- b. Rev. 5:10 - the twenty-four elders join in
- c. Rev. 5:8 - harps are added
- d. Rev. 5:11 the voices of angels begin their praises; and

e. In Rev. 5:18 - all created beings of the universe join this choir of praise.

Chapter 4 is the hymn of creation

Chapter 5 is the hymn of redemption.

The living ones give praise to God for his holiness, his power, and his eternity. God is holy, He alone is holy. He is separate and absolutely untainted by evil, error, or wrong doing. He is powerful. No one can oppose Him. His power is seen in His creation as well as His judgment. God is eternal, for He always was and will always be.

The twenty-four elders prostrate themselves before God [Rev. 5:8, 14; 7:15; 11:16; 19:4].

This posture is one of reverence to a holy, righteous God. The elders cast their crowns before the throne and join the chorus of praise with the four living ones. These elders acknowledge God's right to redeem and judge His creation.

Chapter four ends with the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders worshiping in awe and wonder as God

prepares for judgment. All creatures owe their very existence to God as their Creator.

As chapter four concludes, it is a fitting introduction to chapter five. As the choir increases their praise, they lift their voices to the glory of God's Son Jesus Christ, the Redeemer. They all proclaim with one voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain."



Revelation Chapter 5

[The Heavenly Scene]

As chapter 5 opens, we see a King sitting on His throne. Throughout history, many have sought to conquer and rule the world – Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander the Great, the great emperors of Rome, Napoleon, Lenin, Stalin and Hitler. However, the most powerful, Satan-possessed human conqueror of all is still future – the final Antichrist of Revelation [2 Thess. 2:3-4, 8-9]. What do all of these men have in common – they failed!

There is only one who has the right, power, and authority to rule the earth – the Lord Jesus Christ. Chapter 5 introduces the Lamb of God, who is the central theme of this chapter.

No one else is worthy or capable of ruling the world – no man, demon or holy angel, only God’s Son Jesus who is the Redeemer of man’s sins and the world.

Chapter 5 is a continuation of a series of hymns of praise that celebrate God as Creator [Chapter 4] and God as Redeemer [Chapter 5]. Both chapters anticipate “the holocaust of divine judgment” that is about to be poured on a sinful, rebellious earth [Chapters 6-19]. God in the Person of Jesus Christ is ready to take back what rightfully belongs to Him, and all believers [Eph. 1:4] and creation [Rom. 8:19-22] are waiting with anticipation for this moment of complete redemption.

The Lamb of God [Chapter 5]

This is a significant chapter for it contains the key that opens Chapter

6 and the rest of the book of Revelation. This chapter naturally divides into three sections.

The Search of the Worthy One [5:1-4]

A. "And I saw . . ." [5:1]

John was an eyewitness of the events in this chapter. He saw the one that sat on the throne [vs. 1], a strong angel [vs. 2], a Lamb that was slain [vs. 6] and heard the voices of many angels [vs. 11].

B. 'A book . . . sealed with seven seals' [5:1]

1. It is not a book but a scroll.

It is in the right hand of God the Father. It is written on both sides and sealed with seven seals. The full contract would be written on the inner pages and sealed with seven seals. Then the content of the contract would be described briefly on the outside.

Revelation by John MacArthur, Jr, p. 163.

2. It is a deed or contract.

What John saw in God's hand was the title deed to the earth. This deed contains the divine judgments that will be poured out on the earth. On one hand, it is a scroll of doom for the inhabitants of the earth while a scroll of redemption for the believers. It explains how Christ will redeem the world from the greatest usurper, Satan, through a series of judgments.

C. "And I saw a strong angel. . ." [5:2]

The angel is not named. Some say its Gabriel while others say Michael. Since the text does not say, it's best the angel remain anonymous.

He spoke with a loud voice – everyone could hear his question throughout heaven. He is seeking someone who is worthy and able to open the book and break its seals.

D. "And I wept much . . ." [5:4]

No one was able to open the scroll or to look on it; no one in heaven or earth, or under the earth. This scroll is related to the human race and their home on earth. No angelic being was able to open it.

John was overwhelmed with grief and dismay. He wept because there was no one that could rid the world of evil, sin and death. If no one was able to step forward, Satan would remain in power and the curse of sin would remain on earth.

"This title deed was given by God to Adam, who lost it through sin to Satan; for that reason Satan is in control of the world from the time of Adam until the glorious appearing of Christ. John weeps because he knows that this scroll represents the title deed to the earth and that as long as it is left sealed, Satan will remain in control of the earth." *Revelation Unveiled by Tim LaHaye, p. 125.*

John's tears were genuine but premature for the search for the one worthy to open the seals was just about to be realized.

The Selection of the Worthy One [5:5-7]

A. One of the elders told John to stop weeping, He then directs his attention to one emerging from the midst of the throne. This one is identified by two Messianic titles:

2. The Lion of Judah [Ex. 15:16-18; Luke 3:23, 26; Heb. 7:14]

Since the lion is the king of the beasts and since Judah is the ruling tribe of Israel, this Messianic title indicates Christ's reign as King over human affairs.

3. The Root of David [Isa. 9:6-7; 2 Tim. 2:7-8]

Jesus Christ was a descendant of David through both his mother's line [Luke 3:23-38] and his stepfather Joseph's line [Matt. 1:1-16]. Through Mary Jesus has the royal right to the throne and through Joseph he has the legal right to the throne.

Conclusion:

Jesus is the only one worthy to take the scroll for three reasons: 1) For who He is – the rightful King from David's loins; 2) For what He is – the powerful Lion of Judah who will destroy His enemies; and 3) For what He has done –defeated sin, death and the forces of hell.

B. John beheld "a Lamb as it has been slain" [Rev. 5:6]

John's attention is now directed to someone standing in the midst of the throne. Although John understood that Christ is the mighty Lion of Judah and the all-conquering Davidic King, John sees a sacrificial Lamb. Christ had to first come as the Lamb of God [John 1:29] before He could be the Lion of judgment and the King of glory. This One was no ordinary lamb:

1. Bearing the marks of deadly wounds, suffered at the cross.

Even in His glorified state, Jesus bears the marks of His death – the cost of redemption [Zech 12:10; Rev. 1:7].

2. "Having seven horns and seven eyes"

a. "Seven horns" – horns represent strength and power [Matt. 28:18]. No one anywhere can stand against the Lion of Judah for He is the Mighty God [Isa. 9:6; Titus 2:13]

b. "Seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God" – eyes represent the eyes of judgment. The Holy Spirit in all His perfection will rest on this Lamb of God. Seven is the number of perfection. Therefore as the righteous Judge, all his judgments will be fair and morally justified, since He knows all that human beings have ever thought, said or done.

C. The Lamb takes the scroll [5:7]

This is the culminating act of chapters 4 & 5. From Rev. 4:1 to now, everything has been leading up to this monumental moment. The Lamb takes the scroll out of His Father's hand, signifying that the ultimate goal of redemption is about to take place [Dan. 7:13-14].

The Song of the Worthy One [Rev. 5:8-14]

As the Lamb takes the scroll, worship and praise begins to break forth once again throughout heaven. The two praises sung in chapter 4 are now joined with three more praises in chapter 5. All of God's creation have waited for this time of redemption. Sin and death is about to be abolished forever. Satan and his followers will be cast into the eternal lake of fire. The worshipers are holding two things.

A. "Having every one of them harps" [5:8]

Harps were frequently associated with Old Testament worship [2 Sam. 6:5; Ps. 33:2; Rev. 14:2] as well as prophecy [1 Chron. 25:1, 3]. The harps here could symbolize all of prophecy, which culminates in the momentous events about to take place.

B. "And golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints"

These golden bowls were used both in the tabernacle and the temple [1 Kings 7:40; Jer. 52:19; Zech. 14:20]. They symbolize the priestly work of intercession for the people. The burning of incense is also connected with the prayers of the saints [Ps. 141:2; Luke 1:9-10].

Note: Therefore, the harps and the bowls could possibly indicate that all that the prophets ever prophesied and all that God's children have ever prayed will finally be fulfilled and answered.

C. "And they sung a new song . . ." [5:8]

This song of redemption begins with Christ being worthy as the Lamb, Lion and King. He has the authority to take the scroll from God the Father.

1. "To open the seals thereof" [5:8]

This means to enact the judgments written inside this scroll. What makes Christ worthy to break the seals is because He gave His life at the cross and He paid the ransom price to redeem all humanity from sin [1 Pet. 1:18-19].

2. The results of this redemption [5:10]

The elders here are obviously speaking because holy angels have not need to be redeemed. The elders are not only speaking of themselves but all believers throughout the ages. This redemption has provided believers with wonderful benefits:

- a. Believers become part of God's kingdom.. God has taken us out of the kingdom of darkness and placed us into the kingdom of His dear Son [Col. 1:12-14; 1 Thess. 2:12].
- b. Believers are made priests before God [Ex. 19:5-6; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9]. Doing the work of a priest means telling people about the gospel of Christ.

Note: These benefits signify that believers have access to God [Heb. 4:14-16]. The present priesthood of believers is a foreshadowing of when they will have total access and perfect communion with God.

D. "And I [John] beheld. . ." [5:11]

1. "I heard the voice of many angels . . ."

Added to the voices of the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders in chapter 4 are the voices of an innumerable host of angels joining the choir of praise. The vast host emphasizes Christ's death in providing the perfect redemption. This heavenly host counts Christ worthy to receive seven things – power, riches, wisdom, honor, glory and blessing [5:12].

2. All creatures everywhere now join in this great choir of praise [5:13]. This great hymn culminates with all creation singing endless praise and worship to God the Father and His Lamb, Jesus Christ [Ps. 69:34; 150:6]. Creation cannot hide their joy as their ultimate redemption draws nigh [Rom. 8:22-23].

Verse 13 seems to carry John even beyond the Tribulation to the Great White Throne Judgment when those who have voluntarily rejected him will one-day worship Him before they are cast into the Lake of Fire [Phil 2:9-11].

Conclusion:

This chapter ends with the four living ones saying "Amen" meaning "so be it" while the twenty-four elders once again prostrating themselves in worship to God the Father and His Son. The heavenly scene of chapters 4 & 5 gives heaven's perspective on the terrible judgments to come upon the earth, Christ's authority to reign and the punishment of sin by a holy and righteous God. What a tragedy for those who meet Christ as their Judge instead as their Redeemer.



Christ Redeeming That Which Was Lost

A devotional view of Revelation 5

In 1664, John Milton published his epic poem entitled *Paradise Lost*. The original version consisted of ten books with over ten thousand lines of verse.

It is an epic built around the biblical story of the Fall of Man: the temptation of Adam and Eve by the fallen angel Satan, and their expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Milton stated his purpose in Book I. It is to "justify the ways of God to men."

Milton "did not at first plan to write a biblical epic." Since epics were typically written about heroic kings and queens (and with pagan gods). Milton originally envisioned his

epic to be based on a legendary Saxon or British king like the legend of King Arthur.

But having gone blind in 1652, and suffering emotionally after the early death of his second wife, Katherine Woodcock, in 1658, and the death of their infant daughter. He was moved to write an epic poem about something with a historic basis, and no doubt it was something that helped him lay hold on a future hope.

Though his work is based on biblical events. His poem takes many liberties.

But as we turn to the final book in the New Testament, we are faced with the crystal clear reality of Jesus, the Lamb of God reclaiming what mankind lost in the fall.

Most of us understand that we live in a lost and upside-down world. It is upside-down because many have dethroned God from their lives, and live as though they are the king, the captain of their own soul.

Psalm 2 talks about this

"Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? ² The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, ³ Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. ⁴ He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. ⁵ Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath and vex them in his sore displeasure. ⁶ Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion."

Throughout history there have been many pretenders to earth's throne. Some have sought to conquer and rule the world.

The first and most powerful and notorious usurper was Satan. After his rebellion against God was crushed, he and his angelic followers were thrown out of heaven. He became the "god of this world."

He has since inspired a host of humans to try their hand at conquest.

- Nebuchadnezzar of ancient Babylon
- Darius of the Median and Persian Empire
- Alexander the Great
- The Roman Emperors
- Attila the Hun
- Genghis Khan
- Napoleon
- Lenin
- Stalin
- Hitler

And in the future Satan's most satanically possessed human will attempt to conquer the whole world. That one is known as the Anti-Christ.

All of the men listed above, and a whole host of lesser lights have one thing in common: they failed.

There is only one who has the right, the power and the authority to rule the earth: that is the Lord Jesus Christ.

He will one day take back what is rightfully His. No one else is worthy or capable of ruling the world—no evil man, no good man, no demon, and no holy angel.

Revelation 5 introduces Jesus Christ as earth's rightful ruler. He is pictured about to return to redeem the world from sin, Satan, death, and the curse. He is the central theme of this book.

In Chapter 4 we saw the vision of the throne of God. The indescribable majesty of the throne. Flashes of lightning and peals of thunder. The seven-fold glory of the Holy Spirit. The Cherubim and the 24 Elders.

"And I saw" – Rev. 5:1

John uses this phrase 31 times in this book. The phrase is translated, "**and I saw,**" or "**and I beheld.**" It marks the transition of things revealed in this revelation. It stresses his eyewitness account.

Rev. 5:2 — "**And I saw** a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?"

Rev. 5:6 — "**And I beheld,** and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth."

Rev. 5:11 — "**And I beheld,** and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and

the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands.”

Rev. 6:1 — “**And I saw** when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. ² **And I saw**, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.”

What does John see in Revelation 5:1?

There is a book in the right hand of the One seated on the throne. It’s a scroll. A long piece of papyrus, or animal skin rolled from both ends into the middle. It was sealed with seven seals.

This is not an uncommon sight. Roman contracts, such as title deeds, rental and leasing agreements, marriage contracts, releasing of slaves, bonds etc. were often sealed with multiple seals. **On the outside (or on the backside)** of the scroll is listed all parties involved in this contract.

The breaking of the first seal would reveal the signature of the witnesses. The more witnesses the more important the contract. **The breaking of the second seal would also reveal the summary of the contents and so forth.**

What John saw in God’s hand was the title deed to the earth. Unlike other deeds, it does not detail what Christ will inherit, **BUT rather how He will regain His rightful inheritance.** Each seal reveals another stage of how He will reclaim the earth.

There are three natural divisions in this chapter.

1. Rev. 5:2-4 – Who is Worthy?
2. Rev. 5:5-7 – The Only One Worthy – The Lion from the Tribe of Judah, the root of Jesse
3. Rev. 5:8-14 – The Exalted Worthy One

WHO IS WORTHY? – Rev. 5:2-4

*“And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, **Who is worthy** to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? ³ And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.*

It was a loud voice so that his proclamation would be heard through-out the universe.

“Who is worthy to open the book, and loose the seals thereof?”

No one came forward.

The question implies, Who has the innate, virtuous worthiness of character? Who has the divine right to break the seals? Who has the power to defeat Satan and his demon hosts? Who has the power to wipe out sin and its effects? Who has the power to reverse the curse on all of creation?

Revelation 5:3 – No one was found worthy

- **The powerful archangels** like Michael or Gabriel could not answer
- **All the righteous men of all ages** could not answer such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Job, Moses, David, Solomon, Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Peter, James, John, Paul, etc.
- **No one in the heavenly host were worthy.**

Revelation 5:4 – John began to weep bitterly

“And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.”

The Greek word for wept is *Klaio*. It is the same word used when Jesus wept over Jerusalem. It expresses a strong, unrestrained emotion. John wept because **he wanted to see the world rid of evil**, sin and death. **He wanted to see Satan vanquished** and God’s kingdom established on earth. **He wanted to see Israel saved** and Christ exalted.

Remember John lived to see Jerusalem destroyed in 70 A.D. At that time 1.1 million Jews were massacred

He was aware of the intense persecution coming upon the church, especially upon the seven churches of Asia Minor. He also knew how they were affected with sin.

Everything from His perspective was going from bad to worse.

These are the tears of centuries. Adam and Eve driven out of the garden, the hardship of the curse of sin. Abel’s murder. The tears of the saints through the ages suffering hardships, heartaches, trials, disappointments and death.

THE WORTHY ONE - Rev. 5:5-7

“And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. ⁶ And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. ⁷ And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.”

The Lion from the Tribe of Judah, the root of Jesse

Stop Weeping. (Weep not) – Rev. 5:5. The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David has prevailed.

Two Messianic Terms.

a. The Lion of Judah comes from Genesis 49:8-10

*“Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father’s children shall bow down before thee. ⁹ **Judah is a lion’s whelp**: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? ¹⁰ **The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his***

feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.”

The prophecy states that out of the tribe of Judah would come a strong fierce and deadly ruler—the Messiah. Because of this prophecy the Jews expected to be liberated from the heavy hand of Rome. They mistook God’s timetable.

b. **The second term – The Root of Jesse** – is a messianic title coming from Isaiah 11:1

“And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.”

It predicted that the Messiah would come from the tribe of Judah through the lineage of King David

The Messiah is the One worthy to take the scroll because He is the rightful heir to the throne.

Notice Jesus’ visage in this passage – Rev. 5:6

“And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a **Lamb** as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.”

1. **A Lamb** (Rev. 5:6)

The Greek word for lamb is *αρνιον* (are ni on). It is the term used to describe a little lamb or pet lamb. It is the same phrase used during the Passover when the Jewish people were told to gather the sacrificial Lamb.

Four days prior to the Passover the Jewish family would choose the lamb to be sacrificed. They were required to keep the lamb close to them, like a household pet for four days before sacrificing it on the eve of Passover. This assured the lamb would be without blemish when they sacrificed it.

2. In the Old Testament the Messiah is only referred to a lamb once – Is 53:7

*“He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought **as a lamb** to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.”*

3. In the New Testament Jesus is called the Lamb 4 times between Matthew’s gospel and the book of Jude.

But in the book of Revelation Jesus appears as the Lamb 31 times. But He is not an ordinary Lamb (Rev. 5:6).

1. Standing and **as if slain**. – His wounds are clearly seen.

2. **His seven horns** – horns symbolize strength and power. Seven horns represent perfect absolute power.

3. **His seven eyes** denote perfect omniscience

4. **Seven spirits** represent His fullness of knowledge.

“And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.”

All of heaven breaks out in praise – Revelation 5:8

“And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.”

THE WORTHY ONE IS EXALTED - Rev. 5:8-14

The spontaneous outburst of worship results from the realization that the long-anticipated defeat of sin, death, and Satan is about to be accomplished and the Lord Jesus Christ will return to the earth in triumph and establish His glorious millennial kingdom.

Four things will be righted

1. The curse of sin will be reversed.
2. The believing remnant of Israel will be saved
3. The church will be honored, exalted and granted the privilege of reigning with Christ.
4. Christ will be seated on His throne ruling and reigning.

Rev. 5:8 - The worship by the 24 elders and living creatures.

“And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.”

Notice the harps and golden vials.

Harps (stringed instruments) were often played in the OT while prophesying. Many believe this is a reference to all the unfulfilled prophecies. They will now be fulfilled. The same with the golden vials. They reference the prayers of the saints. All the answered prayers for justice will now be answered.

The New Song of redemption – Rev. 5:9-10

“And they sung a new song, saying, “Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; ¹⁰ And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”

The elders here are obviously speaking. Holy angels are not the ones redeemed. The elders are not only speaking of themselves but all believers throughout the ages. This redemption has provided believers with wonderful benefits:

Believers become part of God's kingdom. God has taken us out of the kingdom of darkness and placed us into the kingdom of His dear Son [Col. 1:12-14; 1 Thess. 2:12].

In Revelation 5:10 we find that the believers are made priests before God [Ex. 19:5-6; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9]. Doing the work of a priest means telling people about the gospel of Christ.

Note: These benefits signify that believers have access to God [Heb. 4:14-16]. The present priesthood of believers is a foreshadowing of when they will have total access and perfect communion with God.

The Voice of the Angels – Rev. 5:11-14

“And I [John] beheld. . .” [5:11a] . . . “I heard the voice of many angels . . .” [5:11b]

Added to the voices of the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders in chapter 4 are the voices of an innumerable host of angels joining the choir of praise. The vast host emphasizes Christ’s death in providing the perfect redemption. This heavenly host counts Christ worthy to receive seven things – power, riches, wisdom, honor, glory and blessing [5:12].

Revelation 5:13 – All creatures everywhere now join in this great choir of praise.

“And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, ‘Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.’”

This great hymn culminates with all creation singing endless praise and worship to God the Father and His Lamb, Jesus Christ [Ps. 69:34; 150:6]. Creation cannot hide their joy as their ultimate redemption draws nigh [Rom. 8:22-23].

Rev. 5:13 seems to carry John even beyond the Tribulation to the Great White Throne Judgment when those who have voluntarily rejected him will one-day worship Him before they are cast into the Lake of Fire [Phil 2:9-11].

This chapter ends with the four living ones saying “Amen.” It means “so be it.” While the twenty-four elders once again prostrate themselves in worship to God the Father and His Son. The heavenly scene of chapters 4 and 5 gives heaven’s perspective on the terrible judgments to come upon the earth. Christ’s authority to reign is about to be revealed. The punishment of sin by a holy and righteous God is about to be poured out. What a tragedy for those who meet Christ as their Judge instead as their Redeemer.



The First Half of the Tribulation

Revelation 6-11



WHEN IS THIS GOING TO HAPPEN?

PRELIMINARY REMARKS ON REVELATION CHAPTERS 6-20

The letters to the seven churches ended with the church of Laodicea. It was a church where Christ was no longer welcomed. The other churches had their problems: loss of their first love, fear of persecution, flares of compromise, corruption, spiritual deadness, and smallest in size and little strength, but you could not go any lower than the last church, the church of Laodicea. They took the prize in departing from God. They became a church where the Living Word was no longer welcomed. The real Christ was pushed out. They became a church void of grace, truth, and life.

Not only were these churches historic assemblies with real problems. It seems they chronologically and prophetically portrayed problems that assemblies around the world experienced throughout the church age. Of course, each age, each departure

from truth, brought the church further from God.

The final age ends with a type of Christianity stripped of all truth and direction. The assembled body exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and cast the Living Word out of their assemblies and out of their lives.

Listen, I am going to be blunt. This is the age in which I believe we live. An age where multitudes of churches are accepting gay marriages, abortion, euthanasia, gay and transvestite priests and pastors. An age where the Word of God is being feminized, stripped of its content and trampled upon.

It is an age that is exchanging the incorruptible God into a god of their vain imaginations. They are remaking the Word of God into a gospel of sensual fantasies. It is a church without God, without truth, without grace, without hope, and without life.

So, where do we go from here, except to the darkest pits of hell, and to the bottomless evils

of human and demonic depravity. BUT the good news is what is seen next in the book of Revelation.

“After this I (John) looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter” (Rev. 4:1).

In other words, what is left of the True Church is taken up (Raptured) into heaven where the storm clouds of God’s wrath are seen gathering around His throne. His wrath is being made ready to be poured out upon the earth. It will consume the growing human rebellion forming around the world. There (*in this heavenly scene*) the Lamb of God, the seed of Jesse, stands to reclaim what is rightfully His.

In the next 15 chapters, we are going to see Christ reclaim all that is His. In doing so, God’s wrath is going to be poured out on the earth in a series of stunning, natural and supernatural events.

Chapter 6 opens with the seal judgments. We believe this chapter covers a 3½ year period. In that time, one fourth of the world will be devastated by wars, plagues, famine, and death.

After a brief respite, the seventh seal opens in chapter 8. From it, seven trumpet judgments are poured out upon the earth. They are more intense in nature. They will affect one third of all the trees, grass, seas, rivers, and water sources. Because of this devastation, there is a temporary darkening of the sky. Apparently the light coming from the sun, moon and the stars will be darkened.

This is followed by a demonic plague that will be unlike anything that occurred before. It will torment the afflicted for five months. It will not kill the earth’s inhabitants, but men will wish they were dead, but they can’t die. Following this, a 200-million-man army will arise. They will kill another third of the earth’s population.

Chapters 10 to 15 and 17 give a description of the spiritual warfare that is taking place on the earth. They describe the Antichrist, his government, the formation and destruction of a false religion, and the nature of life for those who find Christ.

In Chapters 16 and 18 we find the description of the seven bowl judgments. They are the final outpouring of God’s wrath; each happens in rapid succession. It brings about the demise of the greedy merchants and their commerce. It will also bring about the end of the world’s false religion and the collapse of the world’s government.

This is followed by the return of the LORD and His army (Chapter 19). The returning King will cast the Antichrist and the False Prophet into the lake of fire.

In Chapter 20, the LORD will bind Satan and lock him away for 1,000 years in the bottomless pit. Following this, the LORD will establish His millennial reign upon the earth.

At the end of the 1000 years, a final revolt will occur. It will be dealt with immediately by God. Then all that opposed God will be judged at the white throne judgment, and cast into the Lake of Fire. But the saints will enter into the new heavens and earth, and be with the LORD for ever.

This is just a brief and incomplete summary of things that lay ahead. In the weeks that follow we will take the time to carefully go through each section.

We will find intermingled within this terrible period of history glimmers of hope, blessing, and promise to those who turned to the Lord.

What I want to address next are four important points that will help us in our study.

Point #1: How long will this period of tribulation be? Many of us have heard it will be seven years long, but how do we know this? The book of Revelation does not address this, but it is addressed elsewhere.

Point #2: How will we know when this terrible period of time begins? Is there something that kicks this period of time off?

Point #3: How far away or close are we to this period of history? Are there any clues in Scripture that may help us?

Point #4: Where will the church be during this time?

POINT #1:

How long will the tribulation be?

Though Revelation does not state how long the tribulation will be, but the book of Daniel does. There are two items that help pinpoint this time period. First is found in Daniel 9:24.

“Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.”

Daniel predicts that six things will occur by the end of this seventy-week period.

1. to finish the transgression,
2. to make an end of sins
3. to make reconciliation for iniquity

The first three were fulfilled when Jesus went to the cross.

4. to bring in everlasting righteousness
5. to seal up the vision and prophecy
6. to anoint the most Holy

These last three will be fulfilled at the end of the book of Revelation.

So, we have the time frame of Daniel’s vision. Sixty nine of the seventy weeks have already been fulfilled. There is still one week (or seven years) left to fulfill this prophecy.

The next part of his vision is more detailed. But two things are key in relationship to the book of Revelation.

Daniel’s prophecy is made up of 70, 7-year periods.

Sixty nine of those 7-year periods were accomplished when

Jesus died and rose again. Only *(one week or)* one 7-year period is left.

Daniel 9:27a says,

“And he (that is the Prince of the people – the Antichrist) shall confirm the covenant with many for one week”

One week equals 7 years. So, the Antichrist will make a covenant involving Israel with many and it is designed to last seven years.

Several things we learn from this.

1. A covenant will be made involving Israel and others. It will start the seven-year time clock. If we have not been raptured beforehand, this is what we should be looking for to inaugurate the tribulation period.
2. The covenant seems to have a seven-year aspect to it.

Daniel 9:27b

“**In the midst of the week** he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation”

Here we learn that in the middle of this seven-year period **the sacrifices will be stopped**, and the temple mount will be defiled until the Messiah returns. Both Matthew 24 and 2 Thess. 2 confirm this point.

This means that either before the tribulation period begins or in the beginning of the tribulation period the Jewish sacrifices will begin again.

POINT #1:

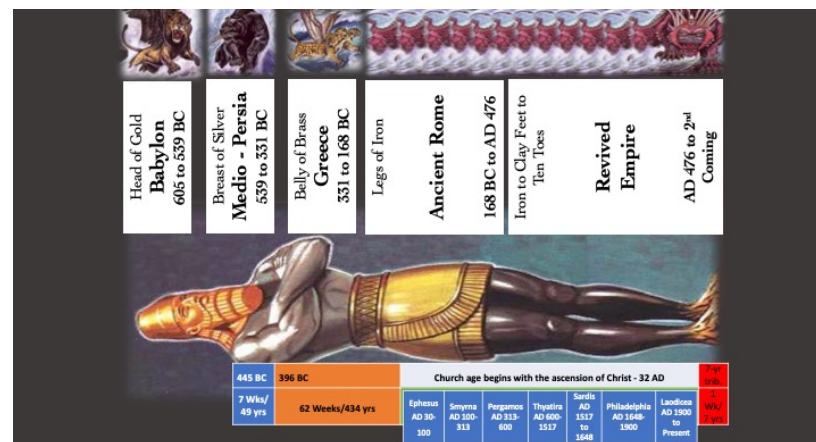
How long will the tribulation be? The answer is seven years. It also means the Jewish sacrifices will restart at some point in the future, and they will be interrupted 3½ years into the tribulation.

POINT #2:

How will we know when this terrible period of time begins? Is there something that kicks this period of time off? We learned that a covenant involving Israel and others will be signed. This event will start the time clock for the Tribulation Period.

POINT #3:

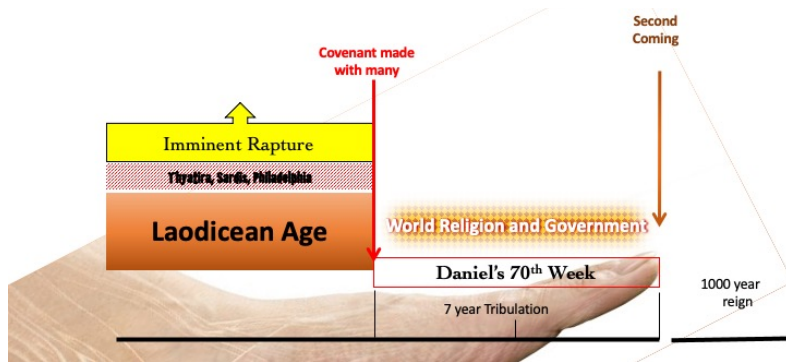
How far away or close are we to this period of history? Are there any clues in Scripture that may help us?



Daniel 2 describes the major world powers from Daniel’s life until the end of time. Babylon, Media-Persian Empire,

Grecian Empire, the Roman Empire. The final empire will eventually be mixed with clay and then divided into ten kingdoms. All these will be destroyed when the Lord returns to set up His kingdom.

We are in the mixed portion, just before the ten toes described in Nebuchadnezzar's vision. It seems the world will be divided into ten region and eventually ruled by the Antichrist.



POINT #4:

Where will the church be during this time? Revelation 3:10

“Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.”

1 Thess. 4:16-17

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: ¹⁷ Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”



Revelation Chapter 6

[The Seven Seal Judgments]

The Bible teaches that the earth is headed toward numerous worldwide, cataclysmic events that will end with a series of battles at Armageddon [Rev. 16:14-16]. While many seek for peace and unity, in reality the earth is deteriorating into a world of chaos, confusion and sin. As Christ's second coming draws nigh, wars, crimes, economic upheavals and unprecedented natural disasters [Matt. 24:6-8] will escalate. All these things will mark the unfolding of God's wrath on a sinful, rebellious world [both Jews - Jer. 30:7 and Gentiles -Isa. 34:1-4].

Starting in chapter 6, the scene changes from heaven to earth. The Lamb now begins to open the seven-sealed scroll given to Him by the Father. This marks the beginning of God's wrath and judgment on an unbelieving world [Rev. 3:10]. Although victory was won at the cross, Jesus is ready to take back creation from the usurper, Satan.

Each seal represents a specific divine judgment. The seal judgments encompass the entire Tribulation period and increase in intensity until the return of Christ. The Lord's chronology of Tribulation events in Matthew 24 parallel the unfolding of the seven seals. See the chart below:

| Seal | World Condition | Reference | Tribulation Period |
|-------------|------------------------|------------------|--|
| 1 | Worldwide peace | Matt. 24:4-5 | 1 st half |
| 2 | War | Matt. 24:6-7 | 1 st half |
| 3 | Famine | Matt. 24:7 | 1 st half |
| 4 | Death | Matt. 24:7 | 1 st half |
| 5 | Prayers | Matt. 24:9 | 1 st - 2 nd half |
| 6 | Physical disturbances | Matt. 24:29 | 2 nd half |
| 7 | Final judgments | Matt. 24:37ff | 2 nd half |

[includes trumpet & bowl judgments]

THE FIRST FOUR SEALS: THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE

The first four seals depict horses and their riders. Each represent world conditions and not individual personalities: worldwide peace, war, famine and death. As each of these four seals are broken a divine judgment falls on the earth. But if we look closely, we will discover a picture of man's inhumanity.

In Revelation 6:1, we find the Lamb opening each of these seals (cf. 6:3, 5, 7, 9, 12, 8:1).

"And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see."

What is written in the scroll is not read, but is acted out on earth. It is interesting to note that each of the four living ones [angels/beasts] are active in the first four seal judgments

- In Rev. 6:1b – “**one of the four beasts** saying, Come and see”
- In Rev. 6:3 – “I heard **the second beast** say, Come and see”
- In Rev. 6:5 “I heard **the third beast** say, Come and see”
- In Rev. 6:7 – “I heard the voice of **the fourth beast** say, Come and see”).

THE FIRST SEAL [REV. 6:1-2]

“And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.”

The First Horsemen

Responding to the summons of one of the living ones [cherubim], a horse comes forth bearing a rider. Although this horse represents a world condition – worldwide peace – the one who ushers it in is none other than the Antichrist. It is a false peace that is short-lived and is shattered by the second seal, the force of war.

- **He is riding a white horse**

He is pictured as a victorious rider who will usher in worldwide peace. However, it is a deceptive peace that will lure the world into a false sense of security. Soon on its heels we find war, famine and death.

The world’s desire for international peace will serve as the bait for this satanic trap.

- **He carries a bow with no arrows**

The Antichrist will usher in worldwide peace through peaceful means. He will deceive most of the world, including Israel by making a 7-year peace treaty “with many.” i.e. with Israel and others, perhaps by identifying Israel’s borders and securing peace with Israel’s neighbors. It will be a peace won by agreement not by conflict [Dan. 9:27].

- **He wears a crown given to him**

The Greek word for “crown” στέφανος. It means a crown won as a prize. This will be given to him by the world, probably for his great achievements in working toward world peace. As the world looks for a world leader to usher in peace, this Antichrist will rise to power not by military means but by cunning and deceit [2 Thess. 2:9-11].

“Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,¹⁰ And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.¹¹ And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie”

THE SECOND SEAL [REV. 6:3-4]

“And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see.⁴ And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.”

Here the world conditions turn ugly. It stays that way until Christ returns at His second coming. The world peace

ushered in by the first horse will abruptly end by the second horse.

- **The second living creature summons the second horse** – the world turns to war.

The horse's color is red. It depicts the color of fire and blood. The short time of peace is now turned into a bloody holocaust.

Power was granted to this horseman to take peace from the earth. This power comes from God and everything is under God's sovereign rule. It is not the wrath of men or Satan but the wrath of God. [Matt. 24:6-8].

- **"They should kill one another"**

Murder and killings will be commonplace during this time. It will be a time of unprecedented devastation.

- **"There was given unto him a great sword"**

The Greek word for "sword" μάχαιρα (*machaira*). It refers to the short, stabbing sword of a Roman soldier carried into battle. It is also used by assassins and terrorists. It depicts a time of great massacre, rebellion, assassination and revolt.

THE THIRD SEAL [REV. 6:5-6]

"And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. ⁶ And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine."

The third living one beckons the third horse and calls John to "come and see." They immediately came forth. John uses the word *behold* to show his shock at the rider's ominous appearance.

The color of this horse is black which is associated with famine [Lam. 5:10]. As war devastates the earth, food supplies are destroyed and those who are involved in food production are killed, famine comes upon the earth.

It will be the most devastating famine in all of history. God has used famine in the past as a means of judgment [Deut. 32:24; Ps.105:16; Jer. 16:4].

The pair of scales

This pictures the rationing that will result due to war. It pictures the scarcity of food. Many people will stand in food rationing lines; however, there will not be enough food to go around as revealed in the fourth seal.

A voice speaks regarding the famine.

A voice in the center of the four living ones reveals how awful this famine will be.

"A measure of wheat for a penny"

A penny, a denarius [a Roman silver coin], normally had the purchasing power of 10 qts. However, during this time, a daily wage will barely buy food for one person, who will have to share it with his family.

- **"Three measures of barley for a penny"**

This same coin bought 30 quarts of barley in better days. During the Tribulation, a person's wage will barely feed three people with low quality food; it is

much lower in nutritional value than wheat. In either case, both represent starvation wages in severe famine conditions.

- **“See thou hurt not the oil and the wine”**

This famine is so severe that God warns them not to waste the oil and wine. Basic food staples will be priceless luxuries. Olive oil and wine are used in the preparation and cooking of food. Wine is also used in the purification of water.

THE FOURTH SEAL [REV. 6:7-8]

“And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. ⁸ And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.”

As is the pattern of the first three seal judgments, the Lamb breaks this seal and the fourth living one summoned the fourth horse and its rider, whose name was Death. Hell [Hades] followed death [Rev. 1:18; 20:13,14].

- **The color of the horse is ashen – a sickly, pale, yellow-green color.** It vividly describes the **pale-green pallor of a decomposed body.** Death is a consequence of war and famine, and Hell [represents the grave of the unsaved], which claims the souls in one single judgment.

- **The extent of death’s victims**

One fourth of the world’s population will be destroyed. In an age of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, this is very plausible.

- **Authority was given to Death and Hell**

The authority comes from God as He brings judgment on an unbelieving, rebellious world.

Four elements of death

1. **The sword** [war].

2. **Famine** - These were already discussed in the second and third seal.

3. **Death**

The word for pestilence comes from the Greek word *θανάτω* (*thanatos*) and is translated as “death” in verse 8.

This may refer to disease as the primary cause of death [Rev. 2:23; 18:8] but can also encompass natural disasters like earthquakes and floods, even nuclear, biological and chemical disasters.

4. **Wild Beasts**

It could mean that during this time of disaster and famine even the wild beasts will be looking for food. Others say it can refer to rats, the deadliest creature of all, that is able to live in all populated areas and have been known for spreading deadly disease to millions of people.

“The first four seals clearly describe awe-inspiring, frightening judgments without parallel in human history. . . Nothing this devastating has happened, yet these first four seal judgments are just the beginning of the horrific, worldwide woes that the sinful, rebellious world will experience. Far worse is still to come in the remainder of the seals, the trumpets, and the bowls . . . There will be no escape for impenitent unbelievers from the terrors of the Tribulation, or from the infinitely worse terrors of hell.

In the words of the writer of Hebrews, ‘How will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?’ (Heb. 2:3). *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Revelation 1-11 by John MacArthur, p. 185.*

THE FIFTH SEAL [REV. 6:9-11]

We live in a world where people worship and create gods in whatever form pleases them, and accommodates their sinful lifestyles [Ps. 50:21]. God has revealed Himself through Scripture, not as people imagine Him to be. He is a loving, merciful, gracious Savior but He is also a God of vengeance against those who reject His Son [Matt. 4:1-2; 2 Thess. 1:6-9]. In this future day, grace will end, and judgment will come.

The fifth seal marks the midpoint of the Tribulation period.

It bridges the gap between the beginning of God’s wrath in the first 3 ½ years and the fury of God’s wrath in the last half of the Tribulation. It is the Lamb that breaks the seal. He alone has the authority to take back the universe. This chapter divides into three sections: the people, the petition, and the promise.

THE PEOPLE [Rev. 6:9]

“And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: ¹⁰ And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? ¹¹ And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.”

- **“The souls of those who had been slain”**

These are martyrs who were killed – some during the first four seal judgments and some through the persecution of believers. Persecution will greatly increase at the time of the “abomination of desolation” [Matt. 24:15].

With most of the world worshiping the Antichrist as God, believers will be considered blasphemers for opposing the Antichrist [Matt. 24:16-22]. John gives two reasons for their deaths:

- **“For the Word of God”**

Believers will correctly interpret what they see around them through the light of Scripture. They will see the need to stand for Christ and tell people to repent and believe the gospel.

- **“For the testimony, which they held”**

This refers to their loyalty to Jesus Christ [Rev. 1:2,9; 12:17; 19:10; 20:4]. This is demonstrated through proclaiming of the Word at the risk of their lives.

Without the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit, many believers will be murdered for their testimony of Christ.

THEIR PETITIONS [REV. 6:10]

This is the imprecatory prayers of the Tribulation saints.

Just as the first four seals represent a force, this seal represents the power of prayers. Prayers will play an important role in the outpouring of God's judgment on earth.

A prayer of pardon is appropriate in a time of grace; **however, when grace is finished and judgment comes, prayers for divine, holy retribution are in order.**

It is not prayers of revenge but a protest against all that is sinful, unholy, dishonoring to God and destructive to His creation. They appeal for vengeance and justice based on two of God's attributes.

"O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" - Rev. 6:10

God is Holy

Because God is pure and sinless; He must judge sin [Ps. 5:4-5; Hab. 1:13; Rom. 2:16; 3:6].

God is True

He must be faithful to His Word and keep His promises [Num. 23:19; Luke 21:33].

Their question "How long . . ."

- "How long . . ."

The question by those martyred is not one of personal vendetta, but a sincere desire to see Satan and the Antichrist destroyed, sin abolished, the wicked judged and Jesus Christ reigning on the earth.

- "Them that dwell on the earth"

Throughout Revelation, this term refers to the ungodly [3:10; 8:13; 11:10; 13:8, 12; 17:2,8].

THE PROMISE [REV. 6:11]

Two things given in this passage makes up God's promise to His martyred saints:

A symbolic gift

To each one in heaven was given a white robe – a symbol of God's righteousness and all the glory they will enjoy in heaven.

A spoken word

God tells them to enjoy heaven's rest until God's time of wrath is completed. There is more time to go [3 ½ more years] and more believers must be martyred before the judgments are finished.

THE SIXTH SEAL [REV. 6:12-17]

“And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; ¹³ And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. ¹⁴

And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.”

Unlike the first five seals that involves humans, God acts alone in the sixth seal. By this time, the “abomination of desolation” is approaching, and massive persecution of Jews and Christians have taken place. As the sixth seal is opened, it will be so terrifying that there will be no question these judgments are from the hand of God. This is the beginning of the Day of the Lord when God’s fury will be displayed in the final 3 ½ year period known as the great tribulation [Matt. 24:21].

The sixth seal unveils the frightening, natural disasters that will precede the Lord’s second coming [Joel 2:1-2, 31; 3:16; Zeph. 1:15].

Six natural disasters are given.

1. There was a great earthquake

This earthquake will be more powerful and devastating than any previous earthquake recorded in history. Satan will be exposed and the world’s false hopes are shattered by the violent shaking of the earth under their feet [Joel 2:10-11].

2. The sun turns black

The sun will turn as black as a mourner’s robe [Isaiah 13:10]. Sackcloth was usually made of black goat’s hair and was the rough cloth worn by those who were in mourning.

3. The moon became as blood

Earthquakes will cause volcanic activity. The ash and smoke will rise and cause the moon to look blood red [Joel 2:31]. The normal cycle of daylight and darkness is disrupted, causing the world to panic.

4. The stars of the sky will fall to the earth

The Greek word ἀστέρες (*asters*) can refer to actual stars or describe any heavenly body other than the sun or moon. The stars here probably refer to asteroids or meteor showers hitting the earth, which would cause devastation [Rev. 8:10]. In John’s vision, so many were hitting the earth that he likens it to a fig tree losing its figs by a mighty wind. With earth being hit with fiery balls plunging out of darkness, there will be nowhere for people to flee or hide.

5. The heavens split open like a scroll

This refers to the earth’s atmosphere. The sky appears to split apart [Isa. 34:4], although the final dissolving of heaven comes later [Rev. 21:1]. Here God strikes a blow at Satan and his domain [Eph. 2:2].

6. Every mountain and island were moved out of their places

The entire unstable crust of the earth begins to move and shift. Although these six natural disasters will be very destructive, there is more intense judgments yet to come under the trumpet and bowl judgments.

THE RESULTS OF THE SEAL JUDGMENTS UPON MANKIND.

“And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; ¹⁶ And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: ¹⁷ For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?” – Rev. 6:15-17

The range of fear

Debilitating fear will affect all. Seven groups of people are mention in this portion of Scripture [Rev. 6:15].

- Kings of the earth – heads of state
- Great men – high ranking officials
- Commanders – military leaders
- The rich – those who control trade and business
- The strong – the influential
- The slaves – lower class
- Free men – common people

The reaction of fear [Rev. 6:15-17]

- **It will not bring repentance but panic.** The people of the earth will continue to follow Satan, believe his lies and continue to follow the Antichrist. Those who continue to harden their hearts toward God will have their hearts hardened by God [Ex. 11:10; Deut. 2:30].
- **They will try to hide.** In light of the meteors bombarding the earth, the continuing aftershocks from the great earthquake, the volcanic eruptions and other natural disturbances, people will try to hide from God’s wrath. These caves and rocks will not provide secure hiding places for even they will shake in the presence of God. Who is able to stand?

Chapter 6 closes with this question – **Who shall be able to stand? No one!** [Nah. 1:6; 1 Thess. 5:3]

Although this chapter is filled with horrifying events, the situation is not hopeless. The Church has been raptured to heaven, and great multitudes of people [both Jews & Gentiles] are saved during the Tribulation period. For those who look to Christ, redemption is near. For those who reject God’s Son, eternal judgment is coming. The writer of Hebrews gives a stern warning when he says, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” [Heb. 10:31].



Revelation Chapter 7

[The Servants of God]

Chapter 7 gives the readers of Revelation important information between the sixth seal [chapter 6] and the seventh seal [chapter 8]. This chapter answers the question at the end of chapter 6

“Who shall be able to stand?” [6:17].

The Apostle John identifies two groups that will survive the wrath of God.

Although the world refused to believe that the first five seal judgments were from God, the sixth seal judgment and the judgments following [trumpet and bowl judgments] will force the world to acknowledge God’s wrath has come to earth. Even in this terrible time of human suffering and judgment, God shows His great love and mercy [Hab. 3:2] through the harvest of souls saved during this period. But to those individuals who reject God’s Son, the Day of the Lord will hold only God’s wrath [2 Thess. 1:7-9; Mal. 3:16-4:3].

It is not unusual in Scripture for God to spare His children from

coming judgment. There are several examples in the Bible. See chart below.

| Judgment | Ref. | Saved |
|---------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|
| Noah and the flood family | Gen.7:13 | Noah & his family |
| Sodom and Gomorrah | Gen. 19:15 | Lot & his family |
| Jericho | Joshua 6:17 | Rahab & her family |
| Egypt [plaques] | Ex. 12:40-41 | Nation of Israel |
| Tribulation | Rev. 7 | The Sealed Ones/ the Trib Saints |

“After these things” [Rev. 7:1-3]

The Apostle John uses this phrase “after these things” once again to introduce a new vision he has. The sixth seal has ended, and the scene now moves from the judgment of the ungodly to the special protection of the believers.

A. The four angels

1. They are given authority

These angels are assigned by God to carry out His judgments. Here the four angels are given power to restrain an element of nature – the wind. Winds are used by God to bring about judgment [Jer. 49:3; Dan. 7:2; Hos. 13:15].

2. They hold back the winds

These angels are so powerful that they can delay the winds of judgment until God’s sealing of His servants is completed. God’s wrath is being held back for a short period of time to protect His witnesses.

a. “The four corners . . . the four winds”

This refers to the four directions on the compass from which the four winds blow – north, south, east and west.

b. “No wind . . . on earth, sea or any tree”

The circulation of the earth’s atmosphere is a mighty engine, and these angels are able to turn off God’s atmosphere at His command. The enormous power of winds is often demonstrated on earth in the form of tornadoes, hurricanes, and blizzards. Everything on earth will become deadly still – no breeze, no waves, no movement of clouds, etc. As the force of these winds are held back, the gathering winds of God’s judgment are building up with great fury.

B. Another angel – the fifth angel [Rev. 7:2-3]

This angel is the same in nature as the other four angels. The use of the pronoun “we” in verse three identifies this angel with the other four in the task of sealing God’s servants.

1. “Ascending from the east”

This is the point on the compass where the sun rises. From the isle of Patmos, the east would be looking toward the land of Israel and where the twelve tribes to be sealed are from.

2. “Having the seal”

A seal in Old Testament times often referred to the ring of kings and officials that was stamped in wax and placed on documents and other items. This seal

shows authenticity – ownership and protection. God seals His servants with His mark that will protect them supernaturally.

3. “Of the living God”

God is called the living God in Scripture to distinguish Him from the dead idols worshiped by the ungodly. This mark would be an eternal guarantee that these servants will be spared in the coming judgments.

4. “Hurt not the earth . . .the sea nor the trees”

This angel commands the other four angels not to release the judgment of the winds [found in the trumpet and bowl judgments] until God’s bond servants are sealed on their foreheads. These servants are described in Rev. 14:1-5 as morally pure, undefiled character, and devoted to Christ. They will be supernaturally protected to be God’s greatest missionaries in the most terrifying time in world history. Only after the completion of the sealing, will the powerful winds of judgment be released.

Two groups of people will stand [Rev. 7:4-17]

When the believers are removed before the seven-year tribulation begins [the rapture], who will witness to those who are left behind. John tells us in this passage that God will raise up and equip His servants to evangelize the world.

John now answers the question in Rev. 6:17, “For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?”

He identifies two groups of people who will survive the holocaust of the end times – the 144,000 Jewish evangelists sealed by God [7:1-8] and the martyred believers killed during the Tribulation period [7:9-17].

The 144,000 Jewish evangelists [vs. 4-8]

These individuals are the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This group of believers are the firstfruits of Israel, and they will be the greatest missionaries of all time. They will not only survive the seal, trumpet and bowl judgments but will also escape the murderous efforts of Antichrist and his followers to rid the world of all believers.

1. Sealed by God

These servants will be sealed by God upon their foreheads. This shows they belong to God, and they are under God’s sovereign protection.

2. The number – 144,000

These are Jewish believers not Gentiles. They are sealed by God out of the twelve tribes of Israel – 12,000 from each tribe. Although the records of their Jewish genealogies were destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70, God knows who belongs to each tribe.

Note: God is not finished with the nation of Israel [Romans chapters 9-11]. Although the nation of Israel rejected their Messiah in the past, this won’t be the case in this future day. Their evangelizing efforts during the Tribulation period will result in a redeemed Israel and an innumerable number of saved Gentiles.

Tribulation Saints [Rev. 7:9-17]

As a result of the evangelizing efforts of the 144,000 Jewish missionaries, the greatest revival to ever take place will happen during the Tribulation period. This revival will exceed any in history and maybe all other revivals combined [1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9]. These evangelists will be a light shining forth in man's darkest hour as Satan and his demons bring havoc to the earth [Isa. 49:6]. This innumerable multitude will consist of Jews [other than the 144,000] as well as Gentiles from every nation.

1. Description of the multitude

b. Clothed in white robes [vs. 9]

The Greek word *leukos* means a dazzling, brilliant, shining white. Robes [*stoles*] were full-length garments. Such clothing was worn for festivals and celebrations. These are the same robes used by the martyrs in Rev. 6:9-11. The number of the Tribulation saints will grow in heaven as they are martyred for their faith on earth. These robes are symbolic:

- 1) The Tribulation saints have not yet received their glorified bodies [Rev. 6:9; 20:4].
- 2) They robes picture their exaltation, victory, and rejoicing.
- 3) White robes are symbolic of holiness – for Christ [Matt. 17:2; Mark 9:3], the angels [Matt. 28:3; Mark 16:5] and the glorified Church [Rev. 19:8, 14].

b. “[Held] palms in their hands”

- 1) Palm branches in Scripture symbolizes celebration, deliverance, and joy. They are used during the Feast of Tabernacles to commemorate God's provision during the wilderness wandering [Lev. 23:40] and during Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem to celebrate the King's arrival [John 12:13].
- 2) Palms are fitting symbols of celebration for Christ's provision for salvation and His redemptive power from the world, Satan, Antichrist, sin, death & hell.

2. Location of multitude [vs. 9]

They were standing before the throne of God and His Lamb. These are the believers who were martyred for their loyalty to Christ. They are no longer under the altar [6:9-11] but are standing triumphantly before the throne of God.

3. Action of the multitude [vs. 10]

These Tribulation saints are crying out with a loud voice, praising God for their salvation. The prayers of intercession have ceased, and they now give glory and praise to the Father and His Son for their redemption. The use of the pronoun “our” indicates their personal relationship with God.

4. Association of the multitude [vs. 11]

a. With God's angels

These Tribulation saints are associated with God's angels. Angels were created for worshiping and serving God; therefore, it is of no surprise that the angels joined the souls of the heavenly saints in praising God.

Note: How can wretched, unworthy sinners mingle with God's holy beings. It is only by God's supernatural grace. These saints missed the Rapture; yet they have been redeemed and given a place of honor among God's angels [Luke 15:7, 10].

b. With the elders and four beasts [vs. 11-12]

1). Give praise

These two groups join in with the Tribulation saints and the holy angels to praise God. Overwhelmed by God's majesty, glory, and splendor, all prostrate themselves before the throne and worship God. This is an appropriate reaction for all of God's creation to humble themselves before a holy and righteous God.

2) Give prayer

They offer a prayer to God attributing seven things to Him – blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honor, power and might. God is worthy of each one of them.

5. Origination of the multitude [13-14]

The question asked by one of the elders to John was to convey revelation. The elder's question was to emphasize the truth that people will be saved during the Tribulation. Be not deceived, there will come a point in the Tribulation when those who continue to reject the Gospel will be confirmed in that rejection [Rev. 9:20-21; 2 Thess. 2:10-12].

a. They come out of the great Tribulation.

These saints are distinct from any other group of redeemed people in history. They lived into the Tribulation, were redeemed during it, and have now come out of the Tribulation through death by violence, natural causes, and martyrdom.

b. Their robes washed in the blood.

This refers to salvation. Their robes have been washed in the blood of the Lamb and made clean [white] before God [Col. 1:14; 2 Cor. 5:21].

6. The function of the multitude [vs. 15]

Because they have been cleansed from their sins by the sacrifice of God's Lamb, they can now stand before the throne of God.

a. Their service

The Greek word for serve *latreuo* is often used to describe priestly service. They were rightly fitted to serve God through their spiritual service of worship.

This worship is not temporary but continual [day and night].

b. The place

They serve God before the temple. Currently, there is a temple in heaven, and there will be one during the millennial kingdom. However, there will be no need of the temple in the eternal state for sin will be vanished forever [Rev. 21:22].

7. The protection of the multitude [vs. 15b]

In God's presence, these saints will be safe and secure forevermore. God who sits on the throne will spread His protective covering over these persecuted believers. These believers will be comforted in the presence of God after having experienced unspeakable suffering, horrors, and persecution under the evil reign of the Antichrist

8. Provision of the multitude [16-17].

They will no longer endure the hunger, thirst, and scorching heat of the Tribulation period. Why? Because they are now in heaven and Jesus Christ is their Shepherd. He will provide for their physical and emotional needs for all eternity [Rev. 21:4; Isa. 25:8].

Conclusion:

It is comforting to know that even in the worst time of human history, God is still calling people [both Jew and Gentile] unto Himself. God's saving grace is very evident in the great harvest of souls that will be saved during this horrible time for mankind. Who will stand? Those who place their faith in God's Lamb, Jesus Christ.

THE ANTICHRIST, THE 144,000 AND THE MARTYRED SAINTS



The Antichrist, the 144,000 and the Martyred Saints

Rev. 6:1-2; Rev. 7

As we move from the horrors described in Revelation chapter 6, which details the first 3½ years of the tribulation. John now records two other features of his vision in chapter seven. Note the phrase, “**after this**” found in Revelation 7:1 and 7:9. “**After this**” . . . John saw the sealing of the 144,000. “**After this**” . . . he saw the martyred tribulation saints standing before the throne.

What John saw in this chapter was not necessarily chronological, but more likely greater detail of things that will occur during the first half of the tribulation. In fact, other interludes such as this will be found in this book (cf. Revelation chapters 10 through 15 and 17 and 18.)

Many of our contemporary history books are written in the same manner. The first chapter describes a predominant historic event, and then follows up with another

chapter to highlight some other event that occurred during that same time period.

There are three more features I would like to highlight in today’s study that occur during the first 3½ years of the tribulation. Two come from chapter seven. That is the 144,000 and the martyred saints. The other item was introduced in the opening verses of chapter six (the Antichrist). He needs a little more attention before we move forward in our study.

LET’S BEGIN WITH THE ANTICHRIST.

The Antichrist’s first appearance in the book of Revelation is found in chapter 6:1-2. He is seen riding upon a white horse, with a bow, a crown and conquering and to conquer.

“And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. ² And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a

bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer."

He is not specifically named in this passage, but nearly everyone agrees that it is the Antichrist beginning a campaign of false peace that soon erupts into war, famine, death and the persecution of the saints.

We now need to know a few more details about him so when we encounter him later in Revelation chapter 11, and in chapters 13 through 19, we will better understand what John is describing in his vision.

THE TERM ANTICHRIST

The term, "Antichrist" is a compound word meaning (*anti*) "against" and (*Christ*) "Messiah" or "Anointed One." The term Antichrist means to be "against the Messiah" or to be the one "opposing the Messiah." In this case he presents himself to the world as the Messiah. In reality, he is the satanically empowered one deceiving the whole world. In doing so, he draws people away from the Lord, resulting in them being condemned to an eternity in hell.

HE IS PART OF A COUNTERFEIT TRINITY – (Satan, the Antichrist and the false prophet.)

Satan's Power: In Revelation 13:4 we learn that the dragon (*Satan*) is the one authorizing and empowering the Antichrist. He is imitating the works that our heavenly Father did in the life of Jesus.

"And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast"

The False Prophet: When we get to **Revelation 13:11** we will find another man known as "another beast," or later in Revelation 19:20 he is referred to as the "false prophet."

"And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. ¹² And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed."

He will call men to worship the Antichrist and will do great wonders in the sight of men and deceive many (Rev. 13:13-14). What he is doing is imitating the ministry role of the Holy Spirit, who calls men to worship Jesus Christ.

The Antichrist: He will be raised as if from the dead in Revelation 13:3, 12, 15. He imitates the resurrection of our Lord.

"And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast" (Rev. 13:3).

*"And he (*the false prophet*) exerciseth all the power of the first beast (*the Antichrist*) before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, **whose deadly wound was healed**" (Rev. 13:12).*

*"And he (*the false prophet*) had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed" (Rev. 13:15).*

HIS NAMES:

We find eleven names are given to the Antichrist in Scripture. They help us understand his character and the role he will play in the last days.

- a. Seed of Satan – Genesis 3:15
- b. The little horn – Dan. 7:8
- c. The King of Fierce Countenance – Dan. 8:23
- d. The prince that shall come – Dan. 9:26
- e. The Desolator – Dan. 9:27 (“he shall make it desolate”)
- f. The Willful King – Dan. 11:36 (“the king shall do according to his will.”)
- g. The Man of Sin – 2 Thess. 2:3
- h. The Lawless One – 2 Thess. 2:8
- i. The Antichrist – 1 John 2:18
- j. The Beast – Rev. 11:7

His common name is the Antichrist. However, we learn much about him in the collection of his names.

HIS ORIGIN IS BOTH NATURAL AND SUPERNATURAL

Remember the counterfeit trinity? Well, there is an interesting aspect to the Antichrist’s natural and supernatural nature. In Genesis 3:15 we read,

“And I will put enmity between thee (*Satan*) and the woman, and between **thy seed** (*Satan’s seed*) וְרִצְוָהּ and **her seed** (*the woman’s seed*) וְרִצְוָהּ; *the woman’s seed* shall bruise *the serpents’* head, and *the serpent* shalt bruise *the woman’s seed’s* heel.”

This passage references Satan’s seed and the woman’s seed. To grasp what I am going to say, we need to understand what God’s word says about the woman’s seed.

The term “seed” in both cases appear in the singular form. “Satan’s seed” (singular – as in one person) and the “woman’s seed” (singular – as in one person.) We know, in the case of the woman that “the seed” in its singular form refers to the true Deliverer – Jesus.

Therefore, some see in the phrase “thy seed” (*Satan’s seed*) as a reference to the Antichrist – the offspring of Satan. They illustrate how this might occur by pointing to an event that occurred in Genesis 6 where

“the sons of God (angels) came into the daughters of men and bare children to men, the same became mighty men of old, men of renown.” (Gen. 6:4).

Therefore, they see Satan at a determined point in history cohabiting with a woman and producing “his seed” a male child who becomes the Antichrist – the antithesis of Jesus.

MORE OF THE ANTICHRIST’S HUMAN NATURE.

He will appear “in the latter time” - Daniel 8:23-25 describes him as

... appearing “in the latter time . . . when the transgressors are come to the full”

He will be known as “a king of fierce countenance” – Dan 8:23.

Daniel 8:24 – “His power shall be great— but not by his own power; and he shall cause fearful destruction and shall succeed in what he does and destroy mighty men and the people who are the saints.”

In other words, he will seek to destroy the holy people.

He Will Understand Dark Sentences:

Daniel 8:23 says in the latter day

“a king of fierce countenance, and **understanding dark sentences**, shall stand up.”

The term “dark sentences” תְּיָדוֹת (*dark sayings*) is a term indicating some sort of direct or indirect revelation, in this case, from the evil one.

2 Thess. 2:9-10 confirms this about him when it says,

“*Even him*, whose coming is **after the working of Satan** with all power and signs and lying wonders,¹⁰ And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness.”

The phrase “**after the working of Satan**” highlights the term “**working**.” In the Greek, the term is ἐνέργειαν (*energeian*) referring to the Antichrist coming “in the energy of Satan.”

He will use craftiness and deceit – Daniel 8:25

“And through his policy **also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand**; and he shall magnify *himself* in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also

stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand.”

He will stand against the true Messiah

2 Thess. 2:3-4 – “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; **4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped;** so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.”

He will be a willful king – Dan. 11:36

“And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done.”

He will not desire women – Dan. 11:37

“Either shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all.”

Perhaps the Antichrist’s disdain for women is linked with the reality that the true Deliverer, the Last Adam (*Satan’s adversary and foiler of his overthrow*) came through the seed of a woman.

WHO IS HE? WHERE WILL HE COME FROM?

Some speculate that he will be Jewish.

They base their assumptions on three things.

First, a Jew will never accept a gentile as their Messiah.

Second, in the book of Daniel, it says that “he (*the antichrist*) shall not regard the God of his fathers” (Dan. 11:37). They assume that the phrase, “God of his father’s” is a reference to the true God – Israel’s God. However, the literal translation of that phrase is “the gods of his father’s” (a reference to pagan deity’s).

Third, the tribe of Dan is not listed among the 144,000, leading some to assume that the Antichrist will come from that tribe.

More likely he will be Gentile (non-Jewish).

First, Daniel 9:26-27 – Makes him to be of Roman Heritage

“And the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city.”

Second, Daniel 7:8 – Has him as the “The little horn” which is a reference to the leader who will rise out of the gentile nations.

Third, the biblical term the “times of the gentiles” found in Luke 21:24 is a reference to the period in which the Gentiles would rule over the nation of Israel. That period began in 606 BC when Babylon took Judah into captivity and will continue until the end of the Tribulation Period. The Antichrist being the final ruler.

Fourth, the typology given in Revelation 13 and 17 pictures the beast (the Antichrist) rising out of the sea. When the term “sea” is used allegorically in Scripture it is always a reference to the Gentile nations.

Therefore, in summary, the Antichrist is one who will be “against or opposing the Messiah.” He will be satanically

inspired and controlled. He will be a fierce king seeking to destroy the saints and he will rise up from among the gentile nations.

THE GREAT EVANGELIST OUTREACH

I did not want to end with our thoughts on this very dark figure. For when we come to Revelation 7, we find embedded within the tribulation’s doom and gloom, a glimmer of hope. In this period of time more people than ever will come to the Lord.

I love how Tim LaHaye a pastor and teacher on these future events illustrates how this great evangelistic awakening may happen.

In 1990 he and Jerry Jenkins authored a wildly popular Christian fiction series entitled “Left Behind.” It imagined what life would be like during the tribulation period.

That year he was invited by a friend to speak at the San Diego Lions Club. Here was a largely secular (non-religious) audience. You can imagine their attitude. Most appeared disinterested, however as he stepped up to speak, a small earthquake shook the city. It caused tables in their room to shake and the lights to flicker. Some items fell to the floor.

After this seismic event ended and the dust settled, Tim began to speak again. But this time all eyes were on him. Everyone’s interest was riveted on what he had to say.

This was just a small earthquake. Imagine what would happen when the church is raptured and within a short time later the horrible scenes described in Revelation 6 unfold. I am sure many souls would be interested in what they could do to rescue themselves.

Which brings us to the 144,000 Jewish men.

Chapter 7 opens with four angels holding back the four winds.

“Standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree . . . till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

And another angel descends from the east having the seal of the living God. The angel seals (or other angels with him seal the men, cf. “**till we have sealed . . .**”) 144,000 Jewish men. These **Jewish men are from the twelve tribes** of Israel. 12,000 men are sealed out of each tribe.

The four winds indicates that the Jewish men will come from all parts of the world.

Two key items occurred here.

First, a seal is given to protect them. They were **supernaturally sealed** on their forehead, so they would be protected during this time period.

Second, a seal sets them apart as servants of the Lord. It seems this is what Jesus was talking about in Matthew 24:14 where He said,

“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.”

In the next scene, we find multitudes of people are standing before the throne of God. Revelation 7:9 tells us,

“After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and

people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.”

These people are from “all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues.” They are “they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev. 7:14).

There will be multitudes coming to Christ during the tribulation. That is good news. But there is also some bad news in this. Those who trust Christ in those last days will suffer greatly for their faith. We know from this and other passages that follow that multitudes will be forced to forfeit their lives because of the oppressive hand of the Antichrist. He will make war with the saints.

Today is the day of salvation. If the Lord is knocking on the door of your heart don't turn from Him. But open the door and receive Him.

“He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” - 1 John 5:12.

“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name” - John 1:12.

“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. ¹¹ For the scripture saith, ‘Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.’ . . . ¹³ For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” – Romans 10:9-11, 13.



Revelation Chapter 8 & 9 **[The Trumpet Judgments]**

Heaven is a place of great joy and worship [chapters 4-5]. Up to this point, there was a lot of noise in heaven [4:5, 8, 11; 5:2, 5-7, 9-13; 6:9-10, 12; 7:2-3]. However, as chapter 8 opens with the Lamb of God breaking the seventh seal, something unique happens. There is an eerie silence in heaven for the space of a half hour. This silence denotes the importance of this seal, and the terrible judgments that are about to be unleashed on the earth. Because these judgments are so devastating, the inhabitants of heaven stand in breathless wonder before God. It is the lull before the storm of God's increasing wrath [Ps. 76:8-9; Hab. 2:20; Zech. 2:13].

The Opening of the Seventh Seal [8:1]

The sealing of the servants of God is completed, and the winds of judgment begin. The opening of this seventh seal resumes the narrative at the end of chapter 6. It contains the seven trumpets and the seven bowl judgments. They are the wrath of God that leads to Christ's second coming. The judgments of the seventh seal will intensify and expand dramatically. These progressive judgments will take place over an indefinite period of time.

Seven Angels [8:2]

1. High ranking angels [v. 2]

These seven angels are appointed by God to stand before Him, awaiting special assignments from their Creator [Luke 1:19]. They are given power by God to direct these series of judgments. They are important for they stand continually in the presence of God. As seen before in Scripture, angels play a significant role in God's judgment. The seven angels do not immediately blow their trumpets

but wait patiently for God's command. Other important events must first take place.

2. Given trumpets [v.2]

These seven angels are each given a trumpet. Trumpets were used in Scripture for many important events such as calling people to worship [2 Chron. 5:12-13], broadcasting a time of war [Num. 10:9], announcing the feasts of Israel [Num. 10:10], and to give news [1 Sam. 13:3-4]. Each of these trumpets unleash a specific judgment. The first four trumpets announce the destruction of the earth's ecology [8:6-12], while the next two produce demonic destruction of humanity [8:13-19]. The seventh trumpet introduces the last set of judgments, which are the bowl judgments. They immediately precede Christ's second coming.

Another Angel [8:3-5]

John's attention is now directed to another angel that comes and stands before God's altar. Some scholars identify this angel as Jesus Christ. They say this because of the angel's priestly duties. However, this is unlikely for three reasons: (1) Christ is identified as the Lamb [5:6; 6:1; 7:17] which distinguishes Him from this angel; (2) Although the pre-incarnate Christ appears as the Angel of the Lord in the Old Testament [Gen. 16:10-11; 22:11, 15], nowhere in the New Testament is Jesus identified as an angel, and (3) The word "another" means, "of the same kind." This angel is of the same nature as the other seven angels; therefore he is not the same nature as Jesus Christ.

1. The altar [v. 3]

The altar in the heavenlies is associated with the altar of incense in the earthly temple. The priest would take hot fiery coals from the brazen altar where sacrifices were offered, and take them to the altar of incense in the Holy Place [Num. 16:46-48; Chron. 29:11]. The hot coals ignited the incense which rose toward heaven, symbolizing the imprecatory prayers of the saints [5:8].

2. A golden censer [v. 3]

The golden censer given to the angel [perhaps by God] is a symbol of God's wrath, which comes from the direct prayers of His saints [James 1:16]. The angel was given much incense, which seem to represent the multiplied prayers of the Tribulation saints mentioned in chapter 6:9-11. The saint's prayers are affirmed by the heavenly incense, which God provides and shows His agreement with the cries of the saints. God's judgment is at hand for the censer is full.

a. The smoke of the incense [v. 4]

This signifies that God hears the prayers of His saints. They are the petition to judge evil and bring in His kingdom. This is a wonderful picture of how the prayers of all God's people continually go up before Him. God's wrath and the saint's prayers are connected.

b. Cast it to earth [vs. 5]

The half hour of silence in heaven comes to an end. The casting of the censer to the earth signifies that the prayers of His people are about to be answered. God's

judgments resume as a firestorm hits the earth. The silence is broken by thunder, lightening and an earthquake. They are tokens of the coming judgments. Although nothing is said about the magnitude of this earthquake, it most likely will be a very powerful one.

The Trumpet Judgments [Rev. 8:6 – 9:21]

The seven angels now prepare to sound their trumpets. In spite of the terrifying destruction of the six seal judgments, and the worldwide preaching of the 144,000 Jewish missionaries, the people on the earth will still refuse the message of salvation [John 3:16-20; Heb. 10:26-27]. The trumpet judgments are of greater intensity than the first six seals, but are not as destructive as the seven bowl judgments that are to come.

The First Four Trumpet Judgments [8:7-13]

As the trumpet judgments begin, the first four judgments affect the earth's ecology, bringing untold desolation upon the earth.

“It has been before observed, that as in the case of the seals, so here, the first four [trumpets] are marked off from the last three. . . The plagues indicated by them are entirely inflicted on *natural objects*: the earth, trees, grass, sea, rivers, lights of heaven: whereas those indicated by the two latter [trumpet judgments] are expressly said to be inflicted on *men*, and *not* on natural objects.” The Revelation of Jesus Christ, John Walvoord, p. 154.

1. The First Trumpet [8:7]

The first angel blows his trumpet, and the first judgment seems to be directed at vegetation. This destruction comes about by “hail and fire mingled with blood.” This judgment may be caused by an earthquake, which will cause volcanic activity. Both of which will affect the earth's atmosphere and ground.

a. Hail, fire and blood [v. 7]

Some Bible expositors say that the hail, fire and blood are just symbols of divine judgment; however the 10th plague in Exodus 9:18-26, was literally hail and fire that rained down upon Egypt. Not only was vegetation destroyed, but the blood of men and beasts was shed in this plague [9:24-25]. No one questions the literalness of the plagues God brought upon Egypt; therefore why should we doubt the literalness of the judgments in the Tribulation period.

b. One third of the trees and all green grass burned up [v. 7]

In today's world, men are obsessed with environmental issues, but a day is coming when God the Creator will bring severe judgment on mankind through the destruction of man's environment. The destruction of one third of the earth's trees and green grass will cause havoc on the earth – crops will be destroyed, hunger will ensue, men and animals will die, along with the loss of wood for building, and paper, etc.

2. The Second Trumpet [8:8-9]

As the second angel sounds the trumpet, this judgment touches the sea. God has created the sea as a blessing to mankind by providing food from the sea, oxygen [from plankton and algae] and water from rainstorms that come from the evaporation from the oceans.

a. A great mountain burning with fire [v. 8]

This indicates a large, fiery object falling from the sky – like a giant meteorite or asteroid, surrounded by flaming gasses set ablaze by the friction of the earth's atmosphere. It will hit the ocean with an explosive power greater than the atomic bomb. It will devastate one third of the ocean waters.

b. Destruction of sea life and ships [vs, 8-9]

The results of this fiery mountain will cause one third of the sea to turn to blood. This can be from the death of countless billions of sea creatures as well as those who die on the ships. The impact of this object falling from heaven will also cause tidal waves that will capsize large ships and destroy seaports. This will cause economic chaos through the disruption of commerce and transportation.

3. The Third Trumpet [8:10-11]

As the third angel blew his trumpet, a flaming object fell to the earth. The Greek word for star is "aster." It can refer to any celestial body other than the sun and moon. It is described as a burning torch [lamps] which is the same word used in ancient times to describe meteors or comets.

a. Polluted water [v. 10]

The fiery debris fell on a third part of the water [rivers, springs, reservoirs], which polluted the fresh water of the earth. The water will become so deadly that the star is called Wormwood. Eight times in the Old Testament, wormwood is associated with poisoned [bitter] water [Deut. 29:18; Prov. 5:4; Jer. 9:15, 23:15; Lam. 3:15, 19; Amos 5:7, 6:12]. The repeated pattern of one-third destruction [vss. 7, 8, 9] clearly shows that it is not random events but divine judgments from God.

b. Human death [v. 11]

Although the first two trumpets do not mention human death, there is no doubt the loss of life. In this third trumpet John specifically mentions that "many men died because the waters were made bitter." Rivers, streams, lakes and reservoirs will become toxic. People can live a while without food, but they cannot live long without water. This judgment brought with it widespread suffering and death.

4. The Fourth Trumpet [8:12-13]

As the fourth angel sounds his trumpet, the focus of divine judgment now shifts from the earth [i.e. the destruction of vegetation, the sea and fresh water], to the heavens. Disturbances in the heaven have been associated with the Day of the Lord [Is. 13:9-10; Ezek. 32:7-8; Joel 2:10, 31; 3:15; Amos 8:9; Luke 21:25; Mark 13:24].

a. The Darkening of the Heavens [v. 12]

A third of the sun, moon and stars are smitten. The Greek word for smitten is *plesso*. It is the verb from which the noun “plague” comes from. Therefore, the heavenly bodies are hit with a plague in which God darkens them by a third. With less light and heat, the temperature will decrease, affecting weather patterns and sea tides. This will cause violent storms and damaging tides, loss of animal and human life and destruction of crops.

b. The Announcement of the Three Woes [v. 13]

1) The Introduction

The three woes of Revelation are introduced here in Scripture for the first time. The horror, destruction and death of the judgments so far will pale in comparison with the misery that will begin with the next three judgments. The three woes are the 5th, 6th, and 7th trumpet judgments.

2) The Darkening of Heavenly Lights

The dimming of the heavenly lights sets the backdrop for the startling and ominous announcement – “Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth. . .” One woe for each of the three remaining trumpets. This portion of Scripture paints a picture of a powerful eagle [angel] swooping down upon its prey. In this case referring to the rapid approach of God’s final judgments [Deut. 28:49; Hos. 8:1; Hab. 1:8]. The word “woe” is used as an expression of judgment, destruction and condemnation [Num.

21:29; 1 Sam. 4:7-8; Ezek 13:3; Matt. 11:21; Judge 11].

3) The Inhabitants of the Earth

These woes will only affect “the inhabitants of the earth,” a term used for those who reject the Gospel [Rev. 6:30; 11:10; 13:8, 12,14; 17:2, 8]. Although they acknowledge these judgments are from God, they harden their hearts and refuse to repent [Rev. 9:20-21; 16: 9, 11]. The rebellion against God will progressively get worse.

5. The Fifth Trumpet [The First Woe - Rev. 9:1-12]

As the fifth angel sounds his trumpet, the first of the three woes are about to take place. John sees “a star fall from heaven unto the earth.” This star is not an inanimate piece of celestial matter as we saw in previous judgments but an angelic being.

a. “A star fall from heaven unto the earth” [9:1]

The use of the word “star” in this passage is not used literally as a heavenly body but figuratively as a person [i.e., movie star, sports star].

1) A Person

This star is referred to as a “him,” thus clearly possessing personality. Although the identity of this person [star] is not revealed in this verse, most Bible scholars believe it is Satan.

2) Fallen Being

The word “fall” is in the perfect tense which signifies completed action. The fall of Satan in this passage does not describe the original fall of Satan [Is. 14:12-15; Luke 10:18], but probably is referring to the aftermath of the warfare in heaven found in Rev. 12:7-9, where the devil is cast to the earth. Satan and his demons will unsuccessfully battle Michael and the holy angels, and as a result, they will be permanently cast down to earth. Satan, knowing his time is short, will do everything in his power to rally his demonic hosts which include those already on earth, those cast to the earth with him, and those held prisoner in the abyss [2 Pet. 2:4].

b. The Pit Unlocked [9:2]

Satan, now restricted to the earth, will bring chaos and death. He is given the key to the pit of the abyss which is the abode of demons [Luke 8:31]. These incarcerated demons in the abyss are the most wicked, vile and perverted of all the fallen angels [Gen. 6:1-4; Jude 6-7]. Satan is given permission to unlock the imprisoned, demonic inmates for five months.

c. The Power Unleashed [9:3-6]

When the abyss is opened, smoke darkens the sun and the air which, no doubt, causes panic upon the earth. Just like a plague of locusts, these vile demons swarm the earth, turning day into night [symbolizing their uncountable numbers and

massive destruction]. These demon-like locusts are restricted in three areas:

- 1) They are restricted by God. They are **not** to hurt the vegetation on the earth. These evil spirits can only do what God allows them to do.
- 2) They are permitted to hurt only those who do **not** have the seal of God on their foreheads. Believers will be preserved, just as God protected Israel from the effects of the Egyptian plagues [Ex. 8:22ff, 9:4ff; 10:23. Also see Ezek. 9:4-6].
- 3) They are allowed to torment their victims for a specific amount of time [5 months]. They are not to kill them. So intense is the torment of the demonic sting from their scorpion-like tails, men will plead for death but will not be able to die.

d. Their Appearance Unlocked [9:7-10]

John gives a detailed description of the appearance of these demons. They are described as locusts because they bring massive, devastating, and rapid judgment from God [Ex. 10:4-5, 12-15], but their exaggerated, terrifying features are unlike any locust, scorpion or any other creature seen before on earth.

1) Like horses prepared for battle

They are warlike, powerful and defiant, straining at the bit to bring havoc to the earth [Joel 2:4-6].

2) Crowns like gold

These demons wear a victor's crown, indicating that this host of demons will be invincible and unstoppable. There will be no weapons or human force that can stop them.

3) Faces like the faces of men

These locust-like demons are not insects but intelligent, rational beings [Joel 2:7-11].

4) Hair like women

This emphasizes their seductiveness. These demons will lure people to their doom.

5) Teeth like the teeth of lions

These demons will be more fierce, powerful, and deadly than lions who rip and tear their victims apart.

6) Breastplates of iron

This symbolizes the demon hordes invulnerability. They will be impossible to resist or destroy.

7) Wings . . . the sound of many chariots

It will be an army on the move. There will be no escaping their massive worldwide onslaught. There will be nowhere to run or hide.

8) Compared to scorpions

This stresses their sole mission to hurt men, spiritually and physically. They will drive people to seek death but they will not find it. It will cause the unredeemed to come to the brink of insanity because of their excruciating sting.

9) Given limited power

They are given power for a limited time. This shows God's sovereign authority over the demons and their time of assault. God will send these demons back to the abyss with their evil master [20:1-3] and then eventually send them to the lake of fire [20:10].

d. The Prince Unmasked [9:11-12]

Unlike locusts [Prov. 30:27], the demons have a king over them. John identifies this king as the angel of the abyss and his name is Abaddon, which is a Hebrew word; and Apollyon, which is a Greek term meaning destroyer. Some say it is Satan while others say it is a high-ranking demon in Satan's hierarchy.

e. The Warning

The first woe is passed. John warns that God's wrath is not finished. There are two more woes to be released on those "who suppress the truth in unrighteousness [Rom. 1:18]."

6. The Sixth Trumpet [The Second Woe - Rev. 9:13-21]

As the sixth angel blows the sixth trumpet, it brings forth a more severe demonic attack on rebellious mankind. This judgment is different from the previous demonic judgment in that this trumpet brings forth death. It unfolds in three stages.

a. The Release of Demons [9:13-14]

2) A Voice [v. 13]

John hears a single, solitary voice. Although the voice is not identified, it could be (a) the Lamb [Jesus Christ], who earlier was standing near the throne [5:6] who took the scroll from the Father's hand and who broke the seas, unleashing the series of judgments of which the 6th trumpet is a part or (b) the angel John saw standing near the golden altar of incense [8:3].

3) The Four Horns [v. 13]

John has seen this golden altar twice before. It is the altar of incense where the martyred saints offered their imprecatory prayers [prayers of vengeance] against their persecutors [6:9-11]. And again, when this altar became an altar of judgment, as the angel threw the golden censer to earth, beginning the trumpet judgments.

4) The Four Angels [v. 14]

The fact that these four angels are bound indicates that they are demons [Rev. 20:1; 2 Pet.

2:4; Jude 6]. Holy angels are never said to be bound. These four angels form a specific group who control a huge, demonic army set to wage war on sinful men. God's control over demonic forces is complete for they are bound or released at His command.

5) Bound in the Great River Euphrates [v. 14]

This river is the longest and most important river in the Middle East. It was near this river that sin began, the first lie was told, the first murder was committed and the tower of Babel was built. It is the place of rebellion against God.

b. The Return of Death [9:15-19]

During the fifth trumpet judgment, death was absent when the scorpion-like demons stung with their tails those who dwelt upon the earth. Although they desired death because of their painful wounds, God allowed torment to ensue to bring repentance not death. However, in the sixth trumpet judgment death returns.

1) God's Sovereign Timetable [v. 15]

These four angels will be released at the precise moment – the exact hour, day, month, and year – that God determines. The purpose of these demons is to kill a third of mankind. They will slaughter well over a billion people.

2) Two Hundred Million [v. 16]

Another army of demonic beings is raised up, numbering – two hundred million. The figurative language used to describe this army's horses suggest a supernatural rather than a human force.

a) The riders had colorful breastplates [v.17]

The colors of red [fire] and yellow [brimstone] which are the colors of hell [Rev. 14:10; 19:20; 20:10; 21:8].

b) The horses [v. 17]

These horses are not actual horses for they have heads like lions. These demons stalk their victims and slaughter them by incinerating them with fire and suffocating them with smoke and brimstone which comes from their mouths. Their tails were not actual serpents but have a deadly, venomous sting that has fatal results.

c) The Reaction of Defiance [9:20-21]

The death of one-third of the earth's remaining population will be devastating. Yet because of the hardness of their hearts, they will not repent. They will tragically choose to worship the dragon [Satan] and the beast [Antichrist] instead of the Lamb [13:4-8]. John lists five sins of defiance of those who refuse to repent.

3) The Works of Their Hands

Since the beginning of time, men have practiced idolatry – the worship of idols which are the works of man's hands [Deut. 27:15; 31:29; Ps. 135:15; Jer. 25:6,7,14; Acts 7:41] that can neither see, hear, or walk. To worship any idol or false deity is to worship demons [Deut. 32:17; Ps. 106:36-37]. When people worship false idols and false religions, they open themselves up to demonic power and deception.

4) Their Murderous Acts

Idolatry, mysticism, spiritualism, Satanism and other forms of false worship will run rampant on earth. Unbridled, unrestrained and escalating wickedness will result in violent crimes and murders. Unrepentant people will imitate the demons in their murderous thirst for blood.

5) Their Sorceries

The word for "sorceries" is our English word for pharmacy or pharmaceutical; therefore, sorceries can refer to not only drugs, but poisons, magic spells, witchcraft, incarnations, etc., to induce a higher religious state of communion with false deities and the trappings of false religion.

6) Their Immorality

Porneia is the root word in English for "pornography." The unregenerated will refuse to turn away from their sexual sins that includes a

variety of sexual misconduct: fornication, adultery, rape, homosexuality, bestiality, incest, sodomy, etc.

7) Their Thefts

Morality and integrity will be nonexistent as the necessities of life grow scarce [food, clothing, water, shelter, medicine, etc.]. Thefts will increase and people will do anything just to survive.

Conclusion:

Under the influence of demonic forces, the world will descend into the pit of religious decay, murderous acts, sexual perversion, witchcraft and theft. Evil will prevail for a time as Satan and his demons walk openly on the earth. It

will be an unparalleled time in human history, and the dwellers of the earth will refuse to repent from their evil ways, causing them to face an eternity in the lake of fire. In light of the future judgments to come upon the earth, it is the responsibility of all believers to faithfully proclaim the gospel message to those who do not know Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior.



A devotional view of Revelation 8:1-9:21

The book of Revelation is a unique and somewhat painful revelation to read. **First**, on the unique side, it reminds us who our Lord and Savior is – He is the first and the last, the Alpha and the Omega, our Creator and our Savior. He is in the midst of the church and sovereignly in control of all things.

Second, on the painful side, we are reminded of man's tendency to wander from the Lord. For in chapters 2 and 3 we are given a snapshot of the churches in Asia Minor. These assemblies should be living for the Lord, and yet, they are reminders that there is no perfect church while on earth. Each are filled with redeemed men and women who have been snatched out of this broken world. Many still need to wash the remaining stench of their former lives through the daily sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.

In fact, we discover the **believers in Ephesus** lost their first love for the Lord. The **believers in Smyrna** were

persecuted for their faith and struggled with their faithfulness. The **believers in Pergamos** were compromising their faith, mixing it with the things of this world. The **believers in Thyatira** were tolerating a false prophetess in their midst. She was seducing them into idolatry and immorality.

Many in Sardis were unregenerated. They had a great past, but this generation attended out of habit. The believers who came before them failed to pass on their faith in Christ. Jesus said, "they have a name that they live, but are dead." Soon there would be no assembly meeting in Sardis.

The **believers gathering in Philadelphia** were a small assembly with little strength but were on fire for the Lord. **Finally, those gathering in Laodicea drifted so far from the mark that all remnants of true Christianity were stripped away.** Jesus was left outside the assembly. He was knocking at the door waiting to be invited in, for there was nothing taught about Him within the assembly.

This is a reminder that if you are looking for a perfect gathering of believers, think again. In reality, it's up to you to maintain your faith. Stop looking at others. I guaranteed that sooner or later they will disappoint you. We need to start holding ourselves up to the standard Jesus has called us. Don't wait for someone else to do this first. Look to Christ only. Learn about Him in His Word. Meditate on the things He has said. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" – Matthew 6:33.

When we got to Revelation 4 and 5, we found the saints in heaven with the Lord. There, He was readying Himself to reclaim all that was lost, bringing forth His kingdom.

Revelation 6 is not a pretty scene on earth. Since Adam and Eve's sin the world has continually been in rebellion against God. This chapter began with Jesus opening the seven-sealed scroll. When each seal opened, we found awful judgments being poured out on the earth upon all those who rejected the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Chapter 6 describes six of the seal judgments. The seventh seal is found in chapters 9 where seven more judgments are revealed. These judgements are known as the trumpet judgments since each are announced with an angel blowing a trumpet.

When the last of the trumpet judgments unfolds in Revelation 16, we will find seven final judgments. They are known as the vial or bowl judgments. They will be poured out in rapid succession ending with the Lord's return to the earth.

THE TIME SEQUENCE OF THESE JUDGMENTS IS DEBATED.

There are two typical premillennial, pretribulational views on when the seal and trumpet judgments will take place during the tribulation period.

The first view: The seal judgments listed in chapter 6 will unfold over a 3½ year period. They will begin with the signing of the covenant with Israel (Dan. 9:27) and end around the midpoint of the tribulation. The trumpet judgments begin shortly after that and will continue for at least 1½ years. It will be followed by the bowl judgments and end with the Lord's return to the earth.

The second view (and the more popular view). Many see the seal judgments occurring within the first 1½ years of the tribulation. They placed the false peace plan, war, famine, pestilence, death (Rev. 6:1-8), the appointing of the 144,000 (Rev. 7:1-8), and the global persecution of the saints (Rev. 6:9-11 & 7:9-19) all occurring within the first one-and-a-half-years. They assign the trumpet judgments to the next one-and-a-half-years. This view is base on the chronological order presented in the biblical text. For we find chapters 10 through 15 detailing a number of events that occur during the middle of the tribulation.

The differences between the Seal and the Trumpet judgments.

The seal judgments have a human element to it. The Antichrist and humanity are part of the false peace, war, famine, pestilence, death, persecution and the witnessing of the 144,000. Chapter 6 ends with God's reaction against man's cruelty towards others and His children (*the sixth seal*).

The trumpet judgments begin with 30 minutes of silence in heaven and is followed by four cosmic events involving hail, fire, and meteorites. This is immediately followed by demonically empowered entities who inflict pain and kill men and women.

LET'S BEGIN:

Revelation 8:1 - Why is there silence in heaven for 30 minutes?

Imagine all the sounds in heaven. We saw them in chapters 4 and 5: the living creatures, the sounds of the heavenly hosts, and the songs of the redeemed saints. This was followed in chapter 6 with the entreaties of the martyred

saints before the throne. But when we get to the seventh seal there is dead silence in heaven for 30 minutes. The sobering astonishment of the judgments to come caused the heavens to fall into complete silence.

Then John sees **seven angels** standing before the throne (Rev. 8:2). They have been there all along. Gabriel (though not mentioned in this passage) is recorded in Luke 1:19 as an angel who stands in the presence of God. He might be one of the ones in this scene. To each were given seven trumpets.

Another angel shows up (Rev. 8:3-5).

He has a golden censer in his hands and is given incense to offer up the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar. These are the stored prayers of the saints that are now being offered up. The censer is then filled with fire from the altar and cast on the earth. This gives us the sense that these are the unanswered prayers regarding the injustices inflicted upon humanity. They are now going to be answered.

The sights, sounds and shakings follow this angelic act (Revelation 8:5). That is, voices, thunderings, lightening and an earthquake are felt on earth as a precursor of things to come.

TRUMPET JUDGMENT #1

Revelation 8:8.

Here we find climate change on steroids: Hail, Fire mixed with blood.

The result of this judgment is one-third of the trees are burned up and all the green grass. No doubt affecting the earth's atmosphere.

TRUMPET JUDGMENT #2

Revelation 8:8-9.

A great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea. We are not sure what this is – a meteorite? Something else? **The sea.** When scriptures usually speak of a literal sea, it is a reference to the Mediterranean Sea. This object kills one-third of the sea creatures and one-third of the surface vessels.

TRUMPET JUDGMENT #3

Revelation 8:10-11

A Great Star called Wormwood, fell from heaven, burning as it were a lamp. It fell upon the third part of the rivers and fountains of the deep. The pollution that follows this event will kill many men.

The **Hebrew** word for "**wormwood**" means "to poison." Its root word means "to curse." Other passages use phrases like "bitter as **wormwood**. Cf. "But her end is bitter as **wormwood**, sharp as a two-edged sword" - Prov. 5:4

Again, we are not sure what this object is. Another meteorite? To affect both the rivers and the fountains (the subterranean waterways) it had to hit at the right spot and burrow very deeply into the earth to poison our aquifers and rivers. I can't imagine the ecological impact this will have on the people of the earth.¹⁴⁹

TRUMPET JUDGMENT #4

Revelation 8:12-13

"The third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise."

Literally the length of the day and night hours were flipped. Eight hours of daylight and sixteen hours of darkness. Perhaps the result of the ecological impact brought by the fires, meteorites, and drought. This is the second time the sun was darkened. (The first darkening occurs before the tribulation. Joel 2:31 – “The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, **before** the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.”)

THREE WOES

As if things can't get any worse (Revelation 8:13)

“And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!”

The first four trumpets were cosmic in nature. Phenomenon brought on by hail, fire, and perhaps meteorites. Now the next three trumpets will be brought about by the unleashing of the demonic forces on humanity. They have been held back by God's grace but now He removes His restraining hand. As if to say, “this is what you wanted, this is whom you made your allegiance, . . . so here they are, the host with whom you made your bed.”

With this trumpet we will see demonic activity unleashed with physical consequences upon mankind.

TRUMPET #5 (WOE #1)

Revelation 9:1-12

A star falls from heaven. This time it is an angelic being who opens up the bottomless pit (or the Abyss).

“and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: **and to him** was given the key of the bottomless pit.”

This act brings spiritual darkness across the globe. Demonic creatures emerge like locust. They swarm the earth. They are given power to torment men for five months with pain like a scorpion sting. This pain will be so severe that men wish to die but they cannot. Their king's name in Hebrew is Abaddon and in Greek is Apollyon. Both terms mean destroyer.

TRUMPET #6 - (WOE #2)

Revelation 9:13-21

Four angels:

“Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates. ¹⁵ And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men. ¹⁶ And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand . . .”

– Revelation 9:14-16.

Four fallen angels bound by the Euphrates River are unleashed. They are given the power to kill one third of all men. This torment will take place over a period of thirteen months and one hour. Their tools to kill are by fire, smoke, and brimstone which are issued from their mouths. This is a large demonic army numbering two hundred thousand, thousand (which is 200 million).

YET, MEN REFUSE TO REPENT

Rev. 9:20-21

“And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that

they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: ²¹ Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.”

THE 7TH TRUMPET AND 3RD WOE

appears in Revelation 11:14-19.

“The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly. ¹⁵ And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. ¹⁶ And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, ¹⁷ Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. ¹⁸ And the nations were angry,

and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth. ¹⁹ And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.”



Opening thoughts on this parenthetical section

The Angel With the Small Book

Revelation deals with Christ reclaiming all that was lost due to the fall of man in the Garden of Eden. His ultimate end will be to set up His eternal kingdom where heaven and earth will be one. Though His plan began before the

foundations of the world, Colossians 2:20 tells us that Jesus set in motion an important facet of this reclaiming work when He

“Made peace through the blood of his cross, by him **to reconcile all things unto himself**; by him, I say, **whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.**”

And one day soon He will subdue all things unto Himself,

“That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth” – Phil 2:10.

Revelation six commences with Jesus opening a seven sealed scroll which reveals how He will subdue all things. The first five seals began with the Antichrist making his move to consolidate the whole earth under his rule. He (the Antichrist) began by forging a false peace plan which would ultimately subdue the world’s leaders and overthrow God. This quickly turned into a war and is followed by famine, death and the persecution of the saints. In this opening stage we discover that 25% of those on the earth will perish.

This was followed with the sixth seal where God responds with the first outpouring of His wrath.

Chapter 7 begins with God sealing 144,000 Jewish witnesses to go out into the world and a great multitude of people being saved out of the great tribulation.

In chapters 8 and 9, four cosmic events fall upon the earth: hail, fire (lightening), blood followed by two

meteoritic like objects impacting the earth. These combined plagues destroy one third of the trees, one third part of a sea, and a third part of the rivers and fountains.

This is followed by men being tormented by swarms of demonic like creatures with the ability to strike men with a pain similar to a scorpion's sting for five months. After which, one third of the people on the earth would be killed by another demonic army over a 13 month and one-hour period.

This is where we left off in the previous study. We are now at the midpoint of the tribulation period.

At this juncture we are presented with a series of images as we approach the middle part of the tribulation. All of which is impossible to describe in just one study. So, you will have to tighten your seat belts for what we will be covering in the next few chapters.

Before I go into any more detail, allow me to highlight what we will be seeing.

In this chapter (chapter 10): **We will see** an angel with a small book commissioning the apostle John to proclaim what he sees. Furthermore, the angel declares that there will be no more delay in the Lord's reclaiming of the earth.

Chapter 11: The measuring of the tribulation temple takes place in this chapter, plus two unique witnesses are commissioned to proclaim the Lord for 1,260-days.

Chapter 12: In this chapter we will see the supernatural battle for sovereignty ending with Satan being cast out of heaven to the earth. The covenant with Israel and many will be broken, and the nation of Israel flees into the

wilderness for 1,260-days. The outer court of the temple and the city of Jerusalem will be given to the Gentiles to trod underfoot for 42 months.

Chapter 13: The 10 regional kings over the earth will be viewed. There will be a revolt against the Antichrist where he is wounded with a deadly wound, but he is revived. The antichrist dethrones three kings and consolidates his power and supreme rule. The arrival of the false prophet and the mark of the beast begins.

Chapter 17: The demise of the false world's religion takes place. The worship of the beast is unchallenged.

THE MIGHTY ANGEL

We are at an interlude which stretches from chapters 10:1 to 11:14 and includes features surrounding the mid part of the tribulation. More is also found in chapters 12 to 15.

This pause allows John, and us to assimilate the startling truths that have been revealed to him. As mentioned before this is the longest of the three interludes given in the book of Revelation. It covers a lot of material.

Believers alive during this period will endure unimaginable horrors and a demonic assault, from a sin-mad world. They will fear being swept away by the divine judgment that rages upon the earth. In this interlude God will comfort and reassure those that come to Him. He will not forget them. He is still in control of the events to come and is able to protect His own.

In chapter 10 we are being prepared for the final trumpet blast which occurs in Revelation 11:14. It will bring forth the remainder of God's wrath (known as the seven bowl

judgments). The mighty angel emphasizes the coming events.

“And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, ⁶ And swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, ***that there should be time no longer:*** ⁷ ***But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, (Rev. 11:15) the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.***” - Revelation 10:5-7

Several things we learn in this passage:

THE ANGEL’S APPEARANCE

Rev. 10:1-2a

He came from heaven **clothed with a cloud**. The cloud typifies his power. As the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did when Israel was in the wilderness.

A rainbow upon his head. It typifies God’s covenant of mercy in the midst of the judgment to come.

His face as was the sun typifying his power and holiness. His feet are pillars of fire representing his unbending holiness that will stamp out injustice.

He is holding open a little book in his hand. We assume it is the prophecy that John is to assimilate and share.

Who is he?

First, he is an angel. Note the wording in Revelation 10:1 where it says,

“I saw **another** mighty angel.”

Clearly John understood him to be an angel, not the Lord Jesus Christ. There are other angels of similar glory found in Revelation 5:2; 18:21. Furthermore, in Revelation 10:6 he makes an oath to the Creator of the heavens and earth. Daniel describes a similar angel in Daniel 10:5-6.

THE ANGEL’S ACT

Rev. 10:2b-3

His right foot is upon the sea, his left foot is upon the earth. Therefore this angel is huge and represents God’s sovereign rule over the sea and land. Notice that this fact of his feet standing on the Sea and Land is mentioned three times in this chapter (Rev. 10:2, 5 & 8) emphasizing the fact of God’s sovereignty over the earth.

THE REMARKABLE THUNDER AND ANSWER

Rev. 10:4

The angel has a loud voice like a lion’s roar. When he cries out there are seven perils of thunder with a voice. The thunder is the harbinger of the judgment to come. John is told not to write what he heard in the thunder. This is to be sealed until they come to pass.

THE ANGEL'S ANNOUNCEMENT

Rev. 10:5-7

He swears by Him who created heaven and earth that the prophecies that went on before will now be fulfilled. There will be no more delay.

THE ANGEL'S ASSIGNMENT

Rev. 10:8-11

John is given the little book to consume and then told to prophecy to the nations what he hears.

“Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.”



Revelation 10

[Details on the Mighty Angel with the Little Book]

Beginning with chapter 10, another parenthetical section is introduced. The narrative that ends with the sixth trumpet is not resumed until Revelation 11:15 when the seventh trumpet sounds. This parenthetical section does not advance the narrative but presents important facts, which contribute to the total prophetic scene.

An Unusual Angel

John sees another mighty angel come down from heaven. The word *another* ordinarily means, “of the same kind.” It is similar to the other angels that have been previously introduced.

The Identity of the Angel: Two Views

1. Jesus Christ

Some Bible teachers believe this angel is Jesus Christ because this angel’s description shows he has great power and possessing majesty. However, nowhere in the book of Revelation does Jesus Christ appear as an angel. Although this mighty angel possesses some glorious Godlike characteristics [clothed with a cloud, the rainbow upon his head, brilliant face and fiery feet], he is not God, and other angels have been given similar Godlike descriptions [Rev. 18:1; Dan. 10:5-6, 13; Ezek. 28:11-15].

2. A Holy Angel

Most Bible scholars believe this is an angel that has been given great power and authority. This angel comes down from heaven to earth [one foot straddling the sea and the other foot the earth]. This cannot be Jesus Christ for there is no evidence that Christ comes to earth in the

middle of the Tribulation period. To say this is Christ is to add another coming of Christ to the earth that is unseen in Scripture.

Carrying a Little Book

Some Bible scholars say it is the seven-sealed scroll [chapters 4-6] taken from the hand of God by the Lamb and given to the angel who then gives it to John. Others say this little scroll contains new revelation of events given from this point to chapter 19. In either case, it is regarding the prophecy of God relating to future events. This book is described as opened, emphasizing that having been opened, it is to remain opened. Its smallest emphasizes its size, for John is told to eat it.

An Unusual Act [Rev. 10:2b - 10:3]

John sees this mighty angel in a most dramatic pose with his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot upon the earth, implying a position of power and authority over the entire earth [Ex. 20:4, 11; Ps. 69:34].

1. A Loud Cry

The angel's loud cry [the roar of a lion] reflects the power, majesty and authority of God [Jer. 25:30; Joel 3:16; Hos. 11:10]. The angel's loud voice not only drew attention but also caused fear. It also reflects that judgment will come.

2. The Seven Peals of Thunder

In response to John's cry, the seven thunders spoke. The voice of the seven thunders is unique to the book of Revelation. Seven represents completeness, finality, or perfection. Thunder often speaks of judgment [1 Sam. 2:12; Ps. 18:13; John 12:28-30].

An Unusual Answer [Rev. 10:4]

The seven peals of thunder communicated information that John was about to write down [Rev. 1:10, 19; 2:1, 8; 14:13, 19:9; 21:5]. However, John is forbidden to record the message. This is the only proclamation in Revelation that is sealed up. The reason is not given; may be it is too terrifying to be revealed [Dan. 8:26; 12:9; 2 Cor. 12:4].

An Unusual Announcement [Rev. 10:5-7]

Another indication that this angel is not Jesus Christ is that the angel swears by God, implying that God is greater than the angel. To take such a vow is to confirm before God that one is going to speak the truth. This vow signifies that what the angel is about to say is of great importance.

1. A Solemn Oath

This angel's oath is based on the special character of the authority of God and Creator of all things. Only God has the authority to judge the entire earth and to take back the earth from Satan. God is the cause of all that is.

2. No More Delay

The angel answers the question that martyrs asked in Revelation 6:30 and the prayers of the saints in Revelation 8:3-5. There is to be no more delay. God is about to bring the last series of judgments upon the earth – the seventh angel . . . is about to sound. The word "days" indicates a period of time for the bowl judgments to take place. God's patience is about to run out. The final acts of judgment are ready to begin and the prayers of all the saints throughout history are about to be answered.

3. The Mystery of God

The word *mystery* in Scripture refers to truths God has hidden and will reveal in His time. The mystery of God [1 Cor. 2:7; Col. 2:2] that the angel is speaking about is “the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth” [Eph. 1:10]. It includes the salvation of the elect and their place in God’s kingdom, the judgment of men and demons, and the creation of the new heavens and new earth. God revealed aspects of His plan to His prophets in the Old Testament. [Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, etc., for they wrote of end time events. Much of the details were hidden and not revealed until the New Testament [Matt. 24, 25; 2 Thess. 1:5-2:12]. It will be comforting to the believers that in a terrifying time of natural disasters, demonic activity, and rampant sin, that God’s glorious plan of redemption is right on schedule for Christ’s coming is nigh and the establishment of His kingdom is near [Hab. 2:14]

An Unusual Assignment

[Rev. 10:8-11]

The same voice John heard earlier from heaven [v. 4] forbidding him to write down the words of the seven peals of thunder now commands John to do three things.

1. Take the Book

John is told to take the book out of the angel’s hand. John once again becomes an active participant in this vision [Rev. 1:19; 4:1; 5:4; 7:13-14]. For the third time the location of the angel is mentioned, noting his unusual authority over the earth.

2. Eat the Book

John obediently took the little book and ate it. This act symbolizes the taking in and digesting the Word of God [Ps. 19:8-10; Jer. 15:16; Ezek. 2:8-10; 3:1-4]. This book is sweet to the believers but bitter to those who reject Christ. The same gospel that carries salvation to those who believe also carries judgment and damnation to those who reject God’s word [Heb.4:12].

3. Prophecy again

John was commissioned a second time [1:19] to write the rest of the prophecies that God was going to give him. He was to be faithful to the truth and to warn everyone of the third woe [the seventh trumpet], which contains the seven bowl judgments to come. By writing down these prophecies in the book of Revelation, sinners could know that a future day of judgment was coming when the seventh trumpet will sound and sin’s power will be broken, Satan and his demons will be rendered powerless, godless people will be judged and believers will live forever with God. Because of John’s obedience, many people throughout the ages have been warned of God’s future judgment.

Conclusion:

This chapter is bittersweet for it is mixed with hope for the believers and despair for those who meet Christ as their Judge instead of their Savior. It also emphasizes our responsibility as believers to warn the lost of that terrible Day of Judgment that will shortly come upon the earth. May the Lord help us to tell others about God’s sacrificial Lamb – Jesus Christ and how they can have forgiveness of sin.



Revelation

Chapter 11

[The Temple and the Two Witnesses]

Chapter eleven of Revelation continues the parenthetical section begun in chapter 10 and extends through chapter 14, with the exception of 11:15-19, which introduces the seventh trumpet. The narrative does not advance until chapter 15 when the rapid bowl judgments are released before Christ's second coming to earth. However, chapters 10 through 14 gives the reader vital information that aids in

understanding the total prophetic scene.

The apostle John has another vision [A.D. 96] and sees the temple of God. Herod's temple, [the temple in Jesus' day] was destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70. Therefore, the temple that John saw, no doubt, refers to the future temple to be rebuilt in the Tribulation period. During this time, the Jewish people will revert to the Old Testament form of worship and will once again offer animal sacrifices for their sins. They will rebuild the temple in unbelief, since they do not believe that the Messiah has come. In addition, this chapter introduces the two supernatural witnesses who will come on the scene to convince lost humanity the need of salvation and to proclaim God's judgment on the wicked world. They will fearlessly preach the gospel during Earth's darkest hour.

THE TEMPLE OF GOD [11:1-2]

This temple built during the Tribulation period will be a sign of Israel's rejection of Christ.

They will once again offer animal sacrifices for their sins, showing they have not received the Messiah. However, the reinstatement of the temple worship will make many Jews realize that animal sacrifices cannot take away sin [Heb. 10:4] and will use this growing dissatisfaction to prepare their hearts to receive Christ at His second coming [Zech. 12:10-13:1].

There are several passages in Scripture that refer to the rebuilt temple in the end times. In Daniel [9:27; 12:1], the signing of the seven-year covenant with Antichrist will give the Jews permission to rebuild the temple under the patronage and protection of the Antichrist in the first 3½ years of the Tribulation period. Jesus states in Matthew 24:15 that the Antichrist will desecrate the future temple by presenting himself to the world as god [also see 2 Thess. 2:3-4]. This will happen at the mid point of this seven-year agreement.

John once again plays an active role in his visions [Rev. 1:17; 4:1; 5:4-5; 7:13-14; 10:8-10]. He is given a measuring rod [a reed-like plant which is ideal for use as a measuring rod [Ezek. 40:3-43:17]. He is commanded by an angel to measure specific areas.

A. Measure **only** the temple, altar and the worshipers therein

The temple does not refer to the entire temple but to the inner temple, which is made up of the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. This is the area where only the priests could enter. The altar is probably the brazen altar located outside the inner sanctuary in the courtyard. This is the place where the Jewish men offered their sacrifices. This measuring symbolizes the

marking out of the believing, Jewish remnant during the Tribulation period that God will spare from judgment [Zech. 13:8-9; 14:1-5].

B. Measure not the outer court

John's measuring of the temple included a significant omission – do not measure the outside courtyard which is the Court of the Gentiles. The explanation given is because the outer court as well as the entire Holy City [Jerusalem] will be under Gentile control for 42 months [3 years]. This time corresponds to the wicked rule of the Antichrist in the second half of the Tribulation. This time of Gentile rule will come to a swift end at Jesus' second coming, and Christ will then reign forever more.

THE TWO WITNESSES [11:3-19]

John's vision now turns to the two supernatural witnesses that God will raise up shortly before the midpoint of the Tribulation. The connection between verses 1-2 and the two witnesses is this – the witnesses will preach the gospel so the Jewish remnant can believe while proclaiming God's message of judgment during the final stages of Gentile rule. The Bible requires the testimony of **two** people to confirm a fact or verify truth [Deut. 17:6; 19:15; Matt. 18:16; John 8:17; 2 Cor. 13:1; 1 Tim. 5:19; Heb. 10:28]. Seven features of the lives and ministry of these two powerful preachers are given in the remainder of this chapter. This will be discussed on pages 61 through 66.



Revelation 11:1-2

The site where the Temple mount sits is the same place Abraham 4000 years ago met with a priest of the true God named Melchisedec (Genesis 14, Hebrews 5-7). A few years later, Abraham went to this site to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice, but God provided a ram for him to offer instead (Genesis 22).

THE FIRST TEMPLE

Approximately 1000 years later, in 988 BC, King David purchased this same site from a local resident named Ornan (1 Chronicles 21.) Twelve years after that, in **975 BC, King Solomon dedicated the First Jewish Temple.**

Prior to that, Israel worshipped in a place known as the Tabernacle (a tent made with badgers' skin). They did this for 470-years. That is, from Moses to King David,

Israel worship at the tent known as the Tabernacle. But when the First Temple was completed (1 Kings 5-8) tradition tells us Israel dismantled the Tabernacle and stored it under the Temple Mount.

The First Temple was twice as large as the tabernacle. It was made of immense quarried stone and cedar and many of its items were covered in gold. It stood for approximately 366 years. It was destroyed by the Babylonians on the 9th of Av, 586 BC (The month of Av relates to late July or early August).

Unique aspects of the Tabernacle and Temple.

Both the Tabernacle and the Temple were built according a pattern revealed by God.

“For when Moses was about to erect **the tabernacle**, he was instructed by God, saying, ‘See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain.’” (Hebrews 8:5).

Likewise, King David said, “*All the plans for the first temple* . . . the LORD made me understand in writing by his hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern” (1 Chronicles 28:19).

Both were blessed with the presence of the *Shechinah* Glory.

THE SECOND TEMPLE Zerubbabel’s Temple

The Second Temple was built in 516 BC by the returning Jews from their Babylonian captivity. It was modest in comparison to the 1st Temple, causing those who remembered the 1st Temple to weep. The prophet Haggai reports their reaction in Haggai 2:3.

“Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?”

However, Haggai’s prophecy continues with a promise:

“The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts” (Haggai 2:9).

In this verse, Haggai prophesies that the glory of the Second Temple would come about in some different and greater ways.

Unlike the Tabernacle and the First Temple, the Second Temple did not begin with a manifestation of the *Shechinah* Glory. But Haggai’s prophecy makes clear that the glory that was once part of the First Temple will come in a greater way to this Second Temple. That is, they would

again see the manifestation of God’s presence in the *Shechinah* Glory. The fact that this Temple was destroyed in A.D. 70 necessitates the fulfillment of Haggai’s prophecy to be prior to that time.” That is, Jesus, the Son of God would walk into this Temple.

The Second Temple’s Remodeling by Herod

Zerubbabel’s Temple was later razed and enlarged by Herod the Great beginning around 20 BC and lasted for **46 years**. The area of the Temple Mount was doubled and surrounded by a retaining wall with gates. The Temple was raised, enlarged, and faced with white stone.

He recruited 10,000 workmen to do this work. In this remodeled 2nd Temple Jesus frequently taught, and on two occasions cast out the money changers.

Its end came on the 9th of Av, in 70 AD (*ironically on the identical date that the First Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians*) the Romans destroyed the Second Temple.

Hosea had prophesied that a time would come that the 2nd temple would be destroyed, and its sacrifices, offerings, instruction and worship would cease (Hosea 3:4-5).

“For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim: ⁵ Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days” (Hosea 3:4-5).

THERE IS NO JEWISH TEMPLE TODAY:

Nineteen hundred and fifty-one years after the Second Temple was destroyed, **the Jewish people are still without a temple.** Today, there are many speculations as to when the Third Temple would be built, but to date, this has not happened.

Four passages in Scripture speak of a future Temple operating during the tribulation period.

The first is found in Daniel 9:27:

“And he (*the prince of the people, the Antichrist*) shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and **in the midst of the week, he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease**, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.”

The second passage is Matthew 24:15:

“When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, **stand in the holy place**, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)”

The third passage is found in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4:

“Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; ⁴ Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; **so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.**”

The final passage is found in Revelation 11:1-2:

“And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and **measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.** ² But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.”

All four passages describe events occurring in the Jewish Temple during the middle part of the tribulation.

There are several things we need to note about this Third Temple – The Tribulation Temple.

First, It Is an Unsanctioned Temple with Unsanctioned Worshippers:

There is a passage found in Isaiah 66:1-6 regarding a temple that will be built with a sacrificial system after the Mosaic Law. However, this Temple receives no sanction from God.

“Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: **where is the house that ye build unto me?** and where is the place of my rest? ² For all those things hath mine hand made, and those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. ³ **He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man;** he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog’s neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine’s blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol. **Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their**

abominations. ⁴ I also will choose their delusions and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes and chose that in which I delighted not. ⁵ Hear the word of the LORD, ye that tremble at his word; your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the LORD be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed. ⁶ A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the LORD that rendereth recompence to his enemies."

Isaiah speaks of a house or Temple being built for God which He does not sanction. We know it cannot be the First or the Second Temple, for they were both clearly sanctioned by God. Nor can it be the Temple that will be built in the Millennial Reign. That one will be built by the Messiah, and God certainly sanctions that one. Therefore, it must be the one that appears during the tribulation period.

In this passage, God is appealing to Israel to return to Him in faith, not to merely build Him a house.

Isaiah 66:3 declares,

"Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations."

Revelation 11:

It is very interesting to note that in Revelation 11, John is asked to measure a temple that exists during the tribulation period. He is to measure *"the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein"* with a reed.

A reed is a 10' long measuring device commonly used in construction in those days. We can easily understand the

physical measurements made on a building, and an altar, but what does it mean to measure those worshipping therein?

Measure them that worship therein:

Imagine John holding his 10' reed next to those worshipping at this temple. He would find that everyone was shorter than the reed. The idea here is they are all falling short. For the true Lamb of God had already come. He is the only acceptable sacrifice for their sins. Here **"they . . . chose their own ways, and their soul delighted in their abominations."** They built a temple to the Lord and were performing an unauthorized form of worship.

Isaiah 66:4 says,

"when I spoke, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes and chose that in which I delighted not."

Second, How Near Are We to The Building of the Third Temple?

The six-day war in 1967 set the stage for the fulfillment of this prophecy. Before the war the Temple compound was under Arab control. That event has made it possible for the rebuilding of the Temple.

Two groups are preparing to rebuild this temple. One is based in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City. They are in the process of making the furnishings of the next Temple. The second group is located in the Moslem Quarter of the Old City, and is training Cohens, descendants of the Aaronic line, in how to perform the sacrificial rites.

Cedar from Lebanon captured in the north during the 1982 war has been placed in storage for the next temple and so on. Thus, there has been considerable preparation for the Third Temple. Both the Askenazi and Sephardic Chief Rabbis of Jerusalem agree that such a temple will be built as soon as circumstances permit.

Third: This examines what John is to measure, and not to measure.

“Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. ² **But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not**” (Revelation 11:1-2)

We do not know when this Temple will be built. It is still for some future date. It will be built before or during the Tribulation period. If the latter is true, then its building might be part of the peace treaty (Daniel 9:27).

What John measures the Holy of Holies, the Holy Place and what we think is Brazen the Altar where the sacrifices are offered. If so, the Altar stands outside the building containing the Holy of Holy's and the Holy Place.

It is unclear why the Gentile court is not measured. We know from this passage that that area will be defiled during the latter part of the Tribulation. Another possibility is it does not exist. That is, the Gentile Court was not constructed either because of time or space restrictions.

THE DESECRATION OF THE TEMPLE AND CITY

We know that the Tribulation Temple will be desecrated in the middle of the tribulation period. Several passages speak of this.

The Revelation 11:2 passage says,

“But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; **for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.**” (3½ years).

Daniel confirms this in Daniel 9:27

“And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: **and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease . . .**” (Daniel 9:27).

This passage continues in Daniel 9:27b,

“And for the overspreading of abominations”

A literal translation of this passage reads,

“Upon the wings of the abominations . . . he (the Antichrist) shall make it (the Temple) desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.”

Here we learn that the sacrifices being offered will be ended and some sort of continual abomination. This will take place within the temple area.

Daniel 12:11 adds to this by saying,

“And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, **there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days.**”

According to this statement the Abomination of Desolation will last 1,290-days. That is a full 30-days longer than the three and one have years. Either it will begin 30-days before the exact midpoint of the tribulation or more

likely go beyond the end of the Tribulation by 30 more days.

Based on Daniel 12:12 we learn,

“Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days” (1335 days or 75 days beyond the tribulation.)

Some suggest that the extra 30-days are required for the cleansing of the earth after the tribulation ends, then another 45-days are required to reorder things for the Millennial age to begin.

FLEEING THE LAND

Matthew 24:15-16 indicates that the desolation will be a sign to Israel to flee the land. It says,

“When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) ¹⁶ Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains”

THE DESOLATION HAS TWO PART TO IT

The desolation seems to involve **someone sitting in the temple** declaring himself to be God and later **some other object is placed in the temple** (like an image or idol).

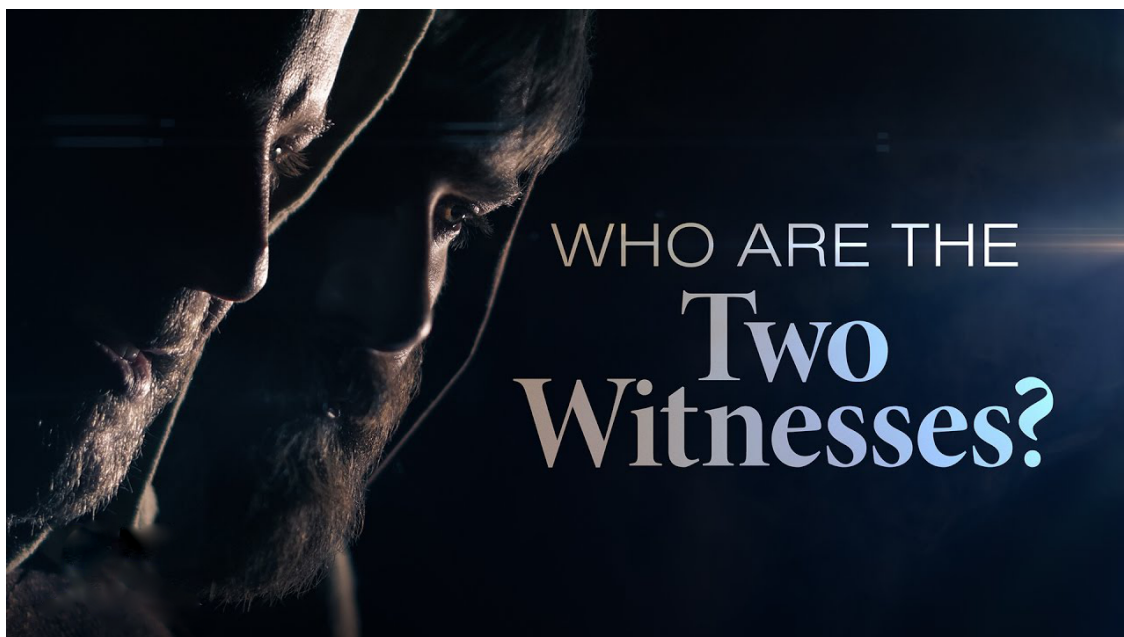
First, 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 speaks about the Antichrist who sits in the temple declaring Himself to be God.

“Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, **the son of perdition;** ⁴

Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; **so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.**”

Second, in Revelation 13:11-15 we are told that the False Prophet sets up an image in the Temple.

“And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. ¹² And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. ¹³ And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, ¹⁴ And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; **saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast,** which had the wound by a sword, and did live. ¹⁵ **And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak,** and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.”



The Two Witnesses

Revelation 11

In our previous chapter, the apostle John saw the third temple of God. We have to remember that when John recorded that vision, Herod's temple, [the temple in Jesus' day – the second temple] had already been destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70. Therefore, what John saw, no doubt, refers to the temple that will be rebuilt shortly before or during the Tribulation period.

When that happens, the Jewish people will revert to the Old Testament form of worship which will include the offering of animal sacrifices for their sins. They will be rebuilding this temple in unbelief. It is an open rejection of Jesus as the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world.

However, the reinstatement of the temple worship will make many Jews realize that animal sacrifices cannot take away sin [Heb. 10:4] and God will use this growing

dissatisfaction to prepare their hearts to receive Christ at His second coming [Zech. 12:10-13:1].

Immediately after this, the chapter introduces the two supernatural witnesses. Their appearance is designed to convince lost humanity the need of salvation. They are also assigned the task to proclaim God's judgment on the wicked world. Together, they will fearlessly preach the gospel during Earth's darkest hour.

THE TWO WITNESSES [11:3-19]

In my opinion, God will raise these men up shortly before the midpoint of the Tribulation. A number of commentators place them during the first half of the tribulation. That means they would die during the abomination done to the temple, followed by Israel fleeing. Their resurrection would take place during Israel's flight into the wilderness.

But if you compare their ability to turn the water into blood, stopping up the heavens, the ability to call fire down from heaven, and darkness over the

land, etc. Those events are more closely aligned with the bowl judgments.

Secondly, their appearance best coincides with the abomination of desolation in the temple, and their death occurring shortly before the end of the tribulation. Their resurrection would coincide with Israel's mass conversion in one day (Zechariah 3:10; Romans 11:26). This would be followed by the nation mourning ten days (Zechariah 12:10) and three days later the outpouring of the Holy Spirit would fall upon the nation (Zechariah 13:1) followed by the Lord's return.

Third, the connection between Revelation 11:1-2 and the two witnesses' best fits in the second half of the tribulation. They will preach the gospel so the Jewish remnant can believe while proclaiming God's message of judgment during the final stages of Gentile rule.

The Bible requires the testimony of two people to confirm a fact or verify truth [Deut. 17:6; 19:15; Matt. 18:16; John 8:17; 2 Cor. 13:1; 1 Tim. 5:19; Heb. 10:28].

Seven features of the lives and ministry of these two powerful preachers are given in the remainder of this chapter.

THEIR DUTY [11:3a]

“And I will give power unto my two witnesses and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days.”

The Lord gives the two witnesses their authority. Their prime responsibility is to preach God's Word. They will proclaim that the disasters occurring in the world are the

judgments of God and warn unbelievers that judgment and hell will soon follow. They will also preach the gospel, calling people to repentance and faith. They will do this for 3½ years or more precisely 1,260 days.

We have several ways 3½ years are described in the book of Revelation.

42 months speaks of the abomination

Rev. 11:2 – “But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot **forty and two months.**”

Rev. 13:5 – “And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue **forty and two months.**”

A Time, and times and half a time speaks of Jacob's trouble during the last 3½ years.

Rev. 12:14 – “And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for **a time, and times, and half a time,** from the face of the serpent.”

Dan. 12:7 – “**And** I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand **and** his left hand unto heaven, **and** swore by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for **a time, times, and an half; and** when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.”

A thousand two hundred and threescore days speak of the latter half of the tribulation.

Dan. 12:11 – “And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be **a thousand two hundred** and ninety days.”

Rev. 11:3 – “And I will give power unto my **two** witnesses, and they shall prophesy **a thousand two hundred** and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.”

Rev. 12:6 – “And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there **a thousand two hundred and threescore days.**”

THEIR ATTITUDE [11:3b]:

The two witnesses will wear sackcloth to express their great sorrow for the unbelieving world. Sackcloth is the rough and heavy course cloth worn in ancient times to show mourning, distress and humility [Gen. 37:34; 1 Chron. 21:16; Dan. 9:3].

They will not only mourn for a world filled with wicked, unrepentant people but for the desecration of the temple, the oppression of the Holy City and the wicked reign of the Antichrist.

THEIR IDENTITY [11:4]

“These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.”

The identities of these two witnesses are not given; however, John describes them as the two olive trees and the

two lamp stands, standing before the God of the earth. This seems to be a reference to Zechariah chapter 4 where a lamp stand and two olive trees are mentioned.

Back in Zechariah’s time, God raised up two witnesses – Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel. Just as these two men were raised up to be witnesses for God and empowered by the Holy Spirit [represented by the olive oil], so the two witnesses in Revelation will execute their prophetic office in the power of God, and not in human ability.

There are four reasons why many believe the two witnesses are Elijah and Moses. Even though these reasons may be true, it is still speculation regarding their true identity.

1. Their miracles are similar to the ones performed by Moses and Elijah in the Old Testament for the purpose of bringing about repentance.
2. Both the Old Testament and Jewish tradition predict the return of Elijah and Moses in the future.
3. Both Elijah and Moses appeared with Christ at the Transfiguration [Matt. 17:3].
4. Both Elijah and Moses left the earth in unusual ways [2 Kings 2:11-12 and Deut. 34:5-6; Jude 9]

THEIR POWER [11:5-6]:

Whether or not these two witnesses are Elijah and Moses, they will have miraculous powers similar to these two Old Testament prophets.

1. They will be able to defend themselves.

They will be universally hated, and many will desire to hurt them; however, they will have supernatural powers to kill their enemies with fire.

2. They will perform miracles.

God often used miracles to authenticate His messengers as true prophets of God. They will be able to bring drought upon the earth, turn water to blood, and cause plagues to come upon the earth. These two witnesses will bring havoc on the land, causing men to both fear and hate them. They will be invincible for 3½ years.

THEIR DEATHS [11:7-10]:

Because godless men hate these servants of God and their message, men will try to murder these men. They will not be successful for God will protect them until their testimony is finished [3½ years]. Then God will allow the Antichrist [the beast from the abyss] to kill them.

1. Their dead bodies will lay in the streets in Jerusalem.

The dead bodies of these two witnesses will lie out in the open for 3½ days. In the ancient world, exposing an enemy's dead body was the ultimate way of dishonoring them. God forbade this practice [Deut. 21:22-23].

Jerusalem, the city of God and the place where Jesus was crucified, will become so corrupt that it will be as wicked as Sodom and as evil as Egypt.

2. Everyone will see their dead bodies.

People from around the world will look upon their dead bodies with contempt and hatred. For the first time in history, this is possible with satellite television, the Internet, and smart devices. For 3½ days, their bodies are exposed before sinful, unrepentant men who rejoice in their deaths.

3. People will celebrate worldwide.

The deaths of the two witnesses will bring global celebration. The unbelievers will rejoice over their deaths and give gifts one to another. Their emotional response demonstrates their continual rejection toward God and His messengers.

THEIR RESURRECTION:

After 3½ days, their celebration over the death of the two witnesses' will end abruptly. The two witnesses will come back to life and stand upon their feet. Fear will grip the people as they see their two tormentors resurrect from the dead. With their ministry completed, the two are bidden to heaven before the eyes of everyone to see. The two-man rapture will no doubt cause sheer panic throughout the world.

THEIR IMPACT [11:13]:

Shortly after the resurrection of the two witnesses, a great earthquake shook the earth. One tenth of the city was destroyed. Seven thousand men are killed. Those who survived the earthquake gave glory to the God of heaven.

This term “remnant” is used to distinguish the true followers of God from those who worship pagan deities.

With this event, the second woe is completed for it is the final phase of the sixth trumpet. Two woes are passed one more is yet to come.

THE SEVENTH TRUMPET [11:15-19]:

The blowing of the seventh trumpet [also known as the third woe] does not initiate anything on earth. It is an announcement made in heaven to introduce the next series of judgments to come upon the earth. These judgments are known as the bowl judgments and will be poured out during the last half of the Tribulation period.

After the heavenly introduction of the seventh trumpet, the parenthetical passage continues until chapter 15. The detail of events given in these chapters will include the persecution of God’s children [ch. 12], the Antichrist and the False Prophet [ch. 13], and a heavenly vision [ch. 14].

Great Voices in Heaven/An Angelic Choir [11:15]:

When the seventh trumpet is introduced in heaven, John hears many voices chanting the triumph of Jesus Christ. In their singing, they declare two things:

1. The kingdom of the world belongs to God:

Christ will conquer the one-world kingdom of the Antichrist when He returns to earth. Earthly rule will end and will pass into the hands of Christ.

2. God’s kingdom will reign forever:

The Greek words for “for ever and ever” means “ages of ages.” When Christ reign begins on earth, there will be no interruption of His government. Although rebellion will break out at the end of the Millennium after Satan is released from his imprisonment [20:7], the Lord will put down this rebellion so quickly that it will not interfere with the rule of His eternal kingdom.

The Song of the Twenty-Four Elders [11:16-18]:

The twenty-four elders bow down and give thanks to the eternal One because He has demonstrated His power and authority over the earth. The elders use the perfect prophetic tense by anticipating in heaven the final stage of God’s judgments on the earth before Christ’s second coming [vs. 16-17]. They rejoice in Christ’s rule over the earth. The twenty-four elders declare three things regarding His coming [v. 18].

1. The nations are angry:

This indicates that at the second coming of Christ the nations are resentful of His appearance and will rebel against Him [Ps. 2]. They willfully reject God’s rule in their lives.

2. The dead will be judged:

The dead refers to the Old Testament believers and the martyred saints of the Tribulation period. This judgment does not refer to unbelievers for they will be judged after the Millennium.

3. Those who destroy the earth will be destroyed:

Christ will take the Antichrist and the False Prophet and throw them into the lake of fire. He will also kill those who follow them. All those who reject Christ will stand before God at the Great White Throne Judgment where they will be judged by their works and where they will meet their fate in the eternal lake of fire [the second death].

The Temple of God [11:19]:

Bound up in the seventh trumpet is the vision of the opening of the temple of God, which represents the promise to believers of the unbroken fellowship we will have with God forever.

1. The Ark of the Covenant:

Inside the heavenly temple is the true Ark of His covenant. This heavenly ark symbolizes God's communion with the redeemed because it was there that the blood sacrifices were offered to atone for men's sins [Lev. 16:2-16; Heb. 9:6-7]. Inside the earthly temple was the ark built after the likeness of the heavenly one Moses saw. In the earthly Ark were three things – manna [God's provision for His people], the budding rod of Aaron [God's sovereignty over His

people], and the tablets of the law [God's covenant with His people] - Heb. 9:4.

2. Lightning's, voices, thundering, earthquake & hail:

Similar events are associated with the glorious, majestic throne of God [4:5]. They have also been associated with judgment for unbelievers [8:5; 16:17-18]. Heaven is a source of covenant blessings for the redeemed but a source of vengeance and eternal damnation [Rom. 12:19] to those who reject Him.

Conclusion:

The seventh trumpet represents that Jesus is truly the sovereign King of kings and Lord of lords. He will one day take the rule of the earth out of Satan's hands. Jesus' kingdom will be a kingdom that has no end. As history moves toward Christ's coming, the world is spinning out of control, getting more wicked and more defiant toward God and His Word. In the light of these future events, we who know Christ should be holy in our conduct and godliness [2 Pet. 3:11].



The Last Half of the Tribulation

Revelation 12-19



Revelation Chapter 12

[Satan Verses Israel]

Since the seventieth week of Daniel deals with Israel and the Jewish people, it is no surprise that Israel is the center of this unprecedented time in history [Daniel 9:24-27]. Israel will agree to the 7-year covenant of the Antichrist, there will be 144,000 Jewish men who will evangelize the world, and God will raise up two supernatural witnesses that will have the spirit of Elijah and Moses. They will stand up to the Antichrist and his evil followers.

Since the fall of Lucifer, the great conflict through the ages began [Isaiah 14:12-15]. Satan continues to oppose God and His plan of redemption. From the Garden of Eden onward, Satan's desire has been to capture the will and souls of men so that they will worship him and forsake God their Creator.

This chapter will show anti-Semitism [the hatred of Israel and the Jewish people] to be the worse the world has ever seen. In light of this age-old conflict, this twelfth chapter introduces seven great actors of the Tribulation period, five are listed in chapter 12 and two are found in chapter 13. Listed below are the seven key personages:

1. The woman
2. The dragon
3. The man-child
4. Michael, the archangel
5. The remnant seed of Israel
6. The beast out of the sea – the world dictator [Antichrist]
7. The beast out of the earth – the false religious leader [the False Prophet]



The War of the Ages

Revelation 12

Chapter twelve pauses to give a historic context to the events before us. Scriptures describe this seven-year period of trials as having two main parts to it – the Beginning of Sorrows and the Great Tribulation.

The first 3½ years are described as “the beginning of sorrows” (Matt. 24:7-8).

“For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. ⁸ All these are the beginning of sorrows.”

The last half of the tribulation is described in three ways – The Great Tribulation, Jacob’s Trouble and the Day of the Lord.

1. The Great Tribulation

In Matthew 24:15 we find Jesus referring to the middle part of the tribulation when He speaks of “the abomination of desolation” (see Daniel 9:27).

Then He says in Matthew 24:21-22,

“For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. ²² And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened” (Mat. 24:21-22).

This passage tells us that the Great Tribulation will begin **after** the abomination of desolation of Daniel 9:27.

2. The Time of Jacob’s Trouble:

The prophet Jeremiah speaks of this time and calls it **The Time of Jacob’s Trouble**.

“Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even **the time of Jacob’s trouble**; but he shall be saved out of it. ⁸ For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him” – Jer. 30:7.

3. The Day of the Lord:

“Shall not the day of the LORD be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?” - Amos 5:20

So, allow me to summarize what we have seen so far in our study of the Book of Revelation.

In Revelation chapters 6 through 11 we found the world reeling in pain for 3½ years. As we mentioned before, this is the period known as the *“beginning of sorrows”* (Matthew 24:8). During this time the world is ravaged with war, famine, pestilence, and death. Immediately afterwards, two meteoric events occur which are followed by a demonic outpouring. The combined sorrow of this period kills half of the world’s population.

Amazingly, we find Israel surviving this first half of the tribulation. They were even able to build and maintain some form of temple worship, but this is about to come to a screeching halt. Right in the middle of the tribulation period anti-Semitism suddenly explodes on the scene. The Antichrist defiles the temple, and his hosts seek to wipe Israel off the map. Hence, the title of the next 3½ years is Jacob’s Trouble. And we will find that the nation of Israel is forced to flee for their lives.

But don’t lose sight of the other terms describing this latter half of the tribulation. It is also called, the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord. These terms depict the final battles resulting from the war of ages. These terrible days describe God’s final assault against Satan, his demonic forces and against rebellious men. In these final days, the world will be brought to its knees as our Lord establishes His rightful rule over all things.

Revelation 12 is an important chapter, for it unveils the war of the ages.

This great conflict has plagued mankind throughout the ages. It began with the fall of Lucifer [Isaiah 14:12-15].

“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! ¹³ For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: ¹⁴ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. ¹⁵ Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.”

Satan opposes everything about God. He hates God and His plan of redemption. From the Garden of Eden onward, Satan’s desire has been to capture the souls of men so they will worship him and forsake their Creator and their true God.

This chapter will show anti-Semitism at its worse. In light of this age-old conflict, this twelfth chapter introduces seven great actors of the Tribulation period – five are listed in chapter 12 and two are found in chapter 13. Listed below are the seven key personages: The woman (Rev.

12:1-2); The dragon (Rev. 12:3-4a); The man-child (Rev. 12:4b-5, 13); Michael, the archangel – (Rev. 12:7-8); The remnant seed of Israel (Rev. 12:11); The beast out of the sea – the world dictator, the Antichrist (Rev. 13:1-2f); The beast out of the earth – the false religious leader, the False Prophet (Rev. 13:11f).

This section will discuss the five characters highlighted in chapter 12.

THE WOMAN [12:1-2]

“And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: ² And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.”

The woman is the first of the seven great personages described in this chapter of Revelation. The word “wonder” [σημεῖον - *semeion*], can also be translated as “a great sign.” She is a sign or symbol of a great truth. Although the sign is seen in heaven, it portrays a reality on the earth – the persecution of the Jewish people.

Her clothing:

She is described as clothed with the sun, moon, and stars. This is an allusion to Genesis 37:9-11 where the heavenly bodies represent Jacob and Rachel and their twelve sons – the nation of Israel.

Joseph’s dream:

“And he [Joseph] dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a

dream more; and, behold, **the sun** and **the moon** and the **eleven stars** made obeisance to me” (Gen. 37:9).

Jacob’s Interpretation:

“And he (*Joseph*) told *it* to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him,

‘What *is* this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall **I** and thy **mother** and thy **brethren** indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth? And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying” (Gen. 37:10).

Jacob saw that in Joseph’s dream he was the **Sun**. **Rachel** his wife was the **moon**. **The stars** were the **sons of Jacob** (in this case 11 minus Joseph).

In Revelation 12:1

The Sun and the **Moon** under her feet are the same as they were in Genesis 37. Jacob is the sun, Rachel is the Moon. **The Stars** represent the sons of Jacob, the twelve tribes which are the crown of Israel. **The Woman** depicts Jacob’s lineage which now forms the nation of Israel. A little later in this passage it will focus on just one woman from the tribe of Judah.

The Travailing in Birth:

“And she (*the nation*) being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.” – Revelation 12:2

The nation of Israel is depicted in this verse as travailing in birth. They are suffering from the enemy’s hatred of their place before God, and their role in bringing forth the

Deliverer. Throughout the ages Satan has sought to crush this nation and prevent the Messiah from coming. If you wipe out Israel, you overthrow God's plan for redemption. Hence, the age-old hatred of the nation of Israel. If you wipe out Israel, you overthrow the promises of God.

Even after the birth of the Messiah, Israel is still under attack. Frequently in Scripture, Israel is pictured as going through great trials and tribulations. Israel has suffered greatly, but her greatest persecution is yet to come in the time of Jacob's trouble [Jer. 30:7; Matt. 24:21-22].

The nation of Israel has always been the object of Satan's hatred and wrath. If he cannot kill the Messiah, he will try to destroy the nation [depicted in our passage as the woman] that brought forth the Messiah.

THE GREAT RED DRAGON [12:3-4]

The second great sign appearing in the heaven is described as a great red dragon. He is none other than Satan, God's adversary.

The Names of Satan:

1. "A great red dragon" [v. 3]

The color red depicts him as the main source or cause of much bloodshed throughout history. This can be seen with Adam and Eve's need for a blood sacrifice to cover their sins, i.e. the first animal killed [Gen. 3:21] and the first murder [Gen. 4:8], etc.

2. "That old serpent" [v. 9]

Satan is first mentioned in the book of Genesis where he deceived Eve in the Garden of Eden. He was very clever. He got Eve to doubt God's Word.

3. "The Devil" [v. 9]

This is the name used in the gospels for this enemy of God [Matt. 4:1-3]. The word devil means *slanderer* or *accuser* [Job 1:8-10; 2:3-5].

4. "Satan" [v. 9]

This name means *adversary, an opponent*. He is the one who opposes God and all of God's children.

5. "The accuser of our brethren" [v. 10]

This indicates his work before the throne of God today, seeking to accuse the saints before God.

Seven heads, ten horns, and seven crowns [vs. 3]

"And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads."

This is referring to Satan's rule over the earth through human governments. The seven heads refer to seven kingdoms [Rev.17:9-10] – Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Mido-Persia, Greece [are the kingdoms of the past]. Rome [is the present kingdom in John's day], and the revised Roman Empire [is the kingdom that is yet to come].

The ten horns refer to the ten kings who will be in power during the Tribulation period. These ten kings will

endorse the authority and power of the Antichrist [Dan. 7:24].

The seven crowns points to the kings. Three of the ten kings will rebel against the Antichrist's rule and will be subdued – hence the seven crowns depict the seven kings that remain loyal to the Antichrist [Dan. 7:24]. Under this evil dictator, wickedness, death, destruction and human suffering will be beyond human comprehension.

The Fall of Satan [v.4a]:

“And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth”

This probably refers to the original fall of Satan when he influenced one-third of the angels to follow him in disobedience against God. Lucifer, now known as Satan, fell because of his pride [Isaiah 14:12-15]. He will continue to try to thwart God's redemptive plan until he is thrown into the eternal lake of fire [Rev. 20:10]. Although Satan and his evil angels were thrown out of heaven after his fall, Satan himself still has access to the throne of God to accuse believers [Job 1:6-10].

Satan is opposed to God in three areas. 1) **As an accuser** of the brethren, he is in opposition to Christ as priest [Heb. 6:20]. 2) **As the one who brings forth the first beast** [the Antichrist], he is in opposition to Christ as king [Rev. 19:13-16]. 3) As bringing forth the second beast [the False Prophet], he is opposed to Christ as prophet [Matt. 21:11].

Satan's Conflict with the Woman:

Ever since the promise of a Messiah [Gen. 3:15], Satan has been determined to destroy “the seed of the woman.” We

see this with the murder of Abel [Gen. 4], the pollution of the human race [Gen. 6], the decree of Haman [Esther 3:8-15] and Herod's decree to kill the children 2-years old and under in Bethlehem [Matt. 2:16]. This conflict will reach its climax during the Tribulation period.

THE MAN-CHILD - JESUS CHRIST [12:5-6]

The child's identity:

The identity of this child is very obvious to those familiar with God's Word. There is only One who “will rule all the nations with an iron scepter [12:5].” This man-child is Jesus Christ. Another proof of his identity is found in the resurrection of Christ, where He is now seated at the right hand of God the Father [Mark 16:19; Romans 1:4].

Notice that the woman, depicted as the nation of Israel, is now being viewed as an individual woman who is bringing forth a man child – Revelation 12:5.

“And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.”

We moved from the nation of Israel to a Jewish woman in this passage. The woman is Mary, the mother of Jesus.

The Messiah comes with this purpose:

1 John 3:8 - “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might **destroy** the works of the devil.”

Hebrews 2:14 - “He [Jesus] also himself likewise took part of the same [flesh and blood]; that through death

he might **destroy** him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;"

John 12:31 - "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. ³² And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all *men* unto me."

Luke 19:10 - "For the Son of man is come to **seek** and to **save** that which was lost."

God sent His Son . . . To redeem His people, Israel. For Zechariah prophesied

"Blessed *be* the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and **redeemed** his people" (Luke 1:68).

To . . . **redeemed** us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us (Gal 3:13).

To **redeem** them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons (Gal. 4:5).

That he might **redeem** us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works (Titus 2:14).

Rom. 8:21 tells us that even

"creation itself also shall be **delivered** from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

So, it is with little surprise that we see Satan seeking to destroy the Man-Child.

A side note: Revelation 12:5-6 parallels the seventy weeks of Daniel [Dan. 9:24-27]. In that passage the church age is omitted. Therefore, this prophecy refers to the Jewish

people, not the Gentile church. **Rev. 12:5** covers the time up to Christ's birth and resurrection. **Rev. 12:6** deals with a future time when Israel will flee for their lives in the last half of the Tribulation period [Matt. 24:15-22], where they will flee to the place God has prepared for them in the desert. Just as God provided for Israel in the wilderness during Moses' day, so will He provide for Israel during the last 1,260 days of the Tribulation period. God will provide water and food [Is. 33:15-16]. He will be faithful to His people during this terrible time of persecution.

MICHAEL - THE ARCHANGEL [12:7]

Satan will make one final attempt to gain the universe from the Almighty God. There will be war in heaven as well as on earth.

WAR IN HEAVEN [12:7-12]

This war will take place in the atmospheric or starry heaven between the holy angels led by Michael the archangel and the fallen angels led by Satan. Michael, the commanding general of the heavenly host, will battle the great dragon. As a result of this conflict, Satan and his hosts are cast out of heaven onto the earth. This is a major step in Satan's ultimate defeat for he is now limited in his sphere of operation. He will be the cause of untold death and destruction, especially in the last 3½ years [v. 12].

The announcement of deliverance [v. 10]

The shout from heaven may be from the Tribulation saints that have pleaded for God's deliverance [6:9-10]. This is a shout of triumph and praise for God's kingdom is at hand.

The means of deliverance [v. 11]

“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.”

1. **By the blood** - Satan’s defeat is through the blood of the Lamb. **The accusations of Satan are nullified by the blood of Christ.** His work makes the believers pure and enables them to have victory over sin.
2. **By the Word** - The preaching of the Word of God is the power of God unto salvation [Rom. 1:16]. **The deceiving works of Satan are exposed in the light and truth of God’s inspired Word.**
3. **By their death** - Although these precious saints did not seek a martyr’s death, **they stood firmly on God’s Word** and gave their lives for the testimony of their faith in Jesus Christ.

The results of deliverance are twofold.

1. **The believers are to rejoice.** The victory is theirs through Christ. They are to rejoice for God’s plan of redemption will soon be completed and God’s kingdom will reign forever.
2. **The unbelievers are warned.** A solemn woe is given to the unredeemed. Their “king” is cast to the earth, and his wrath is fierce. As his end draws near, Satan will kill a countless number of saints and will cause widespread suffering throughout the earth.

WAR ON EARTH [12:13-17].

Although heaven will rejoice that Satan is thrown out of heaven, the earth will not share in that joy. Satan will come to earth with a vengeance and hatred the earth has never seen before. He will direct his wrath at the nation of Israel, God’s chosen people.

God’s protection over Israel [v. 14]

God’s faithfulness is illustrated in this passage. He enables his people to flee. It is as if they are given the wings of an eagle [Ex. 19:4; Deut. 32:11-12; Matt. 24:16] to flee in the desert for 3½ years [Dan. 7:25; 12:7]. God will supernaturally protect and care for the Jewish people. Many Bible scholars believe that the woman [Israel] will flee to Petra.

The earth will be used by God to protect Israel from the flood that Satan brings forth to destroy her. God has used nature to accomplish His tasks in the past. Such as His protection when He divided the Red Sea [Ex.14:21-22], and in settling the rebellion of Korah [Num. 16:31-33].

Satan’s assault on Israel [vs. 15].

In Satan’s effort to destroy the Jewish people and dislodge them from their hiding place, he sends a flood. It is another attempt to persecute and exterminate the Jewish people. Satan is once again hindered by God’s intervention in Israel’s behalf.

THE REMNANT SEED OF ISRAEL

Satan hates God and the nation that brought forth the Messiah. The dragon could not destroy God’s people with

the flood so now he turns his anger on those who did not flee to God's hiding place in the desert. He now sets his wrath upon those in the Jewish nation who "keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." Anti-Semitism will reach its peak, and only one-third of the Jewish population will survive this future time of persecution. God has always had a remnant in the past [1 Kings 19:18] and will have a remnant that will survive the Tribulation period. They will enter the thousand-year reign of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 12 is a fitting introduction to the important revelation given in chapter 13. It introduces the last two principal actors in the book of Revelation: the Antichrist

and the False Prophet. Along with Satan, they form the unholy trinity that will deceive the world, vying for the souls of men and to turn them away from the true worship of their Creator and Savior. Oh, how things could have been different if only Israel would have accepted Jesus Christ at His first coming [Matt. 23:37-39].



Revelation Chapter 13:1-10

The Beast Rising Out of the Sea

The Antichrist

As chapter 13 unfolds, a character who is of central importance to the great tribulation appears on the scene, and is described in detail – the Antichrist This

beast rising out of the sea is first of all a revelation of the revived Roman Empire in its period of worldwide dominion. However, this portion of Scripture also directs one's attention to the world dictator behind this seventh kingdom. This evil leader will be ruthless, cunning and deceitful in manipulating the peoples of the world to worship Satan.

The Beast Described:

The word for beast *therion* does not mean a domesticated animal but depicts a wild, savage, vicious monster. This represents the brutality and power of the beast [both as a kingdom and its leader]. This seventh kingdom is described by Daniel 7:7 as “dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly.” Not only is the kingdom depicted as a beast, but the leader will have beastly characteristics for he will be the most evil dictator the world has ever seen. The three major

references in Scripture regarding the Antichrist and his kingdom are found in Daniel 11:36-45, Revelation 13:1-10 and 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

The details of the beast [the revived Roman empire] are given in **Rev. 13:1** as having seven heads and ten horns. John

gives us an important detail of the beast in Rev. 17:8 – the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

Its' Heads:

John tells us that the heads are mountains [Rev. 17:9].

A mountain can be a prominent elevation on the surface of the earth. Or it can represent a kingdom, empire, established authority, etc. [see Ps. 30:7; Jer. 51:25; Dan. 2:35, 37].

If that is so, then Rev. 17:10 indicates that five kingdoms have fallen, one is [Rome was the kingdom in power during John's writing of Revelation, and one kingdom is yet to come [the future kingdom that makes up the beast of Rev. 13:1]].

The seven heads:

- Egypt
- Assyria
- Babylon
- Media-Persia
- Greece
- Rome (the one that is) In ages past these have blasphemed the Almighty God.
- The seventh head [the revised Roman Empire] which is to come will do the same.

The ten horns:

In Rev. 13:1 we find the ten horns represent ten kings who will collectively give their power to the beast for one specific purpose [Rev. 17:12-13].

The ten crowns:

They represent the regal authority or sovereignty that they possess over their individual kingdoms in that day.

The overall description of this beast is given by John in **Rev. 13:2**. He describes this ferocious beast as a hybrid animal consisting of a leopard [Dan. 7:6], a bear [Dan. 7:5] and a lion [Dan. 7:4]. Daniel interprets these beasts as four kings which rise out of the earth [Dan. 7:17]. When Daniel described the beasts, he was looking forward in time and described a lion, bear, leopard, and beast. While the Apostle John was looking back in time. He describes the reverse order: a beast, leopard, bear, and lion.

The hybrid beast in Revelation 13 is the revived Roman Empire, which rises out of the sea. This beast has seven heads and ten horns [Dan. 7:7-8; Rev. 17:3,7]. The description of the beast fits the time of the empire during the great tribulation [the second 3½ years].

This beast is said to rise out of the sea. The sea often in Scripture refers to the Gentile powers of the world, the mass of humanity or more specifically, the peoples living around the Mediterranean area.

The beast also refers to the ruler of this empire – the Antichrist.

His name “antichrist” literally means “against Christ.” It also has a secondary meaning. It could be translated “instead of Christ,” like a substitute or pseudo-Christ.

There are only four verses in Scripture that deals specifically with the word “antichrist.” They are all found in the epistles of John. The Apostle John tells us that

although there has been many antichrists, there is one coming who will stand above the rest as the notorious opponent of Jesus Christ [1 John 2:18]. John also tells us an antichrist:

- Denies that Jesus is the Christ
- Denies the Father and the Son [1 John 2:22]
- Denies the deity of Christ [1 John 4:3]
- Denies the incarnation of Christ [2 John 7].

This man will be the epitome of all other antichrists.

The Antichrist will be the satanic counterfeit of Christ.

Daniel referred to him as the little horn [Dan. 7:8, 24-25] and the prince who shall come [Dan. 9:26]. Jesus referred to him as the abomination of desolation [Matt. 24:15] and Paul called this future antichrist the man of sin, the son of perdition [2 Thess. 2:3] and the Wicked [2 Thess. 2:8]. The antichrist will be given his power by Satan, and he will be a part of the unholy trinity.

The Apostle John tells us that one of the heads of the fourth beast was wounded unto death.

Scripture does not reveal which head is wounded in **Rev. 13:3**. There are two views regarding the deadly wound to the head:

- **A kingdom**

If the head represents a kingdom, it is probably the seventh kingdom that is in view here. The ten confederation of nations (the revived Roman Empire or seventh kingdom) will experience some catastrophic event(s) that will bring it to an apparent collapse [i.e. economic disaster, political upheaval, natural disaster,

etc.). The kingdom is miraculously restored and the earth marvels at the beast.

- **A person**

If the head represents a person, it can only be the future Antichrist, the leader of this seventh kingdom. Whether his death is real or fake [13:14; 2 Thess. 2:9] is not clear. It may be that Antichrist is really killed, and God, for His own purposes, allows him to be resurrected. More likely though, the Antichrist's alleged death and resurrection will be a counterfeit of Christ's death and resurrection [13:12-15; 2 Thess. 2:9]. Or perhaps the Antichrist will explain his extraordinary powers by claiming to be the reincarnation of the Christ spirit, as some have suggested.

This catastrophic event(s) to the head [whether it represents the kingdom or the Antichrist] sets the scene for the Antichrist to assume full power over the confederation of nations [Rev. 17:12-13]. The Antichrist now becomes the leader and mouthpiece of the revived kingdom [Rev. 13:5-6]. His identification with the beast is so closely associated that the kingdom and the Antichrist is viewed as one entity [i.e., The United States and President].

The world will choose to worship Satan, the Old Dragon [Rev. 13:4].

The people on the earth will believe that Satan will ultimately triumph against God. Satan's remarkable powers are seen in the resurrection of the beast and in the destruction of God's two witnesses [Rev. 11:7]. They will believe a lie [2 Thess. 2:9-12] and will trust Satan for eternal life and power. They will not only acknowledge him as the rightful king but they will help Satan in his battle against

God. In worshiping Satan, they will also acknowledge and worship the beast – the Antichrist, the human counterpart of Satan and the head spokesman of the revived empire.

The Antichrist will speak great things against the Almighty God [Rev. 13:5-6].

His evil character is shown in his boasting and blasphemy [Dan. 7:8, 11a, 25]. The mouth of the Antichrist is like a roaring lion, and Satan now gives the Antichrist marvelous pronouncements to make to the world. Antichrist's power will only last for 42 months [the second 3 ½ years of the tribulation]

Rev. 13:5. He knows his time is short [Rev. 12:12]. During this time, the Gentiles will defile Jerusalem and the temple [Rev. 11:2]. God will specially protect His people in the wilderness during this time [Rev. 12:6,14].

Blasphemy is one of the main features of this satanic kingdom of the Antichrist.

He is both Satan's masterpiece and mouthpiece in uttering the ultimate in unbelief and irreverence to God. The Antichrist blasphemes everything God stands for. He utters obscenities against God's name, His tabernacle, and all those that dwell in heaven [**Rev. 13:6**]. The prophet Daniel spoke of the vile mouth of the Antichrist [Dan. 7:20, 25]. The Antichrist will do according to his will [Dan. 11:36-39]. He will have no respect for any god (whether pagan or the true God) nor will he regard the desire of women (the Messianic hope). The Antichrist will exalt himself as god and demand allegiance by all. Although empowered by

Satan, the Antichrist's "god" will be military power and activity [Dan. 11:38]. He will give rule to those who honor him by dividing the land for gain.

The Antichrist will accomplish what other countless rulers of the past only dreamed of – being a world ruler over all nations [Dan. 7:23].

This is finally achieved by the last Gentile ruler [the Antichrist] in the second half of the Tribulation period. Satan will give the Antichrist the authority over every tribe, peoples, tongues and nations [**Rev. 13:7**]. His rule will not go unchallenged. The Antichrist will use his satanic power to destroy anyone or anything that gets in his way of world leadership. Especially those who are followers or potential followers of the true God.

The Antichrist will not only possess political dominion over the revived empire, but he will desire complete worship from the world.

These earth dwellers will worship both the dragon and the beast [Rev. 13:4]. Every man and woman will worship this extremely brilliant but very evil man. All those, that is, except whom the Lord has reserved for Himself. These beast worshipers will reject the Lord as the true God. Even though they do not doubt God's existence, they will believe that the Antichrist and his master, Satan, will triumph over the Everlasting One. They will choose to receive the mark of the Beast [13:16-17]. All who worship the Antichrist will not be found in the book of life [**Rev.13:8**; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27; 22:19].

Exhortation to the entire world

In **Rev. 13:9** is a general exhortation to the entire world whereas in Revelation 2 & 3, the exhortation is more specific for it is unto the seven churches [Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22]. This exhortation demands serious attention. If men will worship the beast, they will not be found in the book of life and face an eternity in hell [Rev. 13:8]. Their only hope is that Satan will triumph over Christ and empty hell. If men will not worship the beast, they will be persecuted and murdered. There will be no sitting on the fence for the Antichrist will force a decision –neither worship him and receive his mark or deny his worship and die. For this reason, let all men hear.

The Lord gives encouragement to the saints and a warning to the wicked — Rev. 13:10.

This is the law of divine retribution. The day of grace is completely past. Those who persecute the saints and lead them into captivity will ultimately experience the righteous wrath of God [Rev. 14:9-12].

Antichrist's satanic world rule will not be an easy one [Dan. 11:40-45].

As powerful and brilliant as the Antichrist appears, his unprecedented world reign will be limited by the Almighty One who the Antichrist rejects [Dan. 11:36]. The seven-year

peace treaty to protect Israel will bring the Antichrist to the Holy Land around the middle of the Tribulation period. The king of the north and the king of the south shall invade Israel [Dan. 11:40]. The Antichrist and his army will come up against them [Dan. 11:41-42], and the Antichrist will take material gain from Egypt. Egypt, Libya and Ethiopia will become a part of his dominion [Dan. 11:43].

As time goes on, the final battles of the Tribulation period begin to form [Dan. 11:44].

The Antichrist receives word of a huge army forming out of the east as well as another invasion by the king of the north. The Antichrist launches a counter-attack on both of them and many people perish. The Antichrist now sets up his head-quarters (palace) at Jerusalem [Dan. 11:45]. These series of battles continue up to the day of the second coming of Jesus Christ [Zech. 14:1-4]. The same armies which come to do battle with each other unite against Christ and are destroyed by Him. The Antichrist finally meets his doom by being thrown alive in the lake of fire [Rev. 19:19-20].



The Beast that Rises Out of the Sea

Devotional Thoughts Rev. 13:1-10

By the time we reach Revelation 13, half the world is destroyed. Those that survived have suffered through three-and one-half years of war, famine, plagues, and death. Along with this, the aftereffects of two devastating meteor strikes killed one third of the world's trees and grass. This was followed by months of unexplained suffering, and a deadly plague that lasted 1½ years.

The survivors are stunned, wounded and angry. How could a loving God allow this to happen?

Imagine what this did with global commerce, the medical community, local, national, and international governments, and the ecology. The world's infrastructure was merely hanging by a thread. They were in shambles. Everyone is desperate for

normalcy. Who or what will lead then out of this dilemma?

As all this is unfolding, we find John standing on the sand of the sea, and he sees a beast rising out of the sea (Rev. 13:1).

“And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.”

It is a beast which suffered a deadly wound and was healed.

“And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast” (Rev. 13:3).

To this beast the world turns to rescue them. This is the one they believe will deliver them from this chaos. So, in a rushed frenzy the world yields itself to this spirit entity behind this emerging beast – Satan. They yield to his leader (the Antichrist), and his rule (Rev. 13:4). This is their hope, this is what they believed would bring them salvation.

But before we look at this passage we need to turn to the book of Daniel where all this was predicted over 2500 years ago.

Daniel 7:7-8 – And the fourth beast

“I saw in the night visions, and **behold a fourth beast**, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. ⁸ I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom *there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots*: and, behold, in this horn were **eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things**.

Daniel is the first to report details on the coming Antichrist and his kingdom. In this passage, he is seen as a blasphemous leader and is pictured as a little horn arising from among the 10 horns of the fourth beast. This little horn represents a person, since it possessed “eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth speaking great things.”

In the verse 7, Daniel noted that “three of the first horns were pulled out by the roots” indicating that this leader will destroy three of the rulers and subjugate the rest of the kings in his rise to power.

In Daniel 7:21 – reveals his hatred of the saints

“I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them.”

Apparently, the blasphemous leader will lead a savage persecution of God’s people until the Ancient of Days comes in judgment.

Daniel 7:23-24 describes the fourth beast’s kingdom as one which will be different from all other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth and tear down and crush it.

“The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. ²⁴ And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings.”

Daniel 7:25 – Again tells us his hatred toward God and His people.

“And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.”

Daniel 8:23b-25 describes his reign of terror

“And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up. ²⁴ And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practice, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people. ²⁵ And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand.”

Daniel 9:26-27 he will confirm a 7-year covenant between Israel and many.

“And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. ²⁷ And **he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week:** and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.”

And finally in Daniel 11:36-37 we find he will institute a new religion.

“And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done. ³⁷ Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all.”

So, as we return to the book of Revelation, we find a wounded, desperate world searching for a way out of their dilemma. They are looking for a leader.

John’s Vision of the Beast

“And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten

horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy” (Rev. 13:1).

The word for beast *therion* does not mean a domesticated animal but depicts a wild, savage, vicious monster. This represents the brutality and power of the beast [both as a kingdom and its leader]. This seventh kingdom is described by Daniel 7:7 as “dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly.” Not only is the kingdom depicted as a beast, but the leader will have beastly characteristics for he will be the vilest dictator the world has ever seen.

Seven Heads and Ten horns

Rev. 17:8 gives us important detail to help us identify this beast. First, we learn the beast “was, and is not, and yet is” (Rev. 17:8c). Second, we learn the beast’s seven heads are seven mountains (Rev. 17:9).

Seven Mountains

A mountain can be a prominent elevation on the surface of the earth, or **it can represent a kingdom, empire, established authority, etc.** [see Ps. 30:7; Jer. 51:25; Dan. 2:35, 37].

If it is a kingdom, then Rev. 17:10 indicates that five kingdoms have fallen, one is, and one kingdom is yet to come. The seven kingdoms then would be: 1) Egypt, 2) Assyria, 3) Babylon, 4) Media-Persia, 5) Greece, 6) Rome (the one existing at the time of John’s writing), 7) The seventh kingdom is yet to come. All these kingdoms have blasphemed the Almighty God.

The Ten Horns: - Revelation 17:12 gives us more features.

“And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.”

The Ten Crowns – Revelation 13:1 represent the regal authority or sovereignty that the rulers possess over their individual kingdoms in that day.

Summarizing Revelation 13:1:

In the latter days, a global government will rise. It will govern the world through regional rule. This does not mean that nations will cease. I believe countries will continue to have their boundaries, but it will be like the first century AD where Judea, Syria, and Egypt existed. They existed as countries but were ruled by regional governors or kings, which were appointed by Rome.

For example, Pontius Pilate governed Judea while King Herod Antipas governed Northern Israel and Syria. It will be so in the last days where the world will be divided into ten regions.

We know five kingdoms have past, and we are living in the remnants of the sixth kingdom. Soon the seventh global kingdom will emerge.

The overall description of this beast - Rev. 13:2.

John describes this ferocious beast as a hybrid animal consisting of a body like a **leopard** - meaning it will be very swift (Dan. 7:6), Paws of a **bear** - meaning it will be powerful and can maul its opposition (Dan. 7:5) and a

mouth of a **lion** - meaning it is ravenous, loud and fearful (Dan. 7:4).

When Daniel describes these beasts in Daniel 7, he was looking forward in time, while the Apostle John was looking backwards in time.

Daniel's View

↓
Lion - Babylon,
Bear -Medo-Persia,
Leopard - Greece,
Beast - Rome

Lion - Babylon,
Bear -Medo-Persia,
Leopard - Greece,
Beast - Rome
↑
John's View

This beast is said to rise out of the sea.

At the time of John's vision in Revelation 13, half the world has perished. Global commerce has been disrupted, the medical community is crippled; local, national governments are in chaos and broken. One third of the world's ecology has been destroyed. The world's infrastructure was merely hanging by a thread. Everything is in shambles. People are in desperate straits. The global government is in ruins and appears to have failed.

But what does John see? – (Rev. 13:1, 3)

He “sees a beast rise up out of the sea” and . . .

“one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.”

He sees a beast that suffered a fatal wound to its head, but rises out of its ashes and is healed. It is now fiercer and angrier than before. From its mouth pours blasphemy against God and His children. Then the world turns to worship Satan, and they deify the beast.

Who is wounded? . . . the Kingdom? or the Antichrist?

There are several views regarding the deadly wound to the head. If the head represents a kingdom, then the ten confederation of nations will experience some catastrophic event(s) that will bring it to an apparent collapse [i.e. economic disaster, political upheaval, natural disaster, etc.]. The kingdom is miraculously restored and the earth marvels at the beast.

If the head represents a person, it can only be the future Antichrist, the leader of this seventh kingdom. It is not clear whether his death is real or fake [13:14; 2 Thess. 2:9].

It could be both. Daniel 11 describes a battle that will take place in the last days, where the king of the south and the king of the north push against the Antichrist but fail. It is possible that the Antichrist is mortally wounded in this battle but later rises out of the ashes and consolidates his power over the nations.

Whatever the sequence, these catastrophic events set the scene for the Antichrist to assume full power over the confederation of nations [Rev. 17:12-13]. The Antichrist becomes the leader and mouthpiece of the revived kingdom [Rev. 13:5-6]. His identification with the beast is so closely associated that the kingdom and the Antichrist is viewed as one entity.

The world will choose to worship Satan - [Rev. 13:4].

The people on the earth will believe that Satan will ultimately triumph against God. Satan's remarkable powers are seen in the resurrection of the beast. They will believe a lie [2 Thess. 2:9-12] and will trust Satan for eternal life and power.

They will not only acknowledge him as their rightful king, but they will help Satan in his battle against God. In worshiping Satan, they will also acknowledge and worship the beast – the Antichrist, the human counterpart of Satan and the head spokesman of the revived empire.

The Antichrist will speak great things against the Almighty God [Rev. 13:5-6]. His evil character is shown in his boasting and blasphemy [Dan. 7:8, 11a, 25]. The mouth of the Antichrist is like a roaring lion, and Satan gives him marvelous pronouncements to make to the world. His power will last 42 months [the second 3½ years of the tribulation]. According to Rev. 12:12, Satan knows his time is short.

Blasphemy is one of the main features of this satanic kingdom of the Antichrist.

He is both Satan's masterpiece and mouthpiece in uttering the ultimate statements of unbelief and irreverence to God. The Antichrist blasphemes everything God stands for. He utters obscenities against God's name, His tabernacle, and all those that dwell in heaven [**Rev. 13:6**].

The prophet Daniel spoke of the vile mouth of the Antichrist [Dan. 7:20, 25]. The Antichrist will do according to his will [Dan. 11:36-39]. He will have no respect for any god (whether pagan or the true God) nor will he regard the desire of women. This maybe a reference to the Messianic

hope which states a deliverer would come from the seed of a woman (Gen. 3:15).

The Antichrist will exalt himself as god, and demand allegiance by all. Although empowered by Satan, the Antichrist's "god" will be military power and activity [Dan. 11:38]. He will give rule to those who honor him by dividing the land for gain. The Antichrist will accomplish what other countless rulers of the past only dreamed of – being a world ruler over all nations [Dan. 7:23].

Satan will give the Antichrist the authority over every tribe, peoples, tongues, and nations [**Rev. 13:7**].

“And **it was given unto** him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: **and power was given him over** all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. ⁸ And **all that dwell upon the earth** shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”

In Rev. 13:9 we find a general exhortation to the entire world

“If any man have an ear, let him hear.”

This exhortation demands serious attention. If men will worship the beast, they will not be found in the book of life

and face an eternity in hell [Rev. 13:8]. Their only hope is that Satan will triumph over Christ and empty hell.

“He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.” – Rev. 13:10

If men will not worship the beast, they will be persecuted and murdered. There will be no sitting on the fence. The Antichrist will force a decision: either worship him and receive his mark, or deny his worship and die. For this reason, let all men hear.

“Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.” – v. 10b

The Lord gives encouragement to the saints and a warning to the wicked in **Rev. 13:10**. This is the law of divine retribution. The day of grace is completely past. Those who persecute the saints and lead them into captivity will ultimately experience the righteous wrath of God [Rev. 14:9-12].



Revelation 13:11-18

The Beast Rising Out of the Land The False Prophet

The Apostle John now sees another beast rise on the world scene. This beast, the False Prophet, is just as ferocious and wicked as the first one. This beast is also empowered by Satan, “a liar and the father of lies” [John 8:44]. Just as the Antichrist

is the culmination of all previous antichrists, the False Prophet, will be the culmination of all religious deceivers to precede him [16:13-14]. He will be Satan’s last and most powerful deceiver the world has ever seen. He will be the “high priest” that will deify the Antichrist. His purpose is to convince the world that the Antichrist is god, and the only hope for the world’s salvation.

1. John sees another beast rising to power [*Rev. 13:11-12*]. It is none other than the third member of the unholy trinity. This beast comes up out of the earth. This indicates that this creature is not of heaven but of the earth. There is no mention in Scripture of either his geographic origin or his racial background. This second beast is similar in nature to the first beast – a dangerous, ravaging power that is just as hostile to God’s people as the first beast. However, the second beast is described as having “two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.”

2. This beast puts on a mild and lamb-like appearance but in actuality is

- unrelenting and cruel in the words he speaks [like a dragon] and the actions he enforces. Although the second beast is not named here, the second beast is later identified as the False Prophet who occupies a secondary role in supporting the activities of the first beast [Rev. 16:13; 19:20; 20:10]. The False Prophet possesses the same satanic power as the first beast. He uses this power to deceive and manipulate those who dwell on the earth, and encourages them to worship the first beast.
3. The False Prophet is the religious spokesman in the great tribulation period who will profess to convey supernaturally inspired messages to mankind. However, his messages are **not** from God, but from Satan. Jesus warned of false Christ's and false prophets who will perform mighty signs and wonders [Matt. 24:24]. The False Prophet will perform many miraculous signs in the power of Satan. These miracles will help to enhance his reputation and authority. One of the first miracles he will perform is to call fire from heaven [Rev. 13:13]. This undoubtedly will be used by Satan to trick people into worshipping the first beast [the Antichrist].
 4. The False Prophet will skillfully use these demon-produced miracles to deceive the world [Rev. 13:14]. The False Prophet can perform only "certain" miracles, for neither Satan nor his angels can produce miracles of creation [John 1:3]. The False Prophet does these miracles in the sight of the first beast. Now that the world is worshipping the beast and the dragon [Rev. 13:4], the False Prophet seeks to set up and regulate a world-wide worship by instructing the people to make an image of the beast.
 5. The False Prophet performs a great feat of magic, and that is to make the image speak. Once the image is made and installed in the temple, the image speaks intelligibly and gives a command to his worshipers to slay all people who do not worship him [Rev. 13:15]. The Greek word for life is *zoe*, but *zoe* **is not** used in this verse. The Greek word used is *pneuma*, which means, "spirit or breathe." Thus, this verse should read, "It was given to him to give **spirit** to the image of the beast." Giving life is a prerogative of God alone. The False Prophet through his master, Satan, may impart an evil spirit to possess the image, thereby enabling the image to speak and deceive many people.
 6. The False Prophet orders that all people who worship the beast must receive a mark. It will identify them as a loyal citizen of the world kingdom [Rev. 13:16-17]. No **exceptions** are made. All classes of people are included. The small and the great refer to political status, the rich and the poor refer to possessions, and the free and the bond refer to their state in society. Without this mark on their forehead or right hand, they will neither be able to buy or sell. Some have contrasted this mark of the beast as an imitation of the protective seal provided for the servants of God on their foreheads [Rev. 7:3]. This mark is only another device to force all people to worship the beast. Unless a person can display one of the three brands – the mark, the name of the beast, or the number of his name, he or she will face privation and death. Those who receive the mark of the beast seal their own eternal destiny [Rev. 14:9-10] for their names will **not** be found in the book of life [Rev. 13:8].
 7. Chapter 13 of Revelation is the only prophetic chapter in Scripture that presents in detail the two evil characters and their wicked activities at the end of the age. This

seven-year tribulation period will be characterized by a one-world government and a one-world religion that will exalt Satan. Many believers will be martyred for the cause of Christ while many others will be deceived into following the beast. The destiny of the false prophet will be the **same** as the Antichrist for they will be cast alive into the lake of fire [Rev. 19:20]. Those who have trusted Satan throughout the ages, along with those who follow the Beast and the False Prophet during the tribulation period will stand before God at the Great White Throne Judgment [Rev. 10:11-15]. It is here the unbelievers will be judged. They will be sentenced while standing before

the great white throne, and cast into the lake of fire forever with the unholy trinity, Satan's angels, and his ungodly cohorts.



Devotional Thoughts

Revelation 13:11-18

Deception and lies are the main ingredients in Satan's arsenal of weapons. He's "a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44). He disguises himself as "an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14) to deceive this world. For Scripture says,

"If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: ⁴ In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

In like manner, his human and demonic agents

"are also transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" 2 Cor. 11:15.

So, we should not be surprised when we see people using lies and deception as tools to accomplish their goals. It is a trademark of Satan and his ministers.

Jesus also warns us to

"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Matt. 7:15).

We are told as the latter days approach,

"There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" – Matthew 24:24.

We know this to be true. For false prophets have plagued God's people from the beginning of history. But here we are told they will proliferate even more as the return of Christ approaches. Those false prophets will be energized by Satan's demonic hosts. He will intensify his efforts to deceive the world as he sees his doom approach.

False prophets have historically been linked with political powers.

In ancient Egypt we find Jannes and Jambres (two false prophets) assisting Pharaoh when confronted by Moses and Aaron (2 Tim. 3:8). Ancient Moab sought the false prophet Balaam in their attempt to destroy Israel (Num. 22-24). King Ahab and Queen Jezebel used the idolatrous priests of Baal to change policies in northern Israel. The Roman Empire united political and religious powers by demanding its subjects to worship the state and the emperor, (personified as the goddess Roma).

In the latter days the Antichrist will join political and religious powers to consolidate his authority. He will use an individual known in Revelation 13:11 as “**another beast,**” and in Revelation 20:10 he is called the “**false prophet.**”

Just as the Antichrist is the culmination of all previous antichrists, the False Prophet, will be the culmination of all religious deceivers to precede him [16:13-14].

“And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and **out of the mouth of the false prophet.** ¹⁴ For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.”

He will be Satan’s last and most powerful deceiver the world has ever seen. He will be the “high priest” that will deify the Antichrist. His purpose is to convince the world that the Antichrist is god, and that he is the only hope for the world’s

salvation. It is he and his policies that are highlighted in the latter part of this chapter (Revelation 13:11-18).

Three features are underscored in this passage – First, the false prophet’s character (v. 11); second, is his authority (vs. 12-14), and finally, is his policy (vs. 15-18).

THE FALSE PROPHET’S CHARACTER (v. 11)

“And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.”

Three aspects of his character unfold in this verse.

His Origin: “*Coming up out of the earth*” – Rev. 13:11a.

“And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth.”

Like the Antichrist, the false prophet will be indwelt by a demon out of the abyss which is pictured here as the flaming depths of the earth.

In the ancient world, the earth was less mysterious and foreboding than the sea. Thus when we find the False Prophet rising from the earth, it suggests that he will be subtler, gentler, less overpowering, and less terrifying than the Antichrist. He will be winsome and persuasive and the epitome of the wolves in sheep’s clothing that Jesus warned of in Matthew 7:15.

His Appearance: “*and he had two horns like a lamb*” – Rev. 13:11b

The description of the two horns on this second beast reminds us of similar characteristics that were found on the first beast. Remember, the first beast is grotesque and

frightening with its 10 horns and seven heads and 10 crowns and seven blasphemous names.

In contrast, this second beast merely has two horns, which are characteristic of a lamb. That indicates he is not going to display the same massive might as the Antichrist. And unlike the Antichrist who will be savage, ferocious, fierce, and deadly with the combined power of a leopard, bear, and lion, this False Prophet seems to be as harmless as a lamb.

Nor does he come as a conquering dictator, but on the surface appears as a subtle deceiver, with meekness and gentleness, but not without great authority. (MacArthur, Revelation 12-22, pg. 58.)

This False Prophet occupies a secondary role in supporting the activities of the first beast.

His Speech: *“and he spake as a dragon”* – Rev. 13:11c.

So, despite his deceptively mild appearance, this False Prophet is no less a child of hell than the Antichrist. This is evident because he speaks as a dragon, a strange voice indeed for a lamb. The False Prophet, like the Antichrist, will be the dragon’s (Satan’s) mouthpiece, speaking his word.

However, unlike the Antichrist who speaks blasphemous words against our Lord, he will speak winsome, deceiving words of praise about the Antichrist, luring the world to worship that vile, Satanic dictator.

THE FALSE PROPHET’S AUTHORITY (vs. 12-14)

“And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound

was healed. ¹³ And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, ¹⁴ And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which **he had power to do in the sight of the beast**; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.”

The false prophet will exercise the same kind of demonic power and authority as the Antichrist since both are empowered by the same source. Furthermore, another interesting note says,

“He (the False Prophet) had power to do (these miracles) in the sight of the beast (the Antichrist)” - Rev. 13:14.

Since both have this power, it seems that the Antichrist will delegate this authority to him. The False Prophet’s mission will be to use all the means available to him to cause the earth and all those who dwell in it to worship the first beast. He will lead the worldwide cult of antichrist worship.

His First “Miracle”

One of the first miracles he will perform will be to bring about the apparent healing of the first beast. This supposed resurrection from the dead will be in attempt to imitate Christ resurrection.

In my opinion, it is more likely that the Antichrist’s death will be staged and hence his resurrection will be a ruse. However, in either case, the world will accept the Antichrist’s resurrection as genuine. This will enhance the Antichrist’s prestige and that of the False Prophet.

A Series of Other Miracles:

“And **he doeth great wonders** (*signs*), so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, ¹⁴ And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles” – Rev. 13:13-14.

The Greek word for wonders is σημεῖον (*semeion*) meaning, “miracles” or “signs.” Many believe he will attempt to mimic the signs performed by Jesus Christ, but also those of the two witnesses.

These satanic wonders will be extremely persuasive for those on earth. It seems the False Prophet will be imitating the two witnesses that were sent by God, for he makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth. And in fact, it seems he will repeatedly perform this supernatural act in the presence of men to impress them with his power.

Them that dwell on the earth

Them that dwell on the earth is a technical phrase **used eight times** throughout the book of Revelation. It is a reference to those who have rejected Christ [Rev. 3:10; 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 13:8, 12; 17:2, 8].

Because believers know the truth and are protected by their God, they will recognize the False Prophet’s teachings as lies and will not be swayed because of the signs which was given to him to perform in the presence of the beast.

The unbelieving world will be deceived on two accounts. First, it is Satan who is working through the False Prophet’s teaching and deceptive works. Second, God will send upon the world a deluding influence.

“And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; **because they received not the love of the truth**, that they might be saved. And for this cause, **God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:** ¹² That they all might be damned who believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” - 2 Thess. 2:10.

He will make an image:

As the power of the Antichrist and the persuasiveness of the False Prophet grow, Satan will escalate the false world religion of anti-christian worship. Humanity will eventually be so completely under the influence of the False Prophet that the people will obey his command to make an image to the beast. Like king Nebuchadnezzar did before him, but this time on a global scale, the Antichrist, aided by the False Prophet, will set up a statue on the temple grounds in Jerusalem. This will be connected with the abomination of desolation and will be a tribute to the awesome power of the Antichrist, “which had the wound by a sword, and did live (Rev.13:14).

Breath to the Image:

In a display of his power to deceive, the False Prophet will give *breath* to the image of the beast so that the image of the beast would speak.

An interesting Greek word is used in verse 15 for “life.” The term used in this passage is πνεῦμα *pneuma*. It is the word for “*breath*” and not the normal word for life which is “*zoe*” or “*bios*.”

In other words, the False Prophet will give the image the appearance of being alive. Another thought regarding this

“breath.” When God created man, He breathed in them “the breath of life” (Gen. 2:7) making man into His image. Though Satan does not have power to create a race after his likeness, he apparently has the power to give breath to this image. This image is an expression of his likeness.

THE FALSE PROPHET’S POLICY (vs. 15-18)

“And he had power to give **life** unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

His Policy:

His policy, or his mission will be to cause the world to worship Satan and the Antichrist. At this point in his appearance, he will drop the façade of gentleness and cause all those who do not worship the beast to be killed.

This is very similar to the case of Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 3:6) where he decreed those who refused to worship his image to be put to death. This decreed death sentence will affect all true believers in Christ. However, not all will be killed, some will survive the tribulation period and enter the millennial reign at Christ’s second coming.

His Plan – The Mark:

“And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: ¹⁷ And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name” – Rev. 13:16.

The Mark signifies that the person bearing it was a worshiper and loyal follower of the Antichrist. In much the

same way, the Roman Emperors require their subjects to prove their loyalty by offering sacrifices to Caesar. Those who refused, like those who will refuse to take the Antichrist’s mark, will be subject to execution.

The number of the beast:

“Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number *is* Six hundred threescore *and* six” – Rev. 13:18.

Special attention is given to this last verse of this prophetic chapter [**Rev. 13:18**]. God is appealing to his followers to seek wisdom for they will be able to determine the identity of the beast. Once the tribulation period begins, the identity of the Antichrist will not be a mystery for he will be the one to sign the seven-year peace treaty with Israel.

There is endless speculation concerning the number 666. Some Bible scholars believe that the Antichrist’s name [given numerical value by the letters in his name] will add up to the sum of 666.

Letters in Hebrew, Latin and Greek all have numerical equivalents. J. B. Smith suggests that the six Roman numerals [I, V, X, L, C, D.] add up to 666 which alludes to the possibility of a Roman being the Antichrist. Others have suggested that the three sixes [666] could represent the unholy trinity – the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet.

Although there is much speculation about this number, we do know the number 6 is the number of “man” throughout the Scriptures. John Walvoord gives a good explanation of this. Whatever is the correct interpretation, it is evident that God wants His people to be forewarned against this

great deceiver, and God has graciously granted this clue whereby we can recognize this man of sin.

Two Evil Characters:

Chapter 13 of Revelation is the only prophetic chapter in Scripture that presents in detail the two evil characters and their wicked activities at the end of the age. This seven-year tribulation period will be characterized by a one-world government and a one-world religion that will exalt Satan. Many believers will be martyred for the cause of Christ while many others will be deceived to follow the beast.

The destiny of the False Prophet will be the **same** as the Antichrist for they will be cast alive into the lake of fire [Rev. 19:20]. Those who have trusted Satan throughout the ages, along with those who follow the Beast and the False Prophet during the tribulation period will stand before God at the Great White Throne Judgment [Rev. 10:11-15].

It is here the unbelievers will be judged, sentenced, and cast into the lake of fire forever with the unholy trinity, Satan's angels, and his ungodly cohorts.

This sobering chapter of the two Satanic characters yet to come stand as a warning to the unbelieving world that they face a horrible time of deception, tribulation, and damnation without Christ. It will be a time of absolute rule by Satan and his cohorts, bringing unleashed wickedness never seen before on the face of the earth.

To the believers:

It is always a challenge to live godly, watchful lives for Jesus Christ and to give the Gospel to a lost and dying world that is headed for destruction.

Our present-day world is attempting to unify itself into a one-world government and into a one-world religion. Knowingly or unknowingly, governmental leaders, the media, financial institutes, along with commerce, educational establishments, and religious organizations, are setting the stage for this end time scenario.

May the Lord help us all to be ***faithful*** in these last days.



Devotional Thoughts

Revelation 14:1-20

“Don’t Take That Mark” is an ominous title for this study, but fits the context of this passage. Remember, Revelation 14 sits in the middle of the seven-year tribulation period. Up to this point, many things have happened that has shaken the world to its very core. There are still many more things that will occur. In our immediate context, the False Prophet is commanding everyone to take the mark of the beast. This mark shows allegiance to the Antichrist and solidarity with his war against the Lamb.

God now sends three angels to warn every one living to **NOT** take the mark.

Let’s review so we can better understand the context of Revelation 14.

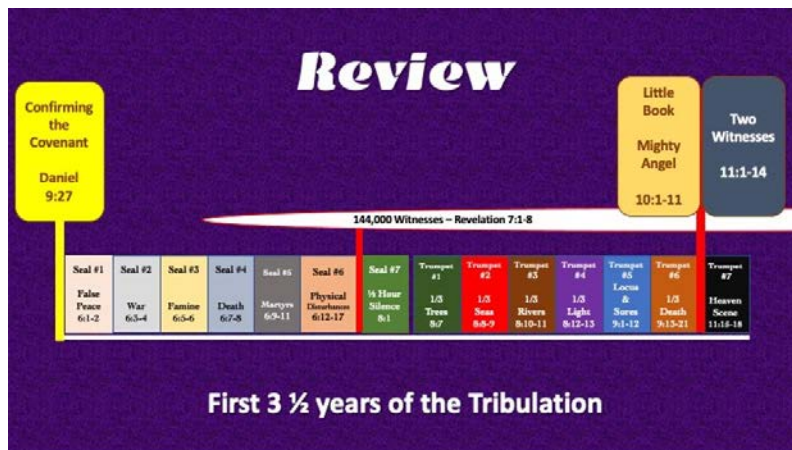
1. After the signing of the covenant (the one mentioned in Daniel 9:27 made with Israel and many) the Tribulation Period begins.
2. In Chapter 6, a **world leader** is pictured luring the world into a false sense of peace. But that does not last long. Soon a **global war** breaks out. This is followed by **famine** and **death**. Tragically, one-fourth of the earth’s population is wiped out in this judgment. (This is known as the Seal judgments.)

The world’s hatred of believers increases and **martyrdom** spreads. This period ends with **physical disturbances** appearing globally.

3. At this point, the book of Revelation takes a brief pause. Chapter 7 describes the appearance of **144,000 Jewish witnesses** who are sealed by God and sent out into the world to share the gospel. They will be seen again in Chapter 14.
4. Following this, the seventh seal is opened and **silence sweeps**

heaven for a half hour. The next series of judgments (called the trumpet judgments) are about to be poured out.

The Trumpet judgments bring a series of ecological and cosmic disasters on earth. **One third of the trees**, one third of the **seas**, one third of the **rivers**, and one third of the **light** (Sun, moon and stars) are afflicted. During this time, **painful sores** break out on men and torment them for nine months. This ends with **another third of the earth's population perishing**.



By now, 1/2 of the world's population has perished. Terror, anger, and confusion fill those that remain. Again, at this point, the book of Revelation pauses to reveal more details.

- In Chapter 10, a **mighty angel** appears with a little book and makes an oath . . .

“by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, **that there should be time no longer:** . . .

the mystery of God should be finished, as he (God) hath declared to his servants the prophets.”

- In Chapter 11, we are met with another sight. **Two witnesses** appear in Jerusalem for 1260 days testifying of God.

This chapter ends with another heavenly scene where the angel announces, “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever.” – Rev. 11:15-19

- In Chapter 12 we find the **sweeping history of Israel** and the travail of the nation as she is assigned the task of bringing the Messiah into the world. Satan is pictured as tormenting the nation and seeking to destroy her and her Child. Israel finally gives birth to the Child and at the end of days **Israel flees** into the wilderness for 1260 days (3½-years).

- In Chapter 13 we find the wounding and reviving of **the Antichrist**, the appearance of a **False Prophet** who mandates that the world worships the beast and **takes his mark** as a sign of allegiance and worship.



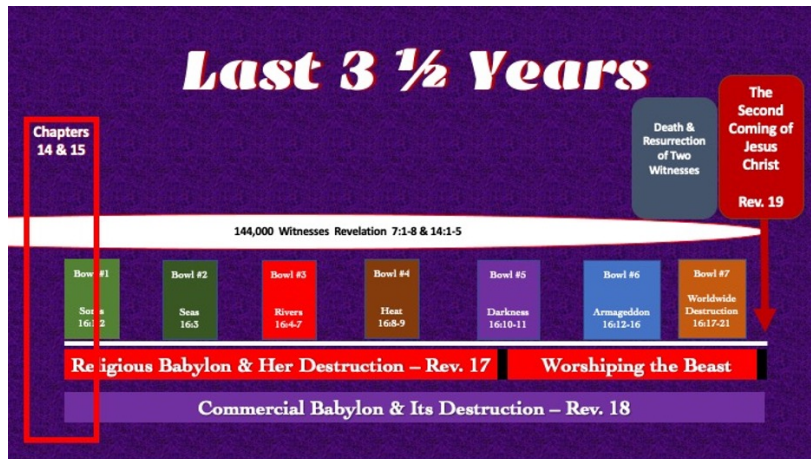
WHAT IS TO COME:

1. A Summary of What Lies Ahead

Chapter 16 lists the final bowl judgments: **Sores, Seas, Rivers, Heat, Darkness, Armageddon, Worldwide Destruction.**

While these judgments unfold, we will see

- The rise and demise of **religious Babylon** (chapter 17)
- The rise and demise of **political and commercial Babylon** (Chapter 18) and
- The **Second Coming of Christ** (Chapters 19).



- Again, that ominous title “Don’t Take That Mark” sits right in the middle of all these events.

Let me read Revelation 14:9-11

“And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, ¹⁰ The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.”

WHY? WHAT IS HAPPENING HERE?

As stated before, we will see five features appearing in this passage. (1) **Hope**, (2) **Three warnings**, (3) A **Promised Blessing**, (4) The **Coming Reaping** and (5) the **Final Staging** for the Bowl Judgements.



HOPE

The way you interpret the first five verses of chapter 14 is key to understanding the purpose behind this revelation.

There are five different views. You will find them on pages 217-219 in these notes. Today we will look at the one I believe to be the correct view. It is also the most popular one.

“And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads.” – Rev. 14:1.

This group of 144,000 men is the same group of Jewish believers that were sealed and protected by God in chapter 7. They are appointed by God to evangelize the world throughout the tribulation period.

Note in Revelation 7 they were sealed after the seal judgments and before the Trumpet judgments began.

Rev. 7:3 - “Saying, ‘Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.’”

The sealing protected this group of men from death, enabling them to evangelize the earth.

In Revelation 14:1, they are prophetically seen as standing triumphantly with their Lamb at the end of the Tribulation. They are seen intact and preserved by God through the most horrible time in history.

They are identified as belonging to the Father and the Son, by having the Father’s name written on their foreheads.

Triumphal View of the End of the Tribulation

This vision pictures the triumphal end of the tribulation period. It is revealed before the bowl judgments are poured out in order to encourage the believers to be faithful to the end.

“These were redeemed from among men, **being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb**” – Revelation 14:4

The 144,000 are described as “**the firstfruits.**” The firstfruits of what? I believe they are the firstfruits of those who will enter the Millennial kingdom.

Some say they are the firstfruits of Jews redeemed after the rapture of the church. This view does not take into account Revelation 7:3 where their sealing takes place at least one year into the tribulation period (after the seal judgments and before the trumpet judgments). To hold this view would mean the unlikely scenario that no one of Jewish descent turned to Christ until the seal judgments were finished.

A Voice from Heaven – Revelation 14:2-3

“And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: ³ And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.”

John now directs our attention to heaven where he hears a voice of many waters. . .of great thunder, the voice of harpers . . . and they sung.

It is a sound of joy when all of heaven will resound with loud praise when Christ returns to earth in triumph to establish His earthly kingdom.

THREE WARNINGS

John now directs our attention to three angels with a proclamation for all those on earth.

Receive the Everlasting Gospel

“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, ⁷ Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters” – Rev. 14:6-7.

Don't take the mark, rather receive the everlasting gospel. Although millions have been saved through the preaching of the two witnesses and the 144,000 Jewish evangelists, many others have not made a decision.

God shows his incredible grace on mankind [Matt. 24:14] by offering them another opportunity to repent before the unleashing of the final and terrifying bowl judgments. Therefore, fear and worship Him instead of the Antichrist. This gospel is everlasting because it brings eternal life to those who receive it.

Remember, this World's System will be Destroyed.

“And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication” – Rev. 14:8.

Unlike the first angel who came before him, this second angel pronounces the bad news of judgment instead of the good news of salvation. This judgment is on Babylon, the Antichrist's mighty empire – the most powerful empire in history – will come to a destructive end.

Her judgment is certain for even though the angel is speaking of Babylon's future judgment [see Rev. 17 and 18], it can be spoken of as if Babylon's destruction has already taken place.

Return to God, Don't Take That Mark

“And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, ¹⁰ The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name” – Rev. 14:9-11.

This angel will deliver his message **loud** and clear – do not give homage to the beast or his image and do not receive

the mark of the beast. Disobedience of the angel's message will result in God's undiluted wrath and judgment.

Their fate will be unending damnation in the lake of fire. Not only will they have no rest to their torment but to add to their shame and humiliation, they will be tormented in the presence of the Lamb and His holy angels [Ps. 139:7-8; Matt. 10:28].

BE PATIENT: THERE IS A PROMISED BLESSING

“Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

¹³ And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, ‘Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.’”

Here again God gives encouragement to his followers, in the midst of judgments pronounced on an unbelieving world. This is the most startling blessing in all of Scripture, and this is the second beatitude of seven in Revelation [cf. 1:3; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14].

This introduces one of the most important doctrines in Scripture. 1) How will these saints be able to persevere in such a time as this? 2) Why are the dead in the Lord considered blessed?

The Scripture tells us in two ways – in how they lived and in how they died.

How they lived [v. 12]

The perseverance of the saints will be manifested in their obedience to God's commandments. No group of believers

has, nor will ever face the strong assaults on their faith like the Tribulation saints.

They will endure the most intense time of persecution in human history. God will intervene by shortening the days [Matt. 24:21-22]. Even in the face of deprivation and certain death, their genuine saving faith will not waiver in their obedience to God and His word.

How they died [v. 13]

Here God pronounces a blessing on the dead. How can this be?

This is the tenth time that John is told to write something down; it is that important. The voice tells John that those who have died and those who will henceforth die will be blessed. How are they blessed?

The promise of rest from their labors [v. 13b]

These tribulations saints will experience excruciating hardships and sorrow – seeing the torment and death of their loved ones, struggling daily to eat and survive, living as fugitives because they have not taken the mark, etc. Death will come as a welcome relief from the struggles and fears of the tribulation period. They gladly die for Christ and experience His promised rest [Matt. 11:28-30; Rev. 21:4] than to live for the Antichrist and experience a life of torment [no rest] in the lake of fire [Rev. 14: 11; 20:15].

The promise is that their works will follow them [v. 13c]

These believers are given a promise by the Spirit. When these loyal followers of Christ die and go to heaven, their

diligent labor will follow them. God will reward believers in heaven for their earthly service [Heb. 6:10; 2 Tim. 4:7-8].

THE COMING REAPING

The Reaper: [14:14, 16]

“And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. . . . And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.”

After the brief pause to encourage the faithful in the Lord [vs. 12-13], the theme of divine wrath resumes in verses 14-20. These pronouncements describe God’s righteous judgments in the imagery of a reaper harvesting a grain harvest and a wine harvest [cf. Isa. 63:1-6; Joel 3:12-13].

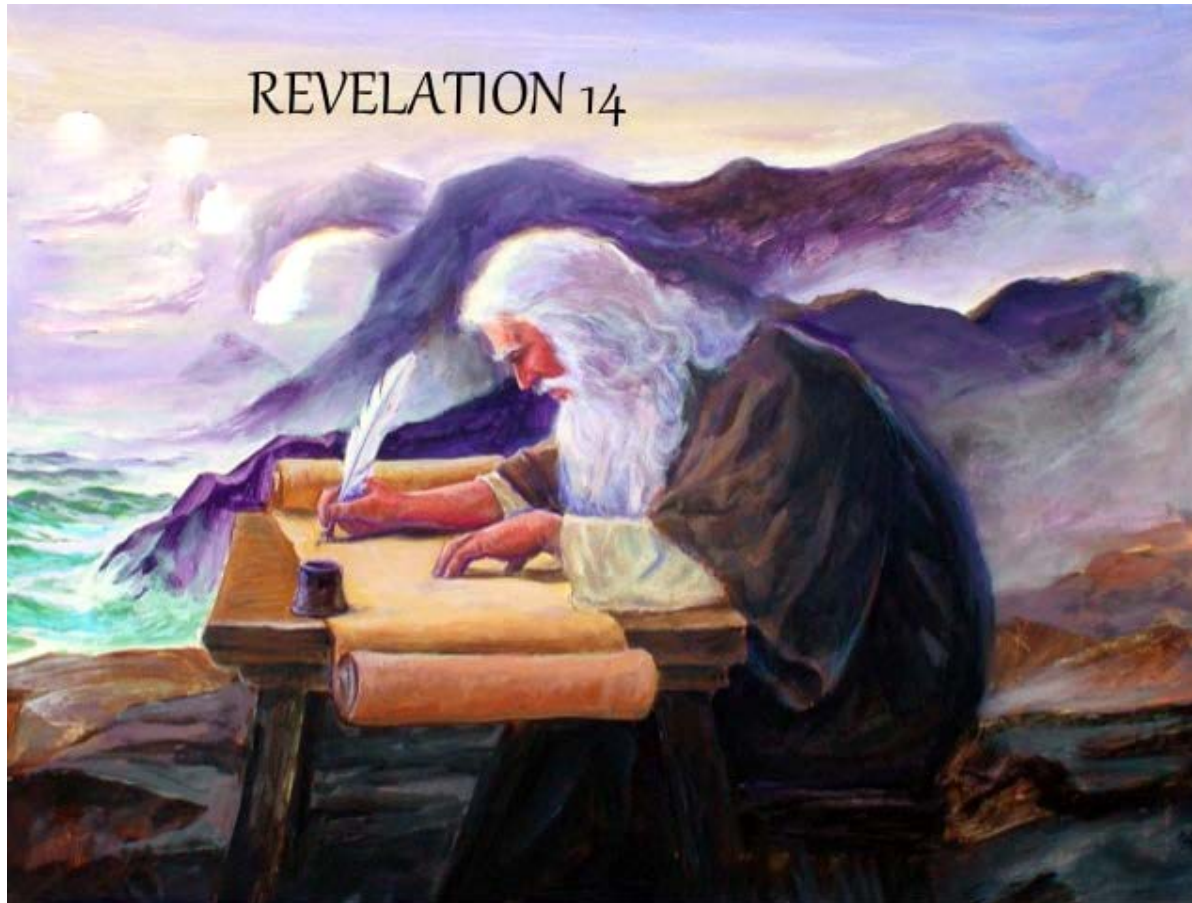
This passage is in fulfillment of the prophecy in Daniel [Dan. 7:13-14] of Christ coming to establish His kingdom. The term “the son of man” was Christ’s favorite title of Himself during His incarnation.

The brilliant, white cloud represents His glory and majesty [Rev. 1:7] and the crown on His head represents Him coming as a victorious conqueror over His enemies [Matt.

24:30]. Christ, the reaper, will have a sharp sickle in His hand. Jesus will use this sickle to mow down His enemies.

What a tragic and sobering act as the Son of man executes divine judgment on the earth. This reaping is carried out in detail in the bowl judgments of chapter 16. These terrifying bowl judgments mark the first phase in the final reaping of the earth.

More details will be found on pages 222-223.



Revelation Chapter 14 **A Vision of Hope in the Midst of Judgment**

This chapter of Revelation begins with a vision of hope to the believers [14:1-5], and ends with six pronouncements of doom to those who refuse the Lamb [14:6-20]. This chapter is the last of three chapters 12-14 that form an interlude between the seal and trumpet judgments [chapters. 6-11] and the bowl judgments [chps.15-16]. We saw in chapter 12 Satan's destructive plan for Israel. In chapter 13 we saw the two evil cohorts empowered by Satan who will try to accomplish his will. Although Satan and his diabolical duo may appear somewhat successful in the last 3½ years of

the tribulation, John's vision in chapter 14 shows us that the Lamb, Jesus Christ, is the real victor in the age-old struggle between God and Satan.

A VISION OF CHRIST ON MT. ZION **[vss. 1-5]**

The way you interpret the first five verses in chapter 14 depends on (1) your view of where Mt. Zion is located – heaven or earth – and (2) who are the 144,000 standing with the Lamb?

The Heavenly View

If you see this scene occurring in heaven, then there are three different views on what is happening..

View #1:

The 144,000 were martyred on or before the middle of the Tribulation.

The 144,000 are the same group of Jewish believers as in Revelation chapter 7. They were sealed and protected for a certain period of time until their evangelistic work was finished on earth. In Revelation 14, they are

in heaven with Christ, rejoicing over the ultimate triumph of the Lamb. This view holds that Chapter 14:1-5 takes place at the middle of the tribulation before the bowl judgments are released.

View #2:

This 144,000 is a different group than in chapter 7. These are martyred believers that have been killed for the testimony of Christ during the first half of the tribulation period. They have sealed their testimony of faith in the Lamb with their blood and are now appearing in heaven with their Lord.

View #3:

This 144,000 in chapter 14 are the most outstanding Christian saints from the church age. They are selected from the early days of the church until the rapture. They enjoy a special position before the throne of God. This began with their death and will continue until Christ's second coming. They will also have an important job in the millennial reign. Revelation Unveiled by Tim LaHaye, chapter 14, p. 232.

THE EARTHLY VIEW

If you see this scene unfolding on earth, then there are two popular views.

View #1:

This is a prophetic vision of the ultimate victory of Jesus, the Lamb of God. It is given to encourage both the Apostle John and the persevering saints in the tribulation period. This vision comes right before the bowl judgments are released upon the earth. These final judgments are the final and most devastating of God's judgments.

This vision looks forward to the end of the tribulation period. It prefigures Jesus Christ returning to earth [19:11-16], the defeat of the world's armies [19:17-19], the judgment of the Antichrist and the False Prophet [19:20], and the unbelievers [19:21]. It also portrays Satan's imprisonment for 1000 years in the bottomless pit [20:1-3]. After all of this is accomplished, Christ then joins the 144,000 on Mt. Zion, a place of security, blessing and glory during Christ's thousand-year reign on earth.

View #2: (this writer's view)

This group of 144,000 is the same group of Jewish believers that were sealed and protected by God in chapter 7. They were to evangelize the world throughout the entire tribulation period. They are prophetically seen standing triumphantly with their Lamb at the end of the tribulation, still intact and preserved by God through the most horrible time in history. They are identified as belonging to the Father and the Son, by having the mark of the Father in their foreheads. This vision is intended to encourage the saints to remain faithful by giving them a glimpse of the witnesses triumphal end. It comes before the remaining bowl judgments are poured out. The 144,000 are described as "the firstfruits" of those who will enter the Millennial kingdom.

A VOICE FROM HEAVEN [v. 2]

John now directs our attention to heaven where he hears a voice of many waters. . .of great thunder. Both the voice of God and the Lord Jesus Christ is described in this way [Ezek. 43:2; Rev. 1:15]; however in Rev. 19:6 the use of these two phrases describe the voice of a heavenly multitude. This is best understood here as a heavenly choir having musical qualities. It is a sound of joy when all of

heaven will resound with loud praise when Christ returns to earth in triumph to establish His earthly kingdom.

A new song [vs. 3]

This song began in Rev. 5:9-10 with the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders. Shortly afterwards, the angels joined in [5:11-12] and all living creatures [5:13]. Next the tribulation martyrs joined this musical crescendo [7:9-10]. Finally, the 144,000 join in with this heavenly praise [Rev. 14:3]. This may be a vision of what takes place at the end of the tribulation period, since the 144,000 are joining in on the heavenly praise.

The song will be new in respect to the 144,000. It is unique to them. For we are told that “no man can learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand.” Why the song is restricted to the 144,000 is not stated.

THE GODLY CHARACTERISTICS OF THE 144,000

Purity

In a time of unrestrained sin and sexual perversion, these chosen servants of God will keep themselves pure and undefiled with women [1 Thess. 4:3; 2 Tim. 2:22; 1 Cor. 6:13, 18]. They are spiritually pure because they are not part of Satan’s world system. Their lives shine forth as testimonies of purity against the backdrop of grossly, immoral, and sexual perversion.

Devotion [14:4b]

Another characteristic of the 144,000 is that they are loyal to the Lamb, no matter what the cost. Jesus still seeks individuals that are unreservedly, devoted to Him in all areas of their lives [Matt. 16:24; John 10:27].

Purpose

Although God has purchased all believers, these 144,000 Jewish men have been redeemed and chosen for a specific purpose. Hand chosen by God, these Jewish men were to proclaim the gospel to the lost souls of the tribulation period. They are the first fruits of Israel to enter the Millennial Kingdom.

(Other believe they are the firstfruits of Jewish people to be saved after the rapture of the Church; thus, foreshadowing Israel’s salvation as a nation when Christ returns at the end of the tribulation [Zech. 12:10]. However, this is not likely since their sealing occurred after the seal judgments and before the trumpet judgments. This view implies that no one of Jewish descent were saved during the opening conflicts found in Revelation 6.)

Truthfulness

These 144,000 will not propagate Satan’s lies but will only speak God’s truth [Zeph. 3:13]. They will not support the “false wonders” [13:13] nor the deception of wickedness promoted by the Antichrist and his False Prophet. Without hesitation, the 144,000 will accurately proclaim God’s word.

Blameless [14:5b]

Being without guile does not mean sinless [Eccl. 7:20; Rom. 3:10-12; 1 John 1:8-10], but the 144,000 will be set apart in their service to the Lamb. Since they led lives of purity, devotion, singleness of purpose and truthfulness, they will be blameless in God’s sight. They will live lives above reproach that will bring forth the greatest spiritual revival the world has ever seen.

THE SIX PRONOUNCEMENTS OF JUDGMENT OF THE WICKED [14:6-20]

John now directs our attention to three angels with a proclamation for all those on earth. He does this through his second vision, in which three angelic messengers proclaim judgment. As we saw so often before in the book of Revelation, angels play an important role in end-time events. The messages of these angels in particular anticipate the judgment of the seventh trumpet sounded in Rev. 11:15 and are poured out in chapters 15 and 16.

The First Pronouncement – Angel #1: having the Everlasting Gospel [14:6-7]

This angel appears in mid heaven with a loud voice where everyone can see and hear the gospel being preached throughout the world. The angel is high enough in the heavens that Satan and his demons cannot reach him, since their demonic activities have now been restricted to the earth [Rev. 12:12].

Although millions have been saved through the preaching of the two witnesses and the 144,000 Jewish evangelists, many others have not made a decision. God shows his incredible grace on mankind [Matt. 24:14] by offering them another opportunity to repent before the unleashing of the final and terrifying bowl judgments. The angel appeals to sinners to turn to the Creator because creation declares God's power and glory, and warns them that this same Creator will also be their Judge. Therefore, fear and worship Him instead of the Antichrist. This gospel is everlasting because it brings eternal life to those who receive it.

The Second Pronouncement – Angel #2: declaring Judgment [14:8]

Unlike the first angel who came before him, this second angel pronounces the bad news of judgment instead of the good news of salvation. This judgment is on Babylon, the Antichrist's mighty empire – the most powerful empire in history – will come to a destructive end. Babylon in scripture is the symbol of all that is evil and rebellious against God. This end time Babylon [comprised of political, economical and religious ties] will seduce the world into sexual perversion and spiritual immorality. Her judgment is certain for even though the angel is speaking of Babylon's future judgment [see Rev. 17 and 18], it can be spoken of as if Babylon's destruction has already taken place.

The Third Pronouncement – Angel #3: proclaiming Damnation [14:9-11]

This angel will deliver his message *loud* and clear. "Do not give homage to the beast or his image and do not receive the mark of the beast." Disobedience of the angel's message will result in God's undiluted wrath and judgment. Their fate will be unending damnation in the lake of fire. Not only will they have no rest to their torment but to add to their shame and humiliation, they will be tormented in the presence of the Lamb and His holy angels [Ps. 139:7-8; Matt. 10:28].

The Fourth Pronouncement – Blessing to the Persevering Saints

Here again God gives encouragement to his followers, in the midst of judgments pronounced on an unbelieving world. This is the most startling blessing in all of Scripture, and this is the second beatitude of seven in Revelation [cf. 1:3; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14]. This introduces one of the most important doctrines in Scripture. How will these saints be

able to persevere in such a time as this? Why are the dead in the Lord considered blessed? The Scripture tells us in two ways – in how they lived, and in how they died.

1. How they lived [v. 12]

The perseverance of the saints will be manifested in their obedience to God's commandments. No group of believers has, nor ever will, face the strong assaults on their faith like the Tribulation saints. They will endure the most intense time of persecution in human history. God will intervene by shortening the days [Matt. 24:21-22]. Even in the face of deprivation and certain death, their genuine saving faith will not waiver in their obedience to God and His word.

2. How they died [v. 13]

“And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.” (Rev. 14:13).

“And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and **I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus,** and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years” (Rev. 20:4).

God pronounces a blessing on the dead. How can this be? This is the tenth time that John is told to write something down; it is that important [cf. 1:11, 19; 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14; 19:9; 21:5]. The voice tells John

that those who have died and those who will henceforth die will be blessed. How are they blessed?

a. They may rest from their labors

These tribulations saints will experience excruciating hardships and sorrow – seeing the torment and death of their loved ones, struggling daily to eat and survive, living as fugitives because they have not taken the mark, etc. Death will come as a welcome relief from the struggles and fears of the tribulation period. They will gladly die for Christ and experience His promised rest [Matt. 11:28-30; Rev. 21:4] than to live for the Antichrist and experience a life of torment [no rest] in the lake of fire [Rev. 14: 11; 20:15].

b. Their works do follow them

These believers are given a promise by the Spirit. When these loyal followers of Christ die and go to heaven, their diligent labor will follow them. God will reward believers in heaven for their earthly service [Heb. 6:10; 2 Tim. 4:7-8]. Their obedience and service to the Lord will result in eternal rest and great reward. No wonder this Scripture in Revelation calls those who die in the Lord blessed.

The Fifth Pronouncement – The Reaping of the Grain Harvest [14:14-16]

After the brief pause to encourage the faithful in the Lord [vs. 12-13], the theme of divine wrath resumes in verses 14-20. These last two pronouncements describe God's righteous judgments in the imagery of a reaper harvesting a grain harvest, and a wine harvest [cf. Isa. 63:1-6; Joel 3:12-13]. The fifth pronouncement represents the

unleashing of the final bowl judgments that will take place by the Son of Man in chapter 16.

1. **The Great Reaper [v. 14]** - “. . . upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man . . .”

This passage is in fulfillment of the prophecy in Daniel [Dan. 7:13-14] of Christ coming to establish His kingdom. The term “the son of man” was Christ’s favorite title of Himself during His incarnation. The brilliant, white cloud represents His glory and majesty [Rev. 1:7] and the crown on His head represents Him coming as a victorious conqueror over His enemies [Matt. 24:30]. Christ, the reaper, will have a sharp sickle in His hand. Jesus will use this sickle to mow down His enemies.

2. **The Earth is Ripe for Judgment [v. 15] - Angel #4**

“And another angel came out of the temple . . . for the harvest of the earth is ripe.”

The first three angels proclaimed that judgment was coming. This fourth angel now brings the command to execute these judgments. This angel comes from God’s throne and delivers the message from God the Father to God the Son that it is now time for judgment. God’s wrath is full. There is no more grace; there is no more delay for the earth is ripe [the idea of overripe or rotten] for judgment [Matt. 13:40-43].

His Reaping [v. 16] - “And he . . . thrust in his sickle . . . the earth was reaped.”

What a tragic and sobering act as the Son of man executes divine judgment on the earth via this forth angel. This reaping is carried out in detail in the bowl judgments of chapter 16. These terrifying bowl

judgments mark the first phase in the final reaping of the earth.

The Six Pronouncement – The Reaping of the Grape Harvest [14:17-20]

1. **Another Angelic Reaper Appears [v. 17] – Angel #5**

“And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven . . . having a sharp sickle. . .”

The reaper in this vision is not the Son of Man as in the vision of the grain harvest. It is referring to the [fifth] angel that came out of the temple of heaven that had a sharp sickle. Angels have been used in Revelation to summon the four horsemen, sound the seven trumpets, defeat Satan and his demons, etc. Therefore, it is of no surprise that angels will assist the Son of Man in pouring out the bowl judgments on earth.

2. **The Sixth Angel [v. 18]**

“And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.”

As John watches, the sixth angel appears on the scene. He is designated as the angel “which had power over fire.”

This designation is, no doubt, connected to the fact that he “came out from the altar” [Rev. 8:3-5]. Unlike the angel in v. 17 that comes from the throne of God, but from the altar associated in heaven with the prayers of the saints. In answer to the saints’ prayers, the time of the reaping of God’s judgment has come.

The fifth angel is told to thrust in his sickle. The word “ripe” here refers to something fully ripe and in its prime; therefore, the unregenerate of the earth are described as clusters of grapes, ready to be cut down by the angel’s sickle [John 15:6].

The Fifth Angel’s Reaping [vs. 19-20]

“And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth . . . and blood came out of the winepress.”

When the angel put forth his sickle, the enemies of God who survived the seven bowl judgments will not escape the wrath of God in this judgment. They will meet their end outside Jerusalem for God will protect His holy city from the carnage of the battle of Armageddon [about 60 miles north of Jerusalem]. There will be millions of people from all nations that gather in the valley of Armageddon to fight each other but then will turn and unite to fight against the army of God. This will not be a

battle but rather a bloody slaughter [14:20] for Jesus Christ will defeat the armies of the world by the power of His word [Rev. 19:11-21].

Conclusion:

Those who do not heed to the repeated warnings of God to repent and turn to The Lamb will face a terrifying future on earth and a more devastating future of eternal punishment in the lake of fire. Those who face Christ as their Judge instead of their Lamb will learn firsthand that “it is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God” [Heb. 10:31]. If only they would heed to David’s admonition in Psalm 2:12: Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little [soon kindled]. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.



Revelation Chapter 15 Doomsday Prelude

In the present world, we worry about many things – global warming, terrorism, economic conditions, environmental issues, moral decay, political unrest, etc. Although these are important issues in our day, they pale in light of the impending judgment to come. One-day God’s grace will end and God’s fierce wrath will begin on an unrepentant, godless world.

Chapter 15 opens and closes with the wrath of God. Although this is the shortest chapter in Revelation, it does not diminish its importance because it depicts the scene in heaven, immediately before the seven bowl judgments of God are released upon the earth. As this chapter unfolds, three reasons are given for the final outpouring of His wrath.

THE VENGEANCE OF GOD Revelation 15:1-2

A Sign

John is given a third sign. The first two signs [wonders] are given in chapter 12 – the woman, Israel [12:1] and the great red dragon, Satan [12:3]. This third sign is the “seven angels having the last seven plagues.” This sign is said to be “great and marvelous.” This is the most significant of all for it reveals the final set of judgments filled with God’s wrath.

The Seven Angels

Central in John’s vision is a group of seven angels. The same beings that minister to and care for God’s people [Heb. 1:14] will bring God’s wrath to a sinful world [Matt. 13:37-42]. The word plague means “blow” or “wound.” The seven plagues that the angels carry are deadly blows that strike the world with killing impact. These last plagues follow after the seal judgments [ch. 6] and trumpet judgments [chs. 8-9], but immediately before the second coming of Jesus Christ. These final, devastating plagues, which are filled

[to overflowing] with God's fierce wrath, [16:19; 19:15] are released in the last 3½ years known as the great tribulation [Is. 13:6-9; Matt. 24:15-22].

The Sea of Glass

John sees a sea of glass similar to the one he saw in Revelation 4:6. However in this chapter, the sea was mixed with fire. Some scholars believe this represents God's divine judgment that proceeds from God's holiness [Is. 66:15-16; Zeph. 1:18] while others believe it can represent the fiery trials of the believers during the tribulation. Standing on the sea of glass are the martyrs that are killed by the beast during the great tribulation. They are victorious over the beast because of their undying faith in Jesus Christ [Rev. 20:4-6]. This sea is not an ordinary sea for the martyrs are standing on it. It reflects God's faithfulness in upholding His own by His divine character and precious promises. These victorious saints are holding harps of God, which indicates that they are rejoicing and singing praises to God. The harps they hold are associated with praise [Ps. 33:2; 71:22]. These martyred believers are rejoicing because God is about to answer their prayers to take vengeance on their enemies [6:9-11].

THE CHARACTER OF GOD [15:3-4]

These saints in heaven are singing a song of praise to God. God's righteous character is the motive behind His wrath in judging sinners. It is God's holy nature that motivates this song of the redeemed. They express their gratitude in the combination of two songs – the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb.

The Song of Moses

The historical setting of the song of Moses comes from the time of the Exodus from Egypt. Moses led the Jewish people out of Egypt. God then parted the Red Sea and the Israelites found deliverance on the other side from their enemies. This song was a song of victory for God's people but a song of judgment on their enemies [Ex. 15:1-18].

The Song of the Lamb

Just like the song of Moses, the song of the Lamb expresses the same theme of God's faithfulness, deliverance of His people and judgment on their enemies. The song of the Lamb was first heard in Rev. 5:8-14. This song praises God for the Lamb's marvelous works of Creation. His just ways, and acknowledges Him as the King of Saints.

The Age-Old Question

This song of praise closes with the martyred saints asking a question and answering it on the basis of God's holiness. This is in stark contrast to the question raised by the earth dwellers in Rev. 13:4. For a short time, power was given to the beast to make war with the saints and to overcome them [13:7]. Now God is about to answer the prayers of His martyred saints [6:9-11] and bring judgment on the Antichrist and his followers. The bowl judgments are so destructive that the earth is brought to the brink of disaster. In that day, no one will be able to stand against God and His Lamb

- **Question:** Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glory thy name?

Answer:

- 1) For thou only art holy [His judgments are wholly righteous because they are based on His holiness]
- 2) For all nations shall come and worship before thee [All men will bow and confess Jesus – either as their Savior or as their Judge Is. 45:23; Phil. 2:9-11].
- 3) For thy judgments are made manifest [His judgments are wholly deserved because they refused to accept God’s Lamb – Jesus Christ]

THE PLAN OF GOD [15:5-8]

God’s angelic beings will carry out all their duties according to God’s plan. What is God’s plan? Because of God’s holiness, it has always been His purpose to judge sinners and destroy sin [Matt. 13:41-42, 49-50]. In this vision, these angels are given the instruments of bring execution upon the earth. They are given seven golden vials filled with God’s wrath.

The Temple of the Tabernacle of the Testimony [v. 5]

John’s attention is now drawn away from the singing of the redeemed saints. He sees the temple of heaven open. The word *temple* refers to the Holy of Holies, the inner sanctuary where God dwells. The tabernacle of the testimony [Numbers 1:53-54] was so named for the most important object placed in the ark of God, the tablets of the Ten Commandments [Heb.9:1-4].

The Seven Angels [v. 6]

This group of angels is not to be confused with the previous group of seven angels [1:20; 8:3]. These angels are unique because they hold the last seven plagues to come upon the

earth. The angels coming out of the inner sanctuary of God’s temple indicate that the judgments they hold come from the holiness of God. The white linen represents righteousness [19:8] as the holy angels carry out God’s will. The symbolism of the golden sashes are not clear, but the gold sashes would be fitting attire for God’s majestic beings. Some Bible scholars say the gold may represent God’s glory as they carry out his righteous judgments.

The Seven Golden Vials [vs. 7-8]

1. One of the Four Living Cherubim [v. 7]

As the seven angels come from the inner sanctuary of God’s holy temple, one of the four living creatures [cherubim] give the angels the instruments to bring forth God’s final judgments. They are given seven golden bowls. These bowls are full of God’s wrath indicating the devastating character of these judgments. The fact that God lives forever and ever is a solemn reminder that His wrath will continue even in the lake of fire.

2. The Temple Filled with Smoke [v. 8]

Just as the bowl judgments are filled with God’s wrath, now the temple of God is filled with the smoke of God’s glory and power. This cloud of glory and celestial smoke [known by the Hebrews as the “Skekinah” glory of God] is associated with God’s presence at times of great crises in God’s dealings with men. Although no one can enter this temple nor stand before Him, the Skekinah glory assures men of His divine presence and the certainty of His divine judgments [Exodus 40:34-35; 1 Kings 8:10-11]. This glorious cloud will remain in the temple until the bowl judgments are accomplished on earth to purge, cleanse and prepare for the true King and His kingdom.

Conclusion:

This chapter of Revelation establishes the background and the righteousness of the rapid-fire bowl judgments that are about to be released on the earth. By the time this judgments are poured out, the earth dwellers will have experienced the unprecedented devastation of the seal and trumpet judgments. Not only that but they have heard the gospel message of the 144,000 Jewish evangelists, the two witnesses, and the testimonies of countless numbers of Jews and Gentiles saved during the tribulation. In all this, God once again shows His mercy by placing an angel in mid heaven to proclaim the gospel so everyone can hear and be without excuse. This chapter is a clear warning of impending doom to those who willfully continue to reject God's message of salvation and their hardened disregard for His sovereignty and holiness.



The Great Tribulation

A Survey of the Last 3½ Years
Revelation 15 & 16

Our world is careening at hyper speed to a day of global economics and governance. Nor should we be surprised by this. Seventy years ago, James Warburg made this statement to our Senate Foreign Relations Committee on February 17th, 1950.

“We shall have world government whether or not you like it, by conquest or consent.”

On May 18, 1972 -- Roy M. Ash then director of the Office of Management and Budget speaking of the coming of world government declared that:

“Within two decades the institutional framework for a world economic community will be in place...[and] aspects of individual sovereignty will be given over to a supernational authority.”

To decades later, in June 1991 at the Bilderberger Meeting, Baden, Germany Kissinger said,

“It would have been impossible for us to develop our plan for the world **if we had been subjected to the lights of publicity during those years.**

But, the world is now more sophisticated and prepared to march towards a world government. The supranational sovereignty of an intellectual elite and world bankers is surely preferable to the national auto determination practiced in past centuries.”

So, the plan for globalism . . . that which we see unfolding before us . . . has been at work for decades.

In fact, shortly after Kissinger addressed the Bilderberger Meeting, Bill Clinton in his 1998 state of the union address said,

“Rarely have Americans lived through so much change, in so many ways, in so short a time. **Quietly, but with gathering force, the ground has shifted beneath our feet as we have moved into an Information Age, a global economy, a truly new world.**”

Today the last stage of this plan is underway. That is the part spoken of by Roy M. Ash in 1972, then director of the Office of Management and Budget when he said,

“Within two decades the institutional framework for a world economic community will be in place...” the second part of his statement [and] *“Aspects of individual sovereignty will be given over to a supernational authority” is taking place in our day.*

There are two types of global rule coming. One by God and the other by man.

1. The One By God

One day the world will be ruled by one King, the King the Lord Jesus. He will rule on earth for a thousand-years. It will be a global rule done in righteousness and justice. (We will talk about this millennial kingdom when we get to Revelation chapter 20.)

2. The One By Man

This is the global governance we are careening towards today. It will not be like the one established by God. It will be a world led by men in rebellion against God.

Do we not see the embers of this coming rebellion today? When we get to Revelation 17 we will see actual examples of this unholy rebellion springing up around the world.

In the context of Revelation 15 and 16 we find a man centered world government has reached its apex in the middle of the tribulation period. This global empire is in full drive.

2 Thessalonians 2:3 speaks of this coming period and calls it the **apostasia**, “apostasy” or “the rebellion” or as our bible translates the word as the “falling away” from God.

“Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come **a falling away first (the apostasy)**, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.”

So, when we read Revelation 15 and 16, we find God’s final judgment is described against rebellious men.

This judgment does not come without warning. Let me list these warnings lest we forget.

Warning #1: Scriptures foretell of this period.

It will come. It is clearly portrayed in both the Old and New Testaments. It is not God’s will that any perish.

Warning #2:

God had John specifically pen the book of Revelation detailing how everything is going to unfold. **All who have a Bible have been warned.**

It is like what Israel often does before bombing a civilian target where the terrorists are hiding. They will send ahead a missile with low yield explosives. When the missile hits its target, its low yield explosion is called “the knock”. It is a warning to civilians to flee, for within 15 minutes that building will be leveled. Get out!

Warning #3:

During the Tribulation God will send **144,000 witnesses** to go through-out the world warning and pointing people to turn to Christ.

Warning #4:

God again sends **two-witnesses** who will go head-to-head against the Antichrist. The world is privy of these men and their pronouncements.

Warnings #5-7:

God will finally then send **three angels** who will warn men not to take the mark of the beast. The whole world will see and hear these warnings.

THE TIME FRAME OF THIS FINAL JUDGMENT.

There are several views. Some see these seven bowl judgments unfold in rapid succession at the end of the tribulation period. Their reasoning for this has to do with the total destruction caused by these plagues.

The second view spreads them out over the last three and one-half years. This is the view I hold. I base this on the assumption that it will take time for the Euphrates River to dry up (at least one year of no rain with extreme heat) and then more time to amass the armies of the world to gather the Lord and finally it will take some time to mark all the followers of the Antichrist and more time for them to be afflicted with sores.)

As we enter Chapter 15, we find the staging for this final assault coming together.

“And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God” – Rev. 15:1.

And in Rev. 16:1 we find these same angels going forth.

“And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.” – Rev. 16:1.

Chapter 15 calls this a sign. There are three signs mentioned in the book of Revelation.

1. The woman, Israel [12:1]
2. The great red dragon, Satan [12:3]
3. The third sign is the gathering of the seven angels [15:1].

These are signs for the world to take notice. When you see Israel fleeing into the wilderness – it is a sign. When you see the rise of the Antichrist – it is a sign. Be assured the next sign is certain. The end is determined and will be seen in the outpouring of these final plagues.

Rev. 15:3-4

“And they sing the **song of Moses** the servant of God, **and the song of the Lamb**, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. ⁴ Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.”

These saints in heaven are singing a song of praise to God. God’s righteous character is the motive behind His wrath in judging sinners. It is God’s holy nature that motivates this song of the redeemed. They express their gratitude in the combination of two songs – the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb.

CHAPTER 16

The earth is ripe for judgment. It is overflowing with the wickedness and rebellion of mankind against a holy, righteous God. The time has come for God to execute His fierce wrath upon all those who are sinful and unrepentant. The seven angels, who were given the vials of God’s wrath in chapter 15, are now given their marching orders to release His last seven plagues upon the earth.

THE FIRST BOWL JUDGMENT – Grievous Sores [16:1-2]

The seven angels holding the instruments of judgment [15:1] are now given permission to release their seven plagues upon the earth [16:1]. These angels immediately respond to the voice of God coming from the temple. The first angel of the seven angels poured out his vial containing God’s wrath upon sinful mankind. Zechariah wrote about a similar plague [Zech. 14:12].

- **Noisome and grievous sores [v. 2]**

This judgment is in the form of physical affliction of unusual severity bringing widespread suffering. **These two words noisome and grievous when used together depict festering, painful and malignant sores.**

The word for sore *helkos* means ulcer. These loathsome and incurable ulcers [Ex. 9:9-11; Luke 16:21] will bring, unrelieved physical torment upon those who worship the beast.

- **Beast Worshipers Are Affected [v. 2]**

These malignant ulcers fall only on those people who have taken the mark of the beast and those who have worshiped the beast’s image. This establishes the bowl judgments in the second 3½ year period of the tribulation. Even though God warned them not to take the mark [14:9-10], many chose to follow the False Prophet’s edict [13:6-7].

Their disobedience to God will result in unbearable suffering and torment. Since this bowl judgment is poured out only upon the beast worshipers, the believers are exempt by this plague.

THE SECOND BOWL JUDGMENT – the Seas are Smitten [16:3]

This judgment is similar to the second trumpet judgment because it affects the seas; however, this bowl judgment is universal rather than the limited area affected in the trumpet judgment [8:8-9]. This judgment will be devastating for the seas are important to all life on earth.

- **Sea of Death**

This worldwide plague will destroy the seas of the world. The oceans will no longer be fluid but become thick, dark and coagulated like the blood of men. The world's seas will become a stinking cesspool of death as billions of sea life die. The seas will become toxic and affect the world in numerous ways.

- **Sea of Poison**

With the death of billions of fishes, marine mammals and marine reptiles, the sea will become poisoned and contaminated. The dead creatures will float to the top of the ocean. The stench of death and the potential disease of this bowl judgment will send people into distress and confusion. It will affect the world's food chain, water supply, hydrologic cycle and commercial shipping. The oceans around the world will no longer be the life-giving waters they were created to be.

THE THIRD BOWL JUDGMENT – Rivers Smitten [16:4-7]

“And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.”

By the time the third angel pours out his vial, the supply of fresh water will be in short supply. One-third of the fresh water supply was polluted in the third trumpet judgment; however, this judgment will be a staggering blow as the remainder of the earth's fresh water supply will be turned to blood, which will breed disease and pestilence.

According to verse six, people may be able to drink this water through some type of purification process, but it, no

doubt, will be bitter and repulsive. This judgment upon the rivers and fountains of the water will make human survival much more difficult since water is basic to human existence. There will be no water to drink nor water to clean the oozing ulcers caused by the first bowl judgment.

- **The Angel of the Water [16:5-6]**

“And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. ⁶ For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.”

This particular angel has been assigned by God over the waters of the earth. This angel now speaks in defense of God for the justification of this bowl judgment upon mankind. No doubt there will be a great outcry against the eternal God when they are forced to drink this putrid water in order for them to survive. Ungodly men have murdered God's saints and prophets throughout the centuries; however, the bloodletting during the tribulation period on God's people will be without precedent in history. Therefore, the angel declares that God is righteous in His judgment because He is holy.

- **A Voice from the Altar [v. 7]**

“And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.”

Not only does the angel of the water bear witness to God's righteous judgment of turning the waters into blood but now John hears another voice from the altar proclaim the same thing. This may be the voice of another angel coming out of the altar.

THE FOURTH BOWL JUDGMENT [16:8-9]

The fourth angel pours his judgment upon the sun instead of the earth. Since the day of creation, the sun has served the earth and mankind well. This judgment will cause the sun to become a deadly killer.

- **The Sun – A Deadly Killer [v. 8]**

Even though a third of the sun was darkened in the fourth trumpet [8:12], the remainder of the sun will increase in its intensity and will scorch unrepentant men and women with unbearably, fierce heat that will feel like fire [Mal. 4:1; Isa. 24:6].

With the cumulative effects of the bowl judgments putrid, ulcerous sores, lack of water for drinking and bathing and now excruciating, scorching heat men will *not* repent but will blaspheme God.

- **The Melting of the Polar Ice Caps**

From the intense heat of the sun, the great ice sheets on Greenland and the continent of Antarctica will melt. It is estimated there is enough ice stored in these great storehouses to raise the sea levels about 200 feet. The resulting rise in the water levels will bring widespread flooding, causing the polluted waters of the dead seas to flood inland. Widespread damage and loss of life will ensue. Transportation on the seas will become virtually impossible [Job 38:22,23; Amos 9:5-6].

- **Blasphemies of God [v. 9]**

God's judgments are designed to bring sinners to repentance [Rom. 2:2-5]. However, in these judgments,

men only hardened their hearts and now begin to curse God. Even in the face of God's power and righteousness, men refuse to turn to Him. Instead of driving them to their knees, their rebellion and hostility only increase, even though they recognize these plagues come from the God whom they reject. This is the first of three occasions in this chapter when people blaspheme God [16:9, 11, 21].

THE FIFTH BOWL JUDGMENT – Darkness [vs. 10-11]

- **Directed at the Beast**

The fifth angel pours out his vial upon the throne of the beast and his subjects. Bible scholars are not in complete agreement as the extent of the meaning of the seat of the beast. Some believe it is the actual throne [headquarters], others believe it's the capital city of Babylon while others believe it's his entire kingdom.

This thick darkness will render the beast and his subjects powerless in the face of God for even Satan and his evil duo will not be able to bring light to Antichrist's kingdom. This plague again will not touch the believers. Therefore, it is evident that God is sovereign, and *all* are subject to His power.

- **Brings Torment & Blasphemy**

This darkness will bring with it unbearable pain and torment. The wicked are stated to gnaw their tongues for pain which describes their severe agony; the torment of their festering sores, along with bitter water, burning heat and now heavy darkness will cause them to gnash their teeth and gnaw their tongues.

Their torment is so great, yet their blasphemy of God continues.

THE SIXTH BOWL JUDGMENT – Euphrates River Dries Up [16:12-18]

The sixth angel will pour his vial on the great river Euphrates, the most significant river in the Middle East. Along with the Tigris River, the Euphrates is the lifeblood of the Fertile Crescent in that area of the world. This supernatural event will remove the barrier that has kept the Asiatic powers from invading Israel to challenge the authority of the beast.

- **The Euphrates Dries Up [v. 12]**

The source of the Euphrates is located in the snow fields and ice caps high on the slopes of Mt. Ararat. In the fourth bowl judgment, the blazing heat of the sun will melt the ice sheets, causing massive flooding and damage to land, crops, bridges, etc.

- **Armageddon Campaign**

The drying up of the Euphrates will bring the kings of the east and their armies east to Armageddon in Israel. The evaporation of the water of this great river will enable them to cross the riverbed on dry land. What will draw the armies of the world to cross west over the Euphrates? Antichrist's world empire begins to disintegrate, and the armies of the east will cross the Euphrates in their march to Israel [Dan. 11:40-45].

This unrest among the nations [16:13-14] are part of God's plan to bring the armies of the east, along with the beast's armies, into Armageddon where they will be

destroyed at the second coming of Jesus Christ [19:11-21]. They are brought to judgment for their persecution of Israel [Joel 3:2] and because of their sinfulness and godlessness [Rev. 16:9].

- **Unclean Spirits Appear [vs. 13-14, 16]**

John's attention is now directed from the Euphrates River back to the city of Babylon. Whatever the human reasons are for the invading army of the east, the primary reason for their advance to Armageddon is satanically inspired.

John sees three unclean spirits [demons] coming out of the mouths of the unholy trinity. Frogs are unclean slimy and cold-blooded just like these demons who go forth to seduce the kings of the world to fight against God and His army [1 Kings 22:19-22].

These demons will not only persuade men to fight against God but will do miraculous signs to convince men to battle with the Almighty God in the place called Armageddon [Joel 3:11-17]. Even though these evil spirits bring the kings of the earth to Israel, they are doing God's will for all things are subject to God's sovereignty.

- **God's Challenge to His Saints [v. 15]**

Once again God encourages His saints who are still living in the closing days of the tribulation to be faithful to the end. With the final battle of Armageddon looming on the horizon, the Lord gives the third of seven beatitudes He tells His saints to be watchful and alert.

Just as a thief comes quickly and unexpectedly so will the Son of God [Rev. 22:20]. But unlike a thief, He will not come to steal but to take back what is rightfully His [Rev. 3:3; Matt. 24:42-44; 1 Thess. 5:2]. Be ready as a soldier awake and with your clothes on so you will be prepared for combat. Those who will have the garments of salvation and the robes of righteousness [Isa. 61:10]; and who have accepted Jesus Christ [Rom. 13:14] will have no shame when Christ appears [1 John 2:28].

THE SEVENTH BOWL JUDGMENT [vs. 17-21]

The seventh angel pours out his vial and this plague affects the air. This is the last and greatest of the seven bowl judgments. The death blow will be the most complete and devastating catastrophe to ever hit the earth. As the angel empties his vial, the voice of the Most High God declares “It is done” for in this judgement the wrath of God is finished [15:1]. It is the final plague of God preceding the second coming of Christ. This will bring doom to unrepentant sinners.

- **Voices, Lightnings & Thunders [v. 18]**

Like the seventh seal [8:5] and the seventh trumpet [11:19], the seventh bowl [16:18] is introduced with the imagery of a fierce thunderstorm voices, thunders and lightnings followed by an earthquake. However, the magnitude of this earthquake will be greater than any other earthquake to ever hit the earth.

- **A Great Earthquake [v. 18]**

The earth convulses as the time of the Gentiles come to an end. This earthquake is the most powerful and most

deadly quake to ever strike the earth for this earthquake will literally shake the globe [Haggai 2:6; Heb. 12:25-29].

This global earthquake will be so severe that it will drastically change the topography of the earth. Every city of the world [except for the eternal city Jerusalem] will be destroyed, leaving the monuments of men in shambles. The fierceness of God’s wrath will cause the islands and mountains to disappear [v. 20]. Great loss of life will ensue.

- **The Great City will be split [v.19a]**

This great city will be split into three parts causing great physical changes, but the text doesn’t say that the city is completely destroyed.

Although there is some debate whether this city is Jerusalem or Babylon, many scholars believe this city is Jerusalem because

(1) it is called the great city in Rev. 11:8; 21:10

(2) distinction is made between Jerusalem and the cities of the nations

(3) there will be great physical changes to Jerusalem [Zech. 14:4-10]; and Jerusalem is distinguished from Babylon [16:20].

- **Great Babylon [v. 19b]**

The fate of Babylon is much different than that of Jerusalem. Babylon will fall like the other nations of the world. However, Babylon is the special object of God’s wrath because of her wickedness and because she led

many into spiritual adultery. She must now drink of the wrath of God [Rev. 14:18-20] and will be violently destroyed from the face of the earth [Rev. 18:21].

- **Huge Hailstones [v.21]**

Those who may have been fortunate to escape the destructive earthquake will face another catastrophe — huge hailstones [boulders] weighing 100 pounds each. This is unprecedented in history for the heaviest hailstones recorded to date are approximately two pounds each.

The unusual weight of these hailstones will cause great devastation by crushing humanity and everything else left standing after the earthquake. The seventh bowl judgment is a clear demonstration of God's power and sovereignty, yet men will become so hardened in their sin and so totally committed to Antichrist and his anti-God system that they blaspheme God once again.

There is no repentance, there is no remorse, there is no sacrifice, for their souls are sold out to Satan condemning them now and for all eternity. This is the last time in Scripture that men blaspheme the name of God.

Conclusion:

The Day of the Lord is quickly approaching and there will be no turning back when judgment comes. God is a holy God; therefore, He must judge unrepentant mankind for their sin.

In that day, the unredeemed will not be able to escape His wrath [Isa. 43:13] unless they avail themselves of the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ. The pain and suffering of that day will be unbearable. Even in the face of overwhelming evidence of God's power and sovereignty, their perverse hearts only become more hardened as they are brought to the bar of justice before Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords.

In that day, they will truly understand that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of an angry God. God's loving grace will end and His fierce wrath will begin. The writer of Hebrews warns the unsaved, "Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts" [Heb. 4:7] for today is the day of salvation [2 Cor. 6:2].



Spiritual And Commercial Babylon Revelation 17 & 18

Babylon is considered the cradle of civilization because it is located at the crossroads of Asia, Europe and Africa. The site of modern Babylon is near the world's richest oil fields and has an unlimited water supply that comes from the Euphrates River. It was here that false religion began [Gen. 11:1-9] and it is here where false religion will come to a catastrophic end.

Chapters 17 & 18 of Revelation do not advance the narrative but looks back on the rise and fall of Babylon. Babylon's demise was already predicted [14:8; 16:19]. These chapters describe in detail Babylon's destruction - the fall of religious Babylon in chapter 17 [the midpoint of the tribulation] and political Babylon in chapter 18 [the end of the tribulation]. These details are given through two separate visions.

In the tribulation period, all the false religions of the world will unite together to form a one-world religion [the great harlot]. This religious body will play an essential role in Antichrist's final world empire by uniting together his military, economic and political structure. This final world religion is characterized as a harlot [whore] for her unfaithfulness has caused many people to chase after false gods and vain philosophies.

In this chapter, the harlot is the main theme. This chapter can be divided into three parts - the description of the harlot [vs. 1-6, 15], the explanation of the harlot

[vs. 7-14, 18] and the destruction of the harlot [vs. 16-17].

The Description of the Harlot - the Great Whore [vs. 1-6, 15]

The Harlot Exposed

One of the angels of the seven bowl judgments directs John's attention to the great whore [the symbol of Babylon]. The whore here is not an actual prostitute but a metaphor for false religion, idolatry, spiritual defection, etc. The powerful appeal of false religion comes from its promise to satisfy man spiritually without bringing him under God's authority. For this, the great harlot will face God's judgment without mercy.

1. She sits on many waters [vs. 1b, 15]

Although many ancient cities were located near water like ancient Babylon, her future counterpart will no doubt sit "on a commanding position on a great waterway that would make her highly influential" - a perfect place for the Antichrist to set up his headquarters. However, the word "waters" is referring to the authority and influence this harlot will have on many people and nations as she seductively leads them into false worship.

2. Her evil alliances

a. With the Unredeemed

Not only will the harlot's influence reach the highest levels of power as she seduces the kings of the earth but her evil tentacles will reach all humanity - all peoples, multitudes, nations and languages [v. 15]. The harlot "who sits upon many waters" shows that this worldwide religious system will dominate the

world of that day [the first 3½ years] for all will be under her intoxicating seduction of idolatry. Her followers will passionately give their hearts and souls [as if intoxicated] to the allegiance of this dangerously false religious system.

b. With the Scarlet Beast [v. 3]

John accepts the invitation of the angel [v. 1] and is carried away into a wilderness [similar to the landscape of Babylon today]. From this vantage point, John can see the great whore sitting on a scarlet beast identified as the Antichrist and his kingdom [13:1, 4; 14:9; 16:10].

1) Supports the woman [harlot]

Antichrist's and his kingdom is supporting the harlot. It is this false religion that will help unify and cement the rise of Antichrist's kingdom. They will co-exist for a while but the beast will come to hate and to destroy the woman [v. 16]. After this, the False prophet will force the whole world to worship the Antichrist [13:11-14] and everything will be under Antichrist's universal and comprehensive control.

2) Scarlet in color

Scarlet represents luxury [2 Sam. 1:24], splendor, and royalty. It is also the color that represents sin [Isa. 1:18] as well as blood. This adequately represents Antichrist and his kingdom for they will be rich in splendor and royalty but evil and bloody in practice. Many people [especially believers] will be murdered under this evil regime.

3) Has names of blasphemy

The Antichrist will take the names and titles that belong only to God. Antichrist will also slander, ridicule and make boastful claims against God [Rev. 13:5-6; Dan. 7:25; 11:36].

4) Has seven heads and ten horns

This scarlet beast is the same beast described in Rev. 13:1-2 - Antichrist and his kingdom. The seven heads represent kingdoms - five have fallen [Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia and Greece], one is [Rome], and the other has not yet come [future kingdom of Antichrist]. This last kingdom will be represented by ten horns [kings] that will give all their power and allegiance to the Antichrist.

The Harlot's Appearance [v. 4]

1. Dressed in beautiful clothing

Religious Babylon will be decked in purple and scarlet, the colors of royalty, prosperity and nobility. She will have all the outward trappings to allure people to her false form of worship - from kings to commonplace people - all who are unredeemed will succumb to her deadly beauty.

2. Covered with precious jewels

Not only will religious Babylon be beautiful but also she will be arrayed with fine gold and precious stones - signs of success and extreme wealth. This religious body will look great on the outside [wealth, power and

beauty] but will be spiritually dead on the inside [full of compromise, false doctrines and idol worship].

The Harlot's Abominations

1. Having a golden cup

The harlot is seen holding a golden cup of abomination and idolatry enticing her victims to drink - bringing them under her intoxicating influence and under the bondage of her false worship [Jer. 51:7, 1 Kings 14:22-24; Ezek. 20:30-33].

2. Having an evil name [v. 5]

Just as a prostitute had to identify herself in the Roman world, here she is known as (1) mystery Babylon referring to spiritual Babylon, the symbol of all worldly resistance to God, (2) the great harlot - referring to her worldwide influence and (3) the mother of harlots and abominations because all false religious systems have their roots in the city of Babylon.

3. Being drunk with the saints' blood

This harlot is declared a murderer for she is intoxicated with the blood of God's people. Throughout history, false religion has been the biggest persecutor of God's prophets and saints. The more the world chases after apostate Christianity, the more this harlot seeks to snuff out the lives of the true believers of God.

The Harlot Explained [17:7-14, 18]

1. The Angel [v. 7]

As John wondered over the beautiful and bloody harlot, the angel tells John he will explain the mystery of the woman and the beast that carries her. John understood two things (1) the woman represented false religion and (2) the beast represented the Antichrist and his kingdom [13:1; 17:3]. John is puzzled by how these two figures are connected - the woman riding the beast. Therefore, the angel begins to explain the beast and his connection to the woman.

a. The beast that was, is not and about to come up out of the abyss

The beast will appear to take a deadly wound. He will die but seems to come back to life. The false prophet will use this alleged miracle of the beast's death and resurrection to deceive the world in worshiping the Antichrist [13:14]. It is at this point that the Antichrist's body will be indwelt by a demon from the abyss. This "resurrected Antichrist" will no longer tolerate the ecumenical apostate church. He will utterly destroy the harlot for the only religion he will tolerate is the worship of Himself. [see MacArthur p. 168]

2. The unredeemed will marvel at the beast

After the Antichrist's death and resurrection, the unsaved will be deceived and amazed by his miraculous return to life [13:3-4]. This will cause many more to worship him; however, the elect will not fall for this deception [Matt. 24:24].

3. The beast will have seven heads & ten horns [vs. 9-10]

John calls his readers to pay close attention as the explanation is given for the woman sitting on the beast. It will take spiritual wisdom to understand it.

a) Seven heads

The seven heads [mountains] represent kingdoms [world empires] along with their kings. The harlot is sitting on Gentile world kingdoms. Five are fallen - Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia and Greece. The one that is [during John's writing] was Rome. The other kingdom that has not yet come" is the final world empire of the Antichrist. This final kingdom will last for only a short time [7 yrs.]. The beast will support the woman for the first 3½ years [this depicts the woman sitting on the beast] and then Antichrist and the ten kings will destroy the harlot. [see Henry Morris Revelation Record, p. 337.]

b) The eighth and is of the seventh

This verse strongly suggests that the Antichrist is the head of the seventh kingdom. As noted above, he will die [appearing to duplicate Jesus' death and resurrection] and his body will come back to life through demon possession (11:7?) and be known as the eighth king during the second phase of his rule [the last 3-years]. This resurrected "eighth" king will be the most-wicked king to ever rule on the earth.

c) Ten horns

The ten horns, which are ten kings, coincide with the ten toes of Nebuchadnezzar's image [Dan. 2:42] and

the beast of Rev. 13:1. These are ten kings that will be a part of the Antichrist's future empire. They will rule under him and will give their loyalty and authority to the Antichrist [the last 3½ years]. Their agenda will be the same as their leader - they will wage war with the Lamb of God. Their rule will be brief for the Lamb will overcome them. No one will be able to stand against God's Anointed [Rev. 19:15a, 17-18, 21]

The Destruction of the Harlot [vs. 16-17]

The relationship between the harlot and the beast come to an end. Although the Babylonian religious system helped the beast gain control of the world, the ten kings and the Antichrist will turn against her and destroy her. Why will the Antichrist turn against the harlot?

1. For complete worship

In the middle of the tribulation period, the Antichrist will declare Himself as a dictator and will demand total worship of Himself. He will not tolerate any other form of religion. He will no longer need the help and power of the church. He along with the kings will destroy the world church and substitute the final form of false worship - the worship of Himself [13:8; Dan. 11:36-39].

2. For the harlot's riches

The Antichrist will no doubt covet the vast riches of the ecumenical church. He will seek to destroy her to gain her riches for himself. Religious Babylon will be stripped of all her pomp and gorgeous robes. She will be

utterly destroyed and consumed by fire. With her destruction, nothing stands in the way of Antichrist's absolute control.

3. God's sovereign plan

Although the Antichrist is self-serving and satanically inspired, this is all part of God's plan to bring about the ultimate destruction of the last evil empire to rule the earth. It is God who puts in the hearts of the Antichrist and his kings to destroy religious Babylon. In God's sovereignty, Satan [and his followers] are just instruments that carry out the ultimate will of God.

Conclusion:

God hates every form of false worship and He will not tolerate anything that robs Him of His glory [Isa. 42:8]. Religious Babylon [the Great Harlot] known as the one world church will come to a violent end. No longer will she seduce the world through false worship. With the harlot out of the way, chapter 18 will now focus on the destruction of Babylon's political and economical empire of the Antichrist. All God's word must be fulfilled regarding Babylon's total destruction.



Devotional Thoughts

Revelation 17

The world is changing at an alarming rate.

First, it is changing in terms of knowledge.

A man by the name of *Buckminster Fuller* created the *Knowledge Doubling Curve*. He noticed that up until the end of the 19th Century that human knowledge doubled approximately every century. By the end of World War II, knowledge was doubling every 25 years. Today things are not as simple. Different types of knowledge have different rates of growth.

For example, the knowledge behind **Nanotechnology** is doubling every two years. **Clinical knowledge** is doubling every 18 months. On the average **human knowledge** is doubling every 13 months. According to IBM, the build out of the “internet of things” will lead to the doubling of **knowledge every 12 hours**.

Second: Things are also rapidly changing geographically and economically.

Geographically:

In the last 25 years 10 new countries emerged: Montenegro– 1996; Czech Republic – 1993; East Timor – 2002; Eritrea on the horn of west Africa – 1991; Slovakia – 1993; Palau – 1994; Serbia – 1990; Bosnia & Hercegovina 1996; Kazakhstan – 1991 and Montenegro Kosovo – 2008.

Economically the first credit card was issued by Diner’s Club in 1951. Today we have all kinds of credit cards, debit cards, PayPal, apple pay and so much more. A few countries like Sweden, and Denmark have almost completely gone cashless, other nations including our own are moving in the same direction. Many digital payments are made by a thumb print, smartphone, iris scan and soon by DNA. These moves will impact security, privacy and even the global economy. It will affect the way we save, spend and invest.

Thirdly, things are changing with world religions.

In the west there is a rise in Islam, Wiccan’s, and a decline in Christianity.

Within Christianity there is a departure from traditional doctrines and values and worship.

Finally, Things are changing politically.

The world is getting smaller by the second. Global economies and businesses are merging in ways they never connected before. No longer do businesses look at serving 360 million people in the US, but rather they are looking at the growing 8 billion people in the global marketplace.

WHERE IS THIS WORLD HEADING?

Our passage mentions a mystery. i.e. Mystery Babylon the Great.

Mystery Defined:

In biblical terms, a mystery is something that was hid in the past but in this age is being made known. There are three mysteries that are unveiled for us in Scripture. Each can help us understand an aspect of the last days.

- 1) The Mystery of Iniquity – 2 Thess. 2:7 (*It reveals the global wickedness and the Antichrist.*)
- 2) Mystery of Israel's blindness and the fulness of the Gentiles – Rom. 11:25. *This helps us understand the nation of Israel's 1900 year disappearance on the world scene and the rise of the church. It reminds us that one day the nation of Israel will reappear when the fullness of the Gentiles is fulfilled.*
- 3) Mystery of Babylon – Rev. 17.

The Scriptures reveal that the world will one day grow into a global empire that will be in total revolt against God. In other words, over time our world will

become so filled with anti-biblical teachings and vile conduct that it will ultimately lead to the rise of a world leader. He will be wholly given over to Satan. This global government and its satanic leader will be part of this mystery Babylon.

It is a reference to the ancient city Babel where the world once gathered in revolt against God. Later, in that same region the city of Babylon was built. The Babylonian Empire in the days of Daniel was the world's superpower. It too was filled with all the detestable practices that were prevalent in Babel.

That same vile practice and satanic oppression will in the last days fill the world. Revelation 17 is the snapshot of this Mystery Babylon. We will see two prime items detailed. (1) its religious nature depicted as a woman riding the beast. (2) Its government depicted as a scarlet beast with seven heads and ten horns.

Revelation 17 and 18 breakdown this global rebellion into two separate visions. Revelation 17 focuses on the religion that is behind the global government. Revelation 18 focuses on the political and corporate aspect of this global revolt.

Think of it this way. Religion historically has united the world in the most compelling way. Politics, economics, even military force are unable to overcome the world's cultural diversity. Only religion, with its appeal to the supernatural, can transcend the physical, geographic, historic, economic and cultural barriers to world unity.

The ultimate expression of false religion will be an essential element of the Antichrist's final world empire. The diversity of false religions will be reunited (in some way) into one great world religion.

WE SEE A FORESHADOWING OF THIS ALREADY TAKING PLACE.

Examples of this are seen with the Koran being read daily at the Vatican. Recently Evangelicals, Hindus, Wiccans, Catholics, Buddhists, Shamanists and other religious groups are gathering together to worship and celebrate a common deity. This is not mainstream . . . yet, but we are headed there. Our Scriptures point to a world religion exploding onto the scene.

As mentioned before, people are incurably religious because God created us to be worshippers. If humanity does not embrace a genuine faith in Christ, then they will seek to find a way to fill the vacuum in their soul with the worship of false gods.

RELIGIOUS BABYLON

Revelation 17:1-2 is an interlude where John is shown the religious and political system dominating the world during the Tribulation.

“And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, ‘Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: ² With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.”

The kings and the **inhabitation of the world** have become drunk with false teaching. One of the angels of the seven bowl judgments directs John’s attention to the great harlot [who is the symbol of Babylon].

The harlot in this passage is a metaphor for the coming false religion. She will mix all forms of idolatry and

spiritual defection together. It will result in all forms of vile and indecent acts. Remember, when a people embrace false religion Scripture likens their illicit conduct to a that of a harlot. False religion has the powerful appeal to satisfy man spiritually, and sometimes physically, without bringing him under God’s authority.

This false religion is described as sitting on many waters [vs. 1b]

*“Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot **who sits on many waters** . . . ”*

The above passage references the woman’s authority and influence she will have on all people and nations.

Her alliances are with the unredeemed and the scarlet Beast

Not only will her influence reach the highest levels of power **as she seduces the kings** of the earth, but her evil tentacles will reach all humanity - **all peoples, multitudes, nations and languages.**

“. . . The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitting, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.” - Revelation 17:15

The harlot “**who sits upon many waters**” shows that this **worldwide religious system** will dominate the world.

The Scarlet Beast – Rev. 17:3b-5

*“. . . And I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, **having seven heads and ten horns.** ⁴ And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness*

of her fornication: ⁵ And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH."

The woman is riding on a scarlet beast. **The beast describes the godless kingdoms throughout the ages.** We see this in the seven heads and ten horns. It is the same kingdom described in **Rev. 13:1-2**

*"And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, **having seven heads and ten horns**, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. ² And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority."*

In the book of Daniel 7:7, 19 it is called a **dreadful beast**. i.e. the Antichrist and his kingdom.

The mystery of the woman and the beast is interpreted in Revelation 17:7

"I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns."

We are told the seven heads represent **seven kingdoms** in Revelation 17:9.

"The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth."

Nations or kingdoms are often referred to as mountains in Scripture. The mountain image represents the power of kingdoms and individual kings (Jeremiah 51:25, Daniel 2:35, Zechariah 4:7).

The woman in our passage is sitting on a beast which has seven heads which represent seven mountains or seven kingdoms.

This can be described in two different ways; (a) it either means the place where the woman is sitting, or (b) **it can mean she has/had a controlling influence of the seven mountains (kingdoms)**. Since the woman represents the worldwide false religion its **best to say she is the controlling influence over the seven kingdoms and the beast she sits on.**

False religions have been a controlling factor in governments since Nimrod established Babel, and even today false religions are a controlling factor in many of the nations around the world.

"The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. ¹⁰ And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space." – Rev.17:9-10

In the passage above we are told **"five are fallen."** Since the final kingdom pictured in Revelation 17 is a global empire. The five fallen must be global empires of the past. Most believe them to be Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia and Greece.

The empire that is **"one is"** [the 6th kingdom] is the easiest to identify. It is the empire that existed during the Apostle's lifetime [Rome]. The last kingdom (which is still future).

"and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space" – Rev. 17:10

When this final kingdom arrives, it will not last long like the other kingdoms that went on before. **Furthermore, it** will be represented by ten horns [kings] that will rise out of this

final kingdom. They will give all their power and allegiance to the Antichrist.

“And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. ¹³ These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. ¹⁴ These shall make war with the Lamb” – Revelation 17:12-14.

The Beast Described

It is described as red in color. Scarlet represents **luxury** [2 Sam. 1:24], splendor, and royalty. It is also the color that represents sin [Isa. 1:18] as well as **blood**.

This adequately represents antibiblical kingdoms throughout the ages. They were rich in splendor and royalty but evil and bloody in practice. Many people [especially believers] were and will be murdered under these evil regimes.

The Beast and its Leader has names of blasphemy. *“The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition.”* Here the leader of the kingdom is seen as ascending out of the bottomless pit.

Furthermore, this satanic leader is pictured as changed at some point.

The 10 kings are described as those *“who have received no kingdom as yet”* – Rev. 17:12. **But at some point give all their power to the beast.**

In Daniel 7:8 – The beast (pictured first as a kingdom with ten horns. The horn describes 10 kings who have some authority over this empire.)

“had ten horns. ⁸ I (Daniel) considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things.”

Three of the 10 kings were uprooted by what seems to be the Antichrist.

In **Daniel 7:20-21** we are told that eighth horn

“had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows. ²¹ I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them.”

In Revelation 17:11

“And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.”

The Antichrist will take the names and titles that belong only to the true God. Furthermore, the Antichrist will slander, ridicule, and make boastful claims against God [Rev. 13:5-6; Dan. 7:25; 11:36].

Rev. 13:5 – “And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. ⁶ And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.”

Dan. 7:25 – “And he shall speak **great words against the most High**, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and

they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.”

Dan. 11:36 – “And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and **shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods**, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done.”

Therefore, the woman riding the beast, indicate that she (the representation of false religion) is the cement holding the global kingdom together.

The Woman is seen as dressed in beautiful clothing - (Rev. 17:4). They are the colors of **royalty**, prosperity and nobility. She will have all the outward trappings to **allure** people to her false form of worship - from kings to commonplace people - all who are unredeemed will succumb to her deadly beauty.

She is covered in jewels. Not only will religious Babylon be beautiful but also, she will be arrayed with fine gold and precious stones - signs of **success** and “extreme wealth”. This religious body will look great on the outside [wealth, power and beauty] but will be **spiritually dead** on the inside [full of compromise, false doctrines and idol worship].

She is holding a golden cup full of abominations. She entices her victims to drink – bringing them under her intoxicating influence and under the bondage of her false worship [Jer. 51:7, 1 Kings 14:22-24; 2 Kings 21:2-7, 9, 16; Ezek. 20:30-33].

Her Name: (Revelation 17:5).

“And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.”

Just as a prostitute had to identify herself in the Roman world, here she is known as Mystery Babylon referring to spiritual Babylon, the symbol of all worldly resistance to God. The term “great harlot” - refers to her worldwide influence. She is the mother of harlots and abominations because all false religious systems have their roots in the city of Babylon.

Revelation 17:6

“And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.”

She is declared a murderer for she is intoxicated with the blood of God’s people. Throughout history, false religion has been the biggest persecutor of God’s prophets and saints. The more the world chases after apostate Christianity, the more this harlot seeks to snuff out the lives of the true believers of God.

Revelation 17:7

As John wondered over the beautiful and bloody harlot, the angel tells John he will explain the mystery of the woman and the beast that carries her.

John understood two things. 1) **The woman** represented false religion; 2) The beast upon which she rides represents **the Antichrist** and **his kingdom** [13:1; 17:3].

What John is puzzled about is how these two figures are connected – the beast and the woman riding the beast. Therefore, the angel begins to explain the beast’s connection to the woman.

Revelation 17:8, 16-17

“Rev. 17:8 - “The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.”

*Rev. 17:16 -17 — “And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, **these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.** ¹⁷ For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.”*

This is the same beast that appeared in Revelation 13:3 which took a deadly wound to the head. He will appear to have died but miraculously comes back to life. The false prophet will use the alleged miracle of the beast’s death and resurrection to deceive the world in worshiping Antichrist [13:14].

It is at this point that the Antichrist’s body will be indwelt by a demon from the abyss. **This “resurrected antichrist” will no longer tolerate the ecumenical apostate church.** He will utterly destroy the harlot for the only religion he will tolerate is the worship of Himself.

The unsaved will be deceived and amazed by the Antichrist’s death and resurrection. His miraculous return to life

[13:3-4] will cause many to worship him; however, the elect will not fall for this deception [Matt. 24:24].

Notice the sovereignty of God – Revelation 17:17

Although the Antichrist is self-serving and satanically inspired, this is all part of God’s plan to bring about the ultimate destruction of the last evil empire to rule the earth.

It is God who puts in the hearts of the Antichrist and his kings to destroy religious Babylon. In God’s sovereignty, Satan [and his followers] are just instruments that carry out the ultimate will of God.

Insights:

Where is the Mystery Babylon headquartered?

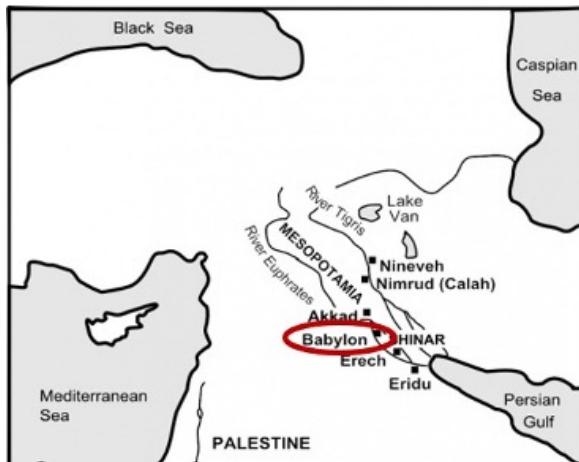
There are many views and books written on this subject. Some say ancient city of Babylon will be rebuilt and it will be the headquarters of the Antichrist. Other say his headquarters will be in Rome for Rome is built on seven hills. Still others suggest the UN or the EU have something to do with the Mystery Babylon.

TO BE HONEST, NO ONE TODAY KNOWS FOR SURE, NOR WILL ANYONE KNOW FOR SURE UNTIL THE MAN OF SIN APPEARS.

What we see today is the growing manifestation of this world’s rebellion against God. I can illustrate man’s growing rebellion in several ways. We can look at the unification of the world religions. We can look at the emergence of globalism from a political, economic, health, or ecological point of view. Or we can look at the UN in its world policies and so much the more.

In this study, I want to focus on one place in the world where this rise of human and governmental rebellion against God is in your face. **That is in the EU.**

Of course, this body of government today is in danger of collapsing with Brexit and other members of this union. But remember, **this is just an example** of how a global rebellion can emerge right under our noses and with the right charismatic leader be hijacked.



Babel to Babylon

My example goes back to Genesis 11 with the emergence of ancient Babel. It seems under the leadership and builder of Nimrod that the city of Babel was built. In Genesis 11 it became a city of rebellion, where the people of the world gathered to build a tower to reach the heavens. Its building was in disobedience to God's word. He told them to multiply and fill the earth, not to build a city.

God visited this city and struck them with languages which broke up their unity and ended their uprising for a time.

Here is an artist rendition of this tower. It is called the Tower of Babel painted in 1563 - by Pieter Brueghel the Elder.

Tower of Babel

EXISTED AROUND
2300 B.C.

Tower of Babel
Painted in 1563 - Genesis 11

by Pieter Brueghel the Elder



He designed his painting on his concept of the tower of Babel and the Roman Colosseum. He depicted a crooked tower designed with Roman construction. Its angles and the building's lean were purposeful to illustrate the failure of those governments.

About 1600 years later on a site near where the tower of Babel was built, the nation of Babylon built another ziggurat. It contained the equivalent gods worshipped during the Sumerian period. The god Marduk was then later known as Bel, or Baal. Later in the Grecian pantheon he was called Zeus, and later in Rome, Jupiter. The goddess Inanna, in the Greek culture was called Istra, and in Rome Venus. Each in their respected cultures were called the Queen of Heaven.

Ironically, we find the EU's parliamentary building in Strasbourg, France is fashioned after Pieter Brueghel's tower of Babel. The outside of the building is designed to

look like the tower of Babel, the open spaces inside the building is designed to look like the Roman Colosseum.

A side note on the Roman Colosseum. It was commissioned in 70 AD to commemorate the end of the Roman-Judean war. That war ended with the destruction of Jerusalem. 60,000 to 100,000 Jewish people were taken from Jerusalem to serve as slaves. They were ordered to build the Roman Colosseum.



The site of the EU Parliament in Strasbourg, France is also near the site of the first mass burning of Jews which took place on February 14, 1349.



The brochure passed out in Europe commemorating the \$12 billion building has 12 stars. Note that they are the inverted five-pointed star. It a Satanic symbol. The EU slogan is many tongues, one voice.

Furthermore, the EU leaders are aware of these ancient symbols and proudly proclaim their hope to complete what the builders of Babel and Rome failed to do.



Has not our world gone mad?

I don't have time to look at all the other symbols that are being replicated straight out of the ancient world. But I will name one more before I close. In front of the EU parliamentary building in Brussels you will find a statue of a woman riding a bull.

The woman is the Phoenician maiden named Europa. She is riding a white bull who is Zeus in disguise.

In the legend Phoenician myth, Zeus disguised as a bull seduces Europa. When she climbs on his back he quickly runs into the sea and swims to Crete where he reveals himself, and rapes her.

That is quite a myth to have depicting your currency, statues, paintings, and decor. This symbol of the European union is eerily similar to the woman riding the beast in Revelation chapter 17. She sits upon many

waters and is later brutally killed by the 10 kings who submit to the beast.

My point in all this is that our world has gone mad and is more than ready to be seduced and led astray.

This is just one of many examples where we see the emergence of paganism, and the idea that man is in rebellion against God. It is rampant amongst our world leaders and many of their followers.



Devotional Thoughts

Chapters 17 and 18 describe the final fall of the commercial and political world led by the Antichrist. The destruction of the one world church in chapter 17 paved the way for the idolatrous worship of this world leader. In chapter 18, we will see the angel from heaven detailing the destruction of commercial and political Babylon, the headquarters [seat] of Antichrist, and the false prophet.

Where is the seat of the Antichrist?

There are many speculations as to where the Antichrist will locate his capital. It includes the original site of ancient Babylon, to the Vatican City in Rome, to Jerusalem, to a city in Europe, New York City, or in other places.

What we do know is that it will be a godless system. It is most likely going to be a city with global control. It is called a city five times in this passage (Rev. 18:10, 16, 18, 19, 21).

Rev. 18:10 - "Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city!"

Rev. 18:16 - "Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls!"

Rev. 18:18 - "What city is like unto this great city!"

Rev. 18:21 - "Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all."

The Antichrist's capital city will be the central hub of the global empire. It will represent both a commercial and religious center.

Apparently, the Antichrist will be able to build the greatest commercial empire the world as ever seen in the midst of devastating judgments. It will reveal the Antichrist's incredible power.

It is a very somber chapter. It not only pictures the destruction of Satan's last and greatest empire, it also describes the demise of the unsaved. The unredeemed are repeatedly seen refusing to heed the numerous warnings of God [7:3-4; 11:3; 6:9; 14:6-7].

With the destruction of Babylon, which is the symbol of all that is

rebellious toward God, the stage is set for the triumphant return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Some Bible scholars do not make a distinction between chapters seventeen and eighteen. There are six reasons why these two chapters are not the same.

1. After this - Rev. 18:1a:

The events in chapter 18 are said to come after the events in chapter 17, indicating two separate events.

2. Another angel - Rev. 18:1b:

The angel of Revelation 18 is different than the angel of 17. Therefore, the angels are introducing different visions.

3. Different names:

The harlot is not mentioned in this chapter, only Babylon the Great. Two different aspects of Babylon's existence.

4. Source of destruction:

The kings of the earth destroyed the harlot in Revelation 17:16. The political-commercial Babylon the Great is destroyed directly by God.

5. Different reactions:

The kings conspired together to destroyed religious Babylon. The kings wail when Babylon the Great is destroyed – Revelation 18:9, 11

6. Different times:

It seems the harlot is destroyed after the Antichrist recovers from a mortal wound – Rev. 13:12c.. Then,

after the events of chapter 17, another angel from heaven announces the judgment of Babylon the Great.

This angel may be the one who predicted Babylon's fall earlier [14:8]. Three important characteristics are given regarding this angel.

- 1) He has great authority [Rev. 18:1]. He comes from the very presence of God. He acts on God's behalf and is given great authority by God to do His will.
- 2) He illuminates the earth with his glory [v. 1b]. This angel will make his appearance sometime after the fifth bowl judgment is released upon the earth [16:10]. His dramatic appearance will bring brilliant light to a darkened empire, causing the earth dwellers to tremble and fear at the sight of this glorious heavenly messenger.
- 3) He has a loud voice [v. 2]. Everyone will hear and no one can ignore his message of judgment. His message will add to the terror of his appearance - a message of woe to the Antichrist and his followers.

TWO REASONS FOR BABYLON'S JUDGMENT

It is a place of demonic activity [v. 2]

Babylon became the dwelling place of all that is wicked and godless. This corrupt city will be a melting pot not only of demons and evil spirits, but also of unredeemed men.

The threefold description of the inhabitants of Babylon is a reference to fallen angels in their various characteristics as demons and evil spirits.

A place of utter wickedness – Revelation 18:3

All nations have been influenced by Babylon's evil practices [religious idolatry, sexual perversions, demonic influences, etc.], causing the world to commit fornication with her, forsaking everything that is right in God's eyes

The inhabitants of the earth will prosper through their evil association with Babylon. Money will become their god, and they will become rich, selling their souls to Satan in order to acquire temporary pleasures.

FINAL EXHORTATION: Revelation 18:4-5

“And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. ⁵ For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.”

Another voice from heaven declares - “Come out of her.” This is grace. Stop partaking of her sins. Soon there will be no escape. Notice a similar warning is given in Revelation 14:9-10

Judgment Defined [18:6]

“Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her **double according to her works**: in the cup which she hath filled **fill to her double**.”

An angel calls for God to take vengeance on the sins of Babylon, similar to the prayers of the tribulation saints [6:9-10]. Enough warnings have been given; now is the time for God's vengeance and Babylon's destruction.

Reward her sinfulness – v. 6a

Babylon is deserving of her destruction. She is to be paid back for her wickedness. The angel's pleas based on the Old Testament principle of retaliation [Ex. 21:23-24; Deut. 19:21].

Double her punishment – v. 6b

Babylon's sins are overflowing, piled high as the heavens. Therefore, the angel calls for God to double her punishment in equal measure according to her works.

In the Mosaic Law, wrongdoers were required to pay double restitution for their crimes. Double refers to fullness or completeness [Ex. 22:4, 7, 9; Isa. 40:1-2; Jer. 16:18; 17:18].

1. Double her wrath from God – v. 6c

In the same cup Babylon used to deceive the nations [Jer. 51:7; Rev. 17:4], God will give her a double portion of His wrath [14:10; 16:19]. There will be no mercy when God's wrath falls on Babylon.

2. Give her torment and sorrow – v. 7a

“How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, **so much torment and sorrow give her**: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.”

God will match the punishment with her crimes. She will receive torment [torture] and mourning [the result of torture]. God will judge Babylon for the sins listed in this passage:

1. She glorified herself - she was proud – v. 7b.
2. She lived sensuously - a life without restraints.
3. She is guilty of self-sufficiency - overestimated her power.

Judgment will come quickly – Rev. 18:10, 17, 19

“¹⁰ Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for **in one hour** is thy judgment come.

¹⁷ **For in one hour** so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off,

¹⁹ And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! **for in one hour is she made desolate.**”

God will show no mercy on Babylon, and no one can thwart God’s wrath. All the power of the Antichrist and his evil demons will not be able to deliver Babylon from God’s divine judgment. Her complete destruction will come instantly - in one day, never to be resurrected again. God will destroy Babylon with complete devastation through death, famine, and fire. Her vaunted strength is no match against the power of God.

Judgment Lamented [18:9-19]

During the tribulation, sinners will refuse to mourn over their sin. Even though God’s judgments will cause untold death and devastation, they refuse to repent over their

sins; yet they mourn over the glorious city of Babylon - the loss of their wealth, pleasures and security. It is the weeping of temporal pleasures instead of the repentance over their immortal living.

There are three groups that are named in the mourning over Babylon. 1) The kings of the earth, 2) manufacturing/retailers—merchants and 3) transportation industry.

You must pause here to think of where we are in history. This passage is speaking of a global enterprise were the government (*kings of the earth*) along with the global corporations and transportation industry are teamed together in creating a system that corrupted itself to the core.

The kings of the earth – v. 9

“And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, **shall bewail her, and lament for her**, when they shall see the smoke of her burning.”

This group would also **include the ten kings** that ruled with the Antichrist and who gave their power to the beast. All their hopes and expectations are shattered with the destruction of the Antichrist’s world headquarters.

The kings will greet the news of Babylon’s demise with **uncontrolled wailing** and lamentation. All the luxuries and prosperity they have enjoyed in Babylon now come to a crashing end. **Think of it from John’s point of view in 90 AD. Covetousness**, which is idolatry, was rampant in the Roman empire. The worship of money, possessions, and so on were obvious.

For example, **Rome had gone to the limits in extravagance.** The Caesars would spend fortunes on a single meal, demanding the most exotic and rare dishes for their personal consumption.

Nero, who ruled from 54-68 AD, decorated his banquets with roses from Egypt costing in today's currency approximately \$70,000 a meal. He never wore the same piece of clothing twice. Most of his outfits cost \$40,000 each.

Caligula who ruled Rome in 31 -41 AD, demanded meals of hummingbird and flamingo tongues. He had pearls costing \$200,000 dissolved in wine to drink. He ate the livers of pike fish, and the brains of peacock. and so on.

As the kings of the final empire look upon Babylon's destruction, they realize the enormity of the situation and great terror grips their hearts. They stand far off for they realize judgment has come, even fearing their own judgment is near. Their only hope is that Antichrist and his armies [who left before destruction hit] will be able to defeat the Lamb of God in the valley of Armageddon.

The merchants of the earth - v. 11-16

“And the merchants of the earth **shall weep and mourn over her**; for no man buyeth their merchandise anymore.”

These are the businessmen who have prospered by the economic success of wealthy Babylon. Now with her destruction, all normalcy has come to a devastating halt.

The economic prosperity is seen in the mention of the 28 common commodities of the ancient world. They were a source of their financial gain and luxurious living.

1. Gold
2. Silver
3. Precious stones
4. Pearls
5. Fine linen
6. Purple
7. Silk
8. Scarlet
9. All thyine wood
10. All manner vessels of ivory
11. All manner vessels of most precious wood
12. Brass
13. Iron
14. Marble
15. Cinnamon
16. Odours
17. Ointments
18. Frankincense
19. Wine
20. Oil
21. Fine flour
22. Wheat
23. Beast
24. Sheep
25. Horses
26. Chariots
27. Slaves
28. Souls of men.

These items will never be found again for Babylon has been stripped of her wealth and beauty. The crown jewel of the Antichrist's kingdom is gone forever. These merchants weep not for the sympathy for the city but because their material appetites can no longer be fulfilled [Mark 8:36]

The shipmasters, sailors, etc [vs. 17-19]

“For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, ¹⁸ **And cried when they saw the smoke** of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city! ¹⁹ **And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing,** saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate.”

Along with the kings and merchants, now the shipmasters and sailors join this funeral dirge as they wail Babylon’s destruction. Just like the kings and merchants before them, they mourn the loss of their wealth and prosperity. Their cry is of pain, suffering and grief but not of repentance toward God. Their great [they thought] indestructible city has been reduced to ashes along with their hopes and dreams.

Judgment Enjoyed [v. 20]

“Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.”

In stark contrast to the world’s perspective on Babylon’s judgment, the redeemed in heaven are told to rejoice, especially the holy apostles and prophets, the two groups who have suffered much privation and persecution.

God has brought judgment upon Babylon for her cruel treatment of His saints. Babylon has finally gotten her just reward for her murderous crimes on God’s saints.

The prayers of God’s people have been finally realized [6:9-11] and God’s vengeance has fallen on mighty Babylon, who will never raise her ugly head again. She will never, ever deceive men again by her evil spirits and evil seductions. The inhabitants of heaven rejoice over God’s righteousness not the loss of souls.

Judgment Completed [vs. 21-23a]

“And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all. ²² And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; ²³ And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee”

Babylon’s destruction will be so complete that she will disappear forever from the face of the earth.

1. A Great Millstone – v. 21

Another angel appears on the scene having a great millstone [four to five feet in diameter, a foot thick and very heavy; used to grind grain].

The angel throws the great millstone in the sea, depicting Babylon’s disappearance into obscurity. This image was given to illustrate the complete and swift destruction of Babylon.

2. A Violent End – v. 22-23

She will experience a violent end beginning with darkness and demons, progressing from fire to flood and culminating in everlasting death. Her destruction will be so extensive that none of the normal activities of human life will ever take place in her again - no music, no commerce, no light and no pleasure [Isa. 13:19-22; 14:22-23; Jer. 50:13, 39; 51:37]. Babylon who was once arrayed in scarlet and gold, now has only a millstone around her neck, pulling her deep beneath the sea.

Judgment Justified [vs. 23b-24]

“for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived.” ²⁴ And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.”

In this portion of Scripture, three reasons are given for the justification of Babylon’s judgment:

1. Wealthy merchants – v. 23b

These successful businessmen used their wealth to gain positions of power and influence. They have lived lives of self-pleasure and opulence, ignoring and often oppressing the poor. Their love of money is their god but also their downfall.

2. Sorceries – v. 23c

All the nations were deceived by Babylon’s sorcery. Her occult influences – deceptive miracles, witchcraft and magic, demon activity, false visions, and drug use will deceive the nations into worshiping another god.

Babylon’s sorceries will be so seducing that the unredeemed will believe a lie [2 Thess. 2:10-11].

3. Persecutions – v. 24

The false religions of the world have methodically murdered God’s people throughout history. The persecution of His saints has not gone unnoticed by Him. God’s righteous judgment is justified in light of her murderous and relentless persecution of God’s saints. Satan has systematically tried to snuff out God’s truth.

The blood of God’s prophets and saints is vindicated by Babylon’s destructive end. Not only was Babylon the mother of harlots but she is also the mother of persecutions. Who she could not deceive, she would pursue and murder. Her end was just for her ways were wicked.

Conclusion:

Babylon from its very beginning has been at the center of man’s rebellion against God. All the false religions and humanistic philosophies of the world have their roots in this Satanic-driven city. Babylon will once again raise her ugly head during the tribulation period. Her meteoric rise to fame will be short lived and will come to a cataclysmic end - never to surface again. Now that Babylon is annihilated [both in her religious and political forms] this sets the stage for the triumphant return of Jesus Christ and His one-thousand-year reign on earth.



Heaven's Hallelujah

Revelation 19:1-11

Devotional Thoughts

This chapter is one of the most exciting chapters in the Bible for it records the glorious appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ. His second coming is the culmination of redemptive history. The great conflict of the ages [good vs. evil] is about to come to

an end. Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, the Redeemer of mankind is about to burst through the clouds with His heavenly host to take back what is rightfully His. He is coming in power and majesty. He will show Himself as the righteous Judge, Warrior and King. To those who know Him, it will be a great day of rejoicing, but for those who have rejected Him,

fear, terror and judgment await then now and for all eternity.

As chapter 19 opens, Babylon [both religious and political] are gone forever. Satan, the beast and the false prophet are headed toward Armageddon while the three evil spirits [Revelation 16:13-14] gather the kings and the armies of the earth to make war with the Lamb. Hordes of evil spirits and unredeemed men are assembling together for the great battle between heaven and hell.

As preparations of war are underway on earth, rejoicing is heard in heaven. The occupants of heaven are waiting with great anticipation as Christ their King prepares to descend to earth to face His enemies, to rescue His people and to establish His righteous rule upon the earth. As they excitedly wait to accompany their Leader, they raise their voices in praise and worship for God Almighty reigns and His judgments are just.

HEAVENLY HALLELUJAHS [Revelation 19:1-10]

The scene now shifts from the earth to heaven. John hears a hallelujah choir from heaven praising God for His righteous destruction of the great whore Babylon. The praise in heaven began in chapter four and continues throughout Revelation. It reaches its climax as heaven rejoices that rebellion has ended, and that the true King is about to establish His rule on the earth. There are four "alleluias" found in this chapter [vs. 1, 3, 4, 6].

Alleluia #1: Full Salvation Has Come [v. 1]

*"And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, **Alleluia**; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:"*

As the loud cries of Babylon's destruction fades, a new vision of rejoicing in heaven rings out. A great multitude is heard praising God for His salvation, glory and power. Salvation has come for God's people, and the glory and power of God is revealed by His execution of judgment on Babylon [1 Chronicles 29:11-13].

Justice is Meted Out [v. 2]

"For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand."

Heaven rejoices because God's judgments are true and righteous [Rev. 16:7]. Babylon's destruction was deserved because of her unbridled wickedness. God's people have waited for centuries for God's righteous judgment to fall on this ungodly, immoral world system. As judgment and destruction was meted out on Babylon, it set the stage for Christ to establish His righteous kingdom on earth.

God has finally avenged His people [Rev. 6:10] by utterly destroying Babylon. It is fitting and just for God's vengeance to fall upon her because of her corruptive influences and for the persecution of God's saints.

Alleluia #2: Rebellion is Ended [v. 3]

*“And again they said, **Alleluia**. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.”*

Heaven’s first “alleluia” was sung because of Babylon’s judgment. Now the second one is given because of the aftermath of Babylon’s destruction. Although the kings of the earth along with others watched helplessly as Babylon burned with fire [17:16; 18:8], the flames will end. Her judgment is final, and Babylon will never rise again.

The smoke that rises forever is speaking of the eternal judgment of the souls of sinners; their torment will last forever [14:10-11]. Under Christ, all rebellion will come to a swift end. Christ will rule with a rod of iron [2:27; 12:5; 19:15] and will instantly deal with any form of rebellion when He rules on earth, except for a short time at the end of the millennium [20:9-10].

Alleluia #3: God is in Control [v. 4-6]

Heaven rejoices that Christ, their righteous King, will reign forevermore. As the praises resound throughout heaven, others join in the heavenly choir.

The twenty-four elders and the four beasts [v. 4]

*“And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; **Alleluia**.”*

They were first introduced in chapter four and they now join in with the heavenly choir. These two groups have worshiped God throughout Revelation [4:8-11; 5:8-12, 14; 7:11; 11:16-18]. Prostrated before God’s throne, they

indicate their agreement with the heavenly choir concerning the righteous judgment of Babylon.

Their voices join those in verse one in worship and praise to God. The words “Amen, Hallelujah” mean “So be it – praise the Lord.” God’s will is perfect and He is worthy to be praise as He brings all things under His control.

Alleluia #4: The Lord Reigns [v. 5-6]

*“And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. ⁶ And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, **Alleluia**: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”*

Although the voice is not identified, it is probably an angel who is speaking for he refers to God as our God. He invites the servants of God to join in this heavenly praise. All the redeemed throughout the ages [both small and great] are called to praise God. Their voices [along with others in the heavenly choir] rise to a deafening crescendo, sounding forth throughout heaven the reason for this praise – the Lord God Almighty reigns.

The evil world system has been destroyed and God will sovereignly rule the earth in truth and righteousness.

THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB [v. 7-8]

“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. ⁸ And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.”

The Marriage Ceremony

The heavenly multitude is called to rejoice, be glad and give glory to God for the marriage of the Lamb. Marriage was the greatest social event of the biblical world. **Ancient marriages consisted of four stages.** The imagery of the wedding ceremony has been used in Scripture to picture the Lord's relationship with the Church.

To fully understand what is involved at the Marriage of the Lamb, one must first understand the background of the Jewish marriage system which was present in that day, and which involved four distinct steps.

First, the father of the groom made the arrangements for the marriage and paid the bride price.

The timing of the arrangement varied. Sometimes it occurred when both children were small, and at other times it was a year before the marriage itself. Often the bride and groom did not even meet until their wedding day.

The bridegroom takes the initiative by leaving his father's home and travels to the bride's home. He would pay a purchased price for his bride; thus the marriage covenant was established, and she was set apart exclusively for her bridegroom. They were regarded as being married. The couple would drink from a cup of wine over which a betrothal benediction would be pronounced. [Eph. 5:22-33; 1 Cor. 6:19-20]

The second stage occurs a year or more after the arrangement of marriage. **This stage is the fetching of the bride.**

The bridegroom left the bride's home and returned to his father's house. There he would remain separated from his

bride for twelve months. He would prepare living accommodations in his father's house to which he would bring his bride. At the end of this period of separation, the groom and his attendants would go to the bride's house and take the bride and her attendants to his father's home where the wedding guests are waiting for them.

Although the bride expected her bridegroom to come, she needed to be prepared for his coming because she did not know exactly when he would arrive. As a result, the bridegroom's arrival was preceded by a shout.

It is the father of the groom who determined the timing. Before the groom's leaving to fetch the bride, he must already have a place prepared for her as their abode.

Third Stage: the wedding ceremony.

Before the wedding ceremony begins, **the bride underwent a ritual immersion** for ritual cleansing.

Afterwards the bride and bridegroom would be escorted to the bridal chamber [huppah]. The bride remains veiled as she enters the bridal chamber [with her husband] so that no one could see her face. In private, the couple enters physical union for the first time, thereby consummating their marriage covenant. For seven days, the bride remains hidden from view. After this time, the bridegroom brings out his unveiled bride for all the wedding guests to see.

The fourth and final stage is the marriage feast. This often lasted for as many as seven days. Many more people would be invited to the feast than were to the marriage ceremony.

In the Marriage of the Lamb all four of these steps of the Jewish wedding ceremony are evident.

FIRST, God the Father made the arrangements for **His Son and paid the bride price**, which in this case was the blood of the Messiah. This is the background for the statement in Ephesians 5:25-27:

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, **and gave himself for it;** ²⁶ **That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,** ²⁷ **That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle,** or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”

A contract made in eternity past is made when the Father promised the Son a redeemed people, and wrote their names in the Book of Life [Eph. 5:25-27]. Jesus, the bridegroom left His Father’s house and traveled to earth, the home of His prospective Bride, the Church. Jesus paid the purchased price by shedding His blood. He established a new covenant [1 Cor. 6:19-20]. His Bride, through faith in Christ is set apart [1 Cor. 1:2; 6:11; Heb. 10:10; 13:12]. The cup of grape juice at communion serves as the symbol of this covenant [1 Cor. 11:25].

THE SECOND STEP: After a long waiting period:

A long period of time transpires between the arrangement of the marriage and Bridegroom coming for His bride. (In the Jewish arrangement, it was at least one year). Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom returned to His Father’s house to prepare a place for His Bride, and will come again for her, sometime in the future, after a period of separation [John 14:1-2]. This will take place at the Rapture. Although the Bride, the Church, is waiting for His coming, she doesn’t

know the exact time of His appearance and needs to be prepared. The Rapture is when the Church will return with Christ to His Father’s house in heaven, She will be snatched from the earth to meet Him in the air. His coming is preceded with a shout [1 Thess. 4:17; John 14:2-3]. Upon their arrival in heaven, they will find wedding guests waiting for them, as the wedding ceremony is about to begin.

Almost two thousand years have now passed since the first step occurred.

In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, we are told when the second step will occur.

“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. ¹⁵ For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: ¹⁷ Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

The Rapture is the fetching of the Bride. Jesus will come in the air to fetch His Bride to His home, which is in Heaven. Only God the Father knows the timing of this event (Mat. 24:36).

“But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. ³⁷ But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”

THE THIRD STEP: The marriage ceremony

The third stage for the church will take place in Heaven. **This is the marriage ceremony** given in Revelation 19:6-8:

“And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. ⁷ Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. ⁸ And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.”

The marriage ceremony takes place in Heaven and involves the Church.

It will take place after the Bema Seat of Christ. This is evident from verse eight, for the Bride is viewed as being dressed in white linen, which is *the righteous acts of the saints*. This means that all the wood, hay, and stubble has been burned away and all the gold, silver, and precious stones have been purified.

Therefore, following the Rapture of the Church in which the Bridegroom brings the Bride with Him to His home, the Judgment Seat of Christ will occur. This will result in the Bride having the white linen garments which represents the wedding ceremony taking place.

The Wedding ceremony takes place in heaven before the actual Second Coming of Christ.

In the context of Revelation 19, verses 1-10 describe events in Heaven prior to the Second Coming, while verses 11-21 describe the Second Coming, and subsequent events.

The thing that should be carefully noted here is that the Church is already in Heaven *before* the Second Coming.

Furthermore, the Church has been in Heaven long enough to undergo the Judgment Seat of Messiah. This clearly means that the Rapture and the Second Coming cannot be the same thing but must be separated by some duration of time. Revelation 19:6-8 is further evidence of this fact.

The marriage ceremony will take place in Heaven after the Rapture and before the Second Coming, involving only the Church saints.

THE FOURTH STEP: THE MARRIAGE SUPPER

“Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.” – v. 8

The marriage supper will take place on earth after the Second Coming during the Messianic Kingdom.

For that reason, some of Messianic Kingdom parables were in reference to the marriage feast (Mat. 22: 1-14; 25: 1-13).

Remember: The marriage ceremony involves only the Church. Later the marriage feast will include the Old Testament and the Tribulation saints.

The Wedding Guests [v. 9]

“And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.”

Those who are invited to the wedding supper are said to be blessed. This means “happy, joyous, satisfied and fulfilled.”

This is the fourth of seven beatitudes in Revelation [1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 20:6; 22:7, 14].

- Rev. 1:3 – “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.”
- Rev. 14:13 – “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.”
- Rev. 16:15 – “Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.”
- Rev. 19:8 – “Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.”
- Rev. 20:6 – “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.
- Rev. 22:7 – “Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.”
- Rev. 22:14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

Because they are invited to the wedding supper, this distinguishes them as a separate group from the church. The bride would not be invited to her own wedding. The wedding ceremony and the wedding supper are two different events.

The Angel’s Rebuke [v. 10]

“And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

1. Worship God Only

Caught up in the astonishment of what he heard, John thoughtlessly fell-down to worship the angel, which was strictly forbidden in Scripture [Col. 2:18; Matt. 4:10].

The angel is a servant of God just like John, and the angel reminds this apostle that only God is to be worshiped. Worship will be the occupation of both angels and believers throughout eternity.

2. Prophecy reveals Jesus Christ

The angel’s final word to John is that prophecy was designed to reveal God’s Son, Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ is the central theme in both Old Testament prophecy and in the New Testament preaching of His saints. All those who are faithful to the testimony of Jesus will share in His kingdom.

Conclusion:

As chapter 19 begins, the inhabitants of heaven are rejoicing over the destruction of Babylon, the godless world religion and political system that have led many away from the true worship of God.

The inhabitants of heaven systematically join in to sing their praises to the Lord their God. They look with great anticipation, as the Lamb of God gets ready to return with His bride to earth to rescue His people, to bring judgment to the unredeemed and to set up His kingdom on earth. It is truly a time of great celebration for their God truly reigns forever.



The Second Coming of Christ

Revelation 19:11-21

Although men believe the world will get better, the Bible tells us that things will get unimaginably worse. In today's world, we see economic and social unrest, civil and national wars, increased terrorism and violence, moral decay, spiritual compromise, and the breakdown of the family, etc. There will be no peace until the Prince of Peace comes to the earth

– the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the only solution to the world's problems. When He comes, the entire world [both redeemed and unredeemed] will witness His magnificent return to the earth.

This portion of Scripture can be divided into four sections – Christ's return, Christ's army, Christ's rule and Christ's victory.

CHRIST'S RETURN

Heaven Open's [v. 11]

"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make

war."

Riding a White Horse

John sees the heaven open before his eyes. Probably with amazement, he beholds this regal scene as the Lord Jesus Christ bursts on the scene riding a white horse – a symbol of victory. It represents His victory over His enemies and the white also represents the spotless, holy character of the Rider. This is the moment that all believers have been

waiting for – Christ’s return to the earth in all His glory and power to receive the kingdom that God the Father promised Him.

Matthew 24:27-31

“For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. ²⁸ For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together. ²⁹ Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: ³⁰ And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ³¹ And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

Called Faithful and True

Earlier in Revelation [3:14], Christ was called “the Faithful and True Witness.” This name is very appropriate. He is faithful to His promises of wrath and judgment, as well as His promise of grace and salvation. He is true to the Word, for God’s righteousness demands justice for all sin [John 5:22, 27; Acts 17:31; 2 Tim. 4:1]. At His first coming Jesus came as the Lamb; this time He comes as the Judge and King.

Unlike other conquerors the world has seen, covetousness, ambition, pride, or power will not motivate this Conqueror.

He will come in utter righteousness, in perfect holiness, and in strict accord with every holy interest.

Heaven cannot be at peace with sin, for God’s eyes are too pure to approve evil, and [He] cannot look on wickedness with favor” [Hab. 1:13]. There is a limit to God’s patience. Justice cannot always tolerate injustice; truth cannot forever tolerate lies; rebellion cannot be permitted to go on forever. Incorrigible, incurable, hardened sinners will face destruction. They abused mercy, and rejected His grace . This will ultimately bring judgment. - John MacArthur, Jr., The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Revelation 12-22, “The Glorious Return of Jesus Christ,” pp. 216-217 comments on Jesus the Conqueror.

His Appearance [vs. 12-13]

a. His Eyes as a Flame of Fire [v. 12a]

Nothing escapes Christ’s notice. Everything will be laid bare before him – thoughts, motives, deeds, etc. [Heb. 4:13]. Christ is coming to earth for the specific purpose of bringing divine judgment on the unredeemed. His judgments will be just, for He has knowledge of all things.

b. He Wears Many Crowns [v. 12b] “. . . and on his head were many crowns”

The diadems on His head refer to His royal rank and authority. The fact that He wears many crowns signifies He alone is the sovereign ruler of the earth. [The Antichrist wore only one crown 4:1].

It was customary in the ancient world for the conquering king to collect all the crowns of those he

conquered [2 Samuel 12:30]. The kings of the earth will stand powerless in Christ's presence, and all will bow their knees and confess Him as Lord [Phil 2:10-11]. He truly is the Lord of lords and King of kings [19:16; 11:15].

- c. A Name Written [v. 12c] *"... and he had a name written, that no man knew, but He Himself."*

This is the second of three names given to Christ in this chapter. It is pointless to speculate about this name since the text states that no one knows this name except Christ. This name may be the one He will give to the overcomers [2:17; 3:12].

- d. His Robe Dipped in Blood [v. 13a] *"And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood..."*

The blood here is not talking of redemption [the blood that was shed at the cross], but it pictures the blood of judgment – the blood of His slaughtered enemies [Isaiah 63:2-3].

The reason His garments are already bloodstained depicts that this is not the first battle He has fought for His people, but this battle will be the last. In this last Day of Judgment, there will be no mercy for those who have rejected God's Lamb.

- e. His Name – The Word of God [v. 13b] *"... and his name is called The Word of God."*

This is the third name associated with the Rider in this portion of Scripture [vs. 11, 12, 13]. He is called the Word of God which unmistakably identifies Him as Jesus Christ, the only begotten of the Father [John 1:1, 14; 3:16; 1 John 1:1]. He is the second Person of the

Trinity, the Son of God who became flesh and dwelt among men [Heb. 1:2-4].

CHRIST'S ARMIES [V. 14]

"And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean."

As the Lord Jesus appears on the scene, He will come with the armies of heaven. They will be clothed in fine white linen. This Rider, like a commanding victorious general, is followed by an innumerable multitude. It is a glorious procession depicting the unprecedented majesty and glory of the Lord when He returns to earth.

This army from heaven is different for they go to battle unarmed. This battle [is more like a slaughter] will be won through the Word that proceeds out of Christ's mouth. Henry M. Morris, The Revelation Record, "The King Triumphant," pp. 393-394 talks about the second coming of Christ.

This glorious coming of the Lord with His saints has been prophesied since the dawn of history.

"And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, 'Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints [or "myriads of saints"], to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him'" [Jude 14, 15]. Also see - Zech. 14:3-9; Psalm 149:5-9.

Likewise, it had been prophesied by the Apostles:

“To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints” [1 Thess. 3:13].

What a magnificent procession that will be, when all the angelic host of heaven and all the multitudes of redeemed and purified saints of God accompany their victorious Redeemer back to earth! After long ages of rule by the old serpent, the god of this world, with his powers of darkness and his legions of Christ-rejecting human dupes, the disease and fevered earth will finally be scoured and purified, and Christ will reign supreme.

CHRIST’S RULE

Powerful images are used to describe Christ as He confronts the armies of the earth and brings divine judgment upon them.

- a. A Sharp Sword [v. 15a] *“And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword . . .”*

The sword, a sharp weapon often associated with intense battle, is a picture of the piercing, lethal words of Christ bringing death to His enemies. The fiery words of judgment will destroy the unredeemed Gentile nations [Isa. 11:4], and with the same mouth, Christ will destroy the Wicked One [2 Thess. 2:8]. God’s Word is powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword [Heb. 4:12].

- b. Strikes the Nations [v. 15b] *“ . . . that with it he should smite the nations . . .”*

This sword is deadly, and it will instantly slaughter all the wicked. God will preserve His elect out of the Gentile nations and the nation of Israel. The dead will include those gathered for battle at Armageddon as well as the rest of the unredeemed people who will be judged and executed at the sheep and goat judgment [Matthew 25:31-46].

- c. Rules with a Rod of Iron [v. 15c] *“ . . . and he shall rule them with a rod of iron . . .”*

This same pattern of swift judgment will be carried out in the Millennium for Christ will rule with a rod of iron [Ps. 2:8-9]. Any rebellion will not be tolerated and will be judged swiftly. Christ will demand absolute rule. It is an absolute Monarchical rule that demands one’s complete obedience.

- d. Treads the Winepress [v. 15d] *“and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.”*

Returning to God’s wrath, **the winepress** symbolizes the fierceness and **wrath of the Almighty God** [14:14-20].

These two terms are synonymous and depict the double intensity of God’s wrath on wicked and rebellious people who He loved and desired to redeem. In spite of His many pleas for salvation, they stubbornly refuse to come to Him [Prov. 1:24-27]. Now He shows them no mercy [Joel 3:13].

- e. A Name Written on His Vesture and Thigh [v. 16] *“ . . . and he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”*

In John's vision of the returning King, he sees that Christ is wearing a banner on His robe and thigh. On this banner is the third name given to Him in this Chapter. He is sovereign over the universe and ruler of all. H. A. Ironside, *Lectures on Revelation*, pp. 326-27, points out the significance of the three names of Christ:

First "A name written that no man knew but He Himself, speaks of His essential glory as the Eternal Son, concerning which He declared that "no man knoweth the Son but the Father" . . .

The second name is "The word of God."

The third title is "KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS."

In these three names we have set forth,

- **First**, our Lord's dignity as the Eternal Son.
- **Second**, His incarnation – the Word became flesh;
- **Third**, His second advent to reign as King of kings and Lord of lords.

CHRIST'S VICTORY [19:17-21]

The Angel's Call [v. 17-18] "

And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; ¹⁸ That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them,

and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great."

- a. Once again, an angel has an important role in end-time events. As he stands in close proximity of the sun, the angel cries out in a loud voice.

This time he commands the birds to feed on the dead bodies at Armageddon, declaring Christ's victory before the battle is even fought [Luke 17:37; Isa. 18:6; Jer. 7:33].

The flesh of millions of dead bodies [both small and great] along with the flesh of horses will be their supper [Ezek. 39:12]. The ultimate indignity is for unburied bodies to be left for food for the birds. John MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Revelation 12-22*, "The Glorious Return of Jesus Christ," p. 222 discusses the migrating birds that fly over Israel:

- b. The brief but catastrophic Day of the Lord's destruction will result in an unprecedented slaughter, with uncounted millions of dead bodies strewn throughout its entire two-hundred-mile length [14:20]. . . .
- c. It is important fact to consider that every year millions of birds of many species migrate south from Europe to Africa. They fly over the land of Israel on the journey. The number of these birds and migrating patterns has been the special study of the Israeli government because of the threat they pose to aircraft. This can certainly answer the question as to where such vast numbers of birds will come from. The geographical setting of Israel, situated between the Mediterranean Sea on the west and the vast expanse of barren desert

to the east, forms the natural corridor for these migrating birds.

The Armies of the Earth [v. 19]

“And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.”

John now sees the Antichrist and the armies of the world [17:12-14a] gathering together to make war with Christ and His army. This “invincible” army with the latest technology that the Antichrist’s kingdom can produce is no match for the King of kings. This battle is over before it begins.

The Beast and False Prophet [v. 20]

“And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.”

These two demonically inspired leaders were immediately cast into the lake of fire – the first two occupants to inhabit this eternal place of torment – a just place for this deceptive duo [Matt. 25:41; 13:42; Mark 9:48].

The Armies of the Earth [v. 21]

“And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.”

With their leaders taken away and their hopes dashed to pieces, the armies of the earth are destroyed by the sword of Christ’ mouth. The rest of the unsaved will be judged at the sheep and goat judgment, which takes place at this time [Matt. 25:31-46].

Conclusion:

The second coming of Christ is bittersweet. For the redeemed, it is a time of rejoicing for Christ will reward the believers with eternal life in the glory of His Presence. For the unredeemed, it is a time of horror and judgment for rejecting God’s provision of salvation, His Son.

Jesus Christ will show no mercy and the unregenerate will be separated from God forever – to suffer the pain and torment of the eternal lake of fire, along with their master, Satan. Christ has made the payment for everyone’s sin. What you do with Christ in this lifetime will determine your destiny for all eternity.

The Word of God says in Psalm 2:12, “Kiss [pay homage to] the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way.”

A vibrant, colorful illustration of a heavenly city. In the foreground, a man in a green shirt and blue pants stands at the ornate golden gates of a city built on clouds. An angel with large white wings sits on a throne to the left, and another angel plays a harp to the right. In the background, a large city with domes and spires is visible, with two large golden angels blowing trumpets. A family reunion scene is depicted on a platform in the middle ground, with a sign that says "Family Reunion". The sky is filled with clouds, birds, and a large circular emblem. The overall scene is bright and celebratory.

Final Judgment, Millennial Reign and Eternal Heaven

Revelation 20-22



When The King Returns

Revelation 19:11-20:15

Can you imagine a world where justice always prevails? Where righteousness is the rule? Where goodness dominates? Where everything is fair and equitable? Can you imagine a world where there is peace, total and lasting peace? Can you imagine a world where there is joy and happiness? Can you imagine a world where health is so widespread that if someone dies at a hundred years of age, they will be said to die as a child? Can you imagine a world where children can play in snake pits and find the snakes friendly and the snakes will find the children friendly? Can

you imagine a world where lions and lambs will walk together with bears and cows? And the whole menagerie be led by a little child?

Can you imagine a world where food is profusely plentiful, even though the globe is experiencing the greatest population explosion ever? Can you imagine a world that is ruled by one person, the whole world? One perfect mind, one perfect will, one who enacts perfect judgment, perfect wisdom, perfect justice, a loving, perfect ruler? Can

you imagine a world where all of the rulers and leaders and politicians who are in charge are saints? Can you imagine a world that is basically without rebels because they're judged instantaneously with a rod of iron?

This is the world described in the Scripture as the kingdom to come.

It is the new world promised by God in the Bible and it is coming. From the remotest point of antiquity, men have longed for and talked about a golden age, a utopia, an age of peace and justice and righteousness, a time when oppression and war will cease. Poets have written about it. Folk singers still sing about it. Politicians promise it.

Prophets predict it. Most people cry for it. And no one brings it.

There is, **however**, such a world coming. And **it will be brought at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ**. It will be a kingdom the likes of which men have never even dreamed, though they have dreamed much. **It will be a utopia beyond all utopia** and understanding and comprehension. It will be a true age of blessedness.

Now this period of time to come is called by many titles.

- In Matthew 19:28 it is called **the "regeneration."** It's a time of new birth, new life.
- In Acts 3:19 it is called the **times of refreshing**.
- In Acts 3:21, **the times of restitution** when everything goes back to being the way it's supposed to be.
- Ephesians 1:10 designates it as the **fullness of times**.
- Philippians 1:6 identifies it as **the day of Christ**. It is paradise regained.

The Christian understanding of history culminates in an earthly kingdom in which God rules through Christ.

When we talk about that kingdom, here's what we're talking about.

It is the sovereign rule of God manifested directly on earth through the person of Jesus Christ.

That is the kingdom to come.

At the present time a usurper has charge of this world, the kingdom of darkness reigns. Satan himself is the ruler of this world and the god of this age.

But there is coming a kingdom in which Jesus Christ will reign both spiritually and physically. That kingdom is the subject of the text before us and of many other texts.

Six Components:

I'm going to show you six components of that great age that are given us starting in verse 11. Here we will see the rule of the Son, the removal of the serpent, the reign of the saints, the return of Satan, the revolt of society and the resurrection of sinners.

THE RULE OF THE SON.

The first characteristic of this future kingdom is that it is dominated by the Lord Jesus Christ. His own words regarding that day are given to us in Matthew 24:29-30:

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: ³⁰ And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

The King comes to destroy the ungodly and to collect His elect from all over the universe for the kingdom.

Revelation 19:11-19:

The first part, vs. 11-16, describe a rider on the white horse who tells us who He is. He is called Faithful and True – v. 11. He is called the Word of God – v.13. He is called KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS – v. 16. He is also given secret names known only to Him – v. 12

Not only do His names tell us who He is, but look at His appearance. He has eyes as a flame of fire. – v.12. He has many crowns upon His head – v. 12b. He has a vesture or a garment or a robe stained with blood – v. 13.

And not only do His names and His appearance tell us who He is, but notice His activities. He righteously judges and makes war – v. 11. He descends from heaven – v. 14. He leads a heavenly host. – v. 14. Out of His mouth comes a sharp sword. – v. 15. And with it He smites the nations. – v. 15b. He rules them with a rod of iron – v. 15b. He treads the winepress of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty – v. 15c.

Revelation 19:17 leads us to an angel standing in the sun, he cries with a loud voice, he says to all the birds which fly in midheaven, "Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God."

What are these birds going to do? They're going to eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses. The beast and the kings of the earth, and their armies, verse 19, assemble to make war against Him who sat upon the horse and against His army are going to be food for the birds.

Revelation 19:20-21

And so the Lord Jesus will come. Verse 20-21 says, Christ is coming back and He will destroy all the ungodly, provide

carnage for scavenger birds. This is the beginning of the kingdom. King Jesus will come to reign.

The form of government will be a theocracy, God will rule by Christ Jesus.

- Psalm 2:6 speaks of this day when it says, "Yet I have set My King upon My holy hill of Zion."
- God promised this in 2 Samuel 7 when He said, "The greater Son of David will come and establish an eternal kingdom."

This is it. The absolute character of this kingdom, by the way, is described by the prophets. It is not a shared rule, it is an absolute kingdom.

Is. 2:2 - "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. ³ And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. ⁴ And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

Is. 9:6 - "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

RULE OF THE SON

So, the first thing we're going to see in this passage is the rule of the Son as He comes to establish His kingdom of righteousness. And to do that He has to do two things, He has to destroy the ungodly, He has to get rid of the beast and the false prophet who have been the earthly leaders of that ungodly force, and He has to gather His elect from all over the universe. So is the rule of the Son.

THE REMOVAL OF THE SERPENT

Revelation 20:1-3

Now note this, as the kingdom begins God has already taken care of all the human rebels. Many of them were destroyed at Armageddon and became the food for the birds.

The rest of the Gentiles who were not destroyed there in the battle, Revelation 19:21 says were killed with the sword that comes out of the mouth of Christ.

Revelation 20:1:

Notice the angel has the key of the bottomless pit – the abyss. It's the place of bound demons, according to Luke 8:31 and 2 Peter 2:4. It is not the final hell, it is a place of bound demons. Ultimately, they will be cast into the final hell at the end of the millennial period. Here they are sent to the bottomless pit, the abode of bound demons.

God has the key and a great chain. He takes the chain and binds Satan. At the same time he binds certain demons and casts them into the abyss. And this is for, it says, a thousand years. And that's the duration of the millennial kingdom.

Satan, is called by four names.

- He's **called the dragon**, it refers to his bestial cruelty, his oppressive powers culminating in the death of so many.
- He is **called that old serpent** to identify him as the same one who was in Eden, the one of whom God said He would bruise his head.
- He is also **called the devil**, diabolos, that means a slanderer, a malignant liar. This has been his character from the start, he's the father of lies, John 8:44.
- And he's **called Satan** which means adversary, or accuser. This roaring lion is overcome by the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the One with the bruised heel crushes the serpent's head.

And for a thousand years the earth will be rid of the evil one.

"Does that mean there won't be sin in the millennial kingdom? No.

There will be sin in the millennial kingdom because sin is not dependent on Satan. Sin is the reflection of man's fallenness.

- What there won't be in the Millennium is **false religion**. That's where Satan spends his time disguised as an angel of light.
- What there won't be is **governmental corruption**.
- What there won't be is **anarchy**.

- What there won't be is **crime**, pervasive runaway crime because it will be dealt with instantaneously.
- What there won't be is **inequity or injustice** and **unrighteousness at the leadership level**.

But sin, yes there will be sin because Satan is not the source of sin, fallenness is.

Satan is not allowed to deceive the nations any longer.

- He can't deceive them religiously.
- He can't deceive them politically.
- He can't deceive them militarily.
- He is bound.

"Until the thousand years are completed, after these things he must be released for a short time."

This is only temporary. He is going to be loosed at the very end. And when he is loosed, he is going to bring about a rebellion. He's going to be turned loose and he's going to be able to gather a force to strike against the Lord. In Revelation 20:7 he is released, and in verse 8, he deceives the nations.

THE REIGN OF THE SAINTS

The rule of the Son, The removal of the serpent and the reign of the saints.

Revelation 20:4

Here's the reign of the saints. John sees this glorious panorama of all of God's people and they're all resurrected, and they're all rewarded, and they're all glorified, and

they're all enthroned. Who are they? I saw thrones and THEY sat upon them, who are they? Some say Israel, some say the church, some say the Tribulation saints. Well I think all of the above.

Dan. 7:18 - "But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever."

Matt. 9:28 - "And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord."

So what do you have? You have Old Testament saints promised the kingdom in Daniel 7:18. You have the Apostles promised the kingdom in Matthew 19. And all who follow Christ, that would include the church, they're all going to be there.

1 Pet. 2:9 - "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."

1 Cor. 6:2 - "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?"

What will be the conditions on earth during that time?

- Politically...universal rule, absolute rule, righteous, just rule.

- Spiritually...Israel will be converted. Israel will be restored to the land. Israel will be the nation that leads the world. She will have the land promised to Abraham.
- Jerusalem will be rebuilt.
- Christ will sit on the throne of David in Jerusalem.
- Israel will be blessed. She will be again united to God. It's a special time for Israel.
- All other saints will be exalted as well.

Beyond the spiritual characteristics of the kingdom will be the presence of Christ. He will be there with the presence of truth.

- Righteousness will flourish.
- Peace will reign.
- Joy will abound.
- The power of the Holy Spirit will be unleashed like never before.
- And even a new temple, a memorial temple will be built. Spiritual life will be glorious.

What will it be like physically?

- Well the curse on the earth will be lifted.
- The desert will blossom like a rose.
- Streams will run into the desert.
- A whole valley will open up in the land of Israel and be filled with water.
- There will be a super-abundance of food, according to Joel chapter 2.

- There will be health and healing.
- There will be a high birth rate and low death rate.
- Jerusalem will be exalted.
- The topography of the land will be utterly changed.
- It's an incredible time. And the saints will sit on thrones. We will rule the world under Christ.
- We'll be His ambassadors and His presidents and governors and rulers and authorities and judges and justices. We'll be His chiefs.

We've been waiting for this kind of control for a long time, haven't we? And we'll have it. And may I say, it will never come until then. The only one who can bring the kingdom is the King.

Rev. 20:5-6 - "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."

THE RETURN OF SATAN.

Revelation 20:7

"And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison"

Why would this have to happen? Isn't it an amazing thing that in the perfect environment Christ will be rejected? If that doesn't make the point that you can't change sinners by changing their environment, I don't know what does.

It is worthy to note that Satan does not escape from prison but he is released from the abyss, signifying God's sovereign control of all – even over Satan. He can only do what God allows him to do [Job. 1:12]. Although Satan is a powerful supernatural being, he is still subject to His Creator [Ezek. 28:14-15]. The question may be asked, Why does God allow Satan to be loosed after the Millennium?

Govett suggests four reasons why Satan must be loosed after a thousand years:

(1) to demonstrate that man even under the most favorable circumstances will fall into sin if left to his own choice; (2) to demonstrate the foreknowledge of God who foretells the acts of man as well as His own acts; (3) to demonstrate the incurable wickedness of Satan; (4) to justify eternal punishment, that is, to show the unchanged character of wicked people even under divine jurisdiction for a long period of time. Robert Govett, *The Apocalypse Expounded*, pp. 506-508, discusses the reasons why Satan must be loosed for a short time:

Deceiver of Nations & Peoples [v. 8]

Satan loses no time in going out to deceive the nations. He is known in scripture as the great deceiver, and he will once again [for the last time] deceive people into following him.

A Free Will

Although no one unsaved will enter into the Millennium, the offspring of the redeemed will have a free will. Because of the longevity of life, the earth will be populated with millions of people at the end of the thousand year reign. They must choose [like generations before them] who they will serve.

A Sinful Nature

Although the parents of these children are saved, they still have their natural bodies and will pass the sin nature unto their children [Rev. 5:12]. Many of these children growing up in the Millennium will outwardly conform to the rule of the King but will inwardly rebel. They have not experienced Satan's deception and they will become easy victims without the grace of God.

“The golden age of the kingdom will last a thousand years, during which righteousness will reign, and peace, prosperity, and the knowledge of God be universally enjoyed. But this will not entail universal conversion, and all profession must be tested . . . Will not a thousand years under the beneficent sway of Christ and the manifested glory will they not have radically changed for the better, and become by the altered conditions of life and the absence of Satanic temptations, children of God and lovers of His will? Alas! It will be proved once more that man whatever his advantages and environment, apart from the grace of God and the new birth, remains at heart only evil and at enmity with God.” John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, p. 302 cites William Hoste as he comments on men's outward conformity to Christ:

Calls them to Battle

Satan's goal is to deceive and convince as many unregenerated souls as he can to do battle with Jesus Christ. This is his last ditch attempt to overthrow Christ the King. Although his efforts are in vane, an innumerable number will follow him in his rebellion against the Son. The battle of Gog and Magog described in Ezekiel 38 and 39 is an entirely different battle than what is described here.

“Gog and Magog are here used in a wider sense than in Ezekiel, and their invasion differs in time and details, though agreeing in character and object, with that which he foretells. Ezekiel predicts an incursion by a great northern power called Gog, which from certain geographical indications, is easily identified with Russia. In the Revelation, however, Gog and Magog are used to designate the nations, not merely from the north, but from all parts, “the four quarters of the earth. . . The hosts in Ezekiel, too, fall on the mountains, and their bodies are buried; whereas the forces assembled in the Revelation are devoured by fire from heaven. The judgment is instantaneous. Christ’s reign is a reign of righteousness, during which evil is not tolerated as now, but promptly crushed.” John F. Walvoord, The Revelation of Jesus Christ, p. 303 cites the thoughts of T.B. Baines on the contrasts of this battle with the battle of God and Magog in Ezekiel:

His Last Battle [v. 9]

Satan and those he deceived will come from all directions to encompass the camp of the saints. The saints will be encamped around the beloved city of Jerusalem, the place of the Lord’s throne and the center of the millennial world [Isa. 24:23; Ezek. 38:12; 43:7; Micah 4:7; Zech 14:9-11], enjoying the glorious presence of the Lord Jesus Christ [Isa. 24:23; Jer. 3:17], their Messiah. Just like the battle of Armageddon a thousand years earlier, this revolt of rebellion will be over before it begins.

“Like Armageddon a thousand years earlier [19:11-21], the “battle” will in reality be an execution. As the rebel forces moved in for the attack, fire came down from heaven and devoured them. They will be swiftly, instantly, and totally exterminated. Sending fire . . .

down from heaven is often the way God judges sinners [cf. Gen. 19:24; Lev.10:2; 2 Kings 1:10, 12; Luke 9:54]. Satan’s forces will be physically killed, and their souls will go into the realm of punishment, awaiting their final sentencing to eternal hell, which will take place shortly [20:11-15]. Nor will their evil leader escape his fate. There he [Satan] will join his cronies the beast and the false prophet, who by that time will have been in that place of torment for a thousand years [19:20]. That those two humans are still there after that time refutes the false doctrine of annihilationism.” John MacArthur, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Revelation 12-22, p. 242 discusses this final revolt:

SATAN IS JUDGED [V. 10]

Satan’s Reward

As powerful as Satan is, he will not be able to escape the terrible fate that awaits him. Satan’s deception of millions of souls will not go unnoticed by God. His reward – he is cast into the lake of fire to join the other two members of the unholy trinity – the Antichrist and the False Prophet. They preceded their leader to their eternal destiny by a thousand years [Rev. 19:20].

Fallen Angel’s Reward

Not only is Satan judged, but it appears that immediately following, the fallen angels will be judged because of their sin in following Satan in his rebellion against God [Jude 6]. They, too, will be cast into the lake of fire for all eternity. Scripture is clear that hell was made for Satan and his evil angels [Matt.25:41]. This takes place before the judgement of the unredeemed [10:11-15].

THE GREAT JUDGMENT DAY [20:11-15]

John now sees another vision “And I saw”. Before his very eyes, John sees this awesome yet terrifying scene as he beholds the great white throne of God. Great because it represents the throne on which God sits and great because of its “significance, majesty and justice”. The white represents its “purity, holiness and justice.” This One who sits on this throne will judge with equity, truth and righteousness [Ps. 9:7-8; John 5:29; Rom. 2:5]. Before John is given the blessings of the holy city described in chapters 21-22, the tragic events of the great white throne judgment must come to pass. It is an admonition to all of us who will have loved ones standing before the Christ in this judgment [Heb. 9:22].

The Judge

The Judge on this throne is the eternal, almighty God in the form of God’s Son. Although the Father and Son share the throne [3:21; 22:1, 3], it is Christ that is in view here for the Father has given Jesus all judgment [John 5:22; Acts 10:42; Rom. 2:16; 2 Tim. 4:1].

The Earth and Heavens

Because of the majesty of the One sitting on the throne, the earth and heavens flee away from the glorious presence of Christ. The most natural interpretation of scripture is that the present earth and heaven are destroyed and is replaced by a new heaven and earth [Isa. 65:17; Rev. 21:1; Matt. 24:35; 2 Pet. 3:10-13]. Those standing before Christ’s throne have no place to go [v. 11]. The throne is in space and the Great White Throne Judgment takes place between the destruction of the present heaven and earth and the creation of the new heaven and earth seen in chapter 21.

Why will God destroy the heaven? Very simply, because the atmospheric heavens are filled with evil. Whenever we read about heaven in the Bible, we should keep in mind that there are three heavens: The atmospheric heaven around the earth, the stellar heaven, which contains the great galaxies that we view on a starry night, and the third heaven, or the throne of God (see 2 Cor. 12:2; Rev. 4-5). Our text in no way indicates that God will destroy the stellar heaven or the place of His headquarters, but He will destroy the atmospheric heaven, where Satan lives. Ephesians 6:12 indicates that Satan, who is the god “of this dark world,” and his emissaries are performing spiritual wickedness in heavenly realms. Therefore, after the final rebellion of Satan, God will destroy this earth that is so marred and caused by Satan’s evil. He will include the atmospheric heaven to guarantee that all semblance of evil has been cleared away. Tim LaHaye, *Revelation Unveiled*, p. 356 states why God will destroy the present heaven and earth:

The Participants [v. 12]

All those who stand before the Great White Throne Judgment will be the unredeemed throughout the ages. It doesn’t matter what their social status was in life whether small or great, they will stand naked for nothing is hid from Christ [Heb.4:13]. What a terrifying ordeal to be in that position before a holy, omniscient God. Their standing posture means that they are about to be sentenced because they have no concern for their sin. The unregenerated are called the dead because they not only physically died but they are also spiritually dead.

The Standard – the Books

Their judgment is made on the basis of the books present at this judgment. There are two sets of books:

a. The Books of Works

These books are the record of the deeds (works) of men done in the flesh. Many people think they will go to heaven by their good works. However, scripture says the opposite for there are no good works apart from Jesus Christ [Isa. 64:6; Titus 3:5]. Those who depend on their works will be judged by them and will be cast into the eternal lake of fire. These books accurately contain every thought, word or deed of the unsaved. Their works will be measured against God's holy standard and will be found lacking [Rom. 3:23].

“The absolute justice of God is revealed in this judgment of works. Even for those who have spurned the Lord Jesus Christ there is differentiation in degrees of wickedness and apparently variation in punishment. While works are never a ground of salvation, there are, nevertheless, considered important before God. Smith finds forty-two instances, in Scripture where man is said to be judged according to his works with the following reference in Revelation (2:23; 18:3-6; 20:13; 22:12). Though men are judged according to their works, the book of life is introduced as the deciding factor as to where they will spend eternity.” John F.

Walvoord, The Revelation of Jesus Christ, p. 307 talks about the judgment based on works:

b. The Book of Life

The name of this book is given. It is called the Book of Life. It is the book that contained the names of every person who ever lived. However in this book, names could be blotted out. Three reasons are given in the Word of God:

- For sinning against God
- For not being clothed in the righteousness of Christ through regeneration
- For taking away the words of the book of prophecy.

Therefore, the only way to keep their names in the Book of Life is to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Upon their profession of faith, not only do their names remain in the Book of Life but their name is also written in the Lamb's book of life for all eternity.

The Summons

In this courtroom scene, the prisoners are released from their prisons [death & hades] to stand before their Judge. The time has come for them to face their sentence [Heb. 9:27].

a. The Sea

Before the sea went out of existence, the sea gave up her head. The sea is the most difficult place from which bodies can be resurrected. This demonstrates that regardless of the conditions of their bodies, the dead will be raised up to stand before their Creator.

b. Death and Hades

Death symbolizes all the places on land from which God will resurrect the dead. The wicked dead will be given resurrected bodies to stand before God. These bodies will be suited for eternal punishment. The word *hell* should be translated hades [Greek] or sheol [Hebrew]. This is the realm of the dead. It is the temporary place

of torment [Luke 16:23] where the unsaved are kept until they stand before the judgment throne of Christ.

Their Sentence

Death (the grave) and Hades (the temporary place of torment) will become non-existent for they are cast into [swallowed up] by the lake of fire. All those found in Death and Hades are found unworthy before Christ and are cast into the lake of fire, the permanent place of residence. There will be no escape. This is called the second death – the first death is physical death; the second death is spiritual death. This is in stark contrast to the believers who are raised to eternal life where there is joy in the presence of God the Father and His Son.

After they are judged by their works, a careful examination is given to the Book of Life to see if their names are found within its pages. What a sad and fearful day that will be when all is found are blank spaces where their names used to be for their names were blotted out because they did not accept God's sacrifice for their sins. Instead of experiencing God's mercy, they are the objects of God's wrath [John 3:36].

“Scripture vividly portrays the various aspects of the final, fiery hell. Fire is used more than twenty times in the New Testament to depict the torment of hell (cf. vv. 10, 15: 14:10; 19:20; 21:8; Matt. 3:10-12; 5:22; 7:19; 13:40, 42, 50; 18:8-9; 25:41; Mark 9:44; Luke 3:9, 16-17; John 15:6; Heb. 10:27; Jude 7). Whether the fire of hell is literal, physical fire is unknown, since the lake of fire exists outside the created universe as we know it. If the fire here is symbolic, the reality it represents will be even more horrifying and painful. The Bible also depicts hell as a place of total darkness, which will

isolate its inmates from each other (Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30; 2 Pet. 2:17; Jude 13); as a place where the worm (possibly emblematic of an accusing conscience) devouring the wicked will never die (Isa. 66:24; Mark 9:44); as a place of banishment from God's kingdom (Matt. 8:12; 22:13); and as a place of unending sorrow, where there is “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:18). John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Revelation* 12-22, p. 256 discusses the eternal lake of fire:

Conclusion:

There is only one way to escape the eternal lake of fire – accepting Jesus' sacrifice on the cross for the forgiveness of sin. There is no other way to God [John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Heb. 10:16]. God is holy and, therefore, must judge sin. God showed His love by giving us His Son [John 3:16]. No one has to go to the eternal lake of fire for Christ paid the price for everyone's sins [1 John 2:2]. Each individual will be held responsible for their decision [Rom. 1:18-23]. If they reject God's Son, there is no other sacrifice for their sins. All will acknowledge Christ one day [Phil 2: 9-11] – some as their glorious Lord and Savior while others as their Judge and Executioner. There are only two choices of where you will spend eternity – heaven or hell. Have you made your decision of where you will spend eternity? [Heb. 10:26-31].



Heaven

Revelation 21-22

From this point forward we are going to focus on the last two Chapters in Revelation which depict the believers hope. We have a target we are heading toward. There is a good end for all those in Christ. In this study I want to remind all who read of the believers eternal hope.

J. C. Ryle, an early 1800's pastor once wrote,

“The man who is about to sail to a . . . *new land* . . . as a settler, is naturally anxious to know something about his future home, its climate, its employments, its inhabitants, its ways, its customs. All these are subjects of deep interest to him. You are leaving the land of your nativity; you are going to spend the rest of your life in a new hemisphere. It would be strange indeed if you did not desire information about your new abode.

Now surely, if we hope to dwell forever in that ‘better country, even a heavenly one,’ we ought to seek all the knowledge we can get about it. Before we go to our eternal home, we should try to become acquainted with it.”

Famous Quotes About Heaven:

I am “resolved, to endeavor to obtain for myself as much happiness, in the other world, as I possibly can.” – Jonathan Edwards

Matt. 6:19 – “Lay not up for yourselves **treasures** upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: ²⁰ But lay up for yourselves **treasures** in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: ²¹ For where your **treasure** is, there will your heart be also.”

Heb. 11:16 – “But now they desire a better *country*, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.”

We are promised “a resurrected life in a resurrected body, with the resurrected Christ on a resurrected Earth” – Randy Alcorn.

“Imagine you are part of a NASA team preparing for a five-year mission to Mars. After a period of extensive training, the launch date finally arrives. As the rocket lifts off, one of your fellow astronauts says to you, “What do you know about Mars?” Imagine shrugging your shoulders and saying, “nothing. We never talked about it. I guess we’ll find out when we get there.”

WHAT IS YOUR CONCEPT OF HEAVEN?

Tell me about your heavenly home. What is waiting for you in heaven? If you were moving to the Philippines, I suspect you would be able to tell me what would be waiting for you when you arrived. You’d show me the village, the house you might live in, the culture, and the customs, etc. So, tell me what is waiting for you in heaven?

Can you invest in heaven today? If so, what does that mean? What is heaven like? Describe it. What will you be doing there? Where is heaven? What will you look like? Will there be arts, entertainment, and sports in heaven?

In the opening passage of Revelation 21 we find the new heaven and new earth and in verse 2 we find the holy city, new Jerusalem.

The Bible describes Heaven as both a:

Country (Luke 19:12; Hebrews 11:14-14) and a city (Hebrews 12:22; 13:14; Revelation 21:2). Fifteen times in Revelation 21 and 22 the place God and His people will live together is called a city.

The repetition of the word, “*city*” and the detailed description of the architecture, walls, streets, and other features of the city suggest that the term *city* isn’t a figure of speech but a literal geographic location.

Cities have inhabitants, visitors, bustling activity, cultural events, and gatherings involving music, the arts, education, religion, and much more.

The city at the center of the future Heaven is called the New Jerusalem. The city is portrayed as a walled city.

The size of the city

It is 1,400 miles (2200 kilometers) in length, width, and height (Revelation 21:15-16). To understand how large this is, it would stretch from Canada to Mexico, and from the Appalachian Mountains to the California border.

The height of the city is 1,400 miles high. This is the height that most satellites orbit the earth.

The ground level of the city will be nearly 2 million square miles (40 times larger than England, 10 times as large as France or Germany and far larger than India. But remember this is just the ground level. If the ceilings were one mile high it would have 140 stories. If the ceilings were 12 feet high then it would have 600,000 stories. However, God builds it, it is capable of housing billions upon billions of people with many square miles of space per person.

The shape of New Jerusalem (if a cube) reminds us of the cube shape of the Most Holy Place in the Temple (1 Kings 6:20).

The City Gates

The city has “a wall great and high, *and* had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are *the names* of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: ¹³ On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.” – Revelation 21:12-13

They will never be shut (Rev. 21:25). No enemies will enter. They are attended by angels. The entire earth will be filled with the knowledge of God (Habakkuk 2:14). God is always accessible. The redeemed will be able to go in and out of these gates (Rev. 21:24-27).

The city has twelve foundations each decorated with a different gem (Rev. 21:14, 19-20). The city is built by God Himself (Heb. 11:8-10).

More details of the New Jerusalem

On the New Earth there will be cities and nations. The kings of those cities will bring their treasures into the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:24).

New Jerusalem is heaven’s capital city: It will be designed with incredible beauty, wealth and splendor (Rev. 21:18-19). The streets will be of pure gold and transparent (Rev. 21:21). The River of Life flows from the throne (Rev. 22:1-2).

Why water? It comes from the throne of God. The Tree of Life is mentioned many times in Scripture. It is first found in Genesis 2, located in the garden of Eden, and later mentioned four times in Revelation (Revelation 2:7; 22:2 twice, 14). The tree of life is present in Paradise, in the intermediate Heaven (Revelation 2:7) and finally in the New Jerusalem and New Earth.

The tree is associated with healing and the way God provides to sustaining physical life. It seems the tree(s) will have life sustaining or life-enhancing properties that will help people maintain health and energy. Therefore, our wellbeing is not granted once-for-all but will be forever sustained and renewed as we depend on Him and draw from His provision.

Will there be natural wonders? There is a mountain on the New Earth (most likely many more) (Rev 21:10). On Mars, the volcano Olympus Mons rises 79,000 feet (3 times higher than Mt Everest. The base of Olympus Mons is 370 miles across and cover then entire state of Nebraska. The Valles Marineris on Mars is a vast canyon that stretches 1/6th of the way around Mars. It is 2,800 miles long and 370 miles wide and 4.5 miles (23,760 feet) deep. If God can create this just on Mars what else can He create?



The New Heaven & Earth Our Eternal Home

Revelation 21

Following the somber judgments of Satan, his evil angels and all the unredeemed throughout the ages, the apostle John is given a glimpse of the future heaven and earth that God has prepared for all those who love Him [Isa. 64:4; 1 Cor. 2:9]. The last two chapters of Revelation reveals the beauty and wonders of eternity, prepared

by a loving God for His redeemed saints.

Heaven is mentioned many times in Scripture – more than 500 times, with approximately fifty mentions of heaven just in the book of Revelation. Heaven is a real place, not a state of spiritual unconsciousness nor a figment of man's imagination [John 13:36; 14:2-3]. It is a place of eternal peace and joy – God's plan for mankind to live forever in fulfillment of His promises.

In the first of three visions given to the apostle John in chapter 21, six features are given regarding the final, eternal heaven and earth. Each vision [as we have seen before so often in Revelation] begins with the phrase "***And I saw.***" This phrase has introduced each climatic event in this book and now introduces the glory of all God's creation – the new heaven and new earth.

OUR ETERNAL HOME

The New Heaven and New Earth [v. 1]

The present heaven and earth was corrupted by sin and God destroyed them [2 Pet. 3:10-13]. The new heaven and new earth will not be a remake of the old heaven and earth.

1. It is an Act of Creation

The eternal heaven and earth is a special act of new creation by God [Isa. 65:17; 66:22]. God's new creation will be untainted by sin and decay. It will be a place where perfect righteousness will dwell for the curse of sin was destroyed with the first heaven and earth.

2. No More Sea

The first thing John notices about the new heaven and new earth is that there is no more sea. This new earth is different from the present earth. Approximately 70% of the present earth is covered by the sea. In the eternal earth, there seems to be no bodies of water except for the river mentioned in chapter 22:2.

"The first hint of what the new heaven and new earth will be like comes in John's observation that there will no longer be any sea. That will be a startling change from the present earth, nearly three-fourths of which is covered by water. The sea is emblematic of the present water-based environment. All life on earth is dependent on water for its survival, and the earth is the only known place in the universe where there is sufficient water to sustain life. But believers' glorified bodies will not require water, unlike present human bodies, whose blood is 90 percent water, and whose

flesh is 75 percent water. Thus, the new heaven and the new earth will be based on a completely different life principle than the present universe. There will be a river in heaven, not of water, but of the "water of life" (22:1, 17). Without a sea, there can be no hydrological cycle, so that every feature of life and climate will be dramatically different. John MacArthur Jr., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Revelation 12-22*, p. 263 discusses the impact of no more sea:

The New Jerusalem [v. 2]

John's attention is now directed to the holy city coming down from heaven. The new Jerusalem is not heaven but heaven's capital city. The vision taking place before John's eyes is so incredibly glorious that John identifies himself as an eyewitness to this astonishing event.

1. Heavenly Origin

This city is not an earthly city, like the Jerusalem in Israel. It comes down from heaven. What makes this city different is not only is this city holy but so are the residents who will reside in it Rev. 20:6; 22:1]. It is a special place prepared by God in the distant heavens [John 14:2-3; 1 Cor. 2:9 and now it is brought down to the new earth [Heb. 11:10] for the saints to live in. Many Bible scholars believe this city is in existence now.

"In his vision, John saw the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, its "architect and builder" (Heb. 11:10). The implication is that it already exists, a truth reinforced by Hebrews 12:22-23: "You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who

are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect.” All of heaven is currently contained in the new Jerusalem; it is separate from the present universe, which is tainted by sin. Believers who die go to the “heavenly Jerusalem,” where Jesus has gone before them to prepare a place for them (John 14:1-3). But when God creates the new heaven and the new earth, the new Jerusalem will descend into the midst of that holy new universe (21:10), and serve as the dwelling place of the redeemed for all eternity. Since the throne of God will be in the new Jerusalem, which will come down to the new earth, that city will be the bond between the new earth and the new heaven.” John MacArthur Jr., The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Revelation 12-22, p. 265 talks about the new Jerusalem now being in existence.

2. Adorned as a Bride

This heavenly city will be as radiant and beautiful as a bride on her wedding day. The new Jerusalem is known as the bride city, aptly named for Christ’s bride which not only includes the church saints but all believers throughout the ages. They will be adorned in their brilliant white robes of righteousness.

God’s Dwelling Place

God will dwell among His people. He will no longer be far off nor will His Presence be veiled from His people. God’s Presence will not be confined into one place. His Presence represents fellowship and blessing. So important is this announcement that the angel proclaims it in a loud voice for all to hear. His presence is the culmination of all the divine promises and human hope [Lev. 26:11-12; Jer. 31:33-34; Zech 2:10-12; 8:8].

What will it be like to live in the glorious Presence of God? There are four benefits believers will enjoy:

1. They will enjoy fellowship with God.

The fellowship believers will have with God in eternity will be full, complete and unlimited. No longer will sin hinder them in their relationship with God.

2. They will see God as He is.

What was impossible for mortal humans now becomes reality for those in their glorified bodies. They will see God in all His glory and majesty [1 John 3:2]. They will see Him because they are holy and they will enjoy His Presence forever.

3. They will worship God perfectly.

The redeemed will worship God in spirit and truth. Their worship will be perfect and this worship will be their main occupation in heaven [John 4:23-24].

4. They will serve God.

The redeemed saints will serve God continuously [Rev. 7:15]. Their faithfulness in this life will determine their capacity for heavenly service [1 Cor. 3:12-15; 4:5].

Differences in the New Heaven and New Earth [vv. 4-6]

1. No More Curse

Heaven will be dramatically different from the present world we live in for there will be no more curse. Only God in His perfect justice can remove the curse of sin for He paid the price for our redemption. In this new heaven and earth where there will be perfect holiness,

there will be no reason for sadness. No longer will the ravages of sin harm His saints. Old things are passed away and not only has God made everything new but it will stay new for nothing will wear out, decay or age. It will be a perfect environment for his glorified saints.

2. These Truths Are Certain

John, no doubt, was overwhelmed by what He saw and heard that God commands him to write these things down. God assures John that the revelation given to him is as faithful and true as the One who was revealing these truths to him [Rev. 19:11]. Just as Jesus said “It is finished” on the cross to indicate that the work of redemption was completed, now the words “It is done” marks the end of all of redemptive history. Because God started history, He will end it for He is the beginning and the end of all things [Isa. 44:6; 48:12; Rev. 22:13].

The Residents of the New Heaven and New Earth [vv. 6-7]

There are two descriptive phrases that reveal who will live in this new heaven and new earth.

1. Those who Thirst

This phrase describes those who recognize their spiritual need. The Bible describes them as those who hunger and thirst for righteousness” [Matt. 5:6]. These are the ones who recognize their lost condition before a holy God and long for the righteousness that only God can provide. Those who thirst for and diligently seek salvation are the ones who will receive it and partake of the living waters of eternal life [John 4:13-14; 7:37-38].

2. Those who Overcome

This phrase speaks of those who have exercised faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for their salvation. Some of the promises that are given to those who overcome are an inheritance reserved in heaven [1 Pet. 1:4-5], the perfection of the body [Phil. 3:21], partakers of the tree of life [Rev. 2:7], given a new name [Rev. 2:17; 3:12], and the promise they will not experience the second death [Rev. 2:11]. However, the best promise of all is that He will be our God and believers will be His son [Zech 8:8; Heb. 8:10].

The Outcast From the New Heaven and New Earth

John concludes this section with a list of those who will not enter the new heaven and new earth. It is a warning to those who die in their sins. They will not experience the blessings of eternal life with God for they have no sacrifice to take away their sins [1 John 5:12]. A list of similar sins are given in other portions of Scripture {Rev. 22:15; Rom. 1:28-32; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; 2 Tim. 3:2-5}. The Bible is very clear that the choices men and women make in this lifetime will determine their eternal destiny.

GOD’S CAPITAL CITY

An angel [designated as one of the angels who carried the seven bowl judgments] now directs John’s attention to the heavenly city. The new Jerusalem [which existed in eternity but new in the sense it is coming down to earth] is where God will dwell with His people forever. This is the place where God dwells now with His holy angels and where the redeemed go when they die. This city will one day descend from heaven and will be the capital city of the new heaven and new earth. Because it will be the link

between the new heaven and new earth, great detail is given in God's word to its description.

Its General Appearance

The new Jerusalem is described as a bride, relating to its occupants. The bride of the Lamb originally referred to the church saints but here represents the redeemed of all ages. The redeemed are forever united with Christ. The city is also referred as the wife of the Lamb because the marriage of its occupants have already taken place. John's vision begins as the angel carried him away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain. From this vantage point, John can see the holy city in its entirety.

1. Coming Down From Heaven

This is the second time John describes the holy city coming down from heaven [see Rev. 21:1]. This emphasizes its divine origin [Heb. 11:10]. This eternal city is coming down from heaven to be situated between the new heaven and new earth.

2. Having the Glory of God [v. 11]

This divine city's most distinguishing characteristic is the throne of God. This city will shine forth like a glimmering, unblemished diamond [pure and translucent] reflecting the brilliant and blazing glory of God. This city will be like no other city. It will be so beautiful that to describe it in human terms will not do it justice. God's glory will radiate throughout the new heaven and new earth [Isa. 60:19-20; Rev. 21:23; 22:5].

"The city is ablaze with light compared to the brightness of a precious stone such as jasper, and clear

as crystal. The stone here described as a jasper has its name transliterated from a similar word in the original Greek [ἰασπίς], a name used for stones of various colors, but here specifying the qualities "precious" and "clear as crystal." The mention of this stone which is costly to men but used lavishly in the new Jerusalem (cf. 21:19) is designed to manifest the glory of God. Later in the passage (v. 23), the fact is revealed that the city does not originate its light or radiance, but all illumination comes from the Lamb. John Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, p. 320 talks about the brilliance of the new Jerusalem.

Its Exterior Design

Our eternal home will be so magnificent that our human minds cannot comprehend its beauty. It is beyond anything we have ever seen before.

There is much more to this city than is given here in Revelation. This is just a general description of the eternal city of God. It is a literal city for it has dimensions, limits, and gates. Its inhabitants will be able to freely enter and leave the new Jerusalem through the gates in the city's wall.

1. Has a Great Wall [vv. 12-13]

The new Jerusalem is described as having a great and high wall. This wall does not serve as protection for there are no enemies in heaven. This wall gives the heavenly city a sense of strength and eternal security for only those who are qualified may enter in.

2. Has Twelve Gates/Twelve Angels [vv. 12-13]

There will be twelve magnificent gates with twelve angels – one at each gate. These angels will attend to

God's glory and serve the redeemed saints. Each gate will be named after one of the twelve tribes of Israel, depicting God's covenant relationship with Israel. In keeping with the square shape of the city, there are three gates on each of the four sides – north, south, east and west [Num. 2, Ezek. 48]. Although the measurements of these gates are not given, they probably will extend to the top of the walls, making access to the city at all levels.

3. Has Twelve Foundation Stones [v. 14]

Beneath the massive walls of the city lay twelve foundation stones. Each of the twelve foundations had one of the names of Christ's apostles, representing God's relationship with the church. As the saints go in and out of the new Jerusalem, they will be reminded of God's favor on all – the names of the tribes of Israel inscribed on the gates will represent the old covenant and the names of Christ's apostles inscribed on the foundation stones will represent the new covenant.

4. Belongs to God [v. 15]

The angel begins measuring the city's gates and wall. This measuring is reminiscent of the measuring that took place in the tribulation temple [11:1]. The importance of these measurements is that what is measured is the property of God. These measurements also emphasize that this is a literal city and not a mystical one. Scripture tells us that these measurements were taken by using human measurements. All the dimensions of the new Jerusalem are measured and carefully recorded, fully satisfying God who has the highest standards of

perfection. The result of the angel's measurements are as follows:

a. The city is laid out as a square.

“The pyramidal shape . . . (whether as in Egypt, Mexico, or the stepped-towers of practically all ancient nations), seems always to have been associated with paganism, with the pyramid's apex being dedicated to the worship of the sun, or the host of heaven. The first such structure was the Tower of Babel, and the Bible always later condemns worship carried in high places (Leviticus 26:30) whether these were simply natural high hills or artificially constructed hills in the form of a pyramid or ziggurat.” Henry M. Morris, *The Revelation Record*, p. 450 discusses the new Jerusalem – whether it will be pyramid shaped or cubed shaped.

b. Its length, width and height are equal – 1,380 miles in each direction.

Based on certain assumptions about the design of the city and the number of the redeemed who will live in it, Morris calculates that each person's “cube” would be approximately seventy-five acres on each side (The Revelation Record, 451). Were that city to be superimposed on the present-day United States, it would extend from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico, and from Colorado to the Atlantic Ocean (The Revelation Record, 450). Obviously, God will design the new Jerusalem with plenty of room for all the redeemed (cf. John 14:2-3). John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Revelation 12-22*, p. 282 talks about the space in the eternal city.

c. The city's wall is 72 yards thick.

Its Material Design [vv. 18-21]

After describing the city's exterior, John now begins to describe the interior of the new Jerusalem by identifying the materials used in the city's construction. Each material used will be pure and translucent to reflect God's glory.

1. The Walls

This majestic structure is described as being made out of jasper – the costly diamond-like stone mentioned in verse 11. No doubt, this wall of crystal clear radiance will be a structure of transcending beauty as God's glory shines through.

2. The City and Streets

This glorious city is made out of pure gold, translucent as glass. This precious metal will be used in abundance in our eternal home not only in the building of the city but even the streets are made out of the highest quality of gold [v. 21]. As God's glory shines upon the city and streets, its sparkling radiance will be absolutely beautiful.

“Even more glorious than the wall is the city itself. Both the buildings and the streets (v. 21) of the city are made of gold. In the present world, gold is the most precious of metals, the standard of all currencies and the greatest of all objects of human greed and conflict. In the new Jerusalem, however, the very streets are paved with gold and the buildings are plastered with gold. The most beautiful and valuable of metals is now the most abundant of metals . . . The gold of heaven is so good and so flawless that, like the jasper stone, it is

crystal clear, reflecting golden beams of brilliance from every surface. The words “pure” and “clear” in this verse are the same Greek word [*katharos*], speaking of the flawless perfection of the materials of the city.” Henry M. Morris, *The Revelation Record*, pp. 452-453 talks about the beauty of the eternal city of God with its golden structures and streets of gold.

3. The Foundations

Great detail is given to the twelve foundations of this city to describe its sparkling beauty. Each foundation is made out of a different precious stone. Although the precise colors of some of these stones listed cannot be certain, these glimmering gems will be aesthetically pure and translucent. As God's glory shines upon the multi-colored stones, its beauty will be beyond human imagination.

Because the exact colors and composition of some of these stones cannot be determined, it is best not to speculate.

“Though the precise colors of these stones in some cases are not certain, the general picture here described by John is one of unmistakable beauty, designed to reflect the glory of God in a spectrum of brilliant color. The light of the city within shining through these various colors in the foundation of the wall topped by the wall itself composed of the crystal-clear jasper forms a scene of dazzling beauty in keeping with the glory of God and the beauty of His holiness. The city is undoubtedly far more beautiful to the eye than anything that man has ever been able to create, and it reflects not only the infinite wisdom and power of God but also His grace as extended to the objects of His salvation.” John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, p. 325 talks about the colors of the foundation stones.

4. The Gates

These twelve gates will be made out of flawless pearl. In John's day, the pearl was greatly valued and highly prized. Even Jesus gave a parable about a pearl of great price [Matt. 13:45-45].

Each gate was a single gigantic pearl nearly 1,400 miles high. Through these pearly gates will travel God's redeemed saints and holy angels, going in and out doing God's business.

"How appropriate! All other precious gems are metals or stones, but a pearl is a gem formed within the oyster – the only one formed by living flesh. The humble oyster receives an irritation or a wound, and around the offending article that has penetrated and hurt it, the oyster builds a pearl. The pearl, we might say, is the answer of the oyster to that which injured it. The glory land is God's answer, in Christ, to wicked men who crucified heaven's beloved and put Him to open shame. How like God is it to make the gates of the new Jerusalem of pearl. The saints as they come and go will be forever reminded, as they pass the gates of glory, that access to God's home is only because of Calvary. Think of the size of those gates! Think of the supernatural pearls from which they are made! What gigantic suffering is symbolized by those gates of pearl! Throughout the endless ages we shall be reminded by those pearly gates of the immensity of the suffering of Christ. Those pearls, hung eternally at the access routes to glory, will remind us forever of One who hung upon a tree and whose answer to those who injured Him was to invite them to share His home." John Phillips, *Exploring Revelation*, p. 254, discusses the spiritual truth illustrated by the fact that the gates were made of pearls.

Its Interior Design

If the beauty of the exterior of the eternal city wasn't breathe-taking enough, now John's angelic guide shows him the inside of God's capital city. As mentioned previously, both the city and its streets will be made out of the finest gold – so pure that its translucent quality will not hinder the light of God's glory.

1. No Temple

John notices immediately that the city contains no temple. It was at the temple in Mt. Zion in the earthly Jerusalem where God met His people; however in the new Jerusalem, he will dwell with his people. But now the presence of "the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb" are its temple. The tabernacle of God will forever abide with redeemed men and His holy angels. God's glory will so fill the new heaven and earth that the believers will constantly be in His presence [21:3] and they will be the true worshipers God has always desired to have [John 4:23].

2. No Darkness

In God's heavenly capital, the city will not be dependent on the sun, moon or stars for its source of light. God's brilliant glory will illuminate the new Jerusalem and the lamp will be the Lamb [Ps. 119:105; John 1:1, 29]. There will be no night in this celestial city for where God the Father and His Son dwell, there is no darkness. Only the light of God's glory will shine forth throughout all eternity [Isa. 60:19-20].

3. Absolute Equality

In the eternal state, not only will saved Israelites and the church be present but so will the saved Gentiles. The word here for nations [Gr., *εθνη*] is the word for Gentiles – those who are redeemed who are not of the Jewish race. “The kings of the earth” refer to those redeemed individuals who held honored positions while on earth. They will give all their honor and glory and lay it before their God, the true King of kings. These kings will have the same access into the city as others, thereby showing the absolute equality in heaven. No one, even those who were kings, will not seek their own glory but will willingly humble themselves before their Almighty God.

4. Continuous Access

The gates of the eternal city will always be open. Unlike the gates of earthy cities who are closed at night to keep out the criminals, thieves and other dangerous individuals, these pearly gates will continuously welcome the holy angels and redeemed saints. These gates depict a place of peace, safety and security for the redeemed to rest from their labors. God’s people will be free to come and go at all times.

5. Complete Worship

Not only will the kings of the earth surrender their earthly honor and prestige unto God but the nations will also relinquish their honor and glory to the King of all kings [Zech. 2:10-11]. Nations and kings will have learned their lesson – everything they had [wealth, honor, glory and blessing] was because of God’s grace

and they will lay everything at the feet of the One who alone deserves all their worship.

6. Eternal Security

John concludes this chapter by stating that no sinful or impure thing will ever enter through the pearly gates of God’s eternal city. Heaven will be perfectly holy and will remain that way for all eternity. All those who were sinful were confined to the eternal lake of fire – never to escape. Not only does John state who will not enter heaven, but he tells us that only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life [the redeemed] will experience the blessings and glory of the new Jerusalem [1 Cor. 2:9].

Conclusion:

The new Jerusalem will be a place of incredible and indescribable beauty. The city will radiate God’s glory through the translucent diamond-like walls, rainbow colored foundation stones and glittering streets of gold. It will be a place of peace and joy where the redeemed will live forever in the glory of God’s presence – worshiping, serving and reigning with Him for all eternity. To God be the praise and glory for the great things He has done. What a wonderful future awaits the child of God.



Thoughts on Heaven – Part Two

Revelation 6 & 21 – June 20, 2021

Do we remember our time on earth? Are we aware of what happens on earth? What do we do in heaven? Do we recognize one another in heaven? Do we pray in heaven? Do we learn while in heaven?

Several things we need to understand before we move forward.

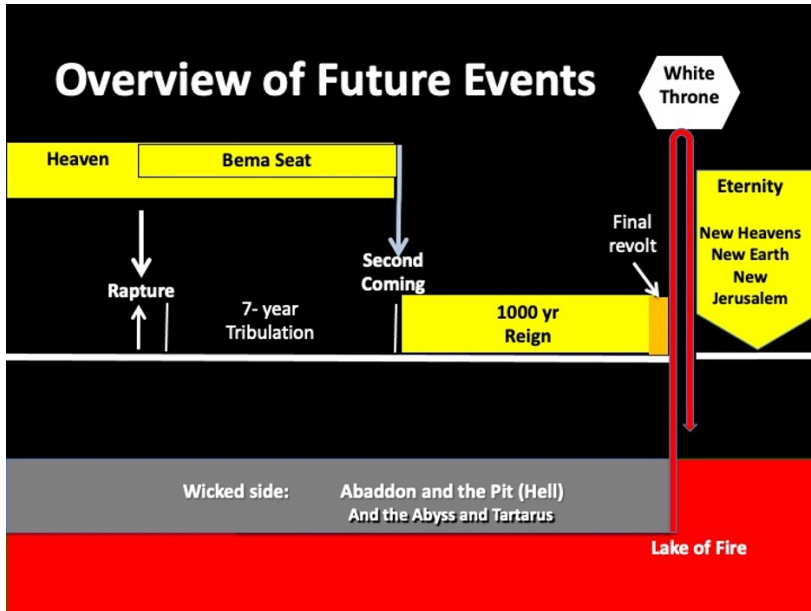
1. There seems to be a difference between today's "present heaven" and "the eternal heaven."

The "present Heaven coexists with and watches over the Earth while under sin. Whereas the "eternal Heaven" will exist when there is no more sin, no more curse and no more suffering.

2. **The time sequence.**

The rapture of the church is followed by the bema seat. At that time the saints in heaven will receive their rewards. At the same time the tribulation will be on folding on earth. At the end of the tribulation the saints will return with the Lord and will rule with Him for 1000 years. A final revolt will be put down at the end of the 1000-year reign.

Then the white throne judgment will take place. All nonbelievers will be judged and cast into the Lake of Fire. Following this event, the Lord will form the New Heavens and New Earth.



Our study in this section will surround what heaven is like before God forms the new heaven and new earth.

Question #1: Will we remember our time on earth? It seems so.

In Revelation 6:9-11 we find the martyred tribulation saints. They know God had not brought judgment on their persecutors. To some extent, therefore, the inhabitants in heaven are aware of what is happening on earth.

“And when he (the angel) had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:

¹⁰ And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? ¹¹ And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.”

1. It seems the martyrs prayed to God in Revelation 6:10-11.

“How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?”

They were asking God for specific action to be taken on their persecutors. They were also interceding for the saints on earth who were suffering under the hand of these unredeemed tormentors.

In the context of this passage these people were believers killed for their testimony for Christ – (v. 9)

“Them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held.”

This demonstrates a direct link between our identity on earth and our identity in heaven. **The martyrs’ personal history extends directly back to their lives on Earth.** Those in the “present Heaven” are not different people; they are the same people relocated — “righteous men made perfect” (Hebrews 12:23).

The martyrs know enough to realize that those who killed them have not yet been judged. Therefore, they pray for judgment on their persecutors who are still at work hurting others. They are acting in solidarity with,

and in effect interceding for, the suffering saints on earth. This suggests that saints in Heaven are both seeing and praying for saints on earth.

2. People in heaven will be remembered for their lives on earth. **These were known and identified as ones slain.**

“Slain for the word of God and for the testimony they held” (v. 9).

“They cried out” – (v. 10).

This means they are able to express themselves audibly. This suggests they exist in physical form, with vocal cords or other tangible means to express themselves.

Furthermore, we find they can raise their voices – (v. 10). This indicates that they are rational, communicative, and emotional –even passionate—beings, like people on earth.

They call out in **“a loud voice,”** not “loud voices.” ***Individuals speaking with one voice*** indicate that Heaven is a place of unity and shared perspective.

The martyrs here are seen as **fully conscious, rational,** and **aware** of each other, and of God, and of the situation on Earth. It seems that those in Heaven are **free to ask God questions,** which means they have an audience with God. It also means they need to learn. In Heaven, people desire understanding and pursue it.

3. **Heaven dwellers have a deep concern for justice and retribution (v. 10).**

When we go to heaven, we will not adopt a passive disinterest in what happens on the earth. Our concerns will be more passionate and our thirst for justice greater.

Neither God nor we will be satisfied until His enemies are judged, our bodies raised, sin and Satan defeated, earth restored, and Christ exalted over all.

4. **The martyrs clearly remember their lives on Earth (v. 10)**

They even remember that they were murdered (Revelation 6:9-11). They wanted the Lord to avenge their blood (their murder).

5. **Those in Heaven see God’s attributes** (“Sovereign . . . holy and true”) in a way that makes His judgment of sin more understandable.
6. **Those in Heaven are distinct individuals:** “Each are given a white robe” (v. 11).

The wearing of white robes suggests the possibility of actual physical forms (disembodied spirits presumably don’t wear robes) plus the Apostle John was able to see them.

God answers their question (v. 11), indicating communication and process in Heaven. It demonstrates that we won’t know everything in Heaven. Therefore, there is learning that goes on in heaven.

7. **God promises to fulfill the martyrs'** requests but says they will have to "wait a little longer" (v. 11).

Those in the "present Heaven" live in anticipation of the future fulfillment of God's promises.

Furthermore, **there is time in the "present Heaven"** (vv. 10-11). The white-robed martyrs ask God a time-dependent question: "How long . . ." **They were aware of time's passing** and are eager for the coming day of the Lord's judgment. God tells them that they must wait.

8. The people in Heaven have a strong familial connection with those on earth, who are called their "fellow servants and brothers" (v. 11).

Our sovereign God knows down to the last detail all that is happening and will happen on Earth (v. 11), including every drop of blood shed and every bit of suffering undergone by his children. The Voice of the Martyrs estimate that more than 150,00 people die for Christ each year, an average of more than 400 per day. God knows the name and story of each one. He knows exactly how many martyrs there will be and is prepared to return and set up His Kingdom when the final martyr dies.

Other passages: Do Heaven's Inhabitants Remember Life On Earth?

Revelation 18:20:

When Babylon is brought down an angel points to events happening on earth and says,

"Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her."

Again, it seems that the saints in Heaven are observing events on earth.

Revelation 19:1-5:

Rev. 19:1, 3 – People in heaven witness the destruction of spiritual and political Babylon and rejoice.

Revelation 19:11-14:

We can assume that the saints know what is happening since they are returning with Christ to set up His millennial kingdom.

Luke 9:31:

Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus when He was transfigured. It is recorded that they *"Spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem."* They seem fully aware of the drama that was unfolding on earth and that God's redemptive plan was about to be accomplished.

1 Timothy 3:16; 5:21; 1 Corinthians 4:9:

The things on earth were "seen of angels." Angels saw Christ on earth and knew what was happening. If angels saw what was happening on earth, why not the saints?

Luke 15:7, 10:

Notice that the joy is "in the presence of angels." Who is doing the rejoicing in this passage?

"I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just

persons, which need no repentance . . . ¹⁰ Likewise, I say unto you, there is **joy in the presence** of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.”

Does God’s Redemption Plan Include The Earth?

The entire physical universe was created for God’s glory. But humanity rebelled, and the universe fell under the weight of our sin. Yet the serpent’s seduction of Adam and Eve did not catch God by surprise. He had in place a plan by which He would redeem mankind—and all of creation—from sin, corruption, and death. Just as He promises to make men and women new, He promises to renew the earth.

Isaiah 65:17

“For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.”

Luke 19:10

“For the Son of man is come to **seek and to save** that which was lost”.

Rom. 8:19-23:

“For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected *the same* in hope, ²¹ Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. ²³

And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body.”

2 Peter 3:13

“Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Revelation 21:1-4

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. ² And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. ⁴ And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”

If God’s plan were merely to take mankind to heaven, there would be no need for new heavens and a new earth.

Our Rewards Are Reminders of our Life On Earth

1. After we die, we will give an account for our lives on earth, down to specific actions and words.

2. The doctrine of eternal rewards hinges on specific acts of faithfulness done on Earth that survive the believer's judgment and are brought into Heaven with us.
3. The white robe stands for the righteous acts we did.
4. Our righteous deeds will not be forgotten. They will follow us.
5. Rewards given will remind us of the works we have done.
 - Matthew 19:21 - Rewards given will remind us of the works we have done.
 - Luke 12:33 – Rewards given will remind us of the works we have done.
- Luke 19:17, 19 - Rewards given will remind us of the works we have done.
- 1 Timothy 6:19 - Rewards given will remind us of the works we have done.
6. Positions of authority and treasures will be granted in heaven which will perpetually remind us of our life on earth, because what we do on earth will earn us those rewards.



Eternal Life

Revelation 22

It is very interesting to note that the first two chapters in the Bible — Genesis — talks about the creation of the first heaven and earth, while the last two chapters of the Bible — Revelation — focuses on the indescribable beauty of the eternal heaven and earth. All the chapters in between from Genesis to Revelation speaks about the conflict of the ages, man's rejection of God and God's love in drawing mankind to Himself. Throughout the pages of history, God consistently gave the human race many opportunities to worship Him. The eternal heaven and earth will be perfectly holy, for everyone living there will be without sin. This new heaven and new earth will be a place of glorious peace, eternal rest and unspeakable joy as the saints behold God's glory for all eternity

John, no doubt awed by all he has seen, watches in humbleness as the angel continues his tour of God's capital city. In chapter 21, he saw the city from a high

mountain (21:10). Now the angel takes him into the city itself to show him the heavenly delights that are awaiting the saints of God.

THE NEW JERUSALEM

The River of Life

As chapter 22 opens, the angel continues to show the apostle John more wonders of the heavenly Jerusalem. The first thing the angel shows John inside the city's gate is the river of life. Whether this is actual water as we know it or not, it represents everlasting life. The source of this pure, crystal-clear river is the throne of God and His Lamb [indicating the co-rulership of the Father and the Son in eternity]. Just like everything else in the new Jerusalem, this dazzling, sparkling river cascading from God's eternal throne will also reflect the glory of God. This pure, sparkling water represents the constant flow of eternal life coming from God's throne to God's people by God's grace.

The Tree of Life

John's attention is now directed to the tree of life. Whether this is the same tree or a heavenly counterpart of the tree of life mentioned in the garden of Eden [Gen. 2:9; 3:22-24], the Scriptures does not say. However, we do know that this tree is only for those who have been redeemed. The tree of life is said to be in the midst of the street and at the same time on both sides of the river.

“Because of its somewhat obscure presentation, has caused some difficulty to expositors. The verse declares that the tree of life is in the midst of the street and at the same time on either side of the river. The street mentioned is clearly the street of the city, as “it” is feminine [Gr., *αυτης*], referring back to the city in 21:23. The visual picture presented is that the river of life flows down through the middle of the city, and the tree is large enough to span the river, so that the river is in the midst of the street, and the tree is on both sides of the river. It would appear that the pure river of the water of life is not a broad body but a clear stream sufficiently narrow to allow for this arrangement. Henry B. Swete offers a possible solution to the problem of this description by saying, “The picture presented is that of a river flowing through the broad street which intersects the city, a row of trees being on either side. Swete interprets the word *tree* as a collective reference and finds a parallel situation in Ezekiel 47:12.” John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, pp. 329-330, talks about the tree of life.

Throughout Scripture, the tree of life has been associated with all that is good and wholesome – wisdom, righteousness, happiness and helpfulness [Prov. 3:18; 11:30; 13:12; 15:4]. The tree of life represents the

blessings of eternal life. Two things are mentioned about this tree:

1. The Fruit

This supernatural tree will be like no other tree. It will produce fruit which contains life-preserving properties. It will yield twelve varieties of fruit that will, no doubt, be for the believer's enjoyment rather than to sustain life in the eternal state.

“Surprisingly, the tree bears twelve different kinds of fruits, one for each month of the year. Whether this was true of the first tree of life in Eden the Scriptures does not say, but the inference at least seems to be that the trees of the first garden and the last garden are the same. In any case, this tree is a most marvelous creation of a loving God, with its genetic instructions beautifully programmed for this perpetual variety. Yet every variety of its fruit carries the same life-sustaining ingredient, whatever that may be, imparted to it by its Creator. Actually the word “manner” is not in the original, the phrase merely reading “twelve fruits,” so it is possible that it could be understood as “twelve crops of fruit,” but the more natural implications seems to be that of “twelve kinds of fruit.” Henry M. Morris, *The Revelation Record*, pp. 465-466, discusses the fruit of the tree of life.

2. The Leaves

The leaves of this tree will be used for healing of the nations. The word healing [*τηεραπεια*] does not apply to illness for there is no sickness nor death in the eternal state. The word here is better translated “life-giving,” health-giving” or “therapeutic.” The leaves of the

tree of life will promote fulness of life in the heavenly realm.

“One aspect of the Tree of Life has brought some controversy relative to the expression that “the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations” [Rev. 22:2]. It would be better to translate the word “healing” as “health,” not indicating that anyone will be sick during the eternal order, but that the Gentiles or nations that have been inhuman to each other throughout their known history will be healed in their relationships toward each other and will thus live equitably and fairly.” Tim LaHaye, *Revelation Unveiled*, p. 368, discusses the leaves of the tree of life and the healing of the nations.

No More Curse

Life will be quite different for those dwelling in the new Jerusalem for there will be no more curse. With all sin removed, there will be no more pain, sorrow, crying or death [21:4]. Believers will enjoy a new intimacy with God and all sorrow connected with the consequences of sin will be gone forever. The curse was partially lifted in the Millennium but is completely removed in the eternal state. The second law of thermo-dynamics will be repealed. This new creation of an omnipotent God will stay new and beautiful for all eternity. There is joy in heaven for there will be nothing to cause the saints any hurt or pain.

The Place of God’s Throne

The center of this blessed city is the throne of God. This just proves that this new creation of God is without sin for He can now dwell among His people. As mentioned in verse 22:1, God the Father and God the Son will reign

together for all eternity. This glorious throne is not only the source of the river of life, but God’s brilliant glory will be the source of all light throughout all eternity. Since God will be heaven’s sovereign ruler forever, His saints will serve Him with reverence and awe and will do His bidding with gladness. Whatever this future service may entail, it will be satisfying – a picture of joyful service rather than arduous work

“But there is also work to do. Eternity is before us, and infinity surrounds us. We shall have an eternity of time to explore and discover the secrets of an infinitely varied and limitless cosmos. Perhaps each of us will be assigned an entire galaxy to explore and develop for the glory of God. Then each will share with the others what he has found and what he has accomplished and all will rejoice together.

Or, perhaps more likely, each will develop and use more fully the particular talents entrusted to Him by the Lord in this world and also have opportunity to learn and develop those skills he desired but could never attain before. Obviously the nature of our future service for the Lord can only be the object of reverent wonder and speculation now, but we can be sure it will be joyful and satisfying service, whatever it is.” Henry M. Morris, *The Revelation Record*, pp.467-468 speculates about work the saints may do in the eternal state.

Intimate Fellowship

The saints will have the privilege to see God face to face – an impossibility in the human state. But now with glorified, sinless bodies, they will be able to stand before His presence and with their eyes will behold His face

without being consumed [Ex. 33:20; 1 John 1:18; 6:46; 1 Tim. 6:16, 1 John 4:12]. The fellowship of the saints will have with God will be very sweet and precious. Sin will never hinder His saints from coming into His presence, and God will never remove Himself from His people.

Property of God

The redeemed will never have to fear coming before God for all the saints will have the Lamb's special name on their foreheads. This identification indicates that they will forever belong to Him. Wherever they may be sent to do God's bidding, they will go in His name. What a privilege it will be to be the property of the Sovereign and Redeemer of the universe for all eternity.

No More Night

There will be no night in eternity. So important is this truth that John states this fact for the second time within eight verses [21:23]. God's never-ending light will shine so brilliantly upon His creation that no darkness can ever exist in the presence of God's glory.

“Those who are in the city will enjoy perpetual sunlight. Never will there be clouds or storms, and never will there be any darkness. In our new bodies, we shall presumably have no need for sleep, although there will be ample time and opportunity for rest and leisure activities. In fact, the very nature of life in that day is called rest. “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his” (Hebrews 4:9, 10). In stark contrast is the existence of those in the lake of fire: “They have no rest day or night” (Revelation 14:11).

Even inside the dwelling places, there will always be ample illumination. No lamp is needed for inside lighting. Neither is there need for the outside light of the sun or moon. The glory of God's presence (Revelation 21:23) is the light of that new world, and no other light is ever needed there.” Henry M. Morris, The Revelation Record, p. 469 talks about the perpetual light of the eternal city of God.

No End

If all this was not enough, God tells us that it will never, ever end. These blessings and privileges of the redeemed will never be taken away for His promises are sure and His blessings are forever. Not only this, but Scripture says the saints will reign with Him for all eternity. Just as the Son reigns forever with the Father, so will the saints reign eternally with their God [Rev. 3:21; 2 Tim. 2:12].

“And there shall be no more curse – perfect restoration. But the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it – perfect administration. His servants shall serve him – perfect subordination. And they shall see his face – perfect transformation. And his name shall be in their foreheads – perfect identification. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord giveth them light – perfect illumination. And they shall reign forever and ever – perfect exultation.” J. B. Smith, A Revelation of Jesus Christ, pp. 295-296 talks about the gracious divine provisions the saints will enjoy without end.

THE EPILOGUE [vv. 6-21]

The remainder of the verses in Revelation form the epilogue – (1) It is a direct appeal from Christ Himself to believers. He is looking to see what their response would be regarding His imminent return [vv. 6-12]. These verses speak with urgency to every reader of Revelation. We are to take action upon the truths set forth in God’s word in light of His second coming.

The last section of Revelation [vv. 13-21] ends with (2) an invitation for unbelievers to come to a saving faith in Jesus Christ before it is too late. Christ once again appeals to the unredeemed. For them, there is an urgent need of salvation. For when He comes back, there is no more grace.

To Believers [vv. 6-12]

1. The Certainty of the Blessed Hope [vv. 6-7]

The angel that showed John the glories of the heavenly Jerusalem assures the apostle that all the incredible things that John has seen and heard will come to pass. The words of the Apocalypse is as faithful and true as the One who revealed them to John [Rev. 1:1-3; 19:11]. The angel also reminds the apostle that the God who moved the prophets to write the Old Testament is the same God who sent His angel to reveal to the apostle John the things that shall shortly come to pass.

“The exactness, detail, and precision with which earlier prophecies already fulfilled came to pass forms the pattern for those yet to be fulfilled. God’s prophetic record is perfect. He predicted Israel would go into captivity, and the nation did (Lev. 26:33-39). He

predicted the destruction of Babylon (Isa. 13:1-14:27; Jer. 50-51) and Tyre (Isa. 231ff.), and those cities were destroyed. He predicted that Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2), to a virgin (Isa. 7:14), and be killed by sinners (Isa. 53:7-10) and He was. Thus when God predicts future events, such as the rapture of the church, the rise of Antichrist, the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments, the Battle of Armageddon, the return of Jesus Christ, and His thousand-year earthly kingdom, those events will just as certainly come to pass. God will do exactly what He says He will do, as He Himself declares in Isaiah 46:9-11. John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Revelation 12-22*, p. 293 the truthfulness and certainty of God’s word.

2. The Believer’s Response to the Blessed Hope

a. Be Obedient [v. 7]

The Lord Jesus Christ speaks here and declares that when He comes, He will come quickly. He gives the sixth beatitude of Revelation. He tells the believer to protect and defend the truths that are in this book from detractors and critics who deny its relevance and inspiration. It also calls the believer to not only read the word but to obey its teachings. Lastly, the believer’s knowledge of end-time events should cause them to live holy lives as they wait His soon return.

b. Worship God [vv. 8-9]

The speaker changes again. This time it is neither the angel nor Christ who is speaking. It is the apostle John. John clearly identifies himself as an

eyewitness to all the wonderful things He has seen and heard. In utter amazement, he falls down in worship before the angel. Although he had the proper response – one of worship – he directed it to the wrong object. Once again the angel rebukes John. He is not to worship angels for they were created to be fellow servants, not only to John and the prophets, but to all the redeemed. The angel’s command is clear – worship God only.

c. Proclaim the Word

The angel commands John not to seal up the prophecies of this book but to proclaim them. The reason is that the time of Christ’s return is very near – it can happen at any time. Therefore, the revelation of Jesus Christ is to be taught and proclaimed so people can hear and make decisions regarding their eternal destination. Then the angel gives a solemn declaration. In light of the coming judgments, men everywhere should evaluate their lives and behave accordingly to what has been revealed.

“In view of this, in verse 11 a seemingly strange command is given which has proved to be an enigma to some, namely, that John states, “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still.” In effect, he advocates status quo for both the wicked and the righteous. By this he does not mean that men should remain unmoved by the prophecies of this book, but rather that if the prophecies are rejected, there is no other message that will work. If the warnings of the book are not sufficient, there is no more that God has to say. The wicked must continue

in their wicked way and be judged by the Lord when He comes. The same rule, however, applies to the righteous. Their reaction to the prophecy, of course, will be different, but the exhortation in their case is to continue in righteousness and holiness. It is an either/or proposition with no neutrality possible. There is a sense also in which present choices fix character; a time is coming when change will be impossible. Present choices will become permanent in character.” John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, pp. 334 discusses what is meant by the angel’s command.

d. Serve God

The speaker once again is the Lord Jesus Christ who repeats again that He is coming quickly. When Christ does come, He will bring His reward with Him and presents it to those who have faithfully served Him on earth. While salvation is apart from works, rewards are according to their works. The works of the believers will be tested and only those with eternal value will survive. They will be based not on the quantity but the quality of the works done for our Savior. This promise should encourage each believer to not be slothful but to be obedient, diligent servants for our Master [Mark 13:33-37].

To the Unbelievers [vv. 13-21]

In the concluding verses of this last chapter, the Bible ends the way it begins. In Genesis, it begins with the promise of the Messiah’s first coming [Gen. 3:15] and in Revelation it concludes with the promise of the Messiah’s second coming.

“First, the Savior is to come that He might be crushed, bruised, crucified and made an offering for sin. He is to come to die as the Redeemer for the souls of men. After God made that promise in Eden, hundreds of years passed, millenniums passed and the Lord did not come. When final He did arrive He came unto His own and His own received Him not . . . thousands of humanity had forgotten the promise or else they scoffed at its fulfillment. When finally announcement came that he had arrived, the learned scribes pointed out the place where He was to be born, but never took the time to journey the five miles from Jerusalem to Bethlehem to welcome this promised Saviour of the world. But however long he delayed and however men forgot and scoffed and however few of a faithful band waited for the consolation of Israel, as old Simeon, yet He came. In keeping with the holy, faithful promise of God, the Lord Jesus came. It is thus in the text that God speaks in closing His Bible, “Surely, I come quickly.” Here a second time, however infidels may scoff and however others may reject and however the centuries may grow into the millenniums, this is the immutable Word and promise of the Lord God, “Surely, I come” W.A. Criswell, *Expository Sermons on Revelation*, chapter 5, pp. 176-177 speaks of both the first and second coming of Christ.

How appropriate that the word of God ends with a final invitation to unbelievers to receive Christ before it is too late. Although God’s final invitation is in verse 17, surrounding it is four reasons to motivate people to accept God’s urgent plea for salvation.

The Invitation [v. 17]

In this verse, there are two invitations. Each one begins with the word “Come.” The first invitation is a prayer to Christ and the second invitation is an urgent call to sinners.

1. The Prayer

a. The Holy Spirit’s plea

The third person of the Godhead responds to Christ’s imminent return by urging Christ to come. Throughout history, many men and women have either ignored or rejected the Holy Spirit’s ministry of pointing them to the Savior [John 15:26; 16:8]. After many centuries, the grieved and often blasphemed Holy Spirit eagerly awaits the return of Christ.

b. The Holy Spirit’s ministry

The ministry of the Holy Spirit is to glorify God. Therefore, it is the desire of the Spirit to see Christ exalted when He returns to earth at His second coming. In His first coming, Jesus was despised and rejected [Isa. 53:3] but at His second coming, He will come in all His majesty and glory as the King of kings and Lord of all.

2. The Bride’s desire

Along with the Holy Spirit, the bride also echos the desire for Christ to come. The believers have longed for and prayed for the return of Christ throughout the ages. Weary from the battle with sin and the devil, they look forward to receiving their glorified bodies, living in

their heavenly home and seeing their Savior face to face [John 14:3; 1 Thess. 4:17; 1 Cor. 15:53-54; 2 Tim. 4:8].

3. The Call [v. 17]

The second part of this invitation is for sinners to come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. It is directed to those who will respond to this urgent plea.

a. Those Who Hear

The invitation is extended to those who will hear. Obviously, they will not long for Christ's return until they are saved. Those who sincerely hear will believe and come to Christ [Rom. 10:17]. Hearing is often associated with obedience [Matt. 7:24; John 5:24; Luke 6:47]. They are the ones who will join the Spirit and the bride in calling for Christ's return, longing for His exaltation and their glorification [1 Cor. 15:52-53].

b. Those Who Thirst

Hearing God's word will lead to spiritual thirst. In the Bible the word *thirst* indicates a strong sense of spiritual need. This leads to repentance [Isa. 55:1; Matt. 5:6; John 7:37; Rev. 21:6-7]. Unless you recognize your need for God, you won't come to Him for salvation.

c. Those Who Will

All those who are willing to trust God [Rom. 10:9] and call upon Him [Rom. 10:13] will be washed in the water of regeneration – the new birth [Titus 3:5; 2 Cor. 5:17]. This is a sovereign act of God given to

us without cost for Christ has paid the price for our sins [Rom. 3:25-26; 1 Pet. 1:18-19]. God generously offers salvation to those who hear and obey His word, who thirst for forgiveness of their sins and who are willing to trust Him only for their eternity. Salvation invokes both God's sovereign choice [John 6:44] and human volition [Acts 2:21; Joel 2:32]

The Incentives for Salvation [Rev. 22:13-16, 18-21]

Jesus Christ not only gives the unbelievers another opportunity to come to Him but He gives four undeniable reasons to call upon Him.

1. The Person of Christ

The first reason given to unbelievers to accept God's final invitation is because it personally comes from Jesus Christ Himself. Christ identifies Himself in several ways:

a. The Eternal One

Christ says that He is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last and the beginning and the end [Co. 3:17; 1 Cor. 6:19-20]. All three titles speak of Christ as the beginning and source of all things as well as the goal and consummation of all things. Christ is eternal, sovereign and infinite. No one is more qualified to extend this invitation to the lost than Christ Himself – the only Savior and Redeemer of mankind.

“This description of Jesus Christ is also a statement of His deity. Obviously, there can be only one Alpha and Omega, first and last, and beginning and end –

God. In 1:8 God says, “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” while 21:6 describes Him as “the beginning and the end.” In Isaiah 44:6 God declares, “I am the first and I am the last” (cf. Isa. 41:4; 48:12). That all three titles, which can apply only to God, are used here of Jesus Christ offers convincing testimony to His deity. He is not a created being; He is not merely a great prophet or a great moral teacher; He is not a misguided martyr. He is God the Son, the second Person of the eternal Trinity.” John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* Revelation 12-22, p.306 comments on Christ’s description of Himself.

b. The Root and Descendant of David

Only Jesus, the eternal One, could be both the root and descendant of David. How can this be? Jesus has two natures – he is the God-man. Because of Christ’s deity, He is David’s root [ancestor]. Because of Christ’s humanity, He is David’s descendant [2 Sam. 7:12-16; Ps. 132:11-12; Matt. 1:1; Rom. 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:8].

c. The Bright & Morning Star

Calling someone a star [even in our day] is to exalt that person. In extra biblical writings, the Jewish people called the Messiah a star. Here Jesus refers to Himself as the bright and morning star. Other portions of Scripture also reflect this truth [Num. 24:17; 2 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 2:28].

“The angels of God are frequently called “stars” in Scripture, and on one occasion were called “morning stars” [Job 38:7]. There was one angel, however, identified as “Lucifer, son of the morning”

(Isaiah 14:12), who had led the heavenly rebellion against God and who, undoubtedly, is identical with Satan, that old serpent. The name “Lucifer” is translated in many versions as “Day-star,” referring again especially to Venus, the brilliant “star” of early dawn (Hebrew לִלְיָהּ, the bright star of the dawning) . . . These two words are used only once each in the Bible: לִלְיָהּ in the Old Testament, referring to Satan, and ὀρτηρινος in the New Testament referring to Christ, with both connecting symbolically with the bright rising dawn-star . . . The conclusion seems inescapable that the Lord Jesus intended for this unique appellation to call final attention to the fact the He, not Satan, was the rising star whose coming would herald the dawn of eternal day. Henry M. Morris, *The Revelation Record*, p. 481 talks about Jesus identifying Himself as the bright and morning star.

4. Heaven is Exclusive [vv. 14-15]

a. Only for Believers

Heaven is reserved for those who keep His commandments. The better translation is those who wash their robes. Soiled clothes represent sinfulness [Isa. 64:6; Zech. 3:3] but those who wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb will be cleansed from their sins [Ps. 51:7; Titus 3:5; Rev. 7:14]. They will be the ones who will have the right to eat of the tree of life [Rev. 22:2; 2:7]. The tree of life is located within the New Jerusalem. Therefore, those who are cleansed by Christ will have access through the gates of God’s eternal city.

b. Unbelievers Excluded

Jesus states clearly that not all will go to heaven. He gives a list of those who will not enter the New Jerusalem. This is not a comprehensive list but a list of some of the categories of sinners who will suffer eternity in hell. These are the ones who refused Christ's invitation for salvation for they loved darkness rather than light. They rejected the Savior, having no covering for their sin and their decision made on earth will condemn them forever to the eternal lake of fire [Rev. 20:15].

“But note how modern all these sins are , as well. Consider the amazing revival of acceptability in modern “Christendom” of homosexuality as well as sexual permissiveness in general, associated so commonly today again with drugs and occult paganism, not to mention idolatrous covetousness and even blatant idol worship. All show that John was writing in the context of the last days as much as he was of apostolic times. “Murders” are in the last as well, those who destroy bodies as well as those who destroy souls. And modern technological, intellectual civilization has experienced the greatest murder rates of any period of history. And once again lest anyone feel self-righteous because of freedom from such gross sins, the Lord adds liars to the list as well (compare Rev. 21:8, 27). Unless forgiven and cleansed by the blood of Christ, those who practice lying will also be barred from the city and its tree of life.” Henry M. Morris, *The Revelation Record*, p. 479 discusses the practice of modern day sins.

3. The Truthfulness of Scripture

It is most interesting that the Bible closes with an affirmation of its truthfulness [v. 6] and that it is to be proclaimed [v. 10]. The prophecies in Revelation should bring everyone to their knees in worship of Jesus Christ – for those who remain unredeemed will face God's fearsome wrath and terrifying judgments. Because all God's words are true and faithful, a warning is given against tampering with the word of God. Cults add to the word of God; liberals take away from the word. Both are regarded by God as deserving severe punishment.

“Both warnings contain a play on words. Those who add to Scripture will have plagues added to them; those who take away from Scripture will have the blessings of heaven taken away from them. No true believer would ever deliberately tamper with Scripture. Those who know and love God will treat His Word with the utmost respect . . . That does not, of course, mean that believers will never make errors in judgment or mistakenly interpret Scripture incorrectly or inadequately. The Lord's warning here is addressed to those who engage in deliberate falsification or misinterpretation of Scripture, those whom Paul denounces as peddlers of the Word of God (2 Cor. 2:17).” John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Revelation 12-22*, p. 310 comments on this warning not to tamper with the word of God.

4. The Certainty of Christ's Return

Christ's return is imminent and His last recorded words in Scripture is to remind us that He is coming again. This is the third time in this chapter [vv. 7, 12, 20] that

Christ speaks of His return. In this last announcement in v. 20, Jesus adds the word surely, denoting the certainty of His return. John responds to Christ by speaking for all Christians who look for His appearing, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

“One last promise to return quickly, and the great prophetic testimony of Jesus Christ (Revelation 1:2; 19:10) is ended. “These things” include all the events and promises and warnings of the Book of Revelation, culminating in the grave injunction not to change even a word of the complete Scriptures. Even though His promise to return was made almost 1,900 years ago, His coming is always imminent, and each passing year brings it nearer. From the standpoint of eternity, His coming will be very soon, even though on the scale of human time it may seem long delayed. In any case, His coming is sure. And when He does come, all the events prophesied to accompany His coming, as testified by Him in this book, will be fulfilled speedily and certainly.”

Henry M. Morris, The Revelation Record, p. 488, discusses the certainty of Christ’s return.

5. The Benediction of John

John ends this book by using a similar phrase that is found in the epistles of the apostle Paul. John gives a benediction that the grace of God be upon all its readers. In Revelation, nothing is more clearly stated than God’s grace upon the saints for they will experience His unspeakable blessings. This is in stark contrast to the unsaved who will experience Christ’s wrath and eternal judgment.

“The Christian life begins by grace, is sustained by grace, and thus should always manifest grace. When we

fail, as we often do, there is still forgiveness through grace, for He is “the God of all grace” (1 Peter 5:10), and His “grace is sufficient” (2 Corinthians 12:9). “God is able to make all grace abound” (2 Corinthians 9:8) to all who believe and obey His word. And in the ages to come, John’s simple farewell prayer for his friends will become a magnificent prophecy fulfilled in all the redeemed. The “exceeding riches of his grace” will be manifest toward us in all “the ages to come” (Ephesians 2:7) through Christ Jesus; and “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ” will, indeed be with us, and upon us, and in us, forever. To which we can only answer, with John, and with deep thanksgiving: “Amen!” Henry M. Morris, The Revelation Record, p. 489 talks about the grace of God upon all the saints.

Conclusion:

God’s word is true; Christ is coming again. It is not a matter of *if*, but *when*. All of prophesy throughout the Bible has come true; only those referring to the end times has yet to be fulfilled. In this book of Revelation, God has laid out the eternal future for the saved and unsaved. For those who know Him, they will experience His grace and love. For those who reject Him, they will be the recipients of His wrath and eternal judgment. You will either meet Jesus Christ as your Savior or you will meet Him as your Judge. The choice is yours; the time is now. Christ is coming. Are you ready for His coming?