

Revelation - Chapter 1

Introduction & Jesus Revealed

Introduction

The book of Revelation provides the most detailed look into the future in all of Scripture. The creation account was written in clear detail in the book of Genesis and God gives us a detailed record of how everything ends in the book of Revelation. This amazing book reveals the future history of the world with the return of Jesus Christ and His glorious kingdom. It culminates with a happy ending, as sin and death are banished forever.

The Book of Revelation has been said to be the most neglected, misunderstood & misinterpreted book in the Bible. But there is one over-riding and very important reason that we should all study the book of Revelation. Jesus Christ, Himself, tells us that,

“Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.” (Revelation 1:3)

To understand the entirety of the Book of Revelation and avoid great mis-interpretation, one must also understand God’s plan for Israel and the Church and many of the covenants and prophecies of the Old Testament. We will explore a summary of these topics now. You may read further about these topics on our website.

Interpretation of Prophecy

During this study of the book of Revelation, I will be using the literal interpretation of the Bible versus the allegorical method and the Premillennial view of the return of Christ. The literal translation gives to every word the same meaning it would have in normal usage and emphasizes that the meaning of Scripture is determined both by the literal words and the historical considerations. It was used by the early church and Jesus who also interpreted one passage of Scripture by appealing to another passage to add further clarification.

Proponents of the allegorical or spiritualizing method believe that it is impossible to apply the literal method to all Scripture, especially in the prophetic portions. Some Scripture is interpreted literally while other Scripture is interpreted symbolically. The allegorical or spiritualizing method arose out of a Greek Pagan period and not from a desire to understand the Scriptures.¹

The Premillennial view holds that the Church will be raptured before the Tribulation Period, Christ will make a literal second coming to the earth to destroy His enemies, and then set up His literal Kingdom of peace and righteousness on the earth for one

thousand years. Christ and His saints will reign on the earth in fulfillment of Old Testament and New Testament prophecy.

The Premillennial view holds a distinction between God's plan, purposes, and programs for Israel and God's plan, purposes and programs for the church. The Abrahamic and Davidic covenants are fulfilled literally during Christ's reign on earth. The millennial period is possible and necessary because all the promises given to Israel have not been fulfilled.

Israel & The Church

Five-sixths of the Bible is about Israel - from Genesis 12 to Revelation 22. Israel is the only nation that has its origin, history, ups and downs, and destiny all written out in advance for the diligent. Every time you encounter a Jew you are witnessing a miracle. No race on the planet has endured more systematic, heavily resourced attempts to wipe it out than the Jewish race.

From the Egyptians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Haman in the book of Esther, Hitler, Iran, ISIS and many more, we see a long list of people and nations that have wanted to destroy the Jewish race. Throughout history, the judgements of God have fallen heavily upon Israel's oppressors - Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Rome and in more modern times, Spain, Germany, and Russia.

How tragic it is when, even in Christian theology, Israel has been substantially dismissed. The Bible says more about the current period of time in history than it does about any other period of time, including the time that Jesus walked the shores of Galilee and climbed the mountains of Judea. At a time when we could be united as Christians that Jesus is surely coming soon, the Christian world hardly recognizes "the signs of the times." Jesus warned of not knowing the signs of the times twice; to the Pharisees and Sadducees in Matthew 16:3 and in Luke 19:42-44, "because you did not recognize the time of your visitation" as prophesied in the book of Daniel the Jews would remain in Jerusalem in 70 AD and be slaughtered.

The history of the Bible can be viewed as a Tale of Two Cities: Babylon as the City of Man; Jerusalem as the City of God. The Bible focuses on 3 primary promises:

- God's covenant with Abraham - in His seed all the nations will be blessed
- God's covenant with the nation Israel - if they faithfully served Him they'd prosper and if they forsook Him they'd be destroyed
- God's covenant with David, that his family would produce the Messiah who would reign over God's people forever.

God's Chosen People

In the book of Genesis we learn about how God created the world and that:

- God selected a distinct people to be their God
- God chose to dwell among His people
- God chose to set aside a priestly kingdom and a holy nation for the world to see.

We don't know why God specifically choose the Jews but we do know from the Scriptures that God choose the Jews to be His chosen people in perpetuity. (Ex 6:7-8; 19:5-6; 33:15-17; 28:43; 29:44-46; Deut 11:12). The rest of the Old Testament is about God's relationship to Israel including pointing to Jesus Christ, His birth, death, resurrection, and second coming.

The Unconditional Covenant With Abraham

When God called Abraham to leave his home God also made an unconditional covenant with Abraham. This covenant is made in Genesis 12:1-3 and confirmed and enlarged to him in Genesis 12:6-7; 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17:1-4; 22:15-18. The covenants entitled Abraham and Israel certain basic promises:

1. That Abraham's name shall be great.
2. That a great nation should come from him.
3. He should be a blessing so great that in him shall all families of the earth be blessed.
4. To him personally and to his seed should be given Palestine forever to inherit.
5. The multitude of his seed should be as the dust of the earth.
6. That whoever blessed him should be blessed and whosoever cursed him should be cursed.
7. He should be the father of many nations.
8. Kings should proceed from him.
9. The covenant shall be perpetual, "an everlasting covenant."
10. The land of Canaan shall be "an everlasting possession."
11. God will be a God to him and to his seed.
12. His seed shall possess the gate of his enemies.
13. In his seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed

God Dwells With His Chosen People

God continued His presence with His people when He confirmed His relationship with Abraham through an animal sacrifice. The presence of God passed through the animals Abraham killed. God's covenant to the Israelites was further confirmed to Jacob, Abraham's grandson, through Jacob's twelve sons, the 12 tribes of Israel.

God continued His relationship with His people throughout the years through:

- Animal sacrifice - First performed by God to cover Adam and Eve's shame at their sin, sacrifice was a principle established by God, where the blood of another could substitute for the sins of the sinner.
- Giving of the Law - God appeared to Moses on Mt. Sinai and gave Moses the ten commandments; their standards of righteousness to live by (Ex 24:15-18; 26:30).
- Tabernacle - God gave instructions to build a Tabernacle or structure so that God could continue to dwell with them, they could have communion with God and to worship God (Ex 25:1-8; 26:30).
 - Through the sacrificing of innocent animal blood at the Tabernacle, Israel could atone for their sins and be restored to God. God would let Himself be known to the High-Priest, who would communicate God's will to the people, and the priest would intervene before God on their behalf (Leviticus 16).
 - God dwelt in the Holy of Holies of the Tabernacle, enthroned above the Mercy Seat (Lev. 16:1-2).
 - God wanted a holy people and His presence among the Israelites was what made them holy (Exod. 19:5-6; 3:5; 33:15-17).
 - Although portable at first, the Tabernacle would later become a permanent structure called the Temple. David would buy the land for the Temple and his son Solomon then would build the Temple.
 - Every detail of the Tabernacle points to Christ. See attached Tabernacle charts and pictures.
 - More space is devoted in the Scriptures to the description of the Tabernacle than any other single subject except Christ Himself. God used 50 chapters to explain the Tabernacle and only 2 chapters to explain creation.

God Establishes A Nation For Israel

God guided and directed His people throughout the years to establish a nation for them and claim the land promised to them:

- The Israelites entered Egypt as a family and emerged from Egypt as a nation.
 - God delivered the Israelites out of Egypt where they had been enslaved, with a series of plagues, instituting the Passover, exodus from Egypt and a miracle parting of the Red Sea so they could leave.
 - He appeared as a pillar of a cloud by day and a pillar of fire at night. They could see the glory of God as he led them through the wilderness (Ex 13:21-22).
- Through the leadership of Moses, Joshua begins the process of claiming the land that God promised them.
- As Israel struggled with the other nations and sinned with idolatry they became contaminated with their false religions and apostasy from God. Through judges such as Samson, Gideon and Debra, God delivered His people. The theme for this period

in Israel's history is "and everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:21).

- David, the sheep herder, was singled out by God to be king over the Israelite nation. This period of Israel's history is known as the United Kingdom.
 - God's confirms and further's Israel's covenants with a covenant to David that through David's family line God would send the Messiah who would redeem the world from their sins (Isaiah 9:6-7, II Samuel 7:12-14).
 - David buys the land for the Temple and his son, Solomon, builds a magnificent Temple. The ark of the covenant is now in Solomon's Temple (2 Car 35:3).
 - After David's son, Solomon's death, the kingdom of Israel was split into two nations due to a civil war: Israel to the north with ten of the twelve tribes and Judah to the south with the remaining two tribes.
- For the next 300+ years both Israel and Judah had competing kings, many of the kings turned the people toward the idols of the land and away from God, such as Ahab who worshipped Baal. Some of the kings remained true to the Lord such as Hezekiah and Josiah.

God's Judgements On Israel and Judah

God's continual presence and relationship with the nation of Israel and it's people was contingent on Israel's obedience. If Israel obeyed they would be blessed, but if the nation turned away from the Lord, then they would be scattered and the Temple destroyed (1 Kings 9:6-9).

- During this period God intervened by sending prophets to warn the peoples to repent and turn back to God or God's judgments will follow:
 - Elijah battled the false prophets of Baal in the valley of Carmel (I Kings 18).
 - Three Major Prophets were there to testify to the sins of the nation, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel. All three lived in Jerusalem before the judgments, Jeremiah was the oldest.
 - Israel and Judah's sins were many and ran deep. Jerusalem was labeled "the bloody city" because of its violent crimes and child sacrifices to Molech. God gives Ezekiel a vision of the abominations in Jerusalem; it is sickening (Eze 8).
 - Ezekiel 16 is so sad and indicting that some of the ancient rabbis did not allow it to be read in public.
 - Ezekiel talks about the progression from violence to wickedness. There was a war for the soul of the nation.
- Israel was judged first in 722 BC. God sent the armies of Assyria to destroy the land and take the people captive. In their place other people were settled in the land. Later Babylon defeats the Assyrians.
- Judah was judged and invaded by Babylon 3 times under leadership of Nebuchadnezzar - 605, 597, 587 BC:

- 587 BC Babylon destroyed the Temple and the city, tearing down its walls. Jeremiah wrote the *Book of Lamentations* witnessing the destruction of the people and the city.
- All these defeats were judgments against the land, because the people were turning away from the Lord. The people caused God to judge the land; because they turned away from God and worshipped the gods of Babylon, Egypt, Moab and the Philistines.
- Israel is like an abandoned child. The Israelites had no place to offer atoning blood, thus bearing their sins without relief.
- One of the most distressing Scriptures in the Bible is when Ezekiel describes the Glory of the Lord departing the Temple.
“Then the glory of the Lord departed from the threshold of the temple and stood over the cherubim.” (Ezekiel 10:18)
- Sadly, the exile and affliction did not make the Jews more responsive to God; rather they were hardened by their sufferings.

God’s Covenants Remain

Even when God did judge His people for their failures, He promised that He would still continue with His covenant; He had not forgotten His people. Through His prophets, God gave the Israelites breath taking visions of the Throne of God (Isaiah and Ezekiel) while giving His Word that:

- Babylon will fall (your time is up).
- Jerusalem will be restored and rebuilt. This occurred under Nehemiah and Ezra.
- There will be a New Covenant which was announced by Jeremiah.
- Nebuchadnezzar would usher in a “time of the Gentiles” when Israel's national life is dominated by Gentile nations that would eventually end with the Second Coming of Jesus. Daniel receives a vision that tells of the beginning and end of Gentile rule. The “time of the Gentiles” will be characterized by continuous degeneration and decay:
 - Deteriorating morality in human government
 - Increasing power in human government
 - Disintegrating unity of human government
 - Iron will of authority and the clay like voice of the people
 - As kingdoms degenerate in immorality they will increase in force. As we near the end of this age the tension between the forces will increase until nations are torn apart by strife both internal and external. All attempts at unification with other governments will fail. This will prepare the way for the antichrist world rule.
 - There will be a terrible time of trouble for the Israelites in the last days, called Jacob’s trouble, which will last 7 years (book of Daniel).

- In the middle of the 7 years a coming world leader described in detail, will establish an idol in the Holy of Holies: this act is called the Abomination of Desolation. The last half of that 4 year period is labeled by Jesus as “The Great Tribulation”.
- The Magog Invasion in the end times coming from the uttermost parts of the north - Russia, Iran (Persia), Ethiopia (Cush), Libya and North Africa (Phut). (Described in the book of Ezekiel)
- Jesus will establish His Kingdom for 1000 years which is called the Kingdom Period.
 - All of Israel will be saved.
 - Israel will be restored as a nation, and granted it's land.
 - A Millennial Temple will be built and offerings and sacrifices will be resumed but not like the Mosaic sacrifices. It will be open on the Sabbath Day and on New Moons. (9 chapters in book of Ezekiel)
 - All the nations will come to worship there.
- God will establish an eternal New Heaven and New Earth.

In the Old Testament there are many prophecies regarding the last days:

- Jesus - 36
- Great Tribulation - 9
- Millennial Kingdom - 129
- Time and Eternity - 23

God Establishes Israel's Return From Exile

At the appointed time as predicted by Jeremiah, a remnant returns to Jerusalem from Babylon. There were two primary restorations from Babylonian captivity. Nehemiah a strong governor and Ezra a devout teacher played key roles in the restoration.

Their return to their land showed that they were still God's people, despite the years of exile and the difficulties they had experienced since their return. The first group of returning exiles restored worship of the Lord, culminating in a rebuilt temple, but Ezra, who led the second group, re-established the Israelite community under Mosaic law, culminating in putting away mixed marriages.

Although the Temple is rebuilt it is not restored to it's original glory:

- The Ark of the Covenant is gone
- The Holy of Holies stands empty

The Silent Years

This includes a 400 year period in which no prophet was heard.

John the Baptist

John the Baptist ushers in the New Testament period.

Jesus

Birth, Ministry, Crucifixion and Ascension of Jesus Christ and Pentecost. Jesus ushered in a period of grace in which those who accept His as Lord and Savior can be reconciled to God. Jesus died on the Cross as a sacrifice for our sins. Jesus substituted for us and paid our penalty for us. His death on the cross is an atonement for our sins and appeases God's wrath against our sin. Jesus chose to die for us so that we could live with Him forever.

The Church

The body of Christ or the body of people saved by Jesus Christ and regenerated by the Holy Spirit who live to glorify and enjoy God until Jesus raptures the Church.

Diaspora

Jerusalem and the Temple are destroyed again in 70 AD as predicted in the book of Daniel. The Romans laid siege in Jerusalem for nine months and over a million were slaughtered. Israel is scattered all over the world.

As Jesus makes His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, He weeps for the city, because He knows they will be destroyed as Gabriel had prophesied to Daniel. It's citizens will also be slaughtered because they did not know the Scriptures and as a result did not leave the city.

"saying, 'If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. 'For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side, and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation.'" (Luke 19:42–44, NASB95)

Israel the Nation

In 1948 Israel becomes a nation again. Old Testament prophecies were literally fulfilled.

Summary

God is not finished with Israel. Which of the covenants have been fulfilled and which are *yet to come*? In reviewing the covenants there are seven great promises to Israel:

- A nation forever
- A land forever
- A King forever

- A throne forever
- A kingdom forever
- A New Covenant
- Abiding blessings

Israel must be regathered and restored to *the land* promised by God and then experience the blessings of the New Covenant discussed in Jeremiah 31:31-34 *in the land*. History records no such sequence. This means that these events are still to come.

You might ask, “Well what about the New Covenant?” Jesus instituted the New Covenant and as Gentiles we do receive the blessing, but the New Covenant was made with Israel and not the church.

“Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the Lord. “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the Lord, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. “They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the Lord, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” (Jeremiah 31:31–34, NASB95)

By faith Gentiles can become the children of Abraham and thus become participants in the New Covenant (Rom 4:16; Gal 3:7) . It just means that for Israel the New Covenant is not yet realized. Christ instituted the covenant but Israel as a nation will not realize it until it is confirmed and made actual to them at the second advent (coming) of Christ, when all Israel shall be saved (Rom 11:26-27).

Judgements play a big part in the book of Revelation. Evil nations have been against God and His people throughout the Old Testament and the age ends with empires compared with wild and ferocious animals (book of Daniel). This present age is evil, under the dominion of the kingdom of darkness and will be followed by a judgment on the present cosmic order.

Jesus stopped Israel’s timepiece in Luke 19. The clock has one 7 year period left yet to be ticked off. Nothing else needs to happen. All prophecy before Jesus’ second coming has happened. He could come at any time.

Revelation - Chapter 1

Jesus Revealed

Who Wrote the Book of Revelation

Imagine John's exhilaration as he sees Jesus, His Lord and Savior and old friend. You can hear the excitement, joy, and just how overwhelmed he was to receive a message about Jesus and His return and then to actually see the glorified Jesus.

John the author is none other than John the apostle, the son of Zebedee and brother of James. John loyally testified to the first coming of Christ so now John faithfully proclaims all that he saw concerning Jesus' second coming.

At ninety years old John is nearing the end of his life. It is AD 95, John is alone and exiled to Patmos, a small, barren, volcanic island in the Aegean Sea off the coast of Greece and about forty miles offshore from modern-day Turkey. Patmos is ten miles long and six miles wide. The island was considered the Alcatraz or Devil's Island of its day, where Roman prisoners were sent to spend the rest of their days imprisoned in exile.

Yet this is the time in John's life when God choose to share one of the most glorious messages in the Bible - the return of Jesus. Imagine what a blessing this was for John at what was probably the second lowest point in his life, the first was when he witnessed Jesus being crucified and now John is suffering severe persecution for the cause of Christ, exiled like a common criminal.

John was exiled to Patmos for eighteen months, beginning in AD 95 for refusing to confess the emperor, Domitian, as "lord and god." Domitian was known to be cruel and even exiled his own niece to another island. Conditions for John would have been very harsh. Exhausting physical labor in the mines under the watchful eye of a Roman guard, insufficient food and clothing and having to sleep on the bare ground would have taken their toll on a ninety year old man.

When the Emperor Domitian died in AD 96, his successor Nerva let John return to Ephesus where he directed the churches of Asia until his death after the crowning of Emperor Trajan in AD 98.

First Thing

The very first thing John tells us is that the information in this book he has written is the revelation of Jesus Christ (Rev 1:1). No lengthy opening, no background information,

no build up - one can hear the excitement and urgency in his cadence as he gets to the point of his book immediately.

The word “revelation” is a translation of the Greek *apokalypsis*, meaning “an unveiling” or “a disclosure.”⁵ The book is an unveiling or disclosure of truth about Jesus Christ.

How John Received the Information in Revelation

John shares that the information contained in this book was given to him by God the Father, then to Christ the Son and then revealed by an angel to John (Rev 1:1).

The book of Revelation is unique in the New Testament because it is the only book sent and communicated by angels. Angels appear in every chapter of Revelation except 4 and 13. The words “angel” or “angels” are used seventy-one times in the book of Revelation - more than in any other book in the Bible. Angels were involved in the giving of the book of Revelation to John, just as they were in the giving of the Law to Moses. The name of the angel coming with the revelation to John is not given, however many have suggested it is Gabriel.

John states here and thirty-eight other occasions that he was recording things he saw. (Rev 1:2). His words paint vivid pictures to reveal the future through memorable symbols and images.

Purpose of the Book of Revelation

John tells us that his purpose in writing this book is to *show us things to come* (Rev 1:1). Throughout the ages people of all societies and statuses have wanted to know what lies ahead, what will happen in the future. Here is the answer from our omniscient, sovereign God, through Jesus Christ Himself!

Revelation’s emphasis on future events also sets it apart from all other New Testament books. The first four books of the New Testament are about the past, especially the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; the next twenty-two are about the present, especially the life of the church. Revelation, though it contains some information about the past (Rev 1) and the present (Rev 2–3), focuses on the future (Rev 4–22).

What John was to do with the Information

Jesus, Himself tells John to, “Write in a book what you see.” (Rev 1:11,19) This is the first and second of twelve commands in the book of Revelation for John to write what he sees. John compares Jesus’ voice to a trumpet (Rev 1:10). Throughout the book of Revelation, a loud voice or sound indicates the seriousness of what is about to be revealed.

Who was John Writing the Book to

Early in the chapter, Rev 1:1, John states that the revelation of Jesus Christ is for Jesus' bond-servants or His followers - those who have chosen Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

In Revelation 1:9, John introduces himself again very humbly and simply as a *brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus* (Rev 1:9), emphasizing the experiences he shared with those who would read his letter. *Partaker* is derived from the Greek word *synkoinōnos* and is related to the concept of fellowship. The Greek word for *perseverance* means to remain under, that is, to patiently endure difficulties without giving up. *Tribulation* refers to general trials and persecutions experienced by Christians then and of every era. *Kingdom* refers to the future earthly kingdom which Christ will establish at His second coming.

John describes fellowship with his fellow Christians to include perseverance through tribulation in light of the coming Kingdom. The closer His second coming gets, the more intense the persecution will become for His followers. ¹⁶

After writing the vision, John was commanded to send it to the seven churches in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea (Rev 1:11) which are located in the Roman province of Asia which is modern Turkey today. These seven churches were located in the key cities of the seven postal districts into which Asia was divided. They were points for sharing of information.

Special Blessing

Another unique feature of Revelation is that it contains a special blessing to those who *read, hear and heed* what is written in it (Rev 1:3). No other book of the Bible contains such a promise. We will be blessed when we read Revelation because we will understand how God will ultimately bring sense to our suffering, it will unlock the mystery of history - we are moving toward a goal of Christ assuming His rightful place as eternal Lord of Lords and King of Kings, and it will bring stability to our souls in these chaotic times we live in. If you look forward to His coming you will have stability. Simply put: We Win!!

Preview Glimpse of Jesus' Glorious Return

John begins the first prophetic oracle of Revelation (Rev 1:7) when he gets our attention with the first *behold* - a word that is used 25 times in Revelation and is intended to arouse the mind and heart to consider what follows. What follows is that Jesus is returning.

And Jesus returns in all His glory literally (Rev 1:7). John gives us a preview glimpse of the glorious descent of Christ at the final battle of Armageddon. Christ will be robed in the Shekinah glory of God (*coming with the clouds*) and the brilliance of innumerable

angels and the redeemed who accompany Him will be both an indescribable and terrifying event. Everyone will see Him (Rev 1:7). Those who have not accepted Him as their Lord and Savior will mourn which is prompted by their terror over their impending doom (REv 1:7). Those who have accepted Him will enter the Millennial Kingdom with Him.

Patmos Vision

After John is told that Jesus will return and how He will return, John receives a vision supernaturally, *in the spirit* (Rev 1:10) on Sunday, *the Lord's day*. Even while exiled for his faith, living in harsh conditions on a rocky penal colony, John the elderly apostle set aside time on Sunday, the Lord's Day, to worship and pray. Even though his experience transcends the bounds of normal human understanding, such encounters have occurred with other leaders in the Bible, such as Ezekiel, Daniel, Peter, and Paul.

John began with his back to the voice, so he turned to see the voice, and he first sees seven golden lamp stands and in the middle of the lampstands is the glorified Jesus! John, the elder, theologian, evangelist, apostle and elite member of Christ's inner circle was instantly reduced to a trembling sinner lying powerless before the King of kings and Lord of lords. In a word, he was terrified.

Such fear was standard for those few who experienced such unusual heavenly visions. Yet in the midst of the apostle's heart-stopping terror, the unsurpassable Son of God stooped down, reached out with His nail-pierced hand, and comforted His old friend just as he had done at the transfiguration.

Then John starts his incredible description of the glorified Jesus. This is not the Jesus he traveled with and saw heal the sick, preach to the multitudes, and suffer on the cross, but the Jesus that he saw at the Mount of Transfiguration where Jesus briefly unveiled His glory. Now sixty years later at the end of his life, John was seeing Jesus in all His glorious splendor.

No doubt John used the best descriptions he could come up with considering human words could only partially describe the gloried Jesus that stood before him (Rev 1:13-16):

- Clothed in a long robe - Such robes were worn by royalty, prophets, and high priests. The robe here pictures Christ in His role as the Great High Priest of His people.
- Golden sash across His chest - High priests in the Old Testament wore such sashes.
- Head and hair white as snow - Depicts the Ancient of Days (God the Father), Christ's work of chastening and purifying His church
- Eyes like a flame of fire - Flaming searching gaze penetrates to the very depths of His church

- Feet burnished glowing bronze - The bronze altar in the temple was related to sacrifice for sin and divine judgment on it. Kings in ancient times sat on elevated thrones so those being judged would always be beneath the king's feet. The feet of a king came to symbolize his authority. The red-hot, glowing feet of Christ picture Him moving through His church to exercise His holy scrutiny.
- Voice like the sound of many waters - Christ no longer speaking with the trumpet like voice but now like the eternal God described in Ezekiel showing another parallel affirming Christ's deity.
- Seven stars in his right hand - Represents the seven churches and being held in His right hand depicts sovereign possession.
- Two-edged sword in His mouth - denotes judgment against enemies from inside the church
- Brilliant shining face - Radiant glory evident on His face depicts the glory of God through Christ shines in and through His church, reflecting His glory to the world with Christ being ultimately glorified.

Then Jesus describes Himself in exalted terms (Rev 1:17-18):

- I Am - The covenant name of God
- The first and the last - signify Christ's eternity and His all-inclusive power.
- The Living One - God is the eternal, uncreated, self-existent One.
- I was dead and behold I am alive forevermore - The Greek text reads, "I became dead." The living One, the eternal God who could never die, became man and did die.
- Alive forevermore - Christ lives forever in a union of glorified humanity and deity.
- I have the keys of death and of Hades - death is the condition and Hades is the place of the dead. Here Jesus is saying that he has the authority, the keys, to decide who dies and who lives. Those who have accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior have already been delivered from death and Hades by Christ's sacrificial death on the cross.

Jesus then commands John again to write these things down and gives John the outline to use while recording what he saw in the book of Revelation (Rev 1:19):

The things which you have seen	Vision of Christ in all His glory	Past	Rev 1
The things which are	Message to the seven churches	Present	Rev 2-3
The things which will take place after these things	Vision of things to come	Future	Rev 4-22

Jesus helped all of us by interpreting two symbols from that vision, the stars and the lampstands:

- The *seven lampstands* that Jesus was standing in the middle of are the seven churches at Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea (Rev 1:20).
- The golden lamp stands were like the common portable oil lamps placed on lamp stands that were used to light rooms at night. They symbolize the churches as the lights of the world. They were golden because gold is the most precious metal and the church is God's most beautiful entity on earth. Seven is the number of completeness. Here the seven churches represent the actual churches and also symbolize the kinds of churches that exist through all of church history.
- The *seven stars are the angles of the seven churches* (Rev 1:20). The Greek word for angels is angelos which can mean the six winged figures in Isaiah 6 or human messengers as commonly used in biblical days. In Rev 2:4, 14, 20 these angels are charged with bad behavior so we can conclude that Jesus is not referring to angelic beings but rather He is referring to what we would call today the pastors of the seven churches.

The charge is clear: John was to write everything he saw and heard and send it to the seven churches through each church's pastor. This wide distribution of the book guaranteed that the revelation from Jesus Christ would not only address believers in John's own day, but it would continue to inform and encourage believers until Jesus returns.

Exaltation of Jesus

In the first Chapter of Revelation there are eight references about Jesus. He is the:

- Faithful witness (1:5); He is the One who always speaks and represents the truth.
- Firstborn of the dead (1:5); Christ is the firstborn of all creation, He is the first to receive a resurrection body which is immortal. Of all who have ever been or ever will be resurrected, He is the premier One.
- Ruler of the kings of the earth (1:5); Refers to Christ's authority and kingship as the promised descendant of David.
- Alpha and the Omega" (1:8; 21:6); The first and the last - the One who has always been. Denotes His sovereignty.
- One "who is and who was and who is to come" (1:4,8) Used throughout the Bible to describe God, the I Am. indicates God's complete transcendence over all history - past, present and future.
- Almighty" (1:8); the Eternal God.

All these descriptions confirm the deity of Christ as the Son of the Triune God: God, the Father; Jesus, the Son; and the Holy Spirit. John also gives Christ all the glory and

honor - no doubt due to Christ's unbreakable love. His love was best demonstrated by His sacrificial death on the cross when He released us from our sins by His blood.

When will Jesus Return

Jesus gave John two clues about when He will return. First, John was told that *the time is near*. (Rev 1:3) and then, *so it is to be* (Rev 1:7).

When John tells us that *the time is near* for Christ's coming back, he used a Greek term *kairos* which means a season of time in contrast to time as on a calendar or clock. So the period of time or season of time he is talking about is the time of the end as Daniel also referred to in his vision from the Lord.

John is being told that the next great era of God's redemptive history is near. It is imminent and Jesus can come at any moment. We are not waiting for some event to take place before Jesus can return; He can come whenever He chooses.

We have been living in the last days for more than two thousand years. Jesus commanded His followers to watch expectantly for His return (Luke 12:35-40). Paul, Peter, James and John, the apostles, all wrote that the day of His return is near (Rom 13:12, 1 Pet 4:7; James 5:7-9; 1 John 2:18). We are always living on the edge of eternity and as believers in Christ we should be ready for His return no matter when it occurs.

As part of the message to the seven churches, John was told, and *so it is to be*. Nothing can stop our sovereign Almighty Jesus from coming back and carrying out His will. As Christians we are sojourners in a foreign land because Satan is the "ruler of this world." Jesus told the women who were weeping alongside the Via Dolorosa that His hour had not yet come and we are told in First Timothy that God will bring about Jesus' return in His own time. What a day that will be!

When the time is right He will begin His campaign to regain His rightful sovereignty over the earth. The book of Revelation is the account of that campaign. It tells of His appointment by the Father to the throne, His battle against the forces of evil, His final victory, and His relationship with the redeemed.

Let's Review What We Learned in Chapter 1:

- Jesus reveals to John that He is coming back, the things which must take place soon, and to share this message with the seven churches in Asia.
- Jesus gives John the outline for the book of Revelation - John is to write the things which he has seen, the things which are, and the things which will take place.
- Those that read, hear and heed this message will be blessed.

- The heavens are opened and the readers of John's book can see as did Stephen in Acts 7:56 and John at the Transfiguration, visions of the risen, glorified Son of God.
- Jesus' entrance will be so brilliant no one, no matter what they are doing at the time or where they are, will miss seeing Him.
- The time can be any moment; nothing else has to occur.
- Christ's exaltation is described:

When Jesus came the first time He: When Jesus comes the second time He:

Took the sinner's place to die	Executes judgment upon the unsaved sinner
Lamb led to slaughter	Lion enthroned to judge
Save the lost	Vengeance on those who have not professed Him as Lord and who have not obeyed His Word
Supreme messenger of love	Righteous Judge, Ruler of kings of the earth
Great humility	Alpha and the Omega, the Almighty, Living One, Ancient of Days, Alive forevermore, Awesome power and glory
Wearing a robe of shame	Wearing a robe of glory
Born in a stall and died a horrible death	Honorable return - arrives in the Shekinah glory of God.

Revelation - Chapter 2 and 3

Christ's Messages to the Seven Churches

Following Jesus' instruction to "write the things which he saw, the things which are and the things which will take place after these things" (Rev 1:19), John first writes in Chapter 1 about "*the things he saw*" which was his incredible vision of the glorified Jesus and Jesus' entry from heaven on the clouds at His second coming to earth. This time every one will see Him and there will be great mourning by those who have rejected Him. Those who have accepted Him as Lord and Savior will spend eternity with Him.

Now in Chapter 2 and 3, John writes about "*the things which are*" which is about the Church Age. Jesus has a message for John to share with the seven Churches. There would have been more than seven churches at that time, so it is significant that the number of letters was limited to seven which is the number of completeness in Scripture.

These messages represent the Churches then and the Churches throughout all of the Church Age including now. These churches' issues illustrate conditions that were common in local churches at that time as well as throughout later history. They are written not only to the Churches but also to the members of the Churches, to us as individual believers.

Many Bible teachers believe that the conditions represented in these seven churches also represent the chronological history of Churches throughout the Church Age. There is certainly some merit to this view and we will examine it, although it is a deduction from the text rather than being stated explicitly. ¹

While each message is specific to each Church, there are similarities among the seven letters:

- Each begins with the same expression, "I know your works." Remember in John's vision, Jesus is standing in the middle of the seven churches (Lampstands) and walks among them. Because He is sovereign and omniscient He is aware of their every thought, intention and motive. This is Christ's performance evaluation, His review of their faith and works, including points of encouragement and rebuke. ²
- Each offers a promise "to the one who conquers." Here He is referring to those who have placed their trust in Him, true believers, who have overcome the unbelief and sin of the world.

- Each has the same concluding sentence: “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” This is Christ’s call to action for those who have their ears attuned to hear what the Spirit of God is saying to the churches and to the individual believers.
- Jesus is described in each letter, but His description differs in keeping with the message addressed to the specific church.

Ephesus - The Orthodox, but Lost-love Church

First-century Ephesus was the most important city of Asia Minor and a major center of political, economic, and religious activity. It had a population estimated at 250,000 to 500,000. Ephesus boasted one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, a grand temple dedicated to the fertility goddess Diana and had several temples dedicated to emperor worship. ³

It has been said that no church had such a rich heritage as the one at Ephesus. Priscilla and Aquila first introduced the gospel to that city (Acts 18:18–19). Soon they were joined by the powerful preacher Apollos (Acts 18:24–26). Together, the three laid the groundwork for Paul’s ministry in Ephesus. ⁴

Paul preached the gospel so effectively “that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord” (Acts 19:10). This large city was thoroughly stirred by Paul’s message (Acts 19:11–41), with the result that the silversmiths created a riot because their business of making shrines of Diana was threatened. ⁵

Paul founded the church at Ephesus around AD 52 then appointed Timothy as it’s pastor around AD 65. John probably followed Timothy and Onesimus may have been pastor while John was exiled to Patmos.

Christ complimented the church in Ephesus for:

- Toiling in good deeds (2:2)
- Enduring patiently in trials (2:2-3)
- Standing against false apostles (2:2, 6)

Christians in Ephesus would have been the objects of physical violence, social ostracism, and economic repression. Yet they endured. They bore up under the load. They rejected the teaching of the Nicolaitans who are not specified in Scripture but apparently were a sect wrong in practices and in doctrine. Clearly, Paul, Timothy, and John had taught Ephesus well.

Yet, this diligent, conscientious, industrious and involved congregation had everything except the greatest thing. Thirty-five years earlier, Paul had commended them for their love of Christ. Now in its second generation of Christians they retained purity of doctrine and life and maintained a high level of service, but their love for Christ was missing (Eph 1:15-16). Their failure was a matter of the heart (1 Cor 13:13; Eph 6:24).

Jesus' commands to correct their lost love was to:

- Remember their love of Christ which once burned in their hearts.
- Repent - Change their attitude toward Christ and reclaim their former love for Him.
- Repeat the deeds they did at first. A true love for God is always manifested in the works it produces.

The seriousness of these commands is evident when Jesus tells them they will receive sudden judgment and removal of their lamp stand or witness to the world if they do not change. The church at Ephesus retained its vigor for several centuries and was even the scene of a major church council, but the city declined, the Turks deported its citizens in the 14th century and the church is gone and the city now uninhabited.

Smyrna - The Suffering Church

Smyrna was said to be the most beautiful city in Asia. It was located on a gulf of the Aegean Sea and had an excellent harbor. Just thirty-five miles north of Ephesus, the ancient city of Smyrna today goes by another name: Izmir. In John's day the thriving city was a noted center of science and medicine, had a famous stadium, library, and theater, as well as a diverse population of perhaps half a million people. As a vital port city, it boasted the second-largest number of exports in Asia Minor.

Life was difficult and dangerous in Smyrna for believers. Under Domitian it became a capital offense to refuse to offer the yearly sacrifice to the emperor. Jews in the Roman Empire were legally excused from sacrificing to the emperor, but Christians enjoyed no such exemption after they had been cast out of the synagogues. Therefore, believers in Smyrna were ostracized, verbally assaulted, boycotted, mistreated and faced execution. Many of the believers at Smyrna were slaves. Most were destitute. Those few who had owned possessions had undoubtedly lost them in the persecution.

In the midst of their suffering, the Lord Jesus Christ came to the church in Smyrna with a message of hope:

- I know your tribulation and poverty - Christ reminded them that He transcends this world and empowers them to do the same.
- But you are rich - He was telling them their spiritual riches are far more important than their material poverty.
- Do not fear - Even though the relentless attacks will continue they will be limited in scope and temporary in duration.

- Be faithful until death and you will receive the crown of life.
- You will not be hurt by the second death. You will spend eternity with God in Heaven.

The church at Smyrna had every human reason to collapse. They weren't experiencing hardship because of any wrong they had done. Though they suffered physically and economically, the Christians at Smyrna clung to their spiritual riches. The church at Smyrna is one of only two churches (along with Philadelphia) that received no condemnation or rebuke in its letter from Christ. Throughout its history, the more the church has been persecuted, the greater its purity and strength.

The Church at Smyrna had what really mattered—salvation, holiness, grace, peace, fellowship, a sympathetic Savior and Comforter. The church at Smyrna was the rich church spiritually, in contrast to the church at Laodicea, which was economically rich but spiritually poor (Rev 3:17).

Pergamum - The Compromising Church

Pergamum was fifty miles north of Smyrna and located about fifteen miles inland from the Aegean Sea. Pergamum had been Asia's ancient capital for about 250 years and was considered Asia's greatest city. Pergamum survives today as the Turkish city of Bergama.⁶

Pergamum was famous for its university with a library of about 200,000 volumes, and for manufacturing parchment resulting in a paper called *pergamena*. Like Ephesus and Smyrna it was a wealthy city, but it was wicked.

Because of its library, Pergamum was an important center of culture and learning. It also was a center of worship for four of the main gods of the Greco-Roman world and multiple emperor worship. In other cities Christians were primarily in danger on the one day per year they were required to offer sacrifices to the emperor. In Pergamum they were in danger every day.

The book of Acts does not record the founding of the church at Pergamum. Most likely, the church at Pergamum was founded during Paul's ministry in Ephesus, when the gospel spread from there throughout the province of Asia (Acts 19:10).⁷

Despite the difficult circumstances, the believers at Pergamum courageously maintained their faith in Christ. Christ commended them for:

- Continuing to hold fast His name, even though they lived "where Satan's throne is," Jesus may have been referring to the altar of Zeus which was 120 by 112 feet contained within a colonnaded court that included a podium almost 18 feet high.

- Being faithful even in the days of Antipas, whom Christ described as “My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you.” Nothing certain is known about Antipas apart from this text. He was probably one of the leaders of the Pergamum church. According to tradition, he was roasted to death inside a brass bull during the persecution by Emperor Domitian.⁸

Like many churches today, the church at Pergamum failed to obey the biblical mandate to practice church discipline (Matthew 18:15–18). They had allowed false teaching and were in danger of becoming intertwined with the world. The heart of Christ’s message to the Christians at Pergamum is that Biblical truth and morality can’t exist in a culture of worldly compromise. Jesus mentions two heresies:

- Teaching of Balaam. Like the Israelites in the Old Testament they participated in pagan practices that would destroy their spiritual power. They believed they could participate in pagan feasts and still join the Church.⁹
- Teaching of the Nicolaitans. Although not specifically explained in Scripture the context indicates that the teaching of the Nicolaitans led to the same wicked behavior as that of the followers of Balaam. Nicolaitans probably taught that one could participate in pagan sexual practices and still join the Church.

For the first time in John’s introduction of Jesus, we see Him as judge and executioner. His exhortation is clear: Repent, change your ways or judgement will come suddenly. The majority of the believers at Pergamum did not participate in the errors of these two groups. Yet by tolerating the groups and refusing to exercise church discipline, they shared in their guilt and incurred the Lord’s judgment. Antipas’s faithfulness and courage were a rebuke to those at Pergamum who were tempted to compromise with the world.

Jesus’ promises to the overcomes or believers are:

- Hidden manna - the unseen source of the believer’s nourishment and strength which is Jesus Himself. (John 6:48-51).
- White stone with a new name written on it - No specific explanation is given in Scripture and much has been written about the white stone. One possible explanation is to understand the white stone in light of the Roman custom of awarding white stones to the victors in athletic contests. A white stone, inscribed with the athlete’s name, served as his ticket to a special awards banquet. In this view, Christ promises the overcomers entrance to the eternal victory celebration in heaven. There will be a new name written on the stone no one knows but the person who receives it.¹⁰

Thyatira - Tolerant, Permissive Church

Thyatira was located 40 miles southeast of Pergamum and at the time Revelation was written it was entering its period of greatest commercial prosperity. Its road was important as it connected Pergamum with Laodicea, Smyrna, and the interior regions. It also served as the Roman post road.

Thyatira was situated in an area noted for its abundant crops and the manufacture of purple dye. Although originally founded as a shrine to the sun god Tyrinnus, whose description was somewhat similar to that of Christ in Revelation 2:18, Thyatira was not an important religious center. The primary god worshiped was the Greek sun god, Apollo. Nor does there appear to have been a sizable Jewish population.

The pressure faced by the Christians in Thyatira came from the guilds. To hold a job or run a business, it was necessary to be a member of a guild. Each guild had a deity in whose honor feasts were held, including meat sacrificed to idols and sexual immorality. Christians faced the dilemma of participating or losing their job. How some in the Thyatira church were handling the situation caused Christ great concern.¹¹

As with the churches at Smyrna and Pergamum, the Bible does not record the founding of the church at Thyatira. It is possible that Lydia and her household helped start the church at Thyatira (Acts 16:14). More likely, the church there was founded as an outreach of Paul's ministry at Ephesus (Acts 19:10).¹²

Jesus commended the Thyatira church for their:

- Love - Thyatira is the first of the seven churches commended for its love.
- Faith - dependable, reliable, and consistent
- Service
- Perseverance
- Deeds have increased over the years

Thyatira is the smallest church of the seven but received the longest letter. Jesus is described for the first time as the "Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze" (Rev 2:18). The situation required reaffirmation of His deity and His righteous indignation at their sins. He is approaching the Church at Thyatira as the Divine Judge.

Jesus reveals 3 groups in the Church at Thyatira:

- Jezebel & her followers - Christ is referring to a woman who was in their congregation that was similar to the Jezebel of the Old Testament. The original Jezebel corrupted the kingdom of Israel when she married King Ahab, leading the people into idolatry and sin (1Kgs. 16: 31-33). This Jezebel at Thyatira was

teaching and leading believers to take part in the sexual immorality that accompanied pagan religion and to eat food sacrificed to idols (Rev 2:20).

- Those who tolerated Jezebel
- The faithful - those who did not hold to her teaching and did not know the deep things of Satan (Rev 2:24).

Jesus has a message for each group:

- Jezebel:
 - Sickness for her and death for her (Rev 2:22). Jesus gave her time to repent and she refused. Therefore it is likely that the bed refers to death and hell, the ultimate resting place for those who refuse to repent.
 - Death for her children - referring to her spiritual children - suffering would extend to her followers also (Rev 2:23).
 - All will know that I am He - judgement would be so dramatic that all the churches would know that Christ is the One who searches hearts and minds.
- Her Followers:
 - Great trouble, distress, severe chastening, unless they repent of her deeds. It was too late for Jezebel since her heart was hardened in unrepentant sin. Still, Christ mercifully warned her followers to repent while there was still time.
- The Faithful:
 - Hold fast until I come - They were to hold on to what they had, refuse to accommodate her wickedness and stand against the deception at any cost. Judgement on Jezebel and her followers would come soon and would purge the church (Rev 2:25).
 - Place no other burden - Jesus' words indicate that it would not be easy so He placed no other burden on them.
 - Authority over the nations - They could look forward to reigning with Christ during the Millennial Period.
 - Morning Star - Christ Himself as described in Rev 22:16

It is not known how many in that church responded to Christ's warning, but, tragically, the Thyatira church as a whole apparently did not obey it. History records that it fell to the Montanist heresy, a movement led by a false prophet who claimed continuing revelation from God apart from Scripture. The church disappeared by the end of the second century. ¹³

The letter to the Thyatira Church contains some of the harshest words of judgment in these seven letters. It has an important message for the church today: False teaching and sin are not to be allowed, even under the banner of toleration and unity. ¹⁴ To lead other Christians into false doctrine or immoral living is a very serious sin, meriting the

most severe punishment (Matthew 18:6–10). In the case of the Old Testament Jezebel, her life ended in a gruesome death (2 Kings 9:30–37).

Sardis - The Dead Church

Sardis was located about thirty miles south of Thyatira in the fertile valley of the Hermus River. Sardis was located on the commercial trade route running east and west through the kingdom of Lydia and was the capital city. In AD 17 it was devastated by an earthquake. Sardis continued to exist but its residents chose to dwell on its dead past instead of prospering, never regaining their former wealth and power. The city seemed to have life, but in fact it was merely a shell of what it had been.

Much of Sardis's wealth came from its textile manufacturing and dye industry and its jewelry trade. Most of the city practiced pagan worship and there were many mystery cults or secret religious societies. The Temple of Artemis dating from the fourth century BC was one of its points of interest and still exists as an important ruin.

Though the details are not recorded in Scripture, the church at Sardis was probably founded as an outreach of Paul's ministry at Ephesus (Acts 19:10). The most prominent person from the church at Sardis known to history is Melito. He was an apologist, a defender of Christianity, who served as bishop of Sardis in the late second century. He also wrote the earliest known commentary on passages from Revelation.¹⁵

Jesus is pictured as the sovereign Lord of the church, ruling through godly leaders and pastors. He holds in His hands the power of life for the churches. His commendation is really a rebuke. The church at Sardis had a reputation for being alive and apparently was regarded by their contemporaries as an effective church. Jesus declared to them that they were dead.

The people of Sardis were surrounded by the grossest form of pagan idolatry. Apparently instead of standing out against its ungodly surroundings, it had made peace with the idolatry, became defiled, marked by inward decay and was now populated by unbelieving people playing church.

Jesus' exhortation to the church at Sardis was:

- Wake up - from their spiritual slumber. The believing remnant needed to look at what was happening in their church, evaluate the situation, confront sin, and make a difference.¹⁶
- Strengthen - few evidences of spiritual life they still had
- Remember, obey and repent - Revival would come if they would return to the Scriptures, repent and obey God's word.

Similarly, if Sardis refused to repent, Christ would come suddenly and unexpectedly, pierce the hypocritical facade that church was presenting to the rest of the world and expose them to His hand of discipline. Serious words designed to awaken the dead! ¹⁷.

Jesus promise to the few believers in the Sardis church was that they would be:

- Dressed in white - purity of God's people as they are clothed in the righteousness of Christ. Those who share the marriage supper of the Lamb, the victorious Christ, are seen in white robes (Rev 19:7-9)
- Have their Name in book of life - will spend eternity with God
- Acknowledged by God as His own - acceptance by God

To a striking degree, the history of the church at Sardis paralleled that of the city. Located on a hill some fifteen hundred feet above the valley floor, stood Sardis. Its location made the city nearly invincible. Its seemingly indestructible location caused the inhabitants of Sardis to become overconfident. Sardis had twice before fallen because of overconfidence and failure to watch.

Christ's warning to be watchful corresponded to the political history of the city. The letter does not speak of persecution, false doctrine, teachers, or corrupt living. Yet some combination of those things was obviously present at Sardis, since the church had died.

What happened to Sardis? Did they heed the warning? Did revival come? That such a prominent man as Melito served as bishop of Sardis several decades after John wrote argues that at least some revival took place in Sardis. Complacency eventually led to the city's downfall. Through carelessness, Sardis was conquered. The news of its downfall sent shock waves through the Greek world. All that remains today is ruins.

Philadelphia - Faithful Church

The city of Philadelphia, known in modern times as Alasehir, is located in Lydia some 28 miles southeast of Sardis and was named after a king of Pergamum, Attalus Philadelphus, who built the city. The word Philadelphia means "brotherly love."

Philadelphia had a long history, underwent several name changes, and several times was almost completely destroyed by earthquakes. Grapes were one of the principal crops and in keeping with this, Dionysus was one of the chief objects of pagan worship. Through the centuries a nominal Christian testimony continued in this city and prospered even under Turkish rule. ¹⁸

Little is known about the Philadelphia church apart from this passage. Like most of the other seven churches, it was probably founded during Paul's ministry at Ephesus (Acts 19:10).¹⁹

This time John describes Jesus as being holy and worthy to judge the spiritual life of the Philadelphia church and the One who has the key of the house of David. This description echoes imagery from Isaiah 22. In a similar way, the Father has handed the keys of authority over God's heavenly blessings to Christ alone. Christ controls access to the Father's spiritual treasury, turning difficult situations into wonderful opportunities.²⁰

Even though it was the youngest of the seven churches and quite likely one of the smallest, this church received nothing but commendation from Christ. They are one of the two Churches that did not receive a rebuke from the Lord.

Christ commended them for their:

- Deeds - rich in good works
- Little strength - They had nothing like the riches and influence of their neighbor, Laodicea. Nor did they have a rich history and heritage like Ephesus, neither the great reputation of Sardis nor the fame of faithfulness like Smyrna. They were a small church, but had a little power with great potential, because of the holiness, faithfulness, and sovereign authority of their Lord.
- Kept Christ's Word - loyal to God's Word despite the pressures they faced and they were unashamed of their faith

He exhorted them that:

- He had opened a door for them - The picture of Christ's opening the door also symbolizes His giving the faithful Philadelphia church opportunities for service. In Scripture an open door depicts freedom to proclaim the gospel (1 Cor 16:8-9).
- As the geographic gateway to the East, Philadelphia sat at the crossroads of several languages, cultures, and people groups. From an evangelistic and missionary perspective, this dynamic, diminutive church had great opportunities for ministry. This church's witness was divinely ordained by God and assured by His power and sovereignty.
- Their adversaries would be humbled before them
- They would be kept from the Tribulation Period as would all believers
- Hold fast what you have - He will return suddenly and quickly
- They will remain strong and secure

The letter to the faithful Philadelphia church reveals that the holy, omnipotent God pours out His blessings on churches that remain loyal to Him.²¹

Laodicea - Lukewarm, Useless Church

Laodicea was located on the road to Colosse about 40 miles Southeast of Philadelphia. The city was so wealthy that it paid for its own reconstruction after a devastating earthquake in A.D. 60, rejecting offers of financial aid from Rome.

Laodicea was a major banking/financial center of Asia Minor. The city attracted people of means and money flowed freely through its streets, reflected in its building, its businesses and in its church. The city was also famous for the soft, black wool it produced that was only found in Laodicea and made into luxury clothes and carpets. It was an important center of ancient medicine producing an eye salve for the treatment of blindness that was exported all over the Greco-Roman world.

In spite of everything it had going for it, Laodicea had one major problem. It lacked a supply of good water. Eventually their water supply problem led to an abandonment of the city. The city as well as the churches are now in ruins.

The New Testament does not record anything about the founding of the church at Laodicea. Like most of the other six churches, it was likely established during Paul's ministry at Ephesus (Acts 19:10). Paul did not found it, since when he wrote Colossians some years later he still had not visited Laodicea (Colossians 2:1). ²²

In addressing the church at Laodicea Christ introduced Himself using three divine titles.:

- The Amen - it is true or certain; Christ is the truth. He is affirming that He has accurately assessed their spiritual condition.
- True Witness - Everything He speaks is the truth. This description was in preparation for the stern word of rebuke which Christ would give the church in Laodicea.
- Ruler of God's Creation - As "the Ruler of God's creation" Christ existed before God's Creation and is sovereign over it (Col 1:15, 18; Rev. 21:6). ²³

No word of commendation was extended to the Laodicean church and the letter begins with the most scathing rebuke found in the seven letters. They were pictured as utterly abhorrent to Christ because they were lukewarm. ²⁴

There are three spiritual states that Christ refers to here. One is cold, which describes the unbelieving world's reaction to the gospel of Jesus Christ, or hot, as those who show genuine spiritual fervor and leave no question as to their faith in Christ. The third state is lukewarm.

Lukewarm describes those that are not genuinely saved, yet they do not openly reject Christ. They attend church and claim to know the Lord. Like the Pharisees, they are

content to practice a self-righteous religion. They are hypocrites playing games (Matthew 7:22–23). ²⁵

Lukewarm had a special meaning to the people at Laodecia. Their water was piped in and therefore was lukewarm. In the ancient world people drank in their feasts as well as in their religious sacrifices either hot or cold water - never lukewarm. Some churches make the Lord weep. Others make Him angry. The Laodicean church made Him sick (Rev 3:16). ²⁶

All their wealth had made them self-sufficient, they were content with their wealth and they had no need for the Lord. They were unable to see their spiritual deficient. Christ told them they were: wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked (Rev 3:17). He was speaking of their spiritual state. In spite of all their riches, they lacked what matters most in life: a saving faith and relationship with Jesus Christ.

Jesus' exhortation compared their material wealth and living conditions to their spiritual state. They were urged to replace their material wealth and possessions with only what Christ could offer: spiritual gold, spiritual clothes, and spiritual sight only obtained through salvation in Jesus Christ.

Laodecia's Self Efforts	Christ's Offer
Ordinary gold	Gold refined by Christ's fire so they would become rich spiritually - priceless riches of true salvation
Beautiful clothes	Christ's white garments so that they would be clothed in righteousness & not spiritually naked
Eye salve they produced	Eyes anointed by God so they could see spiritually

Next Jesus graciously offers the Laodicean church salvation. Christ was outside this apostate church and wanted to come in—something that could happen only if the people repented. The invitation is a personal one, since salvation is individual. The picture of Christ outside the Laodicean church seeking entrance strongly implies that there were few believers there or no believers at all. ²⁷

The church at Laodicea was the last, most tragic, and also the most threatening of the seven letters written to the Churches. It has the grim distinction of being the only church that Christ offers nothing positive. Representing the church at the end of the age we can see many similarities to our churches today.

Too many Christians are more interested in their personal and family wealth rather than the lost, churches are busy building their own buildings and entertaining their members rather than reaching the lost and introducing them to a saving and lifelong personal

relationship with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Biblical truths, morals and ethics are being replaced with worldly views and social mores and practices.

Bible teachers have reached new heights of fame and wealth and many are more interested in telling stories about themselves than the One who came to save us and loves us more than we can even imagine. Scriptures that apply to the end of the church age and end times are ignored or made to somehow apply to our lives today rather than used in the context they were written in.

Our material wealth and resulting self-sufficiency can mask the fact that we have become “wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked” (Rev. 3: 17) Christ’s message to the church today is the same as it was then: Repent and open the door of our hearts to Christ before the night of judgment falls.

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. ‘He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’ ” (Revelation 3:20–22, NASB95)

Chronological View

There does seem to be a prophetic revelation as to the course of the age in the seven letters written to the Church. In the order that the letters were given they do seem to foreshadow the successive predominant phases the Church has come to pass. Even the meaning of the names suggest the succession of the development of the periods within the ages. It appears that the history of the first three churches is consecutive; where the history of the remaining four overlaps, and then practically runs concurrently to the end - the Coming of the Lord. ²⁸

Beginning with Ephesus the main movement of church history seems characteristic of the apostolic period. Smyrna is characteristic of the severe persecution of the early church. The history of the 3 centuries that followed is a record of increasing corruption of the church, departure from biblical doctrine, and an attempt to combine Christian theology with pagan philosophy. This is characteristic of the church at Pergamum.

The message to the church in Thyatira seems to foreshadow that period of church history known as the Middle Ages, preceding the Protestant Reformation. In that period the church became corrupt as it sought to combine Christianity with pagan philosophy and religious rites so that many of the church rituals of that period are directly traceable to comparable ceremonies in pagan religion.

During this period also there began the exaltation of Mary, the mother of our Lord, which has tended to exalt her to the plane of a female deity. The church was taught that intercession to God would be made through Mary, apart from whose favor there could be no salvation. Along with this, the church experienced spiritual depravity and idols in the form of religious statues were introduced. Gross physical and spiritual immorality resulted similar to the church at Thyatira. ²⁹

Sardis pictures the church in the time of the Protestant Reformation. A great mass of Christendom was dead even though it had a name that it lived. During those years only a small believing remnant took their stand for true biblical revelation and trusted in Christ as Savior. The characteristics of the church in Sardis remarkably parallels those of the Roman church that sparked the Reformation.

The church at Philadelphia is characteristic of the true Church in the last days. This church has devoted its energy and efforts to spreading the Gospel and leading others to faith in Jesus Christ.

The church at Laodicea represents the last days or latter days of the Church during the Church Age. This period immediately precedes the Great Tribulation and in some measure is a preparation for it. The Scriptures that set forth the last days for the Church give no consideration to political or world conditions but are confined to the Church itself. These Scriptures picture men: ³⁰

- As departing from the faith (1 Tim 4:1-2)
- Denying the power of the blood of Jesus (2 Tim 3:5; Rom 1:16; 1 Cor 1:23-24; 2 Tim 4:2-4)
- Leaders will be unregenerate men (1 For 2:14)
- Denial of God (Luke 17:26; 2 Pet 2:6)
- Denial of Christ's return (2Pet 3:3-4)
- Denial of the faith (1 Tim 4:1-2; Jude 3)
- Denial of sound doctrine (2 Tim 4:3-4)
- Denial of a separated life (2 Tim 3:1-7)
- Denial of Christian liberty (1 Tim 4:3-4)
- Denial of morals ((2 Tim 3:1-8, 13; Jude 18)
- Denial of authority ((2 Tim 3:4)

This condition at the close of the age is seen to coincide with the state within the Laodicean Church, before which Christ must stand to seek admission. In view of its close it is not surprising that the age is called an "evil age" in Scripture. ³¹

Chronological View of Jesus' Message to the Seven Churches

Church	Character	Meaning of Their Name	Approximate Dates	Time Period	Characteristic
Ephesus	Orthodox but Lost-love Church	Beloved or Desired	Pentecost to 100 A.D.	Apostolic Period	Time of sowing, organization & evangelism
Smyrna	Suffering Church	Myrrh or Bitterness	Nero to 300 A.D.	Martyr Period	Persecution Enemy revealed
Pergamum	Compromising Church	Thoroughly Married	300 to 800 A.D.	Decreasing spirituality & increasing worldliness	Worldly alliance. Great external growth.
Thyatira	Tolerant, Permissive Church	Continual Sacrifice	800 to 1517	Middle Ages/ Dark Ages	Rise of papal church; universal authority & cruel persecution of the saints of God. Doctrinal Corruption. Empty profession. Rise of the state church.
Sardis	Dead Church	Those Escaping Renovation	Reformation	Reformation	God's intervention in grace & power to cripple papal authority & introduce into Europe the light which was dimmed for 300 years
Philadelphia	Faithful Church	Brotherly Love	The Last Days	Reformation	True Church of the last days
Laodicea	Lukewarm, Useless Church	People Ruling	Last Days	Apostasy	Present general state of the professing Church - lukewarm or Christless

Summary

The letters to the seven churches contain a remarkably complete treatment for problems that face the church today. Problems faced in the church's first-century are as prevalent today as they were then. The amazing thing is that Jesus, Himself has given us the answers to the problems. Sadly, today mainstream contemporary teaching in the church is staying away from the book of Revelation, entirely missing this significant revelation from God. This is clearly to the church's loss.

Jesus knew how difficult life can be on this fallen earth especially as we get nearer to the time He returns. Difficult days have come and we see happening in the world either the beginning of or the things written in the Bible about this time period as stated in the list above. We would do well to hear and heed His call on how to keep our spiritual fires burning.

Church	Christ's Warnings	Christ's Solution
Ephesus	Danger of losing our first love	Fresh devotion to Christ
Smyrna	Danger of fear of suffering	Do not fear (Rev 2:10)
Pergamum	Danger of doctrinal compromise	Hold fast Biblical truths
Thyatira	Danger of moral compromise	Hold fast Biblical moral standards
Sardis	Danger of spiritual deadness	Wake up from spiritual slumber
Philadelphia	Danger of not holding fast	Keep My Word
Laodecia	Danger of lukewarmness	Open the door and I will come in and save you

Revelation - Chapter 4 and 5

Worship in Heaven and Triumph of the Lamb

In keeping with the outline that Jesus gave John in the first chapter of Revelation, John has seen the glorified Jesus as He is in Heaven and will be when He returns and the letters to the seven churches on how to keep their spiritual fires burning until Jesus returns. Now God unfolds to John the details of the future, “what will take place later.”

“Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things.”
(Revelation 1:19, NASB95)

Worship In Heaven

John witnesses a great scene of worship in Heaven that begins with a hymn of creation and ends with a hymn of redemption. There are 5 hymns beginning with a quartet of 4 living creatures, then the elders join in, then a myriad of angels, ending with all created beings in the universe in a mighty chorus of praise to God. Their song anticipates paradise lost becoming paradise regained. The events described in these two chapters anticipate the events about to strike the earth.

Jesus in the same trumpet like voice from earlier in Chapter 3, again indicating His deity, invites John to “come up here” meaning to the third heaven, the immediate presence of God (Cor 12:2-4). What John witnesses is the Church in Heaven.

Although not explicitly stated in Revelation the Rapture of the Church has occurred and reference to the Church does not appear again until Chapter 19 and 22 (1 Cor 15:51-53; 1 Thes 4:16-17; Rev 19:7; 22:16). This means that in John’s vision the Church Age has ended and the Church is not a participant in the scenes of the tribulation that follow. Saints who come to know the Lord during the Tribulation period are described as saved Israelites or saved Gentiles.

Throne of God

John sees an incredible and spectacular display of the throne and glory of God. The throne appears to be standing because it is not a physical structure but symbolic of the temple in heaven. The temple in heaven is not a physical structure but is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb (Rev 21:22).

The first impression John had of God is that of color - jasper, carnelian, surrounded by a rainbow or circle of emerald:

- Jasper - is a crystal clear stone indicating purity and will be in the foundation of the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:19-20).
- Carnelian - a fiery blood red ruby, expressing the shining beauty of God's glory, representing Christ's blood sacrificed for the Church and God's blazing wrath about to be poured out on the rebellious world (Rev 6-19).
- Rainbow of emerald - In the Old Testament the rainbow stood for the covenant that God made with the Israelites (Gen 9:13-15). The rainbow is a perfect circle around the throne and represents eternity. Green is the color of life. The emerald circle represents eternal life.

The significance goes far beyond color. The jasper and carnelian are the first and last of the 12 stones on the breastplate of the high priest garments representing all 12 tribes before the throne of God:

- The jasper represented Reuben the firstborn of Jacob whose name means "behold a son."
- The carnelian represented Benjamin the youngest of Jacob's 12 sons, whose name means, "son of my right hand."
- Christ fulfills both these functions: He is the first begotten Son and the Son of God's right hand.

John sees God on the throne in relation to the nation Israel. Although the tribulation will be a time of terrible wrath and judgement, God's covenant relationship with Israel will remain intact. ¹

Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity is represented as the "7 lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God" (Rev 4:5).

- The number seven indicates perfection and the seven attributes of the Holy Spirit revealed in Isa 11:2-3.
- The Holy Spirit has shown physical form in several places in the Bible: descending like a dove on Christ at His baptism (Matt 3:16) and on the day of Pentecost as "tongues of fire that came to rest in each of them (Acts 2:3).

Jesus

Jesus is represented in several forms: "The Lion of the tribe of Judah", "the root of David", "Lamb standing as if slain having 7 eyes and 7 horns which are the 7 spirits of God" (Rev 5:5 6).

- Christ came from the tribe of Judah,
- Isaiah prophesied that Jesus would be a descendant of David (Isa 11:10).

- Christ as Lion calls attention to Jesus as the sovereign Judge of the world especially at His second coming (Gen 49:9-10).
- Christ as the lamb identified Christ as the lamb who was sacrificed at His first coming is the same person as the glorified Christ of the Book of Revelation.

In Heaven John witnesses God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

24 Thrones and 24 Elders

John also sees 24 thrones around the throne of God and 24 elders dressed in white garments with golden crowns on their heads. Who are these elders? John never clearly identifies the heavenly elders but we can make a few deductions:

- They are probably humans and not angels since angels do not age, sit on thrones, reign, nor wear crowns.
- They are dressed in white which symbolizes Christ's righteousness imputed to believers at their salvation.
- The crowns worn here refers to the victor's crown worn by those who successfully completed and won the victory referring to salvation (Rev 2:10; 1 Cor 9:25; 2 Tim 4:8; James 1:12).
- The term elder is used in the Bible to speak of older men in general and rulers of both Israel and the church.
- They probably do not represent Israel as a nation because it has not been redeemed yet and won't be until Jesus' second coming. (24 courses of Leviticus priests and 24 divisions of singers in the temple)
- They are not symbolic because they speak to each other.
- John MacArthur says that they most likely represent those in the raptured church. ²
- Some believe they are the 12 Apostles and the 12 patriarchs from the Old Testament.

4 living creatures

The actual translation is living ones. Since John describes them as having wings and they are also seen in Ezekiel and Isaiah they appear to be angels (Eze 1:5, 10:12, 14-15. Isa 6:2,3).

Their station is in the inner circle nearest the throne. Because they have eyes in front and back means they have full awareness and nothing escapes their scrutiny. Their six wings denotes that their supreme responsibility is to worship God

John describes them in relation to the world and we can also look at the Old and New Testament meanings:

John's Description of Living Ones	OT 12 Tribes	Jesus in NT Gospel
Lion - king of the beasts	Judah	King in Matthew
Calf or ox - patience and continuous	Emphraim	Faithful One in Mark
Eagle - sovereign and supreme	Dan	Divine Son of God in
Man - greatest of God's creation	Reuben	Human presented in

First Heavenly Hymn

Periodically the 4 living creatures give special glory and honor and thanks to God. Their emphasis is on the divine attributes and worthiness of God. The 4 living creatures continually say day and night the first hymn John hears:

“.....“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come.” (Revelation 4:8, NASB95)

Second Heavenly Hymn

The 24 elders join them in praise of recognizing God as the sovereign Creator of the universe. Casting their crowns before Him they testify had it not been for God's grace, salvation and goodness they could not have victory over sin and death; everything they had was from Him. ³

““Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.” (Revelation 4:11, NASB95)

Title Deed to the Earth

John then witnesses a scene that begins what will be a dramatic change in the course of history. God is holding in His right hand a scroll that is the title deed to the earth. The scroll has writing on both sides and is sealed up with seven seals. Unlike other deeds it does not record what Christ will inherit but how Christ will regain his rightful inheritance. The only One who can successively break the 7 seals as the scroll is unrolled is the One to whom the deed rightfully belongs: Jesus Christ.

Adam and Eve turned over the dominion of the earth that God gave them to Satan (2 Pet 2:19). John's tears represent the centuries of man's sin and hopelessness at trying to save themselves beginning with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

Jeremiah 32 illustrates the use of a similar document. Jeremiah's cousin Hanamel, was desperate for Jeremiah to purchase a field. They both knew that the land would be

seized by the Babylonian army soon but God commanded Jeremiah to purchase the field in spite of the potential loss as a sign that the Babylonian captivity would not be permanent.

Jesus is the only one found to be worthy to open the deed to the earth; our kinsman-redeemer who can buy back the land and all that was lost, our sinless sacrifice.

Although introduced by the elder as a Lion, John sees a slain Lamb.

- The Lamb refers to Jesus' first coming and His death.
- The Lamb is standing between the throne of God and the elders because He has been resurrected.
- He is the reigning Lamb (John 1:29).
- The Lamb has seven horns which speaks of His omnipotence, 7 eyes which speaks of His omniscience and then 7 spirits speaking of His omnipresence.

The Lion refers to His second coming and sovereign judgment of the world. This is the only place in Rev that Jesus is referred to as a Lion. The word "Lamb" is found 27 times in Revelation and nowhere else in the NT. ⁴

Third Heavenly Hymn

Jesus opens the scroll and the great heavenly praise continues starting with the 4 living creatures (Heb 1:6). The 24 elders are holding harps and offering the prayers of the saints symbolized by bowls of incense. Harps symbolize praise; in the OT many of the Psalms were sung to harp music (Psalm 98:5). When the high priests went into the temple, they would take a bowl of incense so the aroma would perfume the air. Here the prayers of the saints are a sweet smelling savor to God.

The new song is of Christ's redemption of men from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation. The song is not a new message but is new because it has never been heard before and the singers are now redeemed and up in heaven.

Only the harp and trumpet are mentioned as musical instruments in heavenly worship in the book of Revelation. The living creatures and elders burst into praise of the Lamb:

"And they sang a new song, saying, 'Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. 'You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.'"

(Revelation 5:9–10, NASB95)

Fourth Heavenly Hymn

As another wave of worship begins, John witnessed an unusual event: angels singing. Early in creation Job records that the morning stars or angels sang but since sin entered the world the angels have not sung (Job 38:7). Now a number of angels too large to count appear around the throne along with the 4 living creatures and 24 elders all joining in a mighty symphony to God singing that the Lamb is worthy to open the seals on the scroll.

“...Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.” (Revelation 5:12, NASB95)

Fifth Heavenly Hymn

Uncontainable jubilation then flowed outward from God’s throne as the rest of creation joins in unable to contain their joy over their upcoming redemption. They proclaim the blessing and praise of God and the Lamb, their honor, glory, and dominion forever:

“And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, “To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.” (Revelation 5:13, NASB95)

Jesus is Worthy

In Chapter 4 and 5 we learn that Jesus is worthy to redeem the earth because:

- He made the earth
- He has redeemed mankind
- He has prevailed.

Jesus will regain His rightful inheritance by the divine judgements about to be poured out on the earth. Although the scroll is a scroll of doom and judgement it is also a scroll of redemption. It tells how Christ will redeem the world from Satan and those with him. Ezekiel describes this same scroll in his vision of Heaven (Eze 2:9-10). ⁵

John viewed the great, culminating act of history, the act that will signal the end of man’s day. The ultimate goal of redemption is about to be seen; paradise will be regained, Eden restored. Before John’s wondering eyes the Lamb came and took the book right out of the hand of God who sat on the throne. Jesus, the worthy One has arrived to take back what is rightfully His.

The creation is unable to contain it’s joy over its upcoming redemption. Lost in praise the 4 living creatures could only keep saying “Amen” which means let it be, make it happen. Soon this mighty host would march out of Heaven to execute judgment, gather God’s people, and return with Christ when He sets up His earthly kingdom. The stage for God’s ultimate plan has been set in the throne room of God. ⁶

It is also clear from this revelation that Heaven is real. These two chapters reveal the indescribable glory and infinite majesty of the Godhead in heaven. Those who have received Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior will be numbered among the tens of thousands pictured as giving their worship and praise to the Savior. The following chapters reveal the sovereign power of God expressed in judgement on a wicked world sunk in unprecedented depths of sin and blasphemy. ⁷

Today we still have the opportunity to accept the forgiveness and grace of God and one day soon join in the heavenly chorus of praise to God. Those who hear and respond to the divine invitation have the promise of blessing throughout eternity and deliverance from the time of judgment that will fall upon those who neglect to enter into the safety of salvation in their day of opportunity. Won't you join the millions of redeemed peoples in Heaven and on the earth and call on the name of Jesus Christ and be saved?

“And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12, NASB95)

Hallelujah! For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth! And He shall reign forever and ever!
(Handel's Messiah)

Revelation - Chapter 6 & 7

Judgements Begin & Worship in Heaven

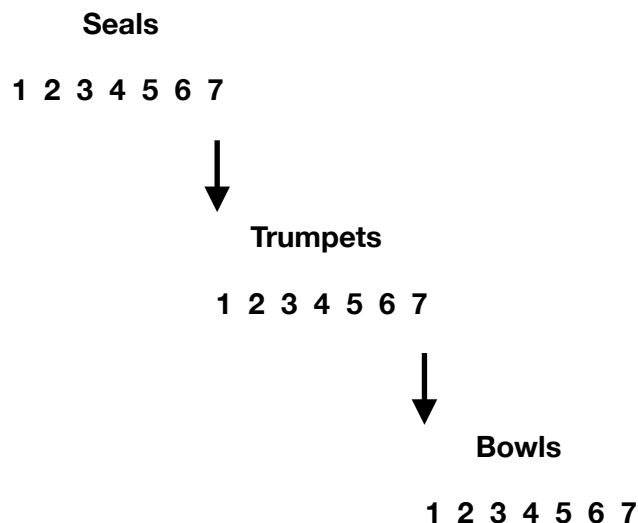
John's incredible visit to the throne room of God continues. John has just witnessed all of God's creation including the 4 living creatures, the 24 elders, a myriad of angels and all created beings in the universe in a mighty chorus of praise to God. Their praises begin with a hymn of creation ending with a human of redemption anticipating paradise lost becoming paradise regained.

Jesus, the only One worthy to open the title deed to the Earth and finish the redemption of mankind and the fallen earth, begins to break open the seals of divine wrath that signal the terrible judgements of God on the world at the end of the age, climaxing in the second coming of Jesus.

The seven seals on the title deed of the earth represent specific divine judgments that will be poured out sequentially on the earth. Although there are differences among commentators regarding when in the Tribulation Period the seals are opened, all agree that the opening of the seals is a future event that happens after the church is raptured (Rev 3:10), the opening of the seals occur during the Tribulation, severe judgement is coming and God has everything under control.

Within the seven seals are also the trumpet and bowl judgements. The seventh of each series opens a new series of judgements as seen below.

Relationship of the Seals, Trumpets and Bowls



The unfolding of the seven seals parallels Jesus' chronology of tribulation events found in His message in Matthew 24. Just as a mother's birth pains increase in frequency and intensity as the time to give birth approaches, so the judgments will intensify throughout the tribulation until the arrival of Christ in judgment glory. The first four seals cover the period Jesus described as "the beginning of birth pangs" (Matthew 24: 8). As terrible as those four judgments are, they are but the preliminary outpouring of God's final wrath in the last three seals.

The Seven Seal Judgments

The Seals	Seal Contents	Jesus' Words in Matthew	Matthew
1st Seal	False Peace	Will be mislead	Matt 24:4-5
2nd Seal	Worldwide war	Wars & rumors of wars	Matt 24:6-7
3rd Seal	Famine	Famines	Matt 24:7
4th Seal	Death - Earthquakes	Earthquakes	Matt 24:7
5th Seal	Divine Judgment	Tribulation & will be killed	Matt 24:9
6th Seal	Physical Destruction - Terror Earthquake Sun black Moon like blood Stars fell to earth Sky split apart	Sun darkened Moon dark Stars fall from sky Powers of heaven shaken	Matt 24:29
7th Seal	Seven Trumpets Cataclysmic Events	Like days of Noah	Matt 24:37

John witnesses Jesus opening the first six seals, the heavenly praise ceases in anticipation of the coming judgements, and the seals are acted out rather than being read. The scene now shifts from heaven to earth through the return of Christ in Chapter 19.

Seven Seals

- Seal 1-4 - Horses and riders (the Four Horseman of the Apocalypse)
 - Seal 1 - Rider on White Horse - Peace
 - Seal 2 - War
 - Seal 3 - Famine
 - Seal 4 - Death
- Seal 5 - Divine judgement
- Seal 6 - Physical destruction

The power for the judgements is granted by God to carry out His judgement on an evil world.

First Seal - Rider on White Horse

The Rider on the white horse carries a bow without arrows, is given a victor's crown, and the ability to conquer. Because he carries a bow without arrows, his crown is not a crown of royalty, and he is on a white horse representing peace and security, this image represents a conquest that was freely given to him with bloodless victories.

The rider is not a real king and he has not conquered by military force, but by deceit (2 Thes 2:9-11). His conquest will be a peace won by agreement, not conflict (Daniel 9: 24–27). He will promise a golden age of peace and prosperity. In gratitude, the world will honor him and elevate him to the position of supreme leadership.

He will even appear to bring peace to the troubled Middle East. He will make a treaty with Israel, posing as their protector and defender. Soon afterwards, however, his desire for dominance will provoke rebellion. The Tribulation period will begin with a deceptive peace accompanied by a counterfeit spirituality and false religion (1 Thes 5:3). His promises and the peace will be short lived.

Second Seal - War

Jesus breaks the second Seal and John sees the worldwide false peace destroyed by the second Rider, war. He is granted to take away peace. The second horse is red symbolizing the fire and blood of war. Rather than an arrow-less bow the rider yields a sword (machaira) which is a dagger used in assassinations, uprising and warfare. This is unlike the sword (rhomphaia) of order and justice that comes from the mouth of Jesus (Rev 1:16). This corresponds to Jesus's reference to "wars and rumors of wars" in the end times (Matt 24:6-7).

When wars break out all over the world Antichrist will have no choice but to resort to war in order to preserve his power. He will be as skillful at war as he was at promoting false peace (Dan 8: 24). Among his victims will be many of God's people (Dan 6: 9; Matthew 24: 9). Antichrist's setting up of the abomination of desolation (Dan 11: 31; 12: 11; Matthew 24:15) will touch off a massive conflict (Dan 11: 36–45). Antichrist's attempts to crush his enemies will last throughout the remainder of the tribulation. Finally, when Jesus Christ, returns, Antichrist will be cast into the lake of fire forever (Rev 20: 10).

Third Seal - Famine

Jesus breaks the third Seal and a black horse gallops onto the scene. This is a symbol of the famine and poverty that results from warfare as food supplies are destroyed. Desolation and despair will flood the world. Jesus also predicted this future famine

(Matt 24: 7). God has used famine as a means of judgment in the past, but this will be the most devastating famine in all of human history.

God Himself announces the level of rationing that will characterize the economic inflation and starvation. God speaks here as a reminder that the judgements are coming from Him. The famine's severity can be seen in the example given: a day's wages will only buy food for one person for one day. Those with families can buy enough food to feed their families for a day by buying barley which is lower in nutritional value and was often fed to the livestock.

God cautions people not to waste the oil and the wine. Used in the preparation and cooking of food as well as the purification of water they will need to be carefully protected. Basic food staples will become priceless luxuries.

Fourth Seal - Death

When Jesus breaks the fourth Seal, out rides an ashen horse with a rider called Death. Hades followed him and they were given authority to kill by sword, famine, pestilence, and wild beasts one fourth of those on earth.

Death slays the body while Hades swallows up the soul. These two figures symbolize the massive number of deaths that will follow in the wake of the first three Horseman. One quarter of those living on the earth will be lost in their rampage. By today's population figures approximately one billion individuals would be killed. This corresponds to Jesus' literal description of the death and destruction that characterizes the end times (Matt 24:7,9). No doubt The Great Tribulation has begun: an unprecedented time of trouble (Jer 30:7; Dan 12:1; Matt 24:21-22).

Fifth Seal - the Martyrs

When Jesus breaks the fifth seal, John sees martyrs underneath an altar: The martyrs are under the altar, which is also where the blood of the sacrifices during the OT was poured out (Ex 29:11).

The word used in the Scriptures for slain can also be interpreted as slaughtered. The Martyrs seen here are slain (or slaughtered) during the Tribulation because of the Word of God & their testimony (Rom 11:25-26). The partial blindness of Israel will be removed during the Tribulation and many Jews will turn to God & reject Antichrist. The whole world will be worshipping Antichrist & those who don't will be considered blasphemers, persecuted and killed.

These souls under the altar testify to the awful suffering and persecution that will occur during the Tribulation (Rev 22:11). Those who come to faith in Christ during the

Tribulation period will face the greatest persecution the world has ever known (Matt 24:21).

Today a Christian dies for their faith every 4-5 minutes across the world:

- More Christians were martyred in the twentieth century than in all previous centuries combined.
- It is illegal to be a Christian in North Korea, and some fifty thousand Christians have been sent to labor camps there. Christians are persecuted in more than 65 of the world's 193 countries.
- In Nigeria, nearly 300 churches were destroyed, and 612 Christians were killed in 2013. Since 2010, the treatment of Christians has rapidly worsened in Iran. The regime monitors church services, bans Farsi-language services, and arrests converts.
- In India, anticonversion laws have been adopted in five states, and these laws are frequently used as a pretext to disrupt church services and harass Christians. Pastors are frequently beaten or killed, church buildings are destroyed, and converts are forced to flee their homes.
- More than one million of the 1.5 million Christians in Iraq have fled the country since the fall of Saddam Hussein, due to increasing persecution. In August 2013, thirty-eight churches were burned down and twenty-three others were damaged in an upsurge in violence against Coptic Christians in Egypt. ¹

The martyrs cry out in a loud voice, "How long until you judge and avenge our blood?" This is a well known cry of suffering Israel asking when will their pain end. The Jews have suffered at the hands of the Gentile world for centuries.

- The infamous Adolf Eichmann, expressing Nazi hatred for the Jews, said, "I shall leap laughing into my grave, for the thought that I have five million human lives on my conscience is to me a source of inordinate satisfaction."
- Zechariah spoke of the future day of Tribulation when two-thirds of the Jewish population would be killed. God promised to bring the one-third through the fire refined as silver and tested as gold (Zec 13:8-9).
- Jesus spoke of the suffering in Matthew (Matt 24:8-10). ²

God answers the martyrs with a spoken word and symbolic gift of a white robe signifying their worthiness purchased by the blood of Jesus. At this time God's judgement and vengeance is about 3.5 years ahead so God tells them to rest for awhile. They are given refuge, rest, retribution and then will receive their reward during the Millennium (Rev 20:4).

The fifth Seal depicts God's judgement and wrath on the evil of worshipping Antichrist and killing believers. The prayers of the saints under the altar are for God's judgement

against the forces of evil that are sinful and dishonoring to God. The age of grace has passed; this is the day of judgement of Holy God.

Sixth Seal - Terror

As Jesus breaks open the sixth seal a great earthquake shakes the entire globe. Volcanic eruptions spew ash and gases into the atmosphere and the sun is veiled like a dark, rough burlap cloth. The moon appears dark red from the putrid air and the heavens rain down meteors. When people head for the mountains, they discover that their hiding places have collapsed. When they head for the islands to escape the mass hysteria, they quickly realize the islands have been submerged.³

The prophet Joel warned about the terror that would strike the earth during the day of the Lord: The heavens tremble, the sun and the moon got dark and the stars lose their brightness (Joel 2:1, 10) Joel also issued a call for repentance and a reminder that the Lord your God is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger abounding in lovingkindness and relenting of evil (Joe 2:12-13). Isaiah also wrote about this phenomena in Isa 13:10.

God has often made His presence felt in human history by shaking the earth (Exodus 19:18; Psalm 68:8; 1 Kings 19:11–12; Matthew 27:51, 54). This terror stricken event is the most dramatic judgement so far. No doubt the Great Tribulation has started.

Following the devastating natural disasters, John records the complete and utter panic of the entire population of the world. All people of the world, heads of state throughout the world, high-ranking officials in government, military commanders, those who control commerce and business, and every unbelieving individual will panic and try to hide themselves like hunted animals in the cracks and crevices of the earth, the very places that are being shaken. There is no place of safety.

They will finally acknowledge that the disasters they have experienced are God's judgment. Rather than repenting before God, they will flee from Him in frenzied fear. They will cry out to the rocks and mountains to fall on them; they would rather die than face the wrath of holy God.

The "great day of their wrath" is another term for the day of the Lord often referred to in the Old Testament. These horrors precede the second coming of the Lord and anticipate the worst that is yet to come in the seventh seal which includes the trumpet and bowl judgments.

As to answering the question of "who is able to stand," only those who have accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior before the time of judgement will be able to stand when God deals with the earth in this final period of great distress.

As we are given a rest from the judgements in chapter seven, John describes the two groups who will be saved in the Great Tribulation:

- Those who are sealed in Israel.
- The great multitude - those of all nations who are martyred for their faith in Jesus Christ.

The 144,00 Sealed Jews

One group of 144,000 Jews will be sealed symbolizing God's protection and ownership and then given special protection during the remaining divine judgements. Just as the three young Hebrew men were kept alive in King Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace, they survive the remaining seal, trumpet and bowl judgements, and the efforts of Antichrist to murder them. They will be preserved through the seven years of the Tribulation and then enter the Millennium Kingdom and reign with Christ and His glorified church. This will fulfill God's promise to His people through the prophets Ezekiel and Zephaniah (Zep 3:13).

John sees angels from the four quadrants of the compass on earth holding back the upcoming plagues associated with the trumpet judgments (Rev 8:5). Another angel arrives from the east (the direction of Israel) and instructs the angels to hold back the judgments until the 144,000 Jews receive their seal of protection (probably the Holy Spirit) from the living God.

They will be the most effective missionaries the world has ever seen. More people, both Jews and Gentiles, will come to know Christ during the Tribulation period than any other period in time.

This is not the first time that God has sealed His people:

- God sealed Noah and his family from the rest of the world so the flood waters would not hurt them (Gen 6-8)
- God told Lot and his family to get out of Sodom before the fire descended, thus sealing them from terrible judgment (Gen 19)
- God sealed the firstborn of all the Jewish families who applied sacrificial blood to the doorposts of their homes in Egypt (Ex 12)
- God sealed Rahab and her household by means of the scarlet cord when He destroyed Jericho (Josh 2, 6).
- God sealed 7,000 Israelites in Elijah's day who had not bowed their knee to Baal (1 Kings 19).

Joel also described the 144,000 who, by the power of the Holy Spirit, will speak prophecies, see visions, and participate in miracles during the Tribulation (Joel 2:28-32).

We also learn from Rev 14:4-5 that they are unspotted by the world and pure in their thoughts and words.

The tribal records for the Jews were lost when the Romans leveled Jerusalem in A.D. 70 but here God makes it known that He knows which tribe every Jewish person belongs to. Twelve thousand from each of the twelve tribes will be sealed. Much speculation exists regarding the listing of the tribes. Here is a possible explanation regarding several of the most controversial issues:

- Judah is listed first rather than Reuben who was the firstborn because Reuben forfeited his birthright as punishment for his sexual misconduct with his father's concubine (1 Chr 5:1)
- The tribe of Dan is omitted in favor of the priestly tribe of Levi due to Dan's reputation for idolatry (Deu 29:18-21). Dan will share in the millennial blessings (Eze 48:1-2, 32) but will not be selected for this duty nor protected during the Tribulation.
- The name of Ephraim is omitted in favor of his father Joseph because Ephraim defected from the ruling house of Judah (Isa 7:17). Like Dan, Ephraim was consumed with idolatry (Hos 4:17). His brother Manasseh is included because he was the faithful son of Joseph. ⁴

The Great Multitude

The 144,000 are successful in their missionary work as John sees a "great multitude which no one could number, from all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb" (Rev 7:9). These are the ones who receive Jesus as Lord and Savior during the Tribulation Period.

Since they are standing triumphantly before the throne of God and serving Him they have been martyred during the Tribulation Period. No longer under the altar, no doubt many have been added to their number since we last saw them in chapter 6. They have waited "a little longer" and have received their vengeance from God and their reward.

They are clothed in white robes symbolizing righteousness purchased by the blood of Christ and waving palm branches associated in Scripture with celebration, deliverance and joy. Palm branches were especially prominent during the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev 23:40) being employed in the construction of the booths the people lived in during that feast (Neh 8:15-17).

During Jesus' triumphal entry the joyous crowd waved palm branches as they welcomed Him into Jerusalem shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel" (John 12:13).

Due to their faithfulness to Jesus during their horrible persecution they now have a special place of service in the throne room of God. God has given them His shekinah presence (tabernacle) in His heavenly sanctuary, the most secure place.

They will receive shelter from the terrors of the fallen world that are to come as God continues to unleash His devastating judgments. They will never experience hunger, thirst or scorching heat again as Jesus, the Lamb in the center of the throne will guide them to springs of the water of life. God will wipe every tear from their eyes (Rev 7:16-17).

The theme of their worship is salvation. They are not alone. An uncountable number of angels has joined them along with the elders and the four living creatures who are constantly before the throne of God. As we have seen throughout John's vision, those before the throne of God faithfully fall on their faces in gratitude worshiping God.

Their prayer is that "blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be attributed to our God forever and ever" (Rev 7:12). This worship will continue throughout all of endless eternity.

Summary

As we study these judgements and the remaining ones it is easy to think that the world appears to be spinning out of control. Take heart; it is not. Our Sovereign, Almighty, and Holy God is in control. He has allowed evil to occur but is not the cause or source of it. He is not the author of sin.

Most of the judgements in Revelation come through the work of evil agents. Yet in His abundant grace, He limits the days of the Tribulation (Mark 13:20). If He did not everyone in the world would perish. Then Jesus returns to fulfill His promise of a Millennial Kingdom.

In this age when Christianity is under siege, it is comforting to be reassured of the ultimate triumph of God's saving grace. The church will be delivered before the Tribulation and great multitudes of people will be saved in the midst of the terrors of divine judgment, both Gentiles and Jews (Rom 11:26).

Sadly, there will be a great "falling away from the faith" at the end of the Church Age (2 Thes 2:3). A massive revival will take place after the Rapture, during the Tribulation. The 144,000 sealed Jews will lead the revival. This vast revival will fulfill the words of Jesus in His Olivet discourse: "This gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come (Matt 24:14).

You too can escape the coming judgment during the Tribulation Period. God says in the Bible that He wants all to be saved. Confess with your mouth that you want Jesus to be your Lord and Savior and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead to die for your sins, you will be saved and spend eternity with God in heaven.

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” (John 3:16, NASB95)

Revelation - Chapter 8 & 9

Trumpet Judgments

John continues to describe what he sees in heaven. God is on His throne surrounded by a rainbow of emerald greens. The twenty-four elders, the four living creatures, the Church and the angels are worshipping God and the glorified Christ. They are joined by the 144,000 Jews who have been sealed to protect them from death during the Tribulation Period. They will bring about the greatest revival ever known. Also joining them are the the Great Multitude, clothed in white robes and waving palm branches, they were martyred during the Tribulation Period. They now have a special place of service in the throne room of God.

Praise ceases as Jesus begins to open the first six seals of judgments. The judgments will extinguish all evil on the earth and then Jesus will return. The first four seals include horses and riders (the Four Horseman of the Apocalypse) which bring about false peace, then war, famine and death of one-fourth of the people on the earth. The fifth seal is God's divine judgment on those who have persecuted His people. John sees the martyred souls under the altar and they are given rest until it is time for God to avenge their deaths. The sixth seal is the greatest physical destruction ever known on earth and begins with a earthquake that shakes the entire globe resulting in worldwide panic.

Seventh Seal: Silence in Heaven & The Seven Trumpets

When Jesus breaks open the seventh seal there is silence in heaven for thirty minutes perhaps the longest period of silence in heaven. Seven trumpets are given to seven angels. As it becomes apparent that God is preparing to intensify His wrath with the coming judgements from the seven trumpets, this silence is the only proper response to the looming judgments (Ps 76:8; Isa 41:1; Zeph 1:7).

During this interlude of reverent silence, another angel approaches the altar and mingles the prayers of the saints with incense. In the Old Testament the priest sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice on the altar. The coals from this offering would then be placed in a golden censer, or container, and the smoke would rise to heaven as incense.

The incense and prayers of the saints are a sweet fragrance in the nostrils of God. This offering of incense symbolizes the prayers of the martyred saints in Revelation 6:10. The time has finally come to answer those desperate pleas for God's intervention (Deut 32:35-36).

The golden altar represents the fire of worship. The altar of judgment represents the death of Jesus for our sins. His sacrifice is meant to be a blessing, but for those who do not accept Him as Lord and Savior His sacrifice is about to become a judgment.

In the Bible a trumpet was used for positive events like gathering a convocation or announcing a coronation. It was also used to gather troops for war. In Revelation, Isaiah, and Joel the trumpet announces the coming of the day of the Lord (Isa 27:13; Joel 2:1). The temporary restraint of God's wrath to seal the 144,000 Israelites is removed.

The first four trumpets sound in rapid blasts, taking up only six verses. The first four trumpet blasts will affect the earth's ecosystem and atmosphere, erratically altering living conditions on the earth. The latter judgments will produce demonic destruction of people.

Limits are placed on the early judgments reminding us that God will still be exercising restraint allowing room for repentance and salvation even in the midst of wrath. The first four plagues affects one-third of the planet, the demonic torment of the fifth trumpet is limited to five months and the deadly spiritual attack of the sixth trumpet affects one-third of the world's population.

The First Trumpet Blast: Devastation on the Earth

At the sound of the first trumpet blast, hail and fire, mixed with blood are thrown to the earth and one-third of the earth's vegetation and all its green grass are destroyed. Hail is frequently associated in Scripture with divine judgment as is fire. A parallel is found in the tenth plague in Exodus 9:18-26 where there was literal hail and fire.

An earth quake the size described would likely trigger worldwide volcanic eruptions and violent thunderstorms that would produce large hail. This will decimate crops and forests, filling the air with smoke and ash. One-third of the earth is burned up, one-third of the trees were burned up and all the green grass was burned up.

Though not directly aimed at human beings, it will indirectly affect food supplies, the global economy, and health on a massive scale. Whether the blood is a result of the hail and fire or is literally thrown to the earth it is only an introduction of what is to come. Six more trumpets are to sound.

The Second Trumpet Blast: Devastation on the Sea

At the sound of the angel's second trumpet blast, a large burning object, something like a mountain, falls from the heavens and lands somewhere in the world's oceans with an explosive power far greater than that of an atomic bomb. It is possible that the "something like a mountain" could describe an asteroid that will strike the ocean. The tsunami caused by this kind of impact would inflict death and destruction on the scale described. The impact on human life would be inestimable.

Because all the world's oceans are connected, the devastation will spread across one-third of the ocean waters, causing a third of the sea to become blood from the death of life in the seas. Giant waves will destroy ships in one-third of the seas. Those who depend on ocean life for food would suffer hunger and hardship on an unprecedented scale.

The destruction of ships would cause disruption in global trade as well as present security crisis as naval ships are also destroyed. Economic chaos will result. This parallels the plagues of Egypt in which the Nile River and all other bodies of water in Egypt were turned to blood when Aaron stretched out his rod over them (Ex 7:17-19).

The Third Trumpet Blast: Waters Made Bitter

As the third trumpet blasts, a great star, possibly a heavenly body or mass from outer space burning as it enters the atmosphere of earth, falls on one-third of the rivers and waters contaminating them with a bitter and poisonous substance, wormwood.

The Greek word here for "star" can refer to any celestial body other than the sun and moon. The fact that it is described as burning like a torch supports that it is likely a meteor or comet, since torches were used in ancient times to describe meteors and comets. Its fiery debris fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of waters, polluting the fresh water around the globe.¹

The reference to wormwood seems to parallel the experience of the children of Israel at the waters of Marah (Ex 15:23-25). There the tree thrown into the bitter waters made them sweet. Here the wormwood has the opposite effect. Such also is the contrast between Christ on the cross atoning for sin and making that which is bitter sweet and Christ coming in judgment that turns the vain hopes and ambitions of unbelievers into bitterness and despair.²

The Fourth Trumpet Blast: Heavens Darkened

As the fourth trumpet blasts, judgment shifts from the earth to the heavens. The heavenly bodies are hit with a plague from God so that one-third of the heavens are darkened. This partial eclipse is temporary, as God will later increase the amount of heat coming from the sun (Rev 16:8-9).

The loss of heat from the sun will cause temperatures to plunge drastically all over the world. The earth's weather patterns and the seas' tides will be severely disrupted, leading to violent, unpredictable storms and tides and the further destruction of crops, and loss of animal and human lives.

Areas hit the hardest by the previous trumpet judgements will have already lost electrical power and deteriorated into desperation and despair. The only place not to have been struck with catastrophe is the skies. Add natural darkness to this situation and the result will be anarchy and chaos. Rioting, looting and crime will exacerbate the horrors experienced around the globe.

Old Testament prophets associated such signs in the heavens with the day of the Lord (Eze 32:7-8; Isa 13:9-10; Joel 2:10, 31:3-15; Amos 8:9). Jesus warned that “there will be signs in the sun and moon and stars” (Luke 21:25; Mark 13:24).

As John witnesses the scene of the heavens darkening, he hears the loud voice of an eagle, a bird of prey rushing to consume its victim, pronouncing a triple woe as the peoples of the earth are warned of judgment to come. Woe is used throughout Scripture as an expression of judgement, destruction and condemnation.

Flying in midheaven the eagle would be at the height of the midday sun and visible to all. The worst is yet to come. No amount of government aid, relief efforts or advanced preparation will be able to bring recovery.

The blessings from God of light from the sun, moon and stars, water, and the beauty and benefits of the tress and green grass are from a loving God to an underserving world and have now come under the blight and judgments described in these trumpets. Although they acknowledge that the disasters have come from God they will not repent. Because they fail to listen to the warning God addresses to all sinners they will be destroyed (Heb 3:7-8).

Fifth Trumpet: Demons Dominate

As the angel blew the fifth trumpet, Satan is permanently cast down to the earth (Rev 9:1-2). Satan was previously banned from heaven but has up until this time had access to God’s presence, where he constantly accuses believers (Rev 12:10; Job 1:6).

During the tribulation, Satan and his demon hosts will unsuccessfully battle Michael and the holy angels (Rev: 12:7-9). As Satan falls from heaven to the earth, Jesus gives him the key to the abyss (underworld) or bottomless pit. This is where certain demons have been kept in prison until judgment (Luke 8:30-31; 2 Pet 2:4).

These are not the demons that roam the earth since they fell from heaven. When Jesus cast the demons out of a man, “they begged Him not to banish them to the abyss” (Luke 8:31). These are the vilest, most malicious and powerful demons. God in His mercy prepared a special pit in which to lock them away until the appointed time. As they come out of the pit, the sun and air is darkened by the smoke of the pit.

John sees a new terror emerge. For the first time in history, all those who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ will come under demonic possession and affliction. The invisible warfare that people experience today will seem insignificant compared to the frontal assault of the enemy's army during the Tribulation.

The demons are described as locusts with the power of scorpions and are given power by God to only hurt those who are not sealed by God for five months. They are not allowed to kill. It is a judgment upon those who have rejected Christ; the 144,000 sealed Jews and those who have accepted Christ and are still alive at that time will be protected.

Since demons do not have physical shape, what John sees must symbolize demonic possession. They appear to have a combination of human and animal qualities. Like locusts they will be uncountable in numbers capable of darkening the sky and blotting out the sun and massive in destructive capabilities.

The devastating physical, mental, emotional and spiritual agony they inflict will be worse than that of actual scorpions which are known to have the capability to kill small children. They are not actual locust because real locusts devour plant life and they are not allowed to harm the grass. This means that some time has passed since the first trumpet judgment scorched all the grass that was then in season (Rev 8:7).

Like the normal life cycle of the locust, the demons will be allowed to torment the unbelieving for five months during which time they will wish they could die but will not be able to. They will however, have the opportunity to repent and embrace the gospel.

These supernatural soldiers in the kingdom of darkness are led by Abaddon or Apollyon probably a high ranking lieutenant of Satan who lives in the bottomless pit. It is like all the prison doors in the world were flung open and every rapist, murderer, pervert, arsonist, abuser, and thief were free to roam the earth with no police protection for the citizens.

When divine restraint is released the true character of Satan is revealed. They are described by John as:

Like horses prepared for battle (9:7)	No one can stop them. Not the military, no amount of money, or medicine will not stop the pain.
Crowns like gold on their heads (9:7)	Satan has always wanted to wear a crown and they appear to have golden crowns. By rejecting Jesus they have crowned Satan and his demons to rule. It will be a reign of terror. Hell has a holiday.
Human like faces (9:7)	Like man they will be intelligent. They will also be crafty and subtle.
Hair like women (9:8)	As a woman's hair is to be her glory, they will seem alluring, hideously beautiful and brilliantly deceptive.
Teeth like lions (9:8)	Warlike, brutal and fierce, a picture of Satan (1 Pet 5:8).
Breastplates like iron (9:9)	They will be wearing impenetrable armor so the groan, cries and shrieks of their victims will be meaningless to them.
Sounds of wings like horses and chariots (9:9)	They will not be moved from their course of action. Wave after wave will come. They cannot be stopped. They cannot be out run. There is no place to hide.
Tails like scorpions (9:10)	Until their deed is done, they cannot be stopped. Five months is the normal lifespan of a locust. Five is also the number of completeness. Nothing but the hand of Almighty God can stop these durable spirits. They cannot be destroyed. There is no weapon against them.

The Sixth Trumpet: The Return of Death

At the sound of the sixth trumpet, a voice from the golden altar, possibly Jesus, commands the sixth angel who had the trumpet to release the four angels who were bound at the great river Euphrates to kill a third of mankind. A third of mankind today is over two billion people. Never since Noah has such a substantial proportion of the earth's population come under God's righteous judgment.

This horrific slaughter will again bring chaos to the world. Just disposing of the dead bodies alone will be inconceivable. The sickly stench of decaying corpses will permeate the world and it will take an enormous effort on the part of the survivors to bury them.

This is the final mention of the golden altar where incense is offered consisting of the prayers of the saints. This judgement like those preceding it, is partially an answer to the prayers of the martyred saints.

Since the angels are bound they are not the same four angels mentioned earlier in Chapter 7:1 but are evil angels. There is no mention anywhere in the Bible that holy angels are bound. Since angels carry out the will of God they would not need to be bound. This judgment comes by God's precise appointment, right down to the year, month, day, and hour.

Although there is controversy about whether these armies are made up of humans or demons, because these creatures are identified as the armies of the four wicked angels of the Euphrates, it seems most reasonable to conclude that they are symbols for an army of demons bringing death and destruction upon the people of the world. This is the second demon inspired attack on humans.

These four high-ranking fallen angels may very well be the invisible influences behind four ungodly nations in power during the Tribulation period. They may also be the same demons that controlled the four major world empires of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. Demonic principalities and powers have stood behind world leaders throughout history. Daniel 10 gives us a glimpse of the kind of spiritual warfare that occurs in the invisible realm. Daniel mentions the prince of the kingdom of Persia and the prince of Greece (Dan 10:12-13).

The number in the army is staggering: two hundred million. The three colors on the rider's breastplates match the color of the plagues that proceed from the mouths of their horses. The figurative language used to describe this army's horses also suggests that this is a supernatural rather than human force; the colors on their breastplates are the very colors and features of hell.

Breastplate Colors	Three Plagues
Fiery red or orange	Fire
Deep hyacinth blue	Smoke
Sulfuric yellow	Brimstone

As distressing as it is to read of the horrific judgments with a fourth of mankind killed during the fourth seal and another third killed in the sixth trumpet for a total of over half of the world's population killed (three billion using today's population count), it is even more disturbing to read that the survivors will close their ear to God's message of mercy and grace rejecting the preaching of the 144,000 missionaries, choosing instead to accept the wrath that will continue to increase in severity.

John lists five sins representative of the defiance of those who refused to repent:

- Worshipping other gods and demons.
- Violent crimes like murders. Without any sense of morality unrepentant people will imitate the demon horde's murderous blood lust.
- Sorceries. Sorceries is a Greek word from which the English words pharmacy and pharmaceuticals derive. Drugs were and still are believed to induce a higher religious state of communion with deities. In the Tribulation man will be reduced to rubble through their abuse of drugs.
- Immorality will prevail. Indescribable sexual perversions will be rampant in that day.
- People will refuse to repent of thefts. As people compete for the scarce supplies of food, clothing, water, shelter and medicines honesty will be nonexistent. There will be no restraints or negative consequences from civil authorities. ³

The Seven Trumpet Judgments

First Trumpet (8:7)	Devastation on the Earth: Bloody Hail & Fire One third of vegetation destroyed
Second Trumpet (8:8-9)	Devastation on the Sea: Fiery Mountain from Heaven One-third of oceans polluted, sea life dead & ships destroyed
Third Trumpet (8:10-11)	Waters made Bitter: Falling Star One-third of fresh water polluted
Fourth Trumpet (8:12)	Heaven Darkened: Darkness One-third of Sun, Moon & Stars Dark
Fifth Trumpet (9:1-2)	Demons Dominate: Demonic Invasion Torment for 5 months
Sixth Trumpet (9:13-21)	Return of Death: Army of 200 Million One-third of mankind killed
Seventh Trumpet (11:15-19)	Christ Reigns: The Announcement of Christ's Reign The Kingdom

God uses a number of ways to call people to repentance and accept his gift of grace. He has used the gospel, the witness of fulfilled prophecy and changed lives. He has revealed coming judgments, warning the world of things to come.

As the Bible tells us, humans are a stubborn lot. Spiritual blindness, self-will and an inborn habit of disobedience all work against the humility and submission that God desires. Saul of Tarsus who was persecuting the early church was struck blind to get his attention. How can a righteous Redeemer snare the attention of a wicked world? Christian apologist C.S. Lewis approached that question this way:

Anyone who has watched gluttons shoveling down the most exquisite foods as if they did not know what they were eating, will admit that we can ignore even pleasure. But pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world. ⁴

A day is coming when the hardness of the unbelieving hearts of the unregenerate will intensify. In these chapters we see God using an intensifying series of judgments to capture the world's attention for the purpose of redemption. It's clear that a major purpose of God's judgments in Revelation is to seize the world's attention when it refuses to listen. The redeemed martyrs in Revelation 7 tell us that many will respond to God's end-times call. The rest of Revelation, however, tells us that most will harden their hearts even more. ⁵

If you are reading this it is not too late to be counted in the redeemed who will spend eternity with God. Do not harden your heart by turning away from God but confess with your mouth that you want Jesus to be your Lord and Savior and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead to die for your sins, you will be saved and spend eternity with God in heaven.

“while it is said, “Today if you hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts, as when they provoked Me.” (Hebrews 3:15, NASB95)

“that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.” (Romans 10:9–10, NASB95)

Revelation - Chapter 10 & 11

The Mighty Angel, Two Fearless Witnesses & The Seventh Trumpet

John has just experienced what is probably one of the longest periods of silence in heaven, thirty minutes, and then the seven trumpets were given to seven angels. God poured out His wrath as each trumpet blast sounded. There was devastation on the earth, then the seas, then the waters and then the heavens. The latter judgments produced demonic destruction of people. As the sixth trumpet sounds a total of over half of the world's population was killed (three billion using today's population count).

As distressing as it was for John to watch this heavenly vision from God and as distressing as it is for us to read it today, it is even more disturbing to read that many survivors will close their ears to God's message of mercy and grace and reject the preaching of the 144,000 Jewish missionaries, choosing instead to accept God's wrath that will continue to increase in severity.

Limits are placed on the early judgments reminding us that God will still be exercising restraint allowing room for repentance and salvation even in the midst of wrath. The 144,000 Jewish missionaries will bring about the greatest revival every known.

An Interlude: The Little Book and Two Great Witnesses

Before the seventh trumpet sounds there is an interlude, which stretches from Revelation 10 to 11:14. This is the second interlude; the first interlude occurred between the sixth and seventh seals and revealed two groups of redeemed believers (the great multitude and 144,000 sealed Jews) that will be saved during the Tribulation.

This pause seems to allow John and all readers since to assimilate the startling truths that have been revealed to him. John is also recommissioned for the second half of his prophetic role. During these interludes God comforts His people that He has not forgotten them, that He is still in control, and that they will ultimately be victorious.

The Little Book

John describes a strong angel appearing with a small book that was open. The content of the scroll is not revealed but may be the written authority given to the angel to fulfill his mission. ¹

John describes the strong angel quite differently from the other angels he has seen so far. The angel appears to arrive on a cloud with a rainbow around his head, face shining as brilliantly as the sun and feet like a pillar of fire. This description is similar to characteristics given Christ although does not appear to be Christ.

The angel cries out in a voice so loud he sounded like a lion roaring and seven peals of thunder rang out. John heard the seven peals of thunder speak out but was instructed by God not to write it down. There is a similar passage in Daniel 12:8-9: "I heard but did not understand. So I asked, 'My lord, what will be the outcome of these things?' He said, 'Go on your way, Daniel, for the words are secret and sealed until the time of the end. Daniel heard what God said, but he did not understand it.

The angel so massive in size that he puts one foot on the sea and the other on the land then takes a vow before God that there will be delay no longer. He has answered the question of the martyrs, "How long?" (Rev 6:10) and the prayers of the saints in Rev 8:3-5. The seventh trumpet is about to sound bringing the final judgment over a period of time which will include the seven bowl judgments (Rev 16:1-21). The time of God's patience is seen as having ended. The final number of the redeemed will be fulfilled and the judgment of the wicked will soon be complete.

Then the mystery of God will be fulfilled as God communicated to the Old Testament prophets. It is the end of the Gentile age and the destruction of Christ's enemies. Then the truth about God previously hidden will be revealed; the full manifestation of the divine power, majesty and holiness of God will be seen in the glorious return of Christ, the establishment of Christ's Millennial Kingdom and then the eternal state that will follow.

The ignorance of God and the disregard of His majesty that characterize the present age, as well as the Great Tribulation, will exist no longer when Christ returns and manifests Himself in glory to the entire earth. In that day all, from the least to the greatest, will know the Lord - that is, know the important facts about Him. ²

Then God instructs John to take the book from the strong angel and eat it. John is told that it will be sweet as honey in his mouth but sour in his stomach. This isn't the first time one of God's prophets was told to eat a scroll. God instructed Ezekiel to eat a scroll (Eze 2:8-3:4). Consuming the scroll was a symbol of completely appropriating the message. Ezekiel spoke God's words of judgment against the people of Israel after eating the scroll.

In the same way John was told to fully consume, understand, write and speak the message of judgment that made his stomach sick. Much of God's truth tastes sweet to those who are His. To those who are not His, the book of Revelation reveals the divine judgments that will be poured out on the earth as God deals in wrath with an unbelieving and Christ-rejecting world.

Though John is an exile on Patmos and experiencing the bitterness of persecution, the Word is a precious assurance of his salvation, a basis for his present fellowship with Christ and the ground for his hope of glory to be fulfilled in the future. Like John, believers today should eat with the assurance that the Word will be sweet, whatever sufferings and trials they may endure in this life.³

There are many wonderful and glorious symbols given to us as we review John's vision of the strong angel:

Description	Meaning
Arrives on a cloud	Arrives with power & brings judgment. Clouds are associated with the second coming of Christ (Rev 1:7; 14:14-16; Mat 24:30; Mark 13:26; 14:62; Luke 21:27).
Rainbow on his head	God's covenant mercy endures even in the midst of judgment. God gave the rainbow as a sign that He would never again destroy the world by water. The rainbow will reassure God's people of His mercy in the midst of coming judgments.
Face like the sun	His brilliant radiant glory lit up the earth like the blazing sun symbolizing God's power, majesty & glory.
Feet like pillars of fire	Symbolizes his unbending holiness in stamping out His judgement on the earth - fire that consumes the ungodly.
Angel's massive size	Demonstrated God's sovereign authority to judge the entire earth (Ex 20:11; 1 For 10:26).
Angel's stance - right foot on sea and left on the land	Indicates a position of power and authority over the entire earth.
Angel's act	Symbolically anticipates the coming judgments of the 7th trumpet and the 7 bowls on the entire earth.
Angel's loud voice	Reflects the power & authority of God; OT prophets connect lion voice with judgment (Jer 25:30; Hosea 11:10; Joel 3:16; Amos 1:2; 3:8)
7 peals of thunder	Completeness & perfection
Thunder	Mark of judgment - Since it was not the voice of the angel it may have represented the voice of God (1 Sam 7:10; Psalm 18:13)
Angel's vow	Indicates the sovereign power of God our Creator.

Since John does not worship the angel as he would Christ, he does not give the angel a title as He does when seeing Christ, and Christ would not swear to Himself that He had created heaven and the earth, we can conclude that this angel is not Christ but as indicated by Scripture a strong angel.

Two Fearless Witnesses and The Seventh Trumpet

John witnesses several events that appear to occur during the last three and one half years of the Tribulation Period, the Great Tribulation. He sees the temple of God and also two unusual witnesses of God.

Measurement of the Temple

John is given a measuring rod, a bamboo-like cane that grew abundantly along the banks of the Jordan River and could reach a height of twenty feet. He is told to measure the temple of God which refers to the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, the inner parts of the temple. John is told not to measure the outer court. The outer court will be trampled by Gentiles under Gentile domination for forty-two months.

There are several instances in the Bible where Jerusalem and the temple are measured signifying that the area belongs to God. It is an evaluation of His property:

- In Zechariah 2, a man is seen measuring Jerusalem, a scene that evidently portrays God's divine judgment on the city.
- In Ezekiel 40, the temple of the future kingdom is carefully measured with a rod.
- In Rev 21:15-17 the new Jerusalem is measured. ⁴

John is told that there will once again be a temple in existence during the Great Tribulation or the last three and one half years of the Tribulation period. As of John's writing of Revelation the second temple in Jerusalem had already been destroyed in A.D. 70 by the Romans. John's vision therefore is the third temple. In the book of Ezekiel we see the fourth temple built during the Millennial Period. God Himself will be the temple in the eternal state (Rev 21:22).

Many orthodox Jews today dream about and have begun the work to rebuild their temple, but its site is now occupied by the Islamic Dome of the Rock. It is the most sacred shrine in the Islamic world. Muslims believe it to be the place where Muhammad ascended to heaven. In today's political climate it would be almost impossible for the Jews to take that site from the Muslims but during the Tribulation, under the protection of Antichrist (Dan 9:24-27), the Jews will be able to rebuild their temple. This will occur during the first three-and-one-half years of the Tribulation.

As we will see later in this study, during the Great Tribulation this temple John sees is desecrated and becomes the home of an idol of the world ruler. (2 Thes 2:4;

Rev 13:14-15; Dan 9:27; 12:11). Although God permits Gentile dominion and persecution of Israel during the second half of the Tribulation, God will also judge Israel's persecutors.

The Two Witnesses

The two witnesses will prophesy for exactly three-and-one-half years in Jerusalem, which has become so wicked and evil in the Tribulation it is described as "Sodom and Egypt" and also "where their Lord was crucified". This time period matches Daniel's prophecy of seven years and the seventieth week. Their ministry will likely go from the midpoint of the Tribulation until just before the sounding of the seventh trumpet.

They will preach the gospel, participating in Jesus' declaration that, "the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matt 24:14). They will likely pronounce that the disasters falling on the world are the judgments of God and they will be used by God to bring salvation to Israel. They will probably warn about God's final outpouring of judgment and that eternal hell will follow. Their gospel preaching will be part of a final expression of God's grace offered to the unbelieving world.⁵

The two witnesses are wearing mourning clothes. They are expressing their great sorrow for the unbelieving world, the desecration of the temple, the oppression of Jerusalem, and the rise of Antichrist.

God grants these two witnesses the power to pour out divine judgments upon the earth and they need divine protection in order not to be killed. They are given power to stop the rain, turn the waters to blood and strike the earth with plagues as often as they need to carry out their mission.

They will stop the rain for three-and-one-half years which will cause further widespread devastation of crops and loss of human and animal life through thirst and starvation as the third trumpet judgment has already resulted in the poisoning of one-third of the earth's fresh water supply.

Because their miracles and plagues will intensify the torment people are experiencing they will be greatly hated and feared. People will search for ways to destroy them. When attacked they will destroy their enemies with fire flowing out of their mouth. They will be unstoppable as long as God deems.

When their mission is complete at the end of the Great Tribulation, God lifts their protection and they are killed by Antichrist, the beast, who is empowered by Satan. This is the first of thirty-eight references in Revelation to a beast. This unholy trinity is the satanic counterfeit of the divine Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit:

- The beast out of the pit - Satan
- The beast rising out of the sea - the world dictator, Antichrist (Rev 13:1)
- The beast rising out of the earth - the false religious leader of that day (Rev 13:11)

The two witnesses' bodies are laid in the street of Jerusalem for three-and-one-half days which will be a horrible insult to Jews whose custom is to be buried immediately. The unrepentant sin-hardened masses will gloat along with the Antichrist and glorify him for his victory over the two irritating preachers.

John states that everyone all over the world will be able to see their dead bodies lying in the street of Jerusalem. This may occur by satellite transmission however, since everyone does not have access to satellite transmission this may occur by God's hand much like described in Rev 1:7:

"Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen." (Revelation 1:7, NASB95)

Because they believe that Satan has won the victory for them and they will no longer be tormented by God's prophets, all that oppose God will have a giant victory party to celebrate the death of God's prophets. They will even exchange gifts in celebration. Ironically, this is the only mention in Revelation of rejoicing on earth. Sadly, this represents the finality of their rejection of God.

However, their worldwide party will be cut short when God brings the two witnesses suddenly back to life and they ascend into heaven. The sight of this incredible miracle of God along with the loud voice from heaven telling the two witnesses to "Come up here," will put a great fear in those watching.

Immediately after the resurrection of the two witnesses, there was a great earthquake killing seven thousand, based on the Greek text probably prominent people, perhaps leaders. Once again they acknowledge God but do not necessarily accept Him as Lord and Savior. For the unbelieving world, there is given a sobering warning that the second woe is past and the third woe is coming quickly. The seventh trumpet will soon sound bringing with it the final, violent bowl judgments and the return of Christ in glory to set up His kingdom.

Who are these two witnesses? John does not reveal who they are and much speculation has been made over the centuries. Throughout history God has faithfully sent His prophets to call sinners to repentance. Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Jonah and many others confronted both wayward Israel and sinful Gentile nations.

Perhaps God selects his two greatest prophets, Elijah and Moses to carry out their prophetic office and shine for God in earth's darkest hour. The powers given to the two witnesses were similar to the powers given both Elijah and Moses.

Elijah called down fire from heaven (2 Kings 1:10, 12) and pronounced a three-and-one-half year drought on the land (1 Kings 17:1; James 5:17), the same length as the drought brought by the two witnesses (Rev 11:6). Moses turned the waters of the Nile into blood (Ex 7:17-21) and announced the other plagues on Egypt recorded in Exodus 7-11. ⁶

Jewish tradition expected Moses and Elijah to return in the future. Malachi 4:5 predicted the return of Elijah, and the Jews believed that God's promise to raise up a prophet like Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15, 18) necessitated his return (John 1:21; 6:14; 7:40).

Both Moses and Elijah (perhaps representing the Law and the Prophets) appeared with Christ at the transfiguration, the preview of the second coming of Christ. (Matthew 17:3). And finally, the two witnesses' ascension to heaven is reminiscent of the ascension of Elijah (2 Kings 2:11) and the mysterious death and burial of Moses (Deut 34:5-6).

A righteous prophet is always a torment to an evil generation. The two witnesses are an obstacle to evil, unbelief and satanic power prevalent in that time. The Word of God makes it clear that it is often possible to silence a witness to the truth by death, but such action does not destroy the truth that has been announced. The power of God will be ultimately revealed. If this is at the end of the Great Tribulation, only a few days remain before Christ comes back in power and great glory. ⁷

The Seventh Trumpet

The seventh angel blew the seventh trumpet and John hears great voices in heaven. This is in contrast to previous proclamations where a single voice makes the announcement. There is a great symphony of voices expressing unrestrained joy that the power of Satan is to be forever broken and Christ is to reign supreme.

The seven bowls of judgement are contained in the seventh trumpet; the destruction of earthly power is already under way. Heaven rejoices as if the long-anticipated day when Christ will establish His kingdom had already arrived, although some time on earth must elapse before that actually happens.

Christ is declared to reign forever and ever. Christ will reign during the Millennial Period and then continue to reign in the new heaven and the new earth. Never again will the earth be under the control of humans.

The twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God appear for the eighth time falling on their faces giving thanks to God because He has manifested His power and assumed authority over the earth. Psalm 2:9 has been fulfilled:

“You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware.” (Psalm 2:9, NASB95)

The seventh trumpet reveals a comprehensive statement giving the main features of the transition from the kingdom of earth to the Kingdom of God:

- The nations have a settled burning resentment against God. They will eventually assemble armies to fight God.
- The wrath of God is certain and omnipotent. The day of grace will be gone. The desperate, last-ditch effort to keep Christ from establishing His kingdom will fail and they will be destroyed.
- The dead are judged. Probably refers to the righteous dead because the evil dead are raised after the Millennium.
- Prophets and the saints are rewarded.
- Destruction of those who oppose God and the resulting sin.

In general the Tribulation is a time of divine wrath, resurrection of the dead and their reward, and of dealing with those who oppose God. All these topics are further discussed in later chapters of Revelation.

Unbroken Fellowship

Also in the seventh trumpet is the promise to believers of unbroken fellowship with God forever. This fellowship is symbolized by the opening of the temple of God which is in heaven revealing the ark of His covenant. The covenant God has promised to men is now available in its fullness. This would have been unthinkable in the Old Testament temple when only the high priest entered the Holy of Holies once a year (Heb 9:7).

The ark symbolizes God's communion with the redeemed because that is where blood sacrifices were offered to atone for men's sins (Lev 16:2-16; Heb 9:3-7). Inside the ark was a golden jar holding the manna, Aaron's rod, and the tables of the covenant. All these symbolized that God would supply His people, He is sovereign over His people, gave His law to His people and entered into an eternal saving covenant with His people.

Then John hears again the sounds of judgment that are heard throughout the book of Revelation; flashes of lightning, sound and peals of thunder, earthquake, and hail storm. Heaven is the source of vengeance on unbelievers as well as covenant blessings for the redeemed. ⁸

Summary

The message of the seventh trumpet is that Jesus Christ is the sovereign King. The consummation of the ages will occur as Jesus takes his rightful rule of the earth away from Satan. At Jesus' second coming He will bring covenant blessings to the redeemed, but eternal judgment to those who reject Him.

If you have not accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, it is not too late. You too can be counted in the redeemed and spend eternity with God in Heaven. Please pray the Scripture below:

“that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.”
(Romans 10:9–10, NASB95)

Revelation - Chapter 12 & 13

The War, The Beast & His Prophet

After John has witnessed God's wrath poured out in the Trumpet Judgments he experiences the second interlude. John is recommissioned for the second half of his prophetic role. During these interludes God comforts His people that He has not forgotten them, that He is still in control, and that they will ultimately be victorious.

John witnesses a massive angel vowing before God that there will be delay no longer. The time of God's patience is seen as having ended. The final number of the redeemed will be fulfilled and the judgment of the wicked will soon be complete.

John is given a measuring rod to measure the temple of God signifying that it belongs to God. Two fearless witnesses preach the gospel, fulfilling Jesus' declaration that, "the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matt 24:14).

The seventh angel blew the seventh trumpet and John hears a great symphony of voices expressing unrestrained joy that the power of Satan is to be forever broken and Christ is to reign supreme. There is a promise given to believers of unbroken fellowship with God forever.

The War

John will not see the results of the seventh trumpet until later in Chapter 16. He now sees a series of signs or symbols of events that will occur in Heaven and on earth during the Great Tribulation. There are six main characters:

- **Israel** - A woman clothed with the sun, moon under her feet, crown of twelve stars, with child, gives birth.
 - Described as a great sign indicating regal splendor for the nation of Israel.
 - Israel is represented throughout the Old Testament as a woman in travail. (Isa 26:17-18; 66:7-8; Micah 4:10; 5:3). Just like a pregnant woman in labor feels pain, so the nation of Israel was in pain, waiting for Messiah to come forth.
 - Also frequently described as the wife of Yahweh.
 - Sun and moon represent Jacob and Rachel and the stars the sons of Jacob from Joseph's dream in Genesis 37:9-11. This identifies the woman with the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant.
 - Crown of twelve stars refers to the twelve tribes of Israel.
 - Moon could also include the concept of God's covenant relationship with Israel, since the moon was part of the cycle of Israel's required times of worship (Num 29:5-6; Neh 10:33; Psalm 81:3; Isa 1:13-14; Col 2:16).

- Israel is the source of many blessings including Jesus Christ, the apostles and the Bible.

Satan - A great red dragon, seven heads, ten horns, seven diadems on his heads

- Star of the morning (Isa 14:12) now a fallen angel; serpent of old (Gen 3:1), emphasizing his subtlety and treachery; devil or slanderer constantly trying to arraign God's people before the throne of God in Heaven; forever branded the adversary; the one who deceives the whole world. It is his habitual, continual activity. Satan lures people to their destruction by causing them to pay "attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons" (1 Timothy 4:1). He seduces people to believe him and not God (Genesis 3:4).¹
 - Red dragon describes Satan's vicious, deadly nature.
 - He is depicted as the ruler of the world. A seven-headed monster that represents seven consecutive world empires running their course under Satan's dominion: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome and Antichrist's future empire.
 - The ten forms represent the kings of the ten-nation confederacy who will rule under Antichrist.
 - The shifting of the diadems from the dragon's heads to the beast's horns reveal the shift in power from the seven consecutive world empires to the ten kings under the final Antichrist.
 - The counterfeit of God, the Father.
- **Christ** - The woman's Male Child
 - Israel brought forth the Messiah (Isa 9:6).
 - **Michael** - A Holy Angel
 - An archangel; an angel of high rank.
 - Daniel identifies Michael as one of the chief princes who guards the people of Israel (Dan 10:13; 12:1).
 - The New Testament also reveals Michael to be the defender of God's people (Jude 9).
 - **Antichrist** - The Beast from the sea, ten horns, seven heads, 10 diadems on his horns, blasphemous names on his heads, like a leopard, feet like bear, mouth like a lion
 - Described as a wild vicious monster, ferocious personality.
 - Represents both a kingdom and a person. Daniel and Paul both describe the Antichrist as a person (Dan 7:25; 8:24-25; 11:36-45; 2 Thes 2:4).
 - Comes out of the sea summoned by Satan. He is seen as coming out of the sea which in the Old Testament is a metaphor for satanic activity (Job 26:12). Therefore the Antichrist is probably coming out of the abyss where demons are

currently located (Rev 9:1-11; Luke 8:31). Satan will be imprisoned in the abyss during the Millennial Kingdom (Rev 20:1-3). May also mean that he is a Gentile and comes from the Mediterranean area.

- He has a similar description to Satan having ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on his horns. Horns symbolize strength and power both for attack and defense. They represent the power of the kings who will rule under his authority.
 - Seven heads represent the seven successive world empires listed above.
 - Antichrist has the characteristics of the animals in the vision recorded in Dan 7:3-7. The lion symbolized the fierce, consuming power of the Babylonian Empire. The bear represents the ferocity, strength and stability of the Medo-Persian Empire. The speed and viciousness of the leopard represents the Greeks' swift conquests. The Antichrist's final empire will incorporate all the ferocity, viciousness, swiftness and strength of the other world empires. It will be unparalleled in human history.
 - He will be a gifted orator, an intellectual genius, possess great charm and charisma and have immense leadership power.
 - He will blaspheme God continually.
 - The counterfeit of Jesus Christ.
- **False Prophet** - Beast from the earth, two horns like a lamb, speaks like a dragon
 - Comes out of the earth suggesting that he will be less overpowering and terrifying than the Antichrist.
 - Will appear as a subtle deceiver, with meekness and gentleness.
 - Will be winsome and persuasive, similar to the wolves in sheep's clothing Jesus warned of (Matt 7:15).
 - He will be Satan's (the dragon) mouthpiece, speaking his words, luring the world to worship the satanic dictator.
 - He will lead the worldwide religion of Antichrist worship.
 - Antichrist will delegate authority to him.
 - The counterfeit of the Holy Spirit.

John witnesses the following events which represent the most symbolization in the entire Bible:

- **Satan Sweeps a Third of the Angelic Host with Him to Earth.**

Lucifer was a beautiful angel in heaven, but one day he decided he was too wise, strong, glorious, and mighty to be anything less than God (Isa 14:12-15). He led a rebellion, ultimately fell, and took a third of the angels with him (Isa 14:12; Eze 28:12-17) ²

Since one-third of the angels fell, and Revelation 9:16 reveals that two hundred million demons will be released from captivity near the Euphrates River, there must be at least four hundred million holy angels.³

This was the beginning of Satan's long war against God and His people. Satan hates Israel because she is the chosen of God and essential to the overall purpose of God for time and eternity.

- **Israel gives birth to the Christ Child & Satan Attempts to Devour Christ.** In spite of Satan's relentless efforts over the centuries to prevent it, Jesus is born. The dragon, referring to the Roman Empire at that time as dominated by Satan, is seen awaiting the birth of Jesus with the intent to destroy Him as soon as He is born.

When God told Satan in the Garden of Eden that the seed of the woman "shall bruise your head" (Genesis 3: 15), Satan began his campaign to eradicate that promised seed, Jesus Christ. Satan has attempted to cut off the Jewish line every since.

Satan incited Esau to attempt to kill his brother, Jacob, who would father the twelve tribes of Israel. He incited Pharaoh to murder all the Jewish baby boys in Egypt but Moses was hidden. After David's descendant King Jehoshaphat died, a series of intrigues and murders eliminated the entire Davidic line except King Ahaziah's youngest son who was hidden by the high priest's wife. Thwarted but undaunted, Satan incited the wicked Haman to plot the extermination of all the Jews. God raised up Esther "for such a time as this," and the promised seed was spared (Est 4:14).

When Jesus was born, Satan instilled fear and hatred in King Herod, who had all the babies in Bethlehem murdered. God intervened and directed Joseph to flee with his family to Egypt, thus sparing Jesus' life. Herod an Edomite was a descendant of Esau and of the people who were the traditional enemies of Jacob and his descendants. (Matt 2:13-15).⁴

Satan then confronted Jesus in the wilderness and attempts were made to murder Jesus several times. Each time Jesus miraculously escaped unharmed. When Jesus died on a cross on a Friday afternoon at three o'clock, Satan thought he had won his centuries-long campaign, but Jesus was raised from the dead once again thwarting Satan's efforts.⁵

- **Christ Ascends to Heaven with God on His throne.** This seems to represent Christ's ascension where He now sits at the right hand of God, the Father interceding for all believers (Heb 2:17-18; 4:13-14; 10:14).

Jesus has brought salvation to all who will call on His name and believe in their heart and confess with their mouth that God raised Him from the dead (Rom 10:9-10) and during the Millennial Period He will rule all the nations with a rod of iron (Rev 12:5).

- **War in Heaven**

There has been war in heaven since the fall of Satan (Isa 14:12-14; Eze 28:11-18). Satan and his evil angels have actively opposed both the holy angels and God's people since Satan's fall (Dan 10:12-13; 1 Pet 5:8). ⁶ Even though Satan has been formally expelled from Heaven, God has still allowed him to come and accuse all the saints before God. The ultimate victory has been won, but it won't be totally implemented until some point in the future.

The grammatical construction of the phrase in the Bible indicates that Satan will start this particular battle. War wages and Michael and his angels are more powerful than Satan and his host. Satan and his evil host are cast down to earth. This describes Satan's second and permanent expulsion from heaven.

It is not specified when the war begins nor how long the war lasts but it may start at the beginning of the seven-year Tribulation, when the church is raptured but probably no later than the midpoint of the Tribulation. ⁷ Perhaps Satan attempts to interfere with the passage of the believers as they are raptured through Satan's realm, triggering the battle with Michael and the holy angels.

This event was prophesied by Daniel the prophet in Daniel 12:1. From this point on Satan and his hosts are excluded from the third heaven, the presence of God, although their temporary dominion over the second heaven (outer space) and the first heaven (the sky) continues. Satan will now wage an all out war to prevent Christ from establishing His Millennial Kingdom.

- **Warning is Given to Earth & Sea Because Satan is Thrown Down to Earth**

The warning indicates that Satan has great wrath because he has only a short period of time left. This probably indicates that Satan is cast to the earth at the beginning of the Great Tribulation period with only three and one-half years left until Christ returns at which time Satan suffers his final defeat.

No longer having access to God to accuse believers, Satan will wage an unprecedented war on anyone belonging to God, especially Israel. Horrors of earthly evil will increase. Satan is described as the serpent of old, emphasizing his subtlety and treachery; the devil meaning slanderer or false accuser; Satan meaning adversary or enemy; and deceiver.

He will attempt to erase Israel from the face of the earth (Rev 12:13). The Jews have been hated, ridiculed and persecuted throughout all of history. This will be the worst and final wave of anti-Semitism that will roll over the world as God defends and protects His people.

- **War on Earth**

- **First Attack**

Enraged by his ejection from Heaven, Satan pursues and persecutes the Jews. God will use believing Gentiles to aid the Jewish people and intervenes directly on their behalf. John sees Israel escaping into the wilderness on wings of the great eagle as also described in Ex 19:4 when God delivered the nation from Egypt. Wings symbolize strength (Isa 40:31) and protection (Deut 32:9-11; Psa 17:8; 57:1).

The location of the place where the Jews will flee is not revealed. Some have suggested Petra, an ancient city carved into the rocky cliffs of Edom between the Dead Sea and Gulf of Aqaba. Petra was easy to defend in ancient times because the only approach was through a narrow gorge. Jesus' warning to flee to the mountains (Matt 24:15-16) suggests that the place of refuge will not be in the coastal plain to the west of Jerusalem, or the relatively flat Negev desert region to the south. More likely, it will be in the mountainous region east of Jerusalem.⁸

Just as God provided manna and quail in the wilderness to His people (Ex 16:12) He will again supernaturally feed His people for three and one-half years. While it is clear that God does preserve a godly remnant, Zechariah 13:8 indicates that two-thirds of Israel in the land will perish.⁹ Frustrated by his defeat, Satan will launch a second attack on the Jews.

- **Second Attack**

Having failed at his initial attempt to massacre the Jewish people, Satan will resort to long-range tactics. Satan's attacking force will sweep toward the Jews' hiding place like a great flood. Reminiscent of Moses' description in Exodus 15:12: "You stretched out Your right hand, the earth swallowed them," the earth will swallow Satan's forces. Perhaps one of the frequent earthquakes during the Tribulation (Rev 6:12; 8:5; 11:13; 19; 16:18; Matt 24:7) will cause the ground to split open.¹⁰

- **Third Attack**

Enraged that he has lost again, Satan turns his fury toward new targets. This time he attacks all of those who name the name of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and hold to the testimony of Jesus. As we will see, Satan also is defeated in this attempt.

- **Satan Sets Up His Earthly Kingdom**

Satan will try to prevent Jesus from setting up His earthly kingdom by setting up his own kingdom under Antichrist. Together with the False Prophet, they will embody the sum total of all the world empires that have opposed God and His people throughout history.

Satan is depicted as the ruler of the nations of the world but in reality, he is a usurper who seeks the world's worship and adoration. His powerful empire, unparalleled in human history, will be his last and greatest attempt to stop the reign of Christ. Like all of Satans' other attempts to thwart God's purposes, it will ultimately fail. Jesus will come again, defeat Satan, set up His Millennial Kingdom and reign forever and ever.

- **Antichrist Arrives - Beast From the Sea**

Satan summons the Antichrist and gives him his power, throne and great authority. He will reign supreme and unchallenged by earth and hell. His totalitarian regime could accurately be described as "hell on earth." Conquering the world has been the dream of countless rulers in the past and it is finally achieved by this last Gentile ruler.

He will make a seven-year covenant with Israel at the beginning of the Tribulation period, promising to protect the Jews from their many enemies. Israel will let down its guard and rebuild the Jewish Temple. Halfway through the seven-year Tribulation period, the Antichrist will break his covenant and turn against Israel (Dan 9:27).

He will cause deceit to prosper under his rule (Dan 8:25) and he will come into power peaceably and seize the kingdom by intrigue (Dan 11:21). Later he will use force beginning a massive world war that continues until the return of Christ. The war is a rebellion against the universal rule of Antichrist and comes at the very end of the Tribulation period.

A startling event will help Antichrist solidify his hold on the world. He will suffer a fatal wound to the head that will be healed. Whether his death is real or fake is not clear. However, his alleged death and resurrection will be a counterfeit of Christ's death and resurrection.

People will believe that he has transcended death at a time when the world will be experiencing death at an unequalled level. With the horrific events of the Tribulation going on people will be devoid of hope and will flock to him like desperate sheep, ready to do whatever he says. The whole world will be

amazed and follow after the beast. Their fascination with Antichrist will quickly become worship.

He will encourage and demand that worship by exalting himself above every god or object of worship and taking his seat in the temple of God (the abomination of desolation) displaying himself as being God (2 The 2:4). All whose names are not written in the Book of Life will worship him. By worshiping Antichrist, unbelievers will actually be worshiping Satan, the real power behind him. This worldwide worshiping of Satan will be the final form of apostasy.

Like Satan, he will be an arrogant blasphemer. God will allow Antichrist to blaspheme and his arrogance will surpass that of anyone else in human history. He will voice his master, Satan's, frustrated rage against God in a world filled with blasphemers. He will twist everything good, pure and holy. With burning eloquence he will turn people away from Jesus and to himself. The ultimate in blasphemy will occur when he sits in the temple of God to proclaim that he is god. God will grant Antichrist authority to act for three and one-half years, the last half of the Tribulation Period.

He will make war with the Tribulation saints on the earth and overcome them because they refuse to worship him. Believers will bear the brunt of his murderous fury. The result will be a worldwide slaughter of God's people like has never occurred in all of history (Rev 6:9-11; 7:9-17: 11:7; 17:6; Dan 7:25). This persecution will require a level of spiritual stamina unparalleled in the numerous persecutions throughout history. This persecution will begin at the midpoint of the Tribulation when Antichrist breaks his covenant with Israel and sets up the abomination of desolation (Dan 9:27; 11:31; 12:11; Matt 24:15; 2 The 2:3-4).

The Counterfeit Christ ¹¹

Christ	Antichrist
Son of God	Son of perdition
Holy One	Lawless one
Came down from Heaven	Came up from the bottomless pit
Energized by the Holy Spirit	Energized by Satan
Does the Father's will	Does his own will
Cleansed the Temple	Defiles the Temple
Man of Sorrows	Man of sin
Humbled Himself	Exalts himself
Called the Lamb	Called the Beast
Received up to Heaven	Sent to the lake of fire

• **False Prophet - Beast from the Land**

John witnesses the rise of a second figure who will serve as the Antichrist's right-hand man. He will be Antichrist's propaganda or branding agent. Just as the false Christs who have plagued mankind will culminate in the final Antichrist, so also will the false prophets culminate in a final false prophet. He will be the counterfeit of the Holy Spirit.

He will be Satan's last and most powerful lying deceiver and Antichrist's partner in Satan's massive final deception of the world. His mission will be to cause people to worship Antichrist. He will be a unifier of the world's religion and he will then lead the worldwide religion of Antichrist worship.

His prestige will be elevated with Antichrist's resurrection. Those who reject the saving gospel of Jesus will eagerly accept the false gospel preached by the false prophet since it appears to be verified by spectacular supernatural signs. He will perform miracles that will be deceitful and deceptive in their purpose. One of these wonders will be a celestial fire out of heaven. This is probably a counterfeit of when Elijah called down fire from Heaven (2 Kings 1:10). The Bible also teaches the Jewish tradition that Elijah will precede the Messiah (Mal 4:5). This fire may be Satan's counterfeit to tempt the Jews to worship the false messiah.

He will command the people to make an image to Antichrist and the world will engage in the most shocking, blatant idolatry ever seen. The blasphemous image will probably be set up on the temple ground in Jerusalem (2Thes 2:4) and will be connected with the abomination of desolation (Dan 9:27; 11:31; 12:11; Matt 24:15).

The false prophet is enabled by Satan to impart a spirit to the image probably one of Satan's evil demons. As a result the image will speak intelligibly. People will be convinced that the image is alive and speaking of its own volition. This is another example of the dark power that will characterize the Tribulation period and allow Satan to gain credibility in the world's eyes so he can carry out his evil program and deceive many in the final days.¹²

The death sentence will be decreed for those who refuse to worship the image of Antichrist. Not all believers will be killed as some will survive until Christ returns and will enter His Millennial Kingdom as living people (Isa 65:20-23; Matt 25:31-40), including many Jews (Rev 12:6-7, 14).

As a counterfeit to God's sealing of the 144,000 Jews, the false prophet marks the unsaved to preserve them from Antichrist's wrath against God's people. They will receive the mark of the beast or Antichrist on their right hand or forehead. No one, rich or poor, will be exempt from receiving the mark. The number of the mark of the beast is 666, the number of man three times; this is man showing himself that he is God.

Those refusing to take the mark of the beast will have dire practical consequences to daily life; no one will be able to buy or sell without it. The penalty for not taking the mark will be death. Antichrist's empire will maintain strict economic control over the world. He will now control religion, miracles, and money.

The Two Beasts

Antichrist - First Beast	False Prophet - Second Beast
Rises from the sea	Rises from the Land
7 heads with blasphemous names	1 head
10 horns with crowns	2 horns like a lamb
Authority given to him by the dragon, Satan	Exercising authority of Antichrist
Whole world worships the Antichrist because of the beast	Causes people to worship Antichrist
Speaks blasphemies against God for 42 months	Performs amazing signs to deceive the whole world into worshipping the rest beast's image
Makes war with the saints and overcomes them	Forces the world to receive the mark of the beast or be killed

Two-Part Tribulation: From Dimming to Darkness ¹³ Daniel 7:25; 9:27; 12:7 & Revelation 11-13 7 Years Total

First 3 Years	Second 3 Years
3.5 Years	3.5 Years
2 Witnesses	2 Beasts
Temple Restored	Temple Desecrated
Israel Flees	Israel in Wilderness
Saints Protected	Saints Martyred
Trumpets	Bowls

The Holy Trinity The Unholy Trinity

God	Satan/Red Dragon
Christ	Antichrist/Beast from the Sea
Holy Spirit	False Prophet/Beast from the Earth

The Celebration

When Satan is cast from Heaven to the earth, a loud voice begins praise to God. It appears to be the shout of triumph of the tribulation saints longing for and anticipating their ultimate victory. They identify Satan as the accuser of our brethren (Rev 12:10) eliminating the loud voice as being angels and indicating believers in Heaven.

So certain is the establishing of the kingdom and the rule of Christ that even though it is yet a future event, they are spoken of in the past tense. The heavenly worshipers rejoice that the first step, Satan's defeat and final ejection from Heaven, has already taken place. The salvation, power, kingdom of God and the authority of His Christ has come. The Tribulation saints have overcome Satan because of the blood of the Lamb & word of their testimony. The Tribulation saints received their courage from Jesus even unto death where they joined Him in Heaven for eternity (Rev 12:11).

Ending

The warning "If anyone has an ear, let him hear" is echoed fifteen times in the New Testament with the phrase "He who has an ear ..." to emphasize a particularly important truth. In all its previous uses in Revelation (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22), it is followed by the phrase "what the Spirit says to the churches." The omission of that phrase suggests that the church is not in view in this passage, having been raptured before the start of the Tribulation (Rev. 3:10).

If you have not accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, we encourage you to do so today while there is still time. You too can be counted in the redeemed and spend eternity with God in Heaven. Please pray the Scripture below:

"that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation."
(Romans 10:9–10, NASB95)

Revelation - Chapter 14 & 15

Tribulation Announcements & Victory of the Lamb

Before the seventh trumpet sounds John witnesses a series of signs or symbols of events that will occur in Heaven and on earth during the Great Tribulation. First there is war in heaven and Satan is permanently expelled from Heaven. Enraged by his ejection from Heaven, Satan attempts to wipe Israel and all believers in Jesus Christ from the earth. Although he is unsuccessful this will be the largest and deadliest of persecutions God's people has ever seen.

Satan then sets up his earthly kingdom, giving power to his Antichrist and False Prophet who together will cause the world to worship Antichrist. Antichrist will commit the ultimate in blasphemy when he sits in the temple of God to proclaim that he is god. The False Prophet will cause all the unsaved to receive the mark of the beast. Antichrist will begin to wage a massive world war that will continue until Jesus returns.

Then there is a celebration of the tribulations saints that the salvation, power, kingdom of God and the authority of His Christ has come. The Tribulations saints have overcome Satan because of the blood of the Lamb and word of their testimony.

Jesus standing on Mount Zion with the 144,000

Then John sees Jesus, the Lamb standing on Mount Zion with the 144,000. This is a prophetic vision of the ultimate triumph of Jesus following His second coming to earth, when he joins the 144,00 on Mount Zion, the highest point in ancient Jerusalem, at the beginning of His Millennial reign. This event is foretold in Psalm 2:6-9.

Standing on Mount Zion with Jesus in triumph are the 144,000 who will survive both Satan's wrath and God's judgments on the sinful world. They are first mentioned at the beginning of the Great Tribulation. Nothing will be able to harm them, because God will seal them (Rev 7:3-4). We learn the following about this group of Jewish men from the twelve tribes of Israel:

- In sharp contrast to the mark of the beast on the foreheads of the unsaved the 144,00 have the name of Jesus and God written on their foreheads.
- They are singing a new song before the throne of God, the four living creatures and the elders and no one else could learn the song. With all the trouble they have faced, they are joyously praising the Lord for their protection and triumph.
- In the midst of rampant sexual sin throughout the world they will keep themselves chaste. They will stand apart from the sin of their culture.
- They will be completely loyal to and follow the Lamb, no matter the cost.
- They are first fruits to God and to the Lamb, purchased by God and Jesus for a special divine service. In the Old Testament the first fruits were offered to God to

be used in His service (Deut 18:3-5). Their purpose is to serve the Lord by proclaiming the gospel to the lost and may refer to the beginning of a great harvest to the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom.

- They will only speak God's truth. They will not propagate Satan, the Antichrist and the False Prophet's lies, agenda and false religion.
- They will be above reproach, leading godly lives before all who see them.
- They will enter the Millennial Kingdom as living men.

Tribulation Announcements

Next John sees three angels flying in mid-heaven. The first angel preaches the everlasting gospel, the second pronounces judgment, and the third promises doom. These three angels deliver God's last call to repentance before the final judgments fall and Jesus returns.

Everlasting Gospel

The first angel proclaims the everlasting gospel, announces that the hour of God's judgment has come, and commands the people of the earth to worship God. Here the everlasting gospel seems to be neither the gospel of grace nor the gospel of the Kingdom, but rather the good news that God at last is about to deal with the world in righteousness and establish His sovereignty over it. ¹

By this time unbelievers will have experienced the devastating seal and trumpet judgments and the earth will have been devastated by worldwide wars, famine and earthquakes. Still in His grace and mercy, God calls sinners to repent and worship Him through the preaching of this angel.

Judgment

The second angel announces the fall of Babylon, which will come later. Sadly, this implies that the first angel's message was largely rejected. The nations who participate in the spiritual corruption induced by Babylon, Antichrist's worldwide political, economic and religious empire, ultimately share her divine condemnation and judgment. The promise of judgment upon the evil Babylonian system is designed to bring comfort to those in trial during the Great Tribulation.

Doom

The third angel proclaims the sad doom of those who worship the beast. As unbelievers drink of the wine of spiritual immorality, they will also drink the cup of God's wrath. God's wrath here is described as full strength, untempered by the Lord's mercy and grace. They will be tormented day and night forever. They will have no rest day or night. Jesus referred to hell more times than any other person in the New Testament. He also talked more about hell than about heaven.

The angel makes it clear that those who trust in Christ will receive the love and grace of God while those who reject Christ will go to hell and receive eternal punishment. Once again, God graciously calls on sinners to repent in the final hour.

Blessing of the Saints

A blessing or encouragement is given to those who put their trust in Christ in the time of the Great Tribulation. God, Himself, then gives a blessing to those who die in the Lord during this period as martyrs of the faith. A voice from heaven, a direct communication from God rather than an angel, occurs six times in the book of Revelation: Rev 10:4, 8:11:12; 14:2; 18:4; 21:3.

Then the Holy Spirit, repeats the blessing and adds two further reasons for the tribulation martyrs' blessedness. First, they are blessed because they can "rest from their labors." Labors here describes difficult, exhausting work. They will live hard, difficult, dangerous lives struggling for survival. They will be filled with deep sorrow as they watch those they love suffer torment and death. They will be excluded from society, unable to buy or sell. They will live as fugitives on the run.

They will also be blessed because "their deeds follow with them." Their deeds here refers to their service to the Lord. Their record of diligent labor will follow with them to heaven where they will be rewarded for their earthly service to God (Heb 6:10).

The Judgment of the Son of Man - Grain Harvest - 7 Bowl Judgments

Next John sees Christ participating in God's judgments on an evil world. Christ is referred to as Son of Man (Rev 14:14). This is the title under which Christ deals with the earth and earth dwellers (Mt 25:31; Jn 5:27) and claims universal dominion (Dan 7:13, 14; Rev 1:13-14).²

It is the last time Scripture refers to Jesus as Son of Man. He is about to take possession of the entire earth. Joel, Isaiah, and Christ all spoke of a coming harvest of divine wrath when the Messiah will execute final judgment (Joel 3:12-13, 21; Isaiah 63:1-6; Matt 13:30, 39-42).

John sees Jesus sitting on a brilliant, white cloud symbolizing His glory and majesty coming to establish His kingdom in fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy (Dan 7:13). He is sitting as He waits for the proper time to stand and begin the reaping. That reaping, which is the seven bowl judgments, will be followed by Christ's return to establish His kingdom. He wears a golden crown the type worn by victors in war or athletic events. It pictures the Son of Man as the triumphant conqueror over all His enemies (Matt 24:30).

An angel comes from the temple alluding that the judgement proceeds from God, and cries out that the time for judgment has come, judgement is overdue, and that the

condition of the world is one of a rotten moral condition. The overripe condition of wicked humanity tells us that the Lord, in His mercy, has delayed judgment for as long as possible (2 Pet 3:9).

Christ's sharp sickle indicates that it is the time of harvest, He reaps with His sickle referring to the judgments at His second coming. The brevity of the statement dramatizes the suddenness of the judgment (2 Pet 3:10). The picture of the Lord Jesus Christ mowing down His enemies is like a harvester cutting an overripe wheat field that demands immediate attention by the harvester. This is the first phase of the final reaping of the earth.

Angel With Sharp Sickle - Grape Harvest - Judgment of Armageddon

Then another angel comes out from the altar in heaven associated with the prayers of the saints. His appearance means that the time had come for those prayers to be answered. While the wheat harvest represents the sudden, swift intrusion of God's judgement into human history, the grape harvest signifies the severity of that judgment.³

The angel has a sharp sickle and is commanded to gather the clusters from the vine of the earth for its grapes are ripe. It pictures the earth's wicked people as bursting with the juice of wickedness and ready for the harvest of righteousness. The time has come for the final harvest. Their destinies had been sealed. They had rebelled against their Creator and Redeemer, taking the mark of the Beast, the ultimate sign of rebellion, and adopting a wicked lifestyle to match.⁴

The angel swings his sickle to the earth and throws the harvested clusters into the great winepress of the wrath of God. All the enemies of God who survive the seven bowl judgments will be gathered like grape clusters from the vine of the earth and flung into the great wine press of the the wrath of God. This action is fulfilled in Rev 19:15.

This is a prophetic picture of the ultimate judgement of unbelievers at the second coming of Christ. The spurting of the grape juice from under the bare feet of those treading the grapes in the winepress is compared to the spurting of blood that will occur in the awful human carnage outside of Jerusalem where the judgements in Rev 19:17-19,21 take place.

Whether the blood will flow as high as the horses' bridles or not, there will be a heavy shedding of blood as part of a tremendous outpouring of God's final judgment on evil mankind. The area described as 1,600 stadia is approximately two hundred miles and refers to the area within a two-hundred mile radius outside of Jerusalem where the world armies will gather to battle Christ at His second coming. There will be millions of people engaged in the battle of Armageddon. Nothing in earth's history has come close

to the massive size and destruction that will occur. This will be the center of the final carnage (Isa 63:1-3, 6; Joel 3:13-16).

Armageddon, will actually be a slaughter rather than a battle. All Christ's enemies, including Satan, Antichrist, False Prophet, and all who refuse to follow Him even after repeated warnings, will be immediately destroyed. This terrible bloodletting will mark the end of the Gentile Age.

Though Armageddon will spell certain doom for the enemies of God, it will also mean salvation for His people. Christ and the armies of heaven will return to destroy the Antichrist and his armies of the earth. Then the King of kings will establish His everlasting Kingdom (Rev 19:11-16).

Seven Proclamations In The Prelude To God's Wrath ⁵

Eternal Gospel Proclaimed	Glorify God!	Rev 14: 6-7
Babylon's Sentence Declared	Babylon Is Fallen	Rev 14: 8
Warning Sounded	Do Not Worship the Beast!	Rev 14: 9-12
Blessing Announced	The Dead in Christ Are Blessed!	Rev 14:13
Rewards Promised	Good Works Will Be Rewarded!	Rev: 14:13
Judgment Pronounced	Reap the Earth!	Rev 14:14-16
Wrath Prescribed	Gather the Wicked!	Rev 14:17-20

The Two Advents of Christ Contrasted ⁶

At His First Coming	At His Second Coming
He came in meekness as a servant (Matt 20:28)	He will come in power as Judge (Matt 24:30-31; 25:31-46; John 5:26-29)
He came in humility & gentleness (Matt 11:29; John 5:41)	He will come in majesty & splendor (1The 4:16; Rev 1:7)
He came to seek & save the lost (Matt 18:11; Luke 19:10; John 3:17)	He will come to judge & reign (Acts 10:40-42; 2 For 5:10; Rev 11:15)
He came as a servant to super wrath for sinners (Matt 16:21; 17:12; Mark 9:12)	He will come as a conqueror to rescue the righteous from wrath (1 For 15:51-52; 1 The 4:15-17)
He came to sow the seed of the gospel (Matt 13:3-9; Luke 8:11)	He will come to reap the harvest (Matt 13:37-42)

Then John records seeing another great and marvelous sign in heaven, the third heavenly sign that he sees. This time there are seven angels with seven plagues. These seven plagues, the seven bowl judgments, are the last and worst plagues because they contain the last of God's wrath.

Standing on a transparent crystal platform shimmering and glistening like a tranquil sunlit sea before God's throne, are those who had been victorious over the beast. These are the believers redeemed during the Tribulation (Rev 6:9-11; 7:9-17; 12:11; 17: 14:1-5; 12-13). They will be victorious over the beast because of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and because they did not take the mark of the beast.

The sea of glass was mixed with the fire of God's judgment, which was about to be poured out on the earth. Fire is frequently associated in Scripture with God's judgment (Heb 12:29; Num 11:1; 16:35; Deut 9:3; Psa 50:3; 97:3; Isa 66:15; 2 Thes 1:7-9; 2 Pet 3:7).

The redeemed Tribulation saints are playing harps, rejoicing and singing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb. The song of Moses is the first of several songs recorded in the Old Testament. The last recorded song in the Bible is the song of the Lamb. Both songs speak of redemption.

As God delivered the people of Israel out of captivity in Egypt, parting the Red Sea, stacking the water of either side of a path to allow the Israelites to cross safely on dry land, the Israelites sang of song of praise to God for their deliverance. This song is recorded in Exodus 15.

There is also another song written by Moses at the close of his career and recorded in Deuteronomy 32. It is a comprehensive picture of God's faithfulness to Israel and His ultimate purpose to defeat their enemies. This song more nearly corresponds to the situation in Revelation 15. Both songs however, ascribe praise to God and are similar in many ways to the hymn recorded by John. ⁷

Like the song of Moses, the song of the Lamb expresses the themes of God's faithfulness, deliverance of His people and judgment of His enemies. Although the words of the song recorded here in Revelation 15 does not exactly match the song of Moses in Exodus 15, Deuteronomy 32, or the song of the Lamb in Revelation 5, the themes and many of the key items are similar.

The song of the redeemed saints extols God's character as the omnipotent, immutable, sovereign, perfect and righteous Creator and Judge. This song closes with joyful anticipation of the Millennial reign of Christ, when all the nations will come and worship before God. ⁸

Then John introduces a startling and dramatic new vision. The Holy of Holies, the inner sanctuary where God's presence dwells, opens and out of the temple comes seven angels dressed in pure linen, clean and bright with golden sashes across their torso from the shoulder to the waist.

The seven angels approach the throne of God and a high-ranking cherubim gave the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God. Bowls were part of the temple furnishings and were associated with the sacrifices (1 Kings 7:50; Zech 14:20; Ex 27:3; 38:3). Those who refuse to drink the cup of salvation will be drowned in the judgments poured from the bowls of wrath (Psa 116:13). God has the power to put an end to sin so that it cannot exist ever again in His holy presence.⁹

These seven angels give four judgments:

1. Righteous judgment because they are wearing white robes
2. Sovereign judgment because they are wearing golden sashes, which represent the priests and king
3. Solemn judgment because they have bowls of wrath
4. Sure judgment because no man can enter into the temple until God is finished

Smoke also came out of the temple in heaven. Smoke symbolizes the glory of God and His power. Smoke also symbolized God's glorious presence in the Old Testament tabernacle or temple (Ex 40: 34-35; 1 Kings 8:10-11; Isa 6:1-4). This smoke also represents God's wrath.

No one was able to enter the temple until the seven plagues were finished. The glory cloud will remain in the temple in heaven until the earth is completely purged and prepared for Jesus, the King and His Kingdom.

Summary

In Chapters 14 and 15 John shares a series of pronouncements and visions assuring us of Christ's ultimate triumph and judgment of evil. The last of God's wrath is seen in the seven bowls given to the seven angels. It will soon be poured out on the earth and Christ will take His rightful place as King of kings. Even during the devastating judgments of the Tribulation, God will continue to call sinners to salvation.

Today, the invitation is still open to those who will receive the grace of God by trusting in Christ and being saved from entering this awful period that may be impending for this present generation.

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” (John 3:16, NASB95)

“while it is said, “Today if you hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts, as when they provoked Me.” (Hebrews 3:15, NASB95)

“that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.” (Romans 10:9–10, NASB95)

Revelation - Chapter 16 & 17

Bowl Judgements, Doom of Babylon & Jesus' Victory

John has just seen Jesus, as the Lamb, in a prophetic vision of Jesus' ultimate triumph following His second coming to earth when He joins the 144,000 on Mount Zion, the highest point in ancient Jerusalem, at the beginning of His Millennial reign. Three angels flying in mid-heaven preach the everlasting gospel, pronounce judgment and promise doom. They also deliver God's last call to repentance before the final judgments fall and Jesus returns.

A blessing or encouragement is given to those who put their trust in Christ in the time of the Great Tribulation. The Holy Spirit repeats the blessing and adds the blessing of rest from their labors and that their deeds follow with them.

John sees Christ participating in God's judgments on an evil world. Jesus is seen as the Son of Man, sitting on a brilliant, white cloud, waiting for the proper time to stand and begin the reaping which includes the seven bowl judgments. He wears a golden crown, the type worn by victors in war. An angel announces the time has come and Christ reaps with his sharp sickle referring to the judgments at His second coming.

An angel with a sharp sickle comes out from the altar in heaven and swings his sickle to the earth, harvesting the clusters of overripe grapes symbolizing the earth's wicked people. Then John sees the Holy of Holies, the inner sanctuary where God's presence dwells, opens and out of the temple comes seven angels with seven plagues, the seven bowl judgments, the final and worst judgments of God. The song of the Lamb and the song of Moses are sung by the redeemed tribulation saints. We are assured of Christ's ultimate triumph and judgement of evil.

God's Final Judgement: The Six Bowls of Wrath

John next hears a loud voice from the temple. Loud voices are heard six times in Chapter 16 and twenty times in Revelation. God commands the seven angels to pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God. Like the other judgments, the seven bowls are supernatural acts of God.

These seven bowls of wrath are God's final judgment on the earth and are carried out in a somber manner, one at a time, in a predetermined order. Because the bowls are shallow, their contents are dumped all at once unleashing God's final judgment on the earth in rapid succession. The effects are devastating to the earth and its inhabitants.

The first four trumpet judgements deal only with one-third of the earth, while the bowl judgments are carried out on the entire earth and are greater in intensity. The bowl

judgements will occur within a short period of time toward the close of the Great Tribulation. The bowl judgements, the climax of God's divine dealings with a blasphemous earth, lead up to the second coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.¹

First Bowl of Wrath

The only people affected by the first plague were the people who, "had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image." Those who have received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior will not be affected by this plague. Since the Beast and False Prophet don't rise until the second half of the Tribulation the bowls of wrath clearly occur in the very last days of the Tribulation.

The Beast followers will join in the persecution and killing of the followers of Christ. They will think they have spared their lives by taking the mark. Now they will receive God's judgement in the form of a cankerous, contagious sore that is putrefying and incurable. With the first bowl of wrath, everybody will begin to realize that the tide is turning and the Antichrist has been only *briefly* allowed to wreak havoc on the saints of God.

Second Bowl of Wrath

Before the sores of the first bowl could heal, the second angel pours out his bowl into the sea and every living thing in the sea died. This judgment is similar to the first plague in Egypt (Exodus 7:20-24) and the second trumpet judgment (Rev 8:8-9). In the second trumpet judgment only one-third of the sea is turned to blood and one-third of the sea life was killed by the fiery mountain that was cast into the ocean (Rev 8:8-9). This time the effects will be worldwide and much more intense since approximately 70 percent of the earth's surface is covered in oceans.

What supernatural means God will use to destroy the oceans is not revealed but the effects will resemble those of the phenomenon known as the red tide, concentrated, toxic species of algae kill higher forms of marine life, including shellfish, fish and marine mammals. The stench from the dead, decaying bodies of every living thing in the sea will be unimaginable. The transforming of the world's seas into putrid pools of stinking death will be graphic testimony to the wickedness of man and a reversal to the day when God originally gave life to all sea creatures (Genesis 1:21).²

Third Bowl of Wrath

As the realization sits in that their lives are being torn apart once again, the inhabitants of the earth receive the third bowl of God's wrath. The third angel pours his bowl into all the fresh water and it is turned into blood.

In the first half of the Tribulation, one-third of all the fresh water was contaminated by a star called Wormwood. The two-witnesses had the authority to shut up the sky so that rain would not fall and the temporary restraining of the earth's winds (Rev 7:1) will also cause drought. With no wind to move clouds and weather systems, the water cycle will be disrupted and no rain will fall. This time, at the end, no water will be safe to drink. This will cause unthinkable hardship and suffering.

As we study the book of Revelation, it is amazing to see the ministries assigned to angels. Now John hears an angel with authority over the waters pronounce God's justice in this judgment. The angel breaks into a brief doxology declaring that because evil unbelievers have killed God's people, spilling their blood upon the earth, God is righteous in cursing them with blood to drink.

The bloodletting during the Great Tribulation, with believers slaughtered by the thousands, is without parallel in the history of the human race. Christ declared it would be a time of trouble without precedent (Matt 24:21). The multitude of martyrs in heaven is revealed in Revelation chapter 7. The eternal God, though awaiting the proper time, is inexorable in His judgment of those who persecuted His people.³ Another voice, the altar, reflecting the testimony of the martyrs of Rev 6:9 and the prayers of believers in Rev 8:3-5, confirms that God is true and just in His judgments.

The Fourth Bowl

Waiting for rains to quench their thirst, the inhabitants of the earth experience the fourth bowl of wrath. Like the fourth trumpet the fourth bowl is a judgment that affects the starry heavens, specifically the sun. In the fourth trumpet, the judgment extends to one-third of the sun, moon, and stars, resulting in the darkening of one-third of both the day and night. The fourth bowl relates only to the sun and increases rather than decreases the sun's intensity. Searing heat exceeding anything ever experienced will scorch the earth's inhabitants so severely that it will seem that the atmosphere is on fire.

A serious consequence of the sun's intense heat will be the melting of the polar ice caps. The resulting rise in the ocean's water level will flood areas for miles inland with the noxious waters of the dead oceans. The rays of the sun will no longer be filtered or deflected, causing all sorts of catastrophic climatic changes. There will be a true end times global warming. Widespread damage and loss of life will occur, adding further to the unspeakable misery of the devastated planet.⁴

When Jesus died, the sun hid its face and refused to shine. When He is manifest in all His glory, there will be erupting flames of fire and judgment. One would think that such devastation would cause the people to repent, but sadly it does not. Until this point, only the Antichrist has been described as blaspheming God (Rev 13:1, 5-6), but now the

world adopts his evil character. Neither grace nor wrath will move their wicked hearts to repentance (Rev 9:20-21; 16:11). ⁵

The Fifth Bowl

Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast and his kingdom became dark and the people were consumed by excruciating pain. This affliction is reminiscent of the plague of darkness God brought on Egypt (Ex 10:21-23). Their beloved beast will not be able to help them now.

Even as the afflictions suffered by the enemies of God are cumulative; the sores brought on by the first bowl will continue to fester as darkness closed in around them, the water that would have soothed their sun-scorched flesh will stand in stinking, stagnant pools; once-clean water will be polluted with decaying blood, nevertheless, the people continue to blaspheme God and refuse to repent.

Sadly, this is the last reference to their unwillingness to repent. The first five plagues were God's final offer and humanity's final opportunity for repentance. There will be no more. The bowls of wrath reveal that the minds, hearts, and wills of those who took the mark have been sealed in their sinful condition. They have become like the generation in the days of Noah (Gen 6:5). Paul describes this state of absolute depravity in Romans 1:18, 24-26. ⁶

The Sixth Bowl

When his turn came, the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates. As a result its water was dried up and the way is prepared for the kings from the east to cross into Armageddon. Earlier with the sixth trumpet judgment (Rev 9:14) two hundred million demons who were bound near the Euphrates were released.

The Euphrates is the longest and most significant river in the Middle East. Its source is in the snowfields and ice cap high on the slopes of Mount Ararat which is located in modern Turkey. The Euphrates flows eighteen hundred miles before emptying into the Persian Gulf. In ancient times the garden of Eden was located in the vicinity of the Euphrates (Gen 2:10-14).

The Euphrates was one of four rivers that irrigated the Garden of Eden before the Fall (Gen 2:14) and it also formed the eastern boundary of the land God gave to Israel (Gen 15:18; Deu 1:7; 11:24; Jos 1:4). It is the dividing line between the Near East and Far East. On the eastern side of the Euphrates are the multitudes from Asia, India and Japan.

Three spirits of demons from the unholy trinity, Satan, Antichrist and the False Prophet, will seduce the kings from the east into making the difficult journey to their doom at

Armageddon. The blazing heat from the sun during the fourth bowl judgment will melt the snow and the ice cap on Mount Ararat increasing the volume of water in the Euphrates, causing massive damage and flooding. Drying up the Euphrates River will insure that the eastern armies are able to reach their ultimate destination of Armageddon in the land of Palestine.

God's drying up of the Euphrates is not an act of kindness toward the kings from the east, but one of judgment. They and their armies will be entering a deadly trap. The evaporation of the Euphrates will lead them to their doom, just as the parting of the Red Sea led to the destruction of the Egyptian army.⁷

The deceiving demon spirits will gather the nations together "to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon". Har-Magedon is a Hebrew word meaning Mount Megiddo. Since there is no specific mountain by that name, and Har can refer to hill country, it is probably a reference to the hill country surrounding the Plain of Megiddo, some sixty miles north of Jerusalem. The Greek word for Megiddo is Armageddon.

More than two hundred battles have been fought in that region. This area was the scene of many of the great battles of the Old Testament such as that of Barak and the Canaanites in Judges 4 and the victory of Gideon over the Midianites in Judges 7. Here is where Saul and Josiah died.

The Plain of Megiddo and the nearby Plain of Esdraelon will be the focal point for the Battle of Armageddon, which will rage the entire length of Israel as far south as the Edomite city of Bozrah (Isaiah 63:1). Other battles will also occur in the vicinity of Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:1–3).⁸

As the young Jesus anticipated His earthly ministry, He knew that one day Megiddo would be the rallying point for the armies of the Antichrist. For as long as anyone can remember, Megiddo, the surrounding hill country, and the Jezreel Valley have been a place for war. There, those who would gather to defy Christ's sovereign rule would suffer judgment for their rebellion.⁹

Then Jesus speaks, giving a final warning that his coming will be sudden and unannounced. He compares his second coming to a thief who will overtake those who are not ready (Matt 24:43; Luke 12:39; Rev 16:15). A similar warning is given to the church in Sardis (Rev 3:3). In 2 Peter 3:10 and in 1 Thessalonians 5:2,4, the day of the Lord is said to come as a thief.

He also assures believers that they will not be forgotten. The exalted Lord pronounces the third of seven beatitudes in Revelation, "Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame."

(Rev 16:15). Those who are prepared for his arrival, those who have accepted Him as Lord and Savior, will be blessed.

The Seventh Bowl

Like the final seal and the seventh trumpet, the final or seventh bowl is introduced by the sound of voices, thundering, lightning and an earthquake greater than any previous one. The seventh angel pours his bowl upon the air. MacArthur suggests that by this action God is cleansing the earth's atmosphere as the former domain of Satan. As the time of the Gentiles comes to an end, the great city is split into three parts along with the destruction of the cities of all the nations.

Babylon will incur the wrath of God; the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath. The islands and mountains disappear leaving a new topography of the Holy Land which is also described in Zech 14:4 and Luke 3:5. The final judgement also includes hailstones weighing 100 pounds which would destroy much that was still left standing by the earthquake. It will be the worst calamity in the world's history and is a judgment compared to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, but here extending over the entire earth. Sadly, unbelievers are still unrepentant, continuing to curse God.

The result of the great earthquake will leave all monuments of human ingenuity in shambles. The shaking from the earthquake will be so severe that it will renovate and reconfigure the earth in preparation for the Millennial Kingdom.

The reconfiguration will be completed when Jesus returns; the Mount of Olives will split in two and a new valley running east and west will be created (Zech 14:4). A spring of water will flow year-round from Jerusalem to the Mediterranean and Dead Seas (Zechariah 14:8), causing the desert to blossom like a rose (cf. Isaiah 35:1). Jerusalem will be elevated, and the surrounding region flattened into a plain (Zechariah 14:10).

Thus, the purpose of the earthquake as it relates to Jerusalem is not to judge the city, but to enhance it. Jerusalem was judged earlier in the tribulation by an earthquake, which led to the salvation of those who were not killed (Rev 11:13). The physical changes will prepare Jerusalem for the central role it will play during the Millennial Kingdom, when Christ will reign there as King (Psalm 110:2; Isaiah 2:3; 24:23; Micah 4:7). ¹⁰

God will punctuate this final judgment against sinners with an earthquake, just as He did His judgment of sin at Calvary (Matt 27:51-54). The earth, the sea, the waters, the sun and finally the earth's atmosphere are all the target of judgment. Then God declares, "It is done". This is similar to Jesus' final words from the cross, "It is finished" (John 19:30). God's judgment of Christ on Calvary provided salvation for repentant sinners; the judgment of the seventh bowl brings doom to unrepentant sinners. ¹¹

Seven Bowl Judgments - Revelation 16:1-21

Bowl Judgement	Location	Judgment
First Bowl	Earth	Sores on the Worshipers of the Antichrist
Second Bowl	Seas	Seas turned to blood
Third Bowl	Fresh Water	Fresh water turned to blood
Fourth Bowl	Sun	Intense, Scorching Heat
Fifth Bowl	Antichrist's kindgom	Darkness & pain
Sixth Bowl	River Euphrates	Armageddon
Seventh Bowl	Air	Earthquakes & Hail

Tribulation Judgments ¹²

Seal Series Rev 6:1-8:5	Trumpet Series Rev 8:6-9:21	Bowl Series Rev 16:1-21
1. Conquest	1. Hail & fire (1/3 of vegetation ruined)	1. Malignant sores
2. Warfare	2. Meteor shower (1/3 of sea life killed)	2. Poisoned seas
3. Famine & poverty	3. Water pollution (1/3 of water)	3. Poisoned freshwater
4. Death (1/4 of population)	4. Darkness	4. Humanity scorched
5. Mistreatment/Martyrdom	5. Demonic locust attack	5. Widespread darkness/Misery
6. Earthquake	6. Demonic hordes (1/3 of humanity killed)	6. Vast military invasion
7. Introduction of Trumpet Judgments	7. Introduction of Bowl Judgements	7. Most destructive earthquake & hail

The Doom of Babylon

Next John witnesses the destruction of Babylon both its ecclesiastical and political forms (political form will occur in Revelation 18). Some expositors believe that the doom of Babylon occurs at the beginning of the Great Tribulation while the bowl judgments occur at the end of the Great Tribulation.

John witnesses the destruction of Babylon, representing false religion and also the judgment of a woman, the symbol of Babylon, described as the “the great prostitute”, who is seen sitting on many waters - the many nations ruled by Babylon. Babylon has become the epitome of spiritual adultery and as such is judged by God.

John is carried away in the Spirit into a wilderness and here is what he sees:

A woman clothed in purple and scarlet, adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls. She is sitting on a scarlet beast that is full of blasphemous names with seven heads and ten horns. The woman is holding a gold cup full of abominations and unclean things. On her forehead is written, a mystery, “Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth”. She is drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus.

The vision was so appalling that when John saw her, he “wondered greatly,” expressing that he was confused, shocked, astonished, and frightened by the ghastly vision of such a magnificent figure of a woman with such a deadly intent. ¹³ So the angel leads John through some visionary symbols in order to explain the meaning of the images. Here is what we learn:

- Babylon here is not the city of Babylon but the representation of a final godless, humanistic and nationalistic world wide religious system.
 - Every false religion has its roots in Babylon. The subject of Babylon in the Scripture is one of the prominent themes of the Bible beginning in Genesis 10 where the city of Babel is first mentioned. Babylon in scripture is the name for a great system of religious error.
 - Babylon is a counterfeit religion that plagued Israel in the Old Testament as well as the church in the New Testament. The teachings of Babylon have had a tremendous influence in moving the church from biblical simplicity to apostate confusion. It can be in the form of false Christianity and in the form of pagan religion.
 - The tower of Babel was a forerunner of later towers dedicated to various heathen deities. It was a monument to human pride and an express act of rebellion against the true God. The city containing the tower of Babel was named Babel and later Babylon.
 - Nimrod founded the city of Babel, later called Babylon. His wife became the head of the Babylonian mysteries that consisted of secret religious rites developed as a

part of idol worship. She was a high priestess of the idol worship known by the name of Semiramis.

According to extra biblical records, Semiramis gave birth to a son who she claimed was conceived miraculously. The son, Tammuz, was considered a savior of his people, a fulfillment of the promise given to Eve, he promised cleansing from sin, was killed by a wild animal and then brought back to life.

This legend is incorporated into the religious rites and various pagan religions. Idols picturing the mother as the queen of heaven with the baby in her arms are found throughout the ancient world. Priestly orders furthered the worship of the mother and child cult. They practiced the sprinkling of holy water and established an order of virgins dedicated to religious prostitution.

Though many of these facts are not mentioned in Scripture, there are a number of references to this false religion. Ezekiel protests against the ceremony of weeping for Tammuz (Eze 8:14). Jeremiah mentions the heathen practices of making cakes for the queen of heaven (Jer 7:18) and offering incense to the queen of heaven (Jer 44:17-19, 25). Baal worship was another form of this same mystery religion and is considered identical to Tammuz.

The Babylonian cult made its way to other cities, including Pergamum, the site of one of the seven churches. The chief priest of the Babylonian cult wore crowns in the form of the head of a fish, in recognition of Dagon the fish god, with the title Keeper of the Bridge. This is the bridge between man and Satan which was imprinted on their crowns. The Roman equivalent of the title, Pontifex Maximus, was used by the Caesars and later Roman emperors and was also adopted as the title for the bishop of Rome. In the early centuries of the church in Rome, incredible confusion arose. Attempts were made to combine some features of the mystery religion of Babylon with Christian faith - the results of which are still present in the Roman church today.

It has been noted by many writers that the iniquitous and pagan rites of Babylon crept into the early church and were largely responsible for the corruptions incorporated in Roman Catholicism from which Protestantism separated itself in the Middle Ages. ¹⁴

- The woman is called the mother of harlots because she represents an apostate worldwide religion. She is evil signifying the spiritual adultery of those who outwardly and religiously seem to be joined to the true God, but who are untrue to Him.

The symbolism of spiritual adultery is not ordinarily used in Scripture of pagan nations

that do not know God. The term is most often used of people who outwardly carry the name of God while actually worshiping and serving other gods.¹⁵ Scripture makes it clear that the apostate church has eagerly sought and solicited the adulterous relation with the world political powers and therefore is primarily to be blamed. She will reap the penalty of her sin.¹⁶

- The woman is sitting on many waters because all people, nations, and tongues around the world are under the influence of the worldwide false worship of the Babylonian religious system. She is sitting in a position of authority and sovereignty and has a close association with the kings of the earth. Her deadly embrace will encompass all the unredeemed, from kings and rulers to common people; all will worship and submit to her religion. Far from being separated, church and state will be united as never before in human history.¹⁷

The spiritual immorality associated with idolatry will have caused the entire world to fall into a spiritual drunken stupor (Rev 17:2). She will be responsible for numerous religions that follow her example. Together the Antichrist and the woman will lead the world into untold abominations. She is portrayed as being drunk “with the blood of the saints.” (Rev 17:6) She will lead the zealous persecution and slaughter of countless true servants of God. She will have a murderous lust for violence.

- The woman is clothed in purple and scarlet, the colors of royalty, nobility and wealth. She is portrayed as a prostitute who is both attractive and has become extremely wealthy. Purple and scarlet, symbolically rich in their meaning when connected with true spiritual values, are here prostituted to this false religious system and designed to glorify it with religious garb, in contrast to the simplicity of pious adornment. As alliance with the world and showy pomp increase, so spiritual truth and purity decline.¹⁸
- The scarlet beast she is sitting on is the Antichrist, ruler of the end-times global empire and object of worship in the worldwide religion.
- The Antichrist will imitate Christ’s death and resurrection in order to amaze the world and win its political and religious devotion. He is the beast that John saw who “was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and go to destruction (Rev 17:8).
- Antichrist’s reign will be limited (“he must remain a little while” Rev 17:10). He will be allowed to rule for forty-two months.
- The woman, the harlot, was “sitting on the scarlet beast” (Rev 17:3) signifies that he was supporting her. The initial unifying and controlling factor of Antichrist’s kingdom will be religion.

- The seven heads represent the seven world empires that stood in opposition to God and His people. The first six are Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. The seventh will arise in John's future and is Babylon the empire of the Antichrist.
- The ten horns (in the Old Testament horns represent power) are the ten nations who will unite to empower the Antichrist. They will turn all their worldly authority over to him.
- The Babylonian beast or Antichrist will turn around and utterly destroy the mother of harlots. He no longer wants a one world religion, he wants all to worship him. He no longer needs the help and power of the church. He wants to rule the world. He will strip her of all her finery, her flesh is eaten, and she is burned with fire. This will be the downfall of the apostate world church. Revelation 17:17 says God will put it in their hearts.

The divine judgment inflicted upon apostate Christendom follows a pattern that can be observed in other judgments upon evil nations and ungodly rulers. Ancient Babylon was used to bring allocation upon the people of Israel, as were also the governments of Assyria and Egypt. But in due time, the same nations that inflicted divine judgment were themselves the objects of God's wrath. ¹⁹

The time of this event may be placed approximately at the midpoint of the seven years of Daniels' seventieth week. During the first half of the seven years, apostate Christendom flowers and establishes its power over all the world. During this period there is a measure of religious freedom as indicated by the fact that the Jews are allowed to worship and renew their sacrifices (Dan 9:27). ²⁰

- Antichrist and the ten nations who unite will wage war against the Lamb. The Lamb will return as King of kings and Lord of lords and overcome the Beast and the kings of the earth. Christ will be accompanied by those who have accepted Him as Lord and Savior ("the called and chosen and faithful" Rev 17:14).

Summary

In Chapters 16 and 17 we see the last of God's wrath poured out on an unrepentant earth. God then judges and destroys the apostate world religion. Antichrist rules for a brief time along with ten nations. Together they wage war against the Lamb who overcomes them along with the called and chosen and faithful.

Today, the invitation is still open to those who will receive the grace of God by trusting in Christ and being saved from entering this awful period that may be impending for this present generation.

“while it is said, “Today if you hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts, as when they provoked Me.” (Hebrews 3:15, NASB95)

““For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” (John 3:16, NASB95)

“that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.” (Romans 10:9–10, NASB95)

Revelation - Chapter 18 & 19

Babylon Falls, Marriage Supper of the Lamb & Christ Returns

John has just seen God's final judgement, the seven bowls of wrath poured out on the earth by seven angels. The first bowl of God's wrath is a plague on those who have received the mark of the beast, the second and third bowls kill all living things in the seas and freshwaters, the fourth causes the sun to scorch the earth's inhabitants so severely that it will seem that the atmosphere is on fire. The fifth bowl of wrath pours out on the throne of the beast and his kingdom becomes dark and the people are consumed by excruciating pain.

The sixth bowl of God's wrath causes the great river Euphrates to dry up and the way is prepared for the kings from the east to cross into Armageddon. Then Jesus speaks, giving a final warning that his coming will be sudden and un-announced. Jesus also assures believers that they will not be forgotten.

The seventh bowl of wrath causes a great earthquake as never before occurs. The shaking from the earthquake will be so severe that it will renovate and reconfigure the earth in preparation for the Millennial Kingdom. Sadly, the earth's inhabitants do not repent and receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

John witnesses the destruction of Babylon, representing false religion and also the judgment of a woman, the symbol of Babylon, described as the "the great prostitute", who is seen sitting on many waters - the many nations ruled by Babylon. Babylon has become the epitome of spiritual adultery and as such is judged by God.

Antichrist and the ten nations who unite will wage war against the Lamb. The Lamb will return as King of kings and Lord of lords and overcome the Beast and the kings of the earth. Christ will be accompanied by those who have accepted Him as Lord and Savior ("the called and chosen and faithful" Rev 17:14).

Babylon Falls

John sees another angel coming down from heaven so splendid that the earth was illumined with his glory. Everyone will not only see him but also hear him as he loudly announces that Babylon is fallen. Here's what John witnesses:

- This is Babylon as an actual city in its political and economic character. In Chapter 17 Babylon represented the world wide false religion and also the judgment of a woman, the symbol of Babylon, described as the "the great prostitute", who is seen sitting on many waters - the many nations ruled by Babylon.

- Where the city is located is not stated in the Bible. Although it will be one city, its influence will be worldwide. Some commentators believe the old city of Babylon will be its site while others believe Rome will become Babylon.
- This event comes late in the Great Tribulation, just prior to the second coming of Christ. The destruction of the woman seems to precede the Great Tribulation and paves the way for the worship of the beast.
- Two reasons are given for Babylon's impending destruction: demonic activity and sensuality.
 - All the demons on the earth will be in Babylon including the two hundred million formerly bound demons that were released at the sounding of the sixth trumpet (Rev 9:13-16), the demons released from the abyss at the sounding of the fifth trumpet (Rev 9:1-11), those cast from heaven with Satan (Rev 12:4,9), and those previously on the earth. Their mission will be to inspire extreme human wickedness, from sexual immorality to unbridled luxury.
 - Babylon will seduce the entire world with its immorality. Babylon has its own system of government and Antichrist will confiscate the wealth gained by the fallen apostate church. Global corporations will make their headquarters in Babylon and the beast will rule over the system. The people of the world will fall into a religious and materialistic daze. Babylon's sin is declared so severe that it reaches to the heavens, an allusion to the tower of Babel that began the evil career of ancient Babylon (Gen 11:5-9).
- Another voice from heaven calls God's people to flee the doomed city, just as His people were urged to leave Babylon in ancient days (Jer 51:45). By leaving they will not participate in the her sin and will not receive the plagues about to befall her.
- Her judgement is announced as a double portion due to her intense wickedness and because she glorified herself. She mixed a cup of sin for the nations to drink down to the full so she is given a double cup of divine judgment to drink. ¹ She has willfully sinned against God.
- Her judgement will come in one day and is reminiscent of the fall of Babylon in Daniel 5, which fell in the same hour that the finger traced its condemning words on the wall. Three plagues will result in Babylon's complete devastation: pestilence, mourning and famine. After those three plagues, Babylon will be burned up with fire. The great city will be found no more (Rev 18:21). Many commentators believe that this judgement will come during the bowl judgements, specifically at the seventh bowl judgement just prior to Christ's return to earth.

- Those who profited from Babylon's wealth will mourn and wail hopelessly as the great city is devastated. They weep and mourn, not out of some emotional sympathy for the city, but because they have been stripped of the key source of their finances.² They stand far off from the city because they fear the same judgement may befall them.
- The first mourners are the leaders including the ten kings who rule Antichrist's kingdom under his authority and the rest of the world's leaders under them. They will be shocked and dismayed at the destruction of the city they thought was invincible.
- The second mourners to appear were the merchants of the earth. With the destruction of Babylon, whatever economic activity taking place on the earth will come to a halt. There will be no one to buy their cargoes. Twenty-eight items are listed that made up their merchandise ranging from gold and silver, precious stones, fine cloth, exotic woods and stones, spices, perfumes, fine foods, animals, slaves and humans. There will be a great trade in iniquity and sin. These items were the source of immense financial gain.
- The third and final group in the vision is every shipmaster and every passenger and sailor that makes their living by the sea. Babylon will be an important distribution center and with its destruction, there will be no more goods to transport by those who make their living by the sea. In a typical ancient expression of grief, the sailors threw dust on their heads as they lamented over the destruction of Babylon in one hour.

A strong angel throws a huge stone into the sea declaring that the great city will be devastated with violence, every facet of society from fine arts to night life, from fine craftsmanship to common labor will all be gone at once. The angel states that Babylon will be destroyed because all the nations were deceived by her sorcery and her murderous slaughter of God's people. (Rev 18:23-24) Babylon will be so thoroughly destroyed that it will never rise again, as predicted by the Old Testament prophets (Isa 13:19-22; 14:22-23; Jer 50:13, 39: 51:37).

The Two Babylons of Revelation 17-18³

	Religious Babylon Revelation 17	Political/Commercial Babylon Revelation 18
Focus:	Babylon as a System	Babylon as a City
Timing:	Falls at the beginning of the Great Tribulation	Falls at the End of the Great Tribulation
Destroyer:	The Beast and the Ten Kings	Jesus Christ at His Second Coming
Result:	No Mourning	Great Mourning

The Fourfold Hallelujah

Heaven's response to the annihilation of Babylon which represents the destruction of everything that is evil and demonic in the present world system is, "Hallelujah." So loud it sounds like roaring waters and thunder it is cried out four times.

Hallelujah, a common Old Testament exultation simply means praise the Lord. In its first Old Testament appearance, Hallelujah also expresses praise for God's judgment on the wicked oppressors of His people (Psa 104:35).

Hallelujah appears only four times in the New Testament all in Revelation chapter 19:1,3,4,6. Three groups cry hallelujah before God: the saints in heaven (Rev 19:1-3), the twenty-four elders before the throne of God (Rev 19:4), and the great multitude (Rev 19:6).

- Hallelujah! Full salvation has come. Babylon is gone and Jesus reigns. (Rev 19:1)
- Hallelujah! Justice has arrived. God's judgments are true and righteous as evidenced by the destruction of wicked Babylon. (Rev 19:2)
- Hallelujah! Rebellion is ended. Smoke "rises up forever and ever" indicates that this judgment is final and irreversible. The language is similar to that used of God's destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:28) and Edom (Isa 34:10). The destruction of Babylon marks the end of human rule. The rebellion that began in the garden of Eden is finally ended and there will be no more false religion or injustice.
- Hallelujah! God is in control. The evil world system has been destroyed and God's kingdom has come in its fullness. For the Lord our God, the Almighty reigns.

Marriage of the Lamb Announced

The great multitude continues to rejoice and announces that the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready. A marriage was the single greatest celebration and social event of the biblical world. There were three major aspects of the marriage:

1. The marriage contract or engagement was often consummated by the parents when the future spouses were still children. It was a legal binding agreement that could only be broken by divorce.
2. The presentation was a time of festivities just before the actual ceremony. When a couple had reached a suitable age, the bridegroom, accompanied by his friends, would go to the bride's house to escort her to his home. Their future home had already been prepared.

3. The actual ceremony, during which the vows were exchanged and marriage supper was the final step of the marriage.

Ancient Marriage Process

Ancient Marriage Steps	Christ's Marriage to His Church
1. Marriage contract or engagement - betrothal	God chose the church before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4). Individuals are betrothed to Christ at the time of initial salvation
2. Presentation of the bride & festivities. Their home would already be prepared.	Rapture of the Church. Christ meets His believers in the air & they are taken up to heaven with Him.
3. Wedding ceremony & marriage supper lasting for several days.	<p>Marriage Supper of the Lamb. The final consummation will begin as Christ and the church take their places to reign over the earth (Rev 20:4-6) in the Millennial Kingdom & finally consummated in the new heavens and the new earth.</p> <p>The bride concept will be expanded to include not only the church, but also all the redeemed of all ages as the New Jerusalem becomes the bridal city (Rev 21:1-2)</p>

The bride or church has made herself ready and is wearing fine, bright and clean linen. Having been presented glorified and spotless before God's throne, her righteous acts may be part of the reward given at the judgment seat of Christ.

Then an angel tells John to write down the fourth of seven beatitudes in Revelation. This is probably the same angel who has instructed John to write on several other occasions. So astonished that the angel has told John to write and that these are the true words of God, John mistakenly falls at the angels feet to worship him. The angel reminds John that he should worship God and that Jesus Christ is the major theme of the Scriptures and also the central theme of prophecy.

The blessing is given to those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. Since the bride does not receive an invitation to her own wedding, the guests are not the Church. The guests at the marriage supper of the Lamb are the redeemed of all the ages who were saved before or after the church age. The Old Testament saints will be there as guests as will all the Tribulation saints, glorified and still alive on earth and entering the Millennial Kingdom.

At Jesus' Last Supper on this earth He said to His disciples, "But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom" (Matt 26:29). With the whole church glorified and united in the kingdom

of God, Christ will take His seat with the saints and enjoy that long-anticipated face-to-face fellowship with those He loves.

The Second Coming of Christ

This time heaven opens not to let John in, but to let Jesus out. The time has come at last for the full, glorious revelation of Christ. Jesus is about to receive the kingdom that the Father promised Him. ⁴

The first time Jesus came to earth He appeared in obscurity. This time John sees Jesus in all His splendid glory and majesty:

- He is riding a white horse, the sign of victory or triumph. White also symbolizes the spotless, unblemished, absolutely holy character of Christ.
- His eyes are a flame of fire that will burn up all that is false as He gazes upon people's hearts and minds. This signifies the Lord's ability to see deep into hearts and deal with all injustice. Just as fire blasts through ore to reveal whether there is pure metal inside, the eyes of Christ will do the same for people's hearts. He will pierce through the motives of nations and individuals and judge them for what they really are. ⁵
- He will be wearing many crowns which is the symbol of sovereignty. When Jesus came the first time, His enemies mocked Him by putting a crown of thorns on His head. This time his many crowns will point to the fact that no rule, might, or authority will be able to stand against Him.
- His robe is dipped in blood. Christ as the slain Lamb in Revelation speaks of redemption by blood; here blood represent divine judgment upon evil people.
- A sharp sword is flying from Jesus' mouth. The sword indicates that Christ's judgment on the wicked nations will be conducted not with physical weapons of mass destruction but with the one sure spiritual weapon - the Word of God.

His names are in keeping with the divine judgment that follows:

- Faithful and True - Our Lord never fails. He promised that one day He would judge the earth for its wickedness and His return demonstrates His faithfulness in fulfilling that promise.
- The Word of God - Jesus is a tangible expression of the invisible God incarnated in human form. He is the Creator of all. He is also the judge of all.
- A name on Him which no one knows except Himself. Jesus promised believers that He will give them a new name, "which no one knows but he who receives it (Rev 2:17).

- KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS - Of all the kings on earth, Christ is the King. Of all earthly lords or rulers, He is the Lord. Every knee will bow before Him when He returns to earth (Isa 45:23; Rom 14:11, Phil 2:10-11).

As Christ descended in the clouds, John quickly sees that Christ was not alone. The armies in heaven dressed in fine white clean linen were following Him on white horses. Although not specifically stated who is included in the armies that are with Christ, most commentators agree that the Church and holy angels will accompany Christ. Some state that the armies will also include the glorified Tribulation saints and the Old Testament saints.

Guaranteeing before the battle has started that the end result is certain, an angel invites the birds to assemble for the great supper of God to eat the flesh of the kings of the earth and their armies which had assembled to make war against Christ and His army.

The invitation of the birds to the great supper of God is in contrast to the invitation received by the saints, other than the church, to attend the marriage supper of the Lamb. There is a parallel to this scene in Matthew 24:28 where reference is made to the carcasses of those who fall in battle and the gathering of the birds to eat them.

There is evidence that a struggle is going on between the various segments of the world empire at the time of Christ's second coming; but with the appearance of the Lord in glory and His armies, these armies of earth forget their differences and join in battle against the King of kings and Lord of lords.⁶

The beast and false prophet are thrown alive into the lake of fire and the rest were killed with Christ's sword which came from his mouth. The beast and the false prophet are the first to inhabit the lake of fire, which is eternal hell. Satan's masterpieces precede Satan himself to this final place of everlasting punishment. Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire a thousand years later (Rev 20:10). The rest of the evil dead will be judged at the great white throne and will follow the beast, the false prophet and Satan into this eternal doom.

Jesus speaks and all the armies are obliterated. The saints will come not to fight with Jesus, but to reign with Him. Just as He spoke the world into being, He will speak the evil out of the world. There will be no war at all, just a word spoken from Christ. And the vultures descend and cover the scene.

The brief but catastrophic day of the Lord will result in an unprecedented slaughter, with uncounted millions of dead bodies (14:20). Even after the birds have eaten, it will still take seven months to bury the bodies (Ezekiel 39:12).⁷

This present age reveals the grace of God and suspended judgment. The age to come, while continuing to be a revelation of the grace of God, will give conclusive evidence that God will bring every evil work into judgment and that those who spurn His grace must experience His wrath. ⁸

The First and Second Comings of Christ ⁹

His First Coming	His Second Coming
Born in obscurity (Phil 2:5-7)	Seen by every eye (Rev 1:7)
Wrapped in swaddling clothes (Luke 2:7)	Clothed in a royal robe dipped in blood (Rev 19:13)
Surrounded by cattle (Luke 2:16)	Accompanied by the armies of heaven (Rev 19:14)
The doors of the inn were closed (Luke 2:7)	The doors of heaven will be opened (Rev 4:1)
Had the voice of a new born baby (Luke 2:12)	Will have a voice with the sound of many waters (Rev 1:15)
The Lamb bringing salvation (John 1:29)	The Lion bringing judgment (Rev 5:5)

Summary

We know from Rev 1:7 that all the world, both believers and unbelievers, will see Christ's second coming to earth. The whole heaven will be illuminated like lighting that shines from the east to the west.

According to Jude, Enoch was the first to predict the second coming of Christ (Jude 14-15). Daniel prophesied the return of the Son of Man (Dan 7:13-14), Zechariah predicted the final epic battle between Christ and the Antichrist at the end of the Tribulation, Jesus described the signs that will foreshadow His second coming, the angels in the book of Acts announced that Jesus would return (Acts 1:11), and Paul describes what the Day of Judgment will be like in 2 Thessalonians (2 Thes 1:7-10).

Although we do not know when our Lord's second coming will occur, we know where it will occur. He will stand on the Mount of Olives. The Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south (Zech 14:4; Acts 1:11-12).

Throughout the book of Revelation we have seen evil run rampant, inflicting unprecedented suffering and persecution on the faithful of God. For more than two thousand years God has mercifully waited to execute His justice. God in all his mercy has given sinners the opportunity to repent. In the last days He will send two miracle-working

witnesses to warn of His coming wrath and then He will send an additional 144,000 witnesses to take the gospel to the whole world once more.

But on that day when He leaves heaven with His saints and angels, the era of His grace will end, and the hour of His wrath will come. This is the moment God's people have been waiting for since Christ ascended into heaven. Christ returns to earth. It is the climax of God's judgment upon this wicked world.

The references to the Second Coming outnumber references to the first by a factor of eight to one. One out of every thirty verses in the New Testament teach us about the return of Christ to this earth. The return of Christ is taught in every single chapter of 1 and 2 Thessalonians, the first two books written for the early church. Jesus referred to His return twenty-one times. The Second Coming is second only to salvation and is the most dominant subject in the New Testament. Christ's second coming is not only the high point of Revelation, but the high point of all history.

You too can be counted in the armies of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, at His Second Coming. Today, the invitation is still open to those who will receive the grace of God by trusting in Christ and being saved from entering this awful period that may be impending for this present generation.

“while it is said, “Today if you hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts, as when they provoked Me.” (Hebrews 3:15, NASB95)

““For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” (John 3:16, NASB95)

“that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.” (Romans 10:9–10, NASB95)

Revelation - Chapter 20

The Reign of Christ

John has just seen God's final judgement, the seven bowls of wrath poured out on the earth by seven angels. The first bowl of God's wrath is a plague on those who have received the mark of the beast, the second and third bowls kill all living things in the seas and freshwaters, the fourth causes the sun to scorch the earth's inhabitants so severely that it will seem that the atmosphere is on fire. The fifth bowl of wrath pours out darkness on the throne of the beast and his kingdom and the people are consumed by excruciating pain.

The sixth bowl of God's wrath causes the great river Euphrates to dry up and the way is prepared for the kings from the east to cross into Armageddon. Then Jesus speaks, giving a final warning that his coming will be sudden and un-announced. Jesus also assures believers that they will not be forgotten.

The seventh bowl of wrath causes a great earthquake as never before to occur. The shaking from the earthquake will be so severe that it will renovate and reconfigure the earth in preparation for the Millennial Kingdom. Sadly, the earth's inhabitants do not repent and receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

John witnesses the destruction of Babylon, representing false religion and also the judgment of a woman, the symbol of Babylon, described as the "the great prostitute", who is seen sitting on many waters - the many nations ruled by Babylon. Babylon has become the epitome of spiritual adultery and as such is judged by God.

Antichrist and the ten nations who unite will wage war against the Lamb. The Lamb will return as King of kings and Lord of lords and overcome the Beast and the kings of the earth. Christ will be accompanied by those who have accepted Him as Lord and Savior ("the called and chosen and faithful" Rev 17:14).

The Millennial Reign of Christ

This is one of the great chapters of the Bible. Here is recorded a series of events that relate to the millennial reign of Christ on earth. Here is where hundreds of Old Testament prophecies will be fulfilled, such as Jeremiah 23:5-6:

"Behold, the days are coming," declares the Lord, "When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely And do justice and righteousness in the land. "In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell securely; And this is His name by which He will be called, 'The Lord our righteousness.'" (Jeremiah 23:5-6, NASB95)

This chapter introduces for the first time in Scripture the exact length of Christ's earthly kingdom which is one thousand years. Six times in Revelation 20 it is stated that there will be a literal thousand years in which Christ will reign.

The Millennial Kingdom is called by many names in Scripture. Jesus calls it the regeneration (Mat19:28), in Acts it is described as a time of refreshing and the period of restoration of all things (Acts 3:19, 21). The apostle Paul refers to it as an administration suitable to the fullness of the times (Eph 1:10). The Bible's teaching on the kingdom is not confined to the New Testament. The kingdom is an important theme throughout Scripture; it is the goal toward which all of redemptive history progresses.²

In Johns' vision he sees only the fact and duration of the millennial kingdom. The character of Christ's reign on earth is fully described in many Old Testament passages such as Psalm 72, Isa 2:2-4; 11:4-9 and many others. From these Scriptures we learn that:

- Christ's dominion is from sea to sea with all kings bowing down before Him
- Jerusalem will be the capital of the Millennial Kingdom (Isa 2:3)
- Israel is regathered from the various parts of the earth and brought back to her ancient land
- Israel will be exalted and Gentiles also will be blessed
- The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord (Isa 11:9)
- The earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord
- All nations will serve Him
- War will be no more (Isa 2:4)
- There will be a righteous reign of Christ (Isa 11)
- There will be peace and tranquility in His Kingdom
- There will be justice for all
- There will be economic justice for all
- There will be physical health and well-being (Isa 33:24; 35:5-6)
- Food will be plentiful (Joel 2:21-27)
- There will be long life (Isa 65:20)
- There will be deliverance from satanic oppression and evil
- The ungodly will be punished
- The natural ferocity of animals will be abated
- Fulfillment of God's prophetic Word

After the purging experience of the Great Tribulation, those who survive become the citizens of the kingdom after the rebels are purged out (Eze 20:34-38). Israel is then rejoined to God in the symbol of marriage, being transformed from an unfaithful wife to one who reciprocates the love of Yahweh.

Gentiles who share in the Kingdom blessings have unparalleled spiritual and economic benefits, and the thousand-year reign of Christ is a time of joy, peace, and blessing for the entire earth. God's purpose in originally placing man in charge of the Garden of Eden will have its ultimate fulfillment in the Last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will reign over the earth.¹

John's vision reveals four essential truths about the Millennial Kingdom:

1. **Satan is Removed.** Most of God's enemies have already been removed. The beast (Antichrist) and the false prophet have already been thrown into the lake of fire (Rev 19:20), most human rebels were destroyed during the Tribulation judgments, those surviving the Tribulation judgments were executed at Armageddon (Rev 19:11-21) or the goat judgment (Matt 25:31-46).

The chief rebel, the dragon who is ferocious and cruel, the serpent of old dating back to the garden of Eden, the devil who slanders, and Satan the adversary who opposes God, Christ and all believers, is left. But not for long.

God sends a great angel, possibly Michael the archangel, the great adversary of Satan, who possesses great power, to bind Satan with a great chain. This chain is a great one, because of Satan's greatness and power as the highest created being (Eze 28:14).

The angel has the power to bind Satan, seize him, cast him into the abyss and seal it, and then release him at the end of one thousand years. This angel is given the key to the abyss. The abyss appears five times in Revelation (Rev 9:11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1, 3) and is a temporary place of incarceration for certain demons. The lake of fire is the place of torment and final punishment (Mat 25:41). It is here in the abyss for one thousand years that Satan will not be able to deceive the nations.

2. **Reign of the Saints.** With Satan and his demons gone and only believers in Christ left, Christ will establish His Millennial Kingdom of peace. John saw God's people sitting on thrones reigning with Christ. Judgment is given to them to rule subordinately over every aspect of life in the Millennial Kingdom and carry out His perfect will.

The martyred believers from the Tribulation were resurrected to reign with Christ for the thousand years. John calls the resurrection of the saints from all ages, the first resurrection. This resurrection is also called the resurrection of the righteous (Luke 14:14; Acts 24:15), the resurrection of life (John 5:29), the resurrection of those who are Christ's at His coming (1Cor 15:23), and the better resurrection (Heb 11:35). The fifth of seven beatitudes in Revelation is given: blessed and holy are those who are a part of the first resurrection, death has no power over them, and they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for one thousand years (Rev 20:6).

The second death is eternal hell. No true believer in Christ will ever face God's eternal wrath (Rom 5:9). Believers are already a royal priesthood (1 Pet 2:9) and will now serve as priests by worshiping God and leading others to the knowledge of Him during the Millennial Kingdom.

- 3. The Return of Satan.** In God's perfect will, Satan will be released from the abyss after Christ has reigned for one thousand years. Satan was not permitted to interfere in the affairs of the Kingdom during the Millennial Kingdom, however after his release he will lead a final rebellion of sinners.

Even though the initial inhabitants of the Millennial Kingdom will be redeemed, they will still possess a sinful nature and will pass that sin nature on to their children. Each generation born during the Millennial Kingdom will be in need of salvation. Despite the personal rule of Christ on earth, despite the most moral society the world will ever know, many will love their sin and reject Christ (Rom 8:7).

As they did during his first presence on earth, sinners will refuse the grace and reject the Lordship of the King of all the earth. Satan will provide the supernatural leadership needed to bring to the surface all the sin and rebellion left in the universe. Satan's violent hatred of God, Christ, and those who believe in Christ will not change by his thousand years of imprisonment in the abyss. Satan will set out on his final act of rebellion.

- 4. The Revolt of Society.** Satan will once again deceive the nations. Those who are not saved will be fertile soil for Satan to sow his seeds of rebellion. They will be as unmoved by the peace, joy and righteousness of the Millennium as earlier sinners were by the devastating judgments of the tribulation (Rev 9:20-21;16:9,11,21).³

Although Satan's deception is not revealed, it will succeed in leading a revolt against the Lord Jesus Christ. Satan will collect the deceived nations from around the globe, all four corners of the earth. John gives these enemies of the King of Kings the symbolic title "Gog and Magog," naming them after the invasion force that will assault Israel during the tribulation (Ezekiel 38–39). Here John appears to be using the name Gog as a general title for an enemy of God's people. Even more amazing is the number of the rebels. John describes them as a vast uncountable multitude.

Due to the peaceful and healthy conditions of the Millennial Kingdom, there will be a huge population explosion on earth. Vast numbers will join Satan in his final rebellion against God. The rebel forces will come up on the plain surrounding Jerusalem. The saints will be enjoying the glorious presence of Christ when the attack comes.

Like Armageddon a thousand years earlier (Rev 19:11-21), there will be no battle. Fire comes down from Heaven and destroys God's enemies. They are instantly exterminated. Satan's forces will be killed and their souls will go into the realm of punishment awaiting their final sentencing to eternal hell. Satan is thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and false prophet have been for one thousand years. They will be tormented day and night forever and ever (Rev 20:10).

The Great White Throne Judgement

We now move to the most serious, sobering and tragic passage in the entire Bible. John describes a terrifying scene before him. Christ is seated on His throne of judgement and all the accused, the unsaved of all generations, are standing before Him.

Revelation mentions throne nearly fifty times. This throne is a great white throne because it is very large and it is the seat of God's sovereign rule. It is white because it is pure, holy and just. The verdict handed down from this throne will be absolutely just. It is Jesus who is sitting on the throne since Scripture teaches that Jesus will judge sinners (John 5:22, 26-27; Acts 10:42). It is God in the person of Jesus Christ who will sit in final judgment.

John also describes another startling reality; the uncreation of the universe. The earth will still be tainted with sin and subject to the effects of the fall so it will be destroyed also. In its place God will create a new heaven and a new earth (Rev 21:1). The present earth will not be moved or reshaped. It will go out of existence. John states that "no place was found for them" (Rev 20:11). Peter describes the final expression of the day of the Lord:

"But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells."

(2 Peter 3:10–13, NASB95)

All the unsaved dead will be raised regardless of the condition of their bodies, coming from the sea, the earth and Hades. The evil dead are given resurrection bodies suited for eternal punishment.

John sees the unsaved from all walks of life and degrees of greatness. They will all face God's judgement for there is no partiality with God (Rom 2:11). They are standing because they are about to be sentenced. Since their death the unsaved have been tormented in a place of punishment. Now they are summoned for their final sentence.

Their judgment is made on the basis of the books that are opened. There appears to be two classifications of books; the book of life and the other books which are probably the divine records of their works. The book of life refers to the roll of those who are saved and have eternal life.

There will be no debate over their guilt or innocence. There will be a prosecutor, but no defender; an accuser, but no advocate. There will be an indictment, but no defense mounted by the accused; the convicting evidence will be presented with no rebuttal or cross-examination.

God has kept perfect records of every person's life and the unsaved dead will be judged according to their deeds. No one will have the slightest grounds for complaint about his or her sentence. Their deeds will be measured against God's perfect, holy standard which no one can meet apart from the saving grace of Jesus Christ. Their deeds will also determine their punishment. While works are never a ground for salvation, they are considered important before God. The book of life will determine where they will spend eternity; their deeds will determine their degree of punishment in hell.

Then death, Hades, and all whose names are not recorded in the book of life were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death. Just as the new heaven and new earth are an eternal existence so is the lake of fire eternal for its inhabitants.

Jesus taught on hell more times than He taught on any other subject. Jesus taught that the punishment of the wicked is as eternal as the eternal life of the righteous (Matt 25:46). The destruction of the wicked in hell stretches throughout all eternity is taught in 2 Thes 1:9.

Hell is described throughout the Bible as a place of total darkness, which will isolate its inmates from each other (Mat 22:13; 2 Pet 2:17), a place where the worm devouring the wicked will never die which is possibly emblematic of an accusing conscience (Isa 66:24; Mark 9:44); as a place of banishment from God's kingdom (Mat 8:12; 22:13), and as a place where there is "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Mat 13:42; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28).⁴

Summary

While it may be difficult to understand why God releases Satan from the abyss where he was chained for one thousand years, it does reveal the incurable evil of the human heart that does not experience the saving grace of Christ. Satan's release shows the power and necessity of the righteous judgment of God.

Those who reject God's grace and mercy in this life will inevitably face His justice in the life to come. Unrepentant sinners will experience God's justice at the great white throne

judgment. Those who have accepted God's grace and forgiveness of sins by believing in Christ will enter the new Heaven and new Earth.

There is only one way to avoid the terrifying future of hell. Those who confess their sins and ask God to forgive them on the basis of Christ's substitutionary death on their behalf will be delivered from God's eternal wrath (Romans 5:9; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9).

Revelation - Revelation Summary & Chapter 21 & 22

Revelation Summary & All Things New

Revelation Summary

The theme of the book of Revelation is Jesus is coming again soon and when He comes it will be sudden and quick to bring an end to all evil. (Rev 1:7; 22:12). Christ through His angel delivers the entire book of Revelation to John, the Apostle, in a series of visions. John is projected forward in the history of the world to witness Jesus ushering in the events that unfold the end of redemptive history and the eternal state that will follow. In keeping with His characteristic roles throughout the Bible, Jesus appears in many different forms and roles in the Book of Revelation.

The Glorified Christ - Message to the Churches

Early one Sunday morning, John is worshiping God and Jesus appears to him in all His glory. So overwhelmed with Jesus's majesty John could not even stand. Jesus did yet another incredible thing; He touched John and said, "Do not be afraid." What an incredible picture of the cross. We could not stand before God without our Friend, Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who died to save us from our sins so that we could have new life here on this earth and spend eternity with God.

No doubt John used the best descriptions he could come up with considering human words could only partially describe the glorified Jesus that stood before him (Rev 1:13-16). Christ was clothed in a long robe typically worn by royalty, prophets and high priests. He had a golden sash across His chest like the ones worn by the high priests in the Old Testament. His head and hair were white as snow, depicting the Ancient of Days, God the Father. His eyes were like a flame of fire penetrating to the very depths of His church.

His feet burnished glowing bronze, symbolizing His authority while His voice was like the sound of many waters as Ezekiel described the eternal God. He was standing in the middle of seven golden lamp stands symbolizing the churches as the lights of the world. They were golden because gold is the most precious metal and the church is God's most beautiful entity on earth. Seven is the number of completeness. In his mouth was a two-edged sword denoting judgment against enemies from inside the church. Jesus's face shone brilliantly depicting the glory of God.

Jesus dictates a letter for John to give to each of the seven churches. Jesus commends all the churches except for Sardis and Laodicea for their good deeds including service, preserving through persecution, slavery and even death due to their Christian faith. Jesus gave a series of promises to the true believers including that they would be kept from the Tribulation Period and would have eternal life with Him and God in the new heavens and new earth.

Jesus rebuked Ephesus for having lost their love of Christ, three churches for allowing false teaching, and the church at Laodicea for being lukewarm or useless. Christ was

outside this apostate church which strongly implies that there were few believers there or no believers at all.

Jesus also gave the churches a solution to keep their faith. They were to have a fresh devotion to Christ, do not fear, hold fast Biblical truths and Biblical moral standards, keep His Word, open the door and receive Christ as Lord and Savior.

These churches' issues illustrate conditions that were common in local churches at that time as well as throughout later history. They are written not only to the Churches but also to the members of the Churches, to us as individual believers.

The Throne of God

Throughout the series of visions, John sees an incredible and spectacular display of the throne and glory of God. The throne appears to be standing because it is not a physical structure but symbolic of the temple in heaven.

John sees jasper a clear stone indicating purity that will be in the foundation of the New Jerusalem

(Rev 21:19-20) and carnelian a fiery blood red ruby representing Christ's blood sacrificed for the Church and God's blazing wrath about to be poured out on the rebellious world.

Jasper and carnelian are also the first and last of the 12 stones on the breastplate of the high priest garments representing all 12 tribes of Israel before the throne of God. God's covenant relationship with Israel will remain intact. There is also a green perfect circle around the throne representing eternal life.

Jesus is represented in several forms including the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, the Lamb now standing as if slain before and having 7 eyes and 7 horns which are the 7 spirits of God (Rev 5:5-6).

The Holy Spirit is represented as the 7 lamps of fire burning before the throne which are the seven Spirits of God. In Heaven, John witnesses God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit

Heavenly Hymns

Around the throne of God there are 24 elders seated on 24 thrones, 4 living creatures (angels serving God also seen in the books of Ezekiel and Isaiah), a number of angels too large to count and the rest of creation.

Periodically the 4 living creatures give special glory and honor and thanks to God, the 24 elders join them in praise of recognizing God as the sovereign Creator of the universe. Casting their crowns before Him they testify had it not been for God's grace, salvation and goodness they could not have victory over sin and death; everything they had was from

Him. Then for the first time since sin entered the world the angels are singing and then unable to contain their joy over their upcoming redemption all created things proclaim the blessing and praise of God and the Lamb, their honor, glory and dominion forever.

The Slain Lamb is Standing - Christ Regains His Rightful Inheritance of Earth

Christ, the slain lamb with 7 horns (which speaks of His omnipotence), 7 eyes (which speaks of His omniscience) and 7 spirits (speaks of His omnipresence) is standing and reaches out to take the scroll from God's right hand that is the title deed to the earth.

Adam and Eve turned over the dominance of the earth that God gave them to Satan (2 Pet 2:19). Christ is the only One worthy to regain His rightful inheritance and break the seven seals to redeem the world from Satan.

The seven seals on the title deed of the earth represent specific divine judgments that will be poured out sequentially on the earth. The opening of the seals occurs after the Church is raptured during the Tribulation Period (Rev 3:10).

This begins what will be a dramatic change in the course of history. Jesus will regain His rightful inheritance by the divine judgments about to be poured out on the earth. The judgments will extinguish all evil on the earth and then Jesus will return. The ultimate goal of redemption is about to be seen; paradise will be regained, Eden restored. Around the throne of God, another round of worship begins:

"And they sang a new song, saying, 'Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. 'You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.'" (Revelation 5:9–10, NASB95)

The Lion from the Tribe of Judah - Christ Finishes the Redemption of Mankind & the Fallen Earth - Divine Judgement of Sin

Jesus, the only One worthy to open the title deed to the Earth and finish the redemption of mankind and the fallen earth, begins to break open the seals of divine wrath that signal the terrible judgments of God on the world at the end of the age, climaxing in the second coming of Jesus.

Seal Judgments

Praise ceases as Jesus begins to open the first six seals of judgments. The first four seals include horses and riders (the Four Horseman of the Apocalypse).

The first rider is on a white horse and brings about false peace when he promises a golden age of peace and prosperity. In gratitude, the world will honor him and elevate him to the position of supreme leadership. The Antichrist will make a treaty with Israel, posing as their protector and defender. Soon afterwards, however, his desire for dominance will provoke rebellion. The Tribulation period will begin with a deceptive peace accompanied

by a counterfeit spirituality and false religion (1 Thes 5:3). His promises and the peace will be short lived.

The second rider on a red horse is granted by God to take away peace with world wide war. Among his victims will be many of God's people (Dan 6: 9; Matthew 24: 9). Antichrist's setting up of the abomination of desolation will touch off a massive conflict (Dan 11: 31, 36–45; 12:11; Matt 24:15). Antichrist's attempts to crush his enemies will last throughout the remainder of the tribulation.

The third seal releases a black horse bringing famine and poverty that results from warfare as food supplies are destroyed. Desolation and despair will flood the world. The fourth seal releases an ashen horse with a rider called Death. Hades followed him and they were given authority to kill one fourth of those on the earth by sword, famine, pestilence, and wild beasts.

The fifth seal is God's divine judgment on those who have persecuted His people. The whole world will be worshipping Antichrist & those who don't will be considered blasphemers, persecuted and killed. Those who come to faith in Christ during the Tribulation period will face the greatest persecution the world has ever known (Matt 24:21). John sees the martyred souls under the altar, they cry out to God in a loud voice, "How long until you judge and avenge out blood?" They are given rest until it is time for God to avenge their deaths.

The sixth seal is the greatest physical destruction ever known on earth and begins with an earthquake that shakes the entire globe resulting in worldwide panic. Rather than repenting before God the peoples of the earth flee from God in frenzied fear. They will cry out to the rocks and mountains to fall on them; they would rather die than face the wrath of holy God.

The 144,000

One group of 144,000 Jews (12 from each of the 12 tribes) will be sealed symbolizing God's protection and ownership during the remaining divine judgments. They will be the most effective missionaries the world has ever seen; they will speak prophesies, see visions, and participate in miracles during the Tribulation (Joel 2:28-32).

The Great Multitude

The 144,000 are successful in their missionary work as John sees a "great multitude which no one could number, from all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb" (Rev 7:9). These are the ones who receive Jesus as Lord and Savior during the Tribulation Period. They have been martyred and are now standing triumphantly before the throne of God and serving Him. More people, both Jews and Gentiles, will come to know Christ during the Tribulation period than any other period in time.

When Jesus breaks open the seventh seal there is silence in heaven for thirty minutes in reverence to the looming judgments coming from the seven trumpets. An angel approaches the altar and mingles the prayers of the martyred saints with incense. The time has finally come to answer those desperate pleas for God's intervention.

Trumpet Judgments

God poured out His wrath as each of the seven angels sounded their trumpet. There was devastation on the earth, the sea, the waters, and the heavens. One-third of the earth's vegetation is burned, one-third of sea life is destroyed, one-third of the fresh water becomes bitter and poisonous and then one-third of the heavens become dark.

Though not directly aimed at human beings, it will indirectly affect food supplies, the global economy, and health on a massive scale. Economic chaos will result. The earth's weather patterns and the seas' tides will be severely disrupted, leading to violent, unpredictable storms and tides and the further destruction of crops, and loss of animal and human lives. Rioting, looting and crime will exacerbate the horrors experienced around the globe. The impact on human life can not be estimated.

The fifth and sixth trumpet judgments produced horrific demonic destruction of people. Satan is permanently cast down to the earth (Rev 9:1-2) and given the keys to the abyss to release the most vilest, most malicious and powerful demons onto the earth. For the first time in history, all those who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ will come under demonic possession and affliction. As the sixth trumpet sounds a total of over half of the world's population was killed (three billion using today's population count).

The Two Witnesses

Two witnesses will prophesy for exactly three-and-one half years in Jerusalem, which has become so wicked and evil in the Tribulation it is described as "Sodom and Egypt." They will preach the Gospel and pour out divine judgments upon the earth including stopping the rain for three-and-one-half years. They will be greatly hated and feared.

People will search for ways to destroy them but will not be able to until their mission is complete at the end of the Great Tribulation. God lifts their protection and they are killed by Antichrist, the beast, who is empowered by Satan. The entire world will celebrate at their deaths but it will be short lived as God brings them back to life, commands them with a loud voice from heaven to "Come up here" and then they ascend into heaven.

Sadly, many survivors will close their ears to God's message of mercy and grace rejecting the preaching of the 144,000 missionaries and the two witnesses, choosing instead to accept the wrath that will continue to increase in severity. God will use an intensifying series of judgments to capture the world's attention for the purpose of redemption.

The seventh angel blew the seventh trumpet and John hears great voices in heaven expressing unrestrained joy that the power of Satan is to be forever broken and Christ is to reign supreme forever and ever. Some time will pass on earth before that actually happens.

Believers are promised unbroken fellowship with God forever. This fellowship is symbolized by the opening of the temple of God which is in heaven revealing the ark of His covenant. The covenant God has promised to men is now available in its fullness. This would have been unthinkable in the Old Testament temple when only the high priest entered the Holy of Holies once a year (Heb 9:7). The message of the seventh trumpet is that Jesus Christ is the sovereign King.

War In Heaven

War rages in heaven between Satan and his evil angels and Michael and his angels. Michael and his angels prevail and Satan and his evil host are cast down to earth. Although not stated when this occurs perhaps it is when the Church is raptured prior to the Tribulation period or at least no later than the midpoint of the Tribulation.

A warning is given to the inhabitants of the earth that Satan has great wrath because he has only a short period of time left. Enraged by his ejection from heaven, Satan pursues and persecutes the Jews. With God's help the Jews will flee to the mountains where God will provide for His people for three and one-half years. Zechariah indicates that two-thirds of Israel in the land will perish (Zech 13:8). Satan will also step up his attack on those who name the name of Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Satan's Earthly Kingdom

Satan will try to prevent Jesus from setting up His earthly kingdom by setting up his own kingdom under Antichrist. Together with the False Prophet, they will embody the sum total of all the world empires that have opposed God and His people throughout history.

With the horrific events of the Tribulation going on people will be devoid of hope and will flock to him like desperate sheep, ready to do whatever he says. The whole world will be amazed and follow after the beast. Their fascination with Antichrist will quickly become worship. Antichrist will sit in the temple of God and declare that he is god. He will make war with the Tribulation saints on the earth. There will be a worldwide slaughter of God's people like has never occurred in all of history (Rev 6:9-11; 7:9-17: 11:7; 17:6; Dan 7:25).

The false prophet will lead a one world religion (apostate religion) and later command the people of the earth to worship Antichrist. The world will engage in the most shocking, blatant idolatry ever seen. He will cause the peoples to receive the mark of the beast or Antichrist, 666 on their right hand or forehead. No one will be able to buy or sell without it. Antichrist will control religion and the economy.

Tribulation Announcements

John sees three angels flying in mid-heaven preaching the everlasting gospel, judgment and then doom to those who do not accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior. The three angels deliver God's last call to repentance before the final judgments fall and Jesus returns.

Bowls of Wrath - God's Final Judgement

John sees seven angels coming out of the Holy of Holies with seven plagues, the final and worst judgments of God. Their contents are dumped all at once unleashing God's final judgment on the earth in rapid succession. The bowl judgements occur within a short period of time toward the close of the Great Tribulation.

God's final judgements are devastating to the entire earth and its inhabitants. All those who take the mark of the beast will have horrible malignant sores, everything in the sea dies and the fresh water becomes blood, the sun scorches men with fire, and the earth becomes dark. No water will be safe to drink and no rain will fall. It will seem that the atmosphere is on fire. This will cause unthinkable hardship and suffering.

Until this point, only the Antichrist has been described as blaspheming God (Rev 13:1, 5-6), but now the world adopts his evil character. Neither grace nor wrath will move their wicked hearts to repentance (Rev 9:20-21; 16:11). Sadly, this is the last reference to their unwillingness to repent.

The first five plagues were God's final offer and humanity's final opportunity for repentance. There will be no more. The bowls of wrath reveal that the minds, hearts, and wills of those who took the mark have been sealed in their sinful condition.

The sixth bowl dries up the Euphrates river preparing the way for the kings from the east to cross into Armageddon to wage war against the Lamb. The seventh bowl is poured out and a great earthquake like never seen before renovates and reconfigures the earth in preparation for the Millennial Kingdom.

The great city Babylon is now inhabited by 240 million formerly bound demons that were released at the sixth trumpet (Rev 9:13-16), the demons released from the abyss at the 5th trumpet (Rev 9:1-11), those cast from heaven with Satan (Rev 12:4,9) and those previously on the earth. They were successful in inspiring extreme human wickedness, from sexual immorality to unbridled luxury.

John witnesses the destruction of the false religion symbolized as Babylon, the great prostitute clothed in purple and scarlet. She represents an apostate worldwide religion. At approximately the midpoint of the Tribulation, Antichrist will destroy the prostitute. He no longer wants a one world religion; he wants all to worship him. This will be the downfall of the apostate world church.

At the end of the Tribulation Period, God calls his people out of the city, just as His people were urged to leave Babylon in ancient days (Jer 51:46). Babylon's judgement is announced as a double portion because she has glorified herself and willfully sinned against God. Her judgement will come in one day and will result in Babylon's complete devastation and then she will be burned up with fire. The great city will be found no more (Rev 18:21) and will never rise again, as predicted by the Old Testament prophets (Isa 13:19-22; 14:22-23; Jer 50:13, 39: 51:37).

The Fourfold Hallelujah - Victory for the Lamb

Heaven's response to the annihilation of Babylon which represents the destruction of everything that is evil and demonic in the present world system is, "Hallelujah." So loud it sounds like roaring waters and thunder it is cried out four times.

Full salvation has come, justice has arrived, rebellion is ended, and God is in control. The evil world system has been destroyed and God's kingdom has come in its fullness. For the Lord our God, the Almighty reigns.

Marriage of the Lamb

The great multitude continues to rejoice and announces that the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready wearing fine, bright and clean linen. Having been presented glorified and spotless before God's throne, her righteous acts may be part of the reward given at the judgment seat of Christ.

The blessing is given to those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb, the final step of marriage in the biblical world. Since the bride does not receive an invitation to her own wedding, the guests are not the Church. The guests at the marriage supper of the Lamb are the redeemed of all the ages who were saved before or after the church age. The Old Testament saints will be there as guests as will all the Tribulation saints, glorified and still alive on earth and entering the Millennial Kingdom.

At Jesus' Last Supper on this earth He said to His disciples, "But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's Kingdom (Matt 26:29). With the whole church glorified and united in the kingdom of God, Christ will take His seat with the saints and enjoy that long-anticipated face-to-face fellowship with those He loves.

The Second Coming of Christ

This time heaven opens not to let John in, but to let Jesus out. The time has come at last for the full, glorious revelation of Christ. Jesus is about to receive the kingdom that the Father promised Him.

The first time Jesus came to earth He appeared in obscurity. This time John sees Jesus in all His splendid glory and majesty: He is riding a white victory horse, His eyes are a flame of fire that will burn up all that is false, He wears many crowns because He is sovereign, His robe is dipped in blood representing divine judgment upon evil people, and a sharp sword is flying from His mouth.

As Christ descended in the clouds, John quickly sees that Christ was not alone. The armies in heaven dressed in fine white clean linen were following Jesus on white horses. They are probably the Church and holy angels.

All the armies of the world join forces to battle against the King of kings and Lord of lords at Armageddon. The beast and false prophet are thrown alive into the lake of fire and the

rest were killed with Christ's sword which came from His mouth. The saints will come not to fight with Jesus, but to reign with Him. Just as He spoke the world into being, He will speak the evil out of the world. There will be no war at all, just a word spoken from Christ. Then the vultures descend and cover the scene.

The brief but catastrophic day of the Lord will result in an unprecedented slaughter, with uncounted millions of dead bodies (14:20). Even after the birds have eaten, it will still take seven months to bury the bodies (Eze 39:12). This present age reveals the grace of God and suspended judgment. The age to come, while continuing to be a revelation of the grace of God, will give conclusive evidence that God will bring every evil work into judgment and that those who spurn His grace must experience His wrath.

Millennial Reign of Christ

Six times in Revelation 20 it is stated that there will be a literal thousand years in which Christ will reign on earth. In John's vision he sees only the fact and duration of the millennial kingdom. The character of Christ's reign on earth is fully described in many Old Testament passages such as Psalm 72, Isa 2:2-4; 11:4-9 and many others.

From these Scriptures we learn that Christ's dominion is from sea to sea, Jerusalem will be the capital, Israel is regathered from the various parts of the earth and brought back to her ancient land, Israel will be exalted and Gentiles will be blessed, the earth shall be full of the knowledge and glory of the Lord, there will be no war, there will be peace, justice, tranquility, prosperity, physical health and well being for all.

God's people will sit on thrones reigning with Christ. Satan will be bound and cast into the abyss and released at the end of the thousand years. Even though the initial inhabitants of the Millennial Kingdom will be redeemed, they will still possess a sinful nature and will pass that sin nature on to their children. Each generation born during the Millennial Kingdom will be in need of salvation. Despite the personal rule of Christ on earth, despite the most moral society the world will ever know, many will love their sin and reject Christ (Rom 8:7).

Satan will once again deceive the nations. Those who are not saved will be fertile soil for Satan to sow his seeds of rebellion. They will be as unmoved by the peace, joy and righteousness of the Millennium as earlier sinners were by the devastating judgments of the Tribulation (Rev 9:20-21; 16:9, 11, 21).

Vast numbers will join Satan in his final rebellion against God. The rebel forces will come up on the plain surrounding Jerusalem. Like Armageddon a thousand years earlier (Rev 19:11-21), there will be no battle. Fire comes down from Heaven and destroys God's enemies. They are instantly exterminated. Satan is thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and false prophet have been for one thousand years. They will be tormented day and night forever and ever (Rev 20:10).

The Great White Throne Judgement

We now move to the most serious, sobering and tragic passage in the entire Bible. John describes a terrifying scene before him. Christ is seated on His throne of judgement and all the accused, the unsaved of all generations, are standing before Him. The verdict Jesus hands down from this throne will be absolutely just.

All the unsaved dead will be raised from the sea, the earth and Hades. They are given resurrection bodies suited for eternal punishment. They are summoned individually for their final sentence based on the book of life and the other books which are probably the divine records of their works.

The book of life will determine where they will spend eternity; their deeds will determine their degree of punishment in hell. All whose names are not recorded in the book of life were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death. Just as the new heaven and new earth are an eternal existence so is the lake of fire eternal for its inhabitants.

All Things New - Revelation Chapter 21 & 22

John also describes another startling reality; the uncreation of the universe. The earth will still be tainted with sin and subject to the effects of the fall so it will be destroyed also.

The present earth will not be moved or reshaped. It will go out of existence. In its place God will create a new heaven and a new earth (Rev 21:1). History has ended, time will be no more, eternity has begun forever and ever.

New Heaven and New Earth

God will create a new realm for the redeemed and the holy angels to dwell forever. Not much information is given about the new heaven and the new earth's characteristics, vegetation, color or form. However, enough information is given that we know that the ordering of the new heaven and new earth will be radically different from the present earth.

There are twelve "No Mores" in the new heaven and new earth:

1. No more sea - Life will no longer be dependent on water for survival. Believer's glorified bodies will not require water.
2. No more tears - Anything that brings sadness or pain will be gone.
3. No more death - The greatest curse of human existence will be gone.
4. No more mourning - Death will be no more.
5. No more crying - Grief and sorrow will not exist.
6. No more pain - There will be perfect holiness and absence of sin. There will be no suffering.
7. No more thirst - God will graciously quench all desires.
8. No more wickedness - All evil will be banished.
9. No more temple - The Father and Son are personally present. (Rev 21:22)
10. No more night - God's glory will give eternal light. (Rev 21:23-25; 22:5)
11. No more closed gates - God's doors will always be open as there is no evil.
12. No more curse - Christ's blood has forever lifted that curse.

No more terminal diseases, hospitals, disabilities, funerals. No more crime, courts or prisons. No more divorces, breakdowns or breakups. No more heart attacks, strokes, or debilitating illnesses. No more doctors, medications or surgeries. No more decay, decline and no waste. No famines, plagues, hurricanes, tornadoes, or devastating disasters. All human experience related to the original creation is gone forever. God has made all things new.

Its Capital

Heaven's capital will be the New Jerusalem. It will be the third city named Jerusalem in redemptive history. The first is the historic Jerusalem, the City of David, which currently exists in Palestine. The second Jerusalem will be the restored Jerusalem where Christ will rule during the Millennial Kingdom. The New Jerusalem is called the holy city because everyone in it is holy (Rev 20:6). Unlike the prior Jerusalem, the inhabitants in the new Jerusalem will live together in perfect harmony.

The new Jerusalem already exists and is where believers who die go to and where Jesus said he was going before them to prepare a place for them (John 14:1-3). The New Jerusalem does not rest on the earth during the Millennium Period and will be withdrawn from its proximity to the earth when the earth will be destroyed at the end of the Millennium.

When God creates the new heaven and the new earth, the new Jerusalem will descend into the midst of the holy new universe and serve as the dwelling place of the redeemed for all eternity. (Mac Arthur pg 316). John compares the city to a beautifully dressed bride being made ready for the wedding. It is time for the consummation of the wedding - the eternal state for believers.

God's Dwelling Place

The supreme glory and joy of heaven is that God dwells there. No more will God be located far away from believers. No longer will His presence be veiled and no longer will believers not be able to behold His majestic glory. We will live in His glorious presence and enjoy His fellowship. We will see Him as He really is, worship Him, and serve Him.

Its Residents

Heaven belongs to those who are redeemed and are dissatisfied with their hopeless, lost condition and crave God's righteousness. Those are the same ones who have overcome or exercise a saving faith in Jesus Christ. God promises that He will be their God. Our adoption as sons of God will be fully realized (Rom 8:23).

The Outcasts

Those without genuine faith will not be in the New Jerusalem. Neither will the other unbelievers: the abominable, murderers, immoral persons, sorcerers, idolaters, and liars.

General Appearance

The most distinguishing characteristic of the capital city is that it is the throne of God. As such it radiates God's glory so much so that it does not need any other light. There will be no sun or moon to give light; God's glory will illuminate the entire city and its lamp is Jesus (Rev 21:23). Darkness and all the evil it signifies will be gone forever.

The city appeared to John like one gigantic precious stone. The stone, jasper, that John mentions does not refer to the modern stone of the same name, which is opaque. It is from the Greek word referring to a translucent stone. A crystal clear stone today would be like a flawless diamond. John pictures the New Jerusalem as a huge, flawless diamond, refracting the brilliant glory of God throughout the new heaven and the new earth. ¹

Exterior & Interior Design

John saw an angel measuring the eternal city much like the measuring of the Millennial Temple (Eze 40:3) and the measuring of the Tribulation temple (Rev 11:1). The significance is that it marks out what belongs to God and was measured in human measurements.

The city is laid out as a square and has three gates on each side with an angel standing guard at each gate. The city walls are about 1,380 miles in each direction. Its length and width and height are equal. There will be plenty of room for all the redeemed.

The thickness of the walls was seventy-two yards and was made out of the same diamond-like stone, jasper. The city itself was also pure gold, like clear glass. The walls and buildings of the eternal city must be clear for the city to radiate the glory of God. This also means that the walls are not to keep people out like we have walls today. These walls are simply to radiate the glory of God.

The names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel are written on the gates. In contrast to Revelation 7:5-8, where the 144,000 are sealed for protection to proclaim the Gospel, the tribe of Dan is omitted and Joseph's son Manasseh is included, the original twelve sons are included here.

The foundation stones bear the names of the 12 apostles of Jesus. The names of the stones have changed through the centuries, making their identification uncertain. However these brightly colored stones refract the shining brilliance of God's glory into a spectrum of dazzling colors.

The gates were each made of a single gigantic pearl which would mean that they were nearly 1,400 miles high. All precious gems are metal or stones, but a pearl is a gem formed within the oyster and is the only one formed by living flesh. The pearl represents pain resulting in beauty, suffering crowned with glory. When we read of this symbol of the pearl eternally embedded in the doorways of heaven, it should remind us that Christ's suffering had an eternal purpose and opened heaven for us (John 10:9; 14:6). ²

The streets are made of pure gold. We will walk on the material we hold in highest esteem. Gold will be trodden upon like asphalt. There will be no vanity, no materialism, no envy or greed. Best of all, no one will be poor in a city that paves its streets with gold.

It will contain a river of the water of life cascading down from the throne of God and of the Lamb in a dazzling never-ending stream. It is a symbol of eternal life and the constant flow of everlasting life from God's throne to His people.

It will also contain the tree of life. This is the celestial counterpart to the tree of life in Eden (Gen 2:9; 3:22-24). It symbolizes the blessing of eternal life. The tree's leaves seem to contribute to the physical well-being of those in the eternal state. Healing here is better translated as health-giving rather than our modern day term of healing.

Internal Character

There will no longer be any curse and we will serve God for all eternity. His name will be on our foreheads and we will reign with Them. The city will be the dwelling place of the united people of God - Old and New Testament believers. The nations will be in the city as well as Israel and the Church. It is evident that the city is the dwelling place of the saints of all ages, the angels, and God Himself, forever.

Jesus' Final Message (Rev 22:7-21)

- Read and share this book - it is not to be hidden.
- The words in the Book of Revelation are prophecy.
- When He comes He will reward based on what we have done.
- Blessed are those who have accepted Him as Lord and Savior and will spend eternity in heaven with Him.
- If anyone adds to or takes away from the words of the prophecy of this book they will not be in heaven.
- Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega; the first and the last; the beginning and the end.
- He is the root and descendant of David, the Bright Morning Star.
- He is coming back.
- The time is near for Him to come back.
- When He comes it will be sudden and quick.
- Blessed are those who read and heed the words of the prophecy of this book.

Amen, Come Quickly Lord, Jesus!

References

Agents of the Apocalypse: A Riveting Look at the Key Players of the End Times; Jeremiah, David; Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.. Kindle Edition 2014.

Agents of Babylon: What the Prophecies of Daniel Tell Us About the End Times; Dr, David Jeremiah, Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, IL; 2015.

Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible, W. A. Elwell, and B. J. Beitzel; Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI; 1988.

Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation, Dr. John MacArthur, Moody Publishers, Chicago, IL; 2007.

Bible Prophecy, Mark Hitchcock; Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Ill; 1999.

Daniel; The John Walvoord Prophecy Commentaries, John F. Walvoord; Moody Publishers, Chicago, Il; 2012

God Loves You; He Always Has - He Always Will, Dr. David Jeremiah; FaithWords, New York, NY; 2012.

Insights on Revelation, Charles R. Swindoll; Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI; 2011.

Is This The End? Signs of God's Providence in a Disturbing New World; Dr. David Jeremiah, W Publishing Group, an imprint of Thomas Nelson; Nashville, Tn; 2016

Lectures in Systematic Theology, Henry C. Thiessen, Revised by Vernon D. Doerksen; William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, Grand Rapids, MI 1949, Revised 1979.

New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update; The Lockman Foundation, LaHabra, CA: 1995.

Revelation; Walvoord, J. F., Revised and Edited by Philip E. Rawley and Mark Hitchcock; Moody Publishers, Chicago 1966, 2011.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary, John R. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck; SP Publications, Dallas, TX; 1983.

The Eerdmans Bible dictionary; A. C. Myers; Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI 1987.

The End, Mark Hitchcock; Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Ill; 2012.

The Millennial Kingdom, John F. Walvoord; Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI; 1959.

The Prophecy Answer Book, David Jeremiah; Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, TN; 2010

The Prophecy Knowledge Handbook, John F. Walvoord; SP Publications, Dallas TX; 1990.

Things To Come - A Study In Biblical Eschatology, J. Dwight Pentecost; Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI; 1958.

End Notes

Introduction & Chapter 1

1. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*; Walvoord, J. F. and R. B. Zuck Eds.; Victor Books, Wheaton, IL 1983; pg 928.
2. *Insights on Revelation (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 15)*, Location 674.

Chapter 2 & 3

1. *Revelation*; Walvoord, J. F., Revised and Edited by Philip E. Rawley & Mark Hitchcock; Moody Publishers, Chicago 1966, 2011; pg 46.
2. *Insights on Revelation (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 15)*; Swindoll, Charles R.; Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.. Kindle Edition 2014; location 839.
3. *Insights on Revelation (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 15)*, Location 879-881.
4. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; MacArthur, John F.; Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition 2007; pg 46-47.
5. *Revelation*; (Walvoord, J. F., Revised and Edited by Philip E. Rawley & Mark Hitchcock), pg 4.
6. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; pg 64.
7. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; pg 63.
8. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; pg 66.
9. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; pg 67.
10. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; pg 70.
11. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; pg 74.
12. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; pg 73.
13. *Insights on Revelation (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 15)*, Location 1061.
14. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; pg 72.
15. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; pg 80.
16. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; pg 84.
17. *Insights on Revelation (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 15)*, Location 1700-1701.
18. *Revelation*; (Walvoord, J. F., Revised and Edited by Philip E. Rawley & Mark Hitchcock), pg 70.
19. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; pg 89.
20. *Insights on Revelation (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 15)*, Location 1863-1864.
21. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; pg 96.
22. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; pg 97.
23. *Revelation*; (Walvoord, J. F., Revised and Edited by Philip E. Rawley & Mark Hitchcock), pg 940.
24. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*; Walvoord, J. F. and R. B. Zuck Eds.; Victor Books, Wheaton, IL 1983; pg 940.
25. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; pg 100.
26. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; pg 99.
27. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; pg 102-104.

28. *Things to Come: A Study In Biblical Eschatology; Pentecost*, J. Dwight; Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI 1958; pg 152.
29. *Revelation*; (Walvoord, J. F., Revised and Edited by Philip E. Rawley & Mark Hitchcock), pg 63.
30. *Things to Come: A Study In Biblical Eschatology; Pentecost*, J. Dwight; Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI 1958; pg 155.
31. *Things to Come: A Study In Biblical Eschatology; Pentecost*, J. Dwight; Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI 1958; pg 152-155.

Chapter 4 & 5

1. *Revelation*; Walvoord, J. F., Revised and Edited by Philip E. Rawley and Mark Hitchcock; Moody Publishers, Chicago 1966, 2011; pg 86.
2. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; MacArthur, John F.; Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition 2007; pg 112.
3. *Revelation*; (Walvoord, J. F., Revised and Edited by Philip E. Rawley and Mark Hitchcock), pg 92.
4. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*; Walvoord, J. F. and R. B. Zuck Eds.; Victor Books, Wheaton, IL 1983; pg 2945.
5. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; pg 117.
6. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; pg 124.
7. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*; Walvoord, J. F. and R. B. Zuck Eds; pg 2946.

Chapters 6 & 7

1. *Agents of the Apocalypse: A Riveting Look at the Key Players of the End Times*: Dr. David Jeremiah; Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Chicago, 2014; pg 52.
2. *Agents of the Apocalypse: A Riveting Look at the Key Players of the End Times*: Dr. David Jeremiah; pg 40
3. *Insights on Revelation* (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 15; Swindoll, Charles R.; Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.. Kindle Edition 2014; location 3007-3009.
4. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; MacArthur, John F.; Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition 2007; pg 112.

Chapters 8 & 9

1. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; MacArthur, John F.; Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition 2007; pg 157.
2. *Revelation*; Walvoord, J. F., Revised and Edited by Philip E. Rawley and Mark Hitchcock; Moody Publishers, Chicago 1966, 2011; pg 130.
3. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; pg 168.
4. *Insights on Revelation*: Charles R. Swindoll; Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011; Kindle Location 3424-3426.
5. *Insights on Revelation*: Charles R. Swindoll; Zondervan, Kindle Location 3410-3428.

Chapters 10 & 11

1. *Revelation*; Walvoord, J. F., Revised and Edited by Philip E. Rawley and Mark Hitchcock; Moody Publishers, Chicago 1966, 2011; pg 144.
2. *Revelation*; Walvoord, J. F., Revised and Edited by Philip E. Rawley and Mark Hitchcock; pg 162.
3. *Revelation*; Walvoord, J. F., Revised and Edited by Philip E. Rawley and Mark Hitchcock; pg 147-148.
4. *Revelation*; Walvoord, J. F., Revised and Edited by Philip E. Rawley and Mark Hitchcock; pg 150.
5. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; MacArthur, John F.; Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition 2007; pg 179-182.
6. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; pg 183.
7. *Revelation*; Walvoord, J. F., Revised and Edited by Philip E. Rawley and Mark Hitchcock; pg 56.

8. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; pg 196.

Chapters 12 & 13

1. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; MacArthur, John F.; Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition 2007; pg 205.
2. *Unveiling the End Times in Our Time: The Triumph of the Lamb in Revelation*; Rogers, Adrian; B&H Publishing Group; Kindle Edition; pg 150.
3. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; pg 202.
4. *Revelation*; Walvoord, J. F., Revised and Edited by Philip E. Rawley and Mark Hitchcock; Moody Publishers, Chicago 1966, 2011; pg 162.
5. *Agents of the Apocalypse: A Riveting Look at the Key Players of the End Times*: Dr. David Jeremiah; Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Chicago, 2014; pg 120-121.
6. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; pg 203.
7. *Insights on Revelation* (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 15; Swindoll, Charles R.; Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.. Kindle Edition 2014; location 4748.
8. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; pg 209.
9. *Revelation*; Walvoord, J. F., Revised and Edited by Philip E. Rawley and Mark Hitchcock; pg 168.
10. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; pg 210.
11. *Agents of the Apocalypse: A Riveting Look at the Key Players of the End Times*: Dr. David Jeremiah; pg 142
12. *Agents of the Apocalypse: A Riveting Look at the Key Players of the End Times*: Dr. David Jeremiah; pg 176.
13. *Insights on Revelation*: Charles R. Swindoll; Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011; Kindle Location 5038.

Chapters 14 & 15

1. *Revelation*; Walvoord, J. F., Revised and Edited by Philip E. Rawley and Mark Hitchcock; Moody Publishers, Chicago 1966, 2011; pg 189.
2. *Revelation*; Walvoord, J. F., Revised and Edited by Philip E. Rawley and Mark Hitchcock; Moody Publishers, Chicago 1966, 2011; pg 193.
3. *Insights on Revelation* (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 15; Swindoll, Charles R.; Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.. Kindle Edition 2014; location 5578.
4. *Insights on Revelation* (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 15; Swindoll, Charles R.; Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.. Kindle Edition 2014; location 5587.
5. *Insights on Revelation* (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 15; Swindoll, Charles R.; Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.. Kindle Edition 2014; location 5588-5390.
6. *Insights on Revelation* (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 15; Swindoll, Charles R.; Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.. Kindle Edition 2014; location 5529.
7. *Revelation*; Walvoord, J. F., Revised and Edited by Philip E. Rawley and Mark Hitchcock; Moody Publishers, Chicago 1966, 2011; pg 200.
8. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; MacArthur, John F.; Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition 2007; pg 246.
9. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; MacArthur, John F.; Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition 2007; pg 247.

Chapter 16 & 17

1. *Revelation*; Walvoord, J. F., Revised and Edited by Philip E. Rawley and Mark Hitchcock; Moody Publishers, Chicago 1966, 2011; pg 201.
2. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; MacArthur, John F.; Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition 2007; pg 250.

3. *Revelation*; Walvoord, J. F., Revised and Edited by Philip E. Rawley and Mark Hitchcock; Moody Publishers, Chicago 1966, 2011; pg 206.
4. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; MacArthur, John F.; Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition 2007; pg 252.
5. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; MacArthur, John F.; Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition 2007; pg 252.
6. *Insights on Revelation* (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 15; Swindoll, Charles R.; Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.. Kindle Edition 2014; location 6148-6152.
7. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; MacArthur, John F.; Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition 2007; pg 254.
8. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; MacArthur, John F.; Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition 2007; pg 256.
9. *Insights on Revelation* (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 15; Swindoll, Charles R.; Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.. Kindle Edition 2014; location 6196-6201.
10. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; MacArthur, John F.; Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition 2007; pg 258.
11. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; MacArthur, John F.; Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition 2007; pg 257.
12. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; MacArthur, John F.; Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition 2007; loc 6058).
13. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; MacArthur, John F.; Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition 2007; pg 265.
14. *Revelation*; Walvoord, J. F., Revised and Edited by Philip E. Rawley and Mark Hitchcock; Moody Publishers, Chicago 1966, 2011; pg 218-220.
15. *Revelation*; Walvoord, J. F., Revised and Edited by Philip E. Rawley and Mark Hitchcock; Moody Publishers, Chicago 1966, 2011; pg 216.
16. *Revelation*; Walvoord, J. F., Revised and Edited by Philip E. Rawley and Mark Hitchcock; Moody Publishers, Chicago 1966, 2011; pg 216.
17. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; MacArthur, John F.; Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition 2007; pg 264.
18. *Revelation*; Walvoord, J. F., Revised and Edited by Philip E. Rawley and Mark Hitchcock; Moody Publishers, Chicago 1966, 2011; pg 217.
19. *Revelation*; Walvoord, J. F., Revised and Edited by Philip E. Rawley and Mark Hitchcock; Moody Publishers, Chicago 1966, 2011; pg 226.
20. *Revelation*; Walvoord, J. F., Revised and Edited by Philip E. Rawley and Mark Hitchcock; Moody Publishers, Chicago 1966, 2011; pg 225.

Chapters 18 & 19

1. *Revelation*; Walvoord, J. F., Revised and Edited by Philip E. Rawley and Mark Hitchcock; Moody Publishers, Chicago 1966, 2011; pg 231.
2. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; MacArthur, John F.; Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition 2007; pg 278.
3. *Revelation*; Walvoord, J. F., Revised and Edited by Philip E. Rawley and Mark Hitchcock; Moody Publishers, Chicago 1966, 2011; pg 227.
4. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; MacArthur, John F.; Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition 2007; pg 287.
5. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; MacArthur, John F.; Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition 2007; pg 203-204.
6. *Revelation*; Walvoord, J. F., Revised and Edited by Philip E. Rawley and Mark Hitchcock; Moody Publishers, Chicago 1966, 2011; pg 247.

7. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; MacArthur, John F.; Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition 2007; pg 292.
8. *Revelation*; Walvoord, J. F., Revised and Edited by Philip E. Rawley and Mark Hitchcock; Moody Publishers, Chicago 1966, 2011; pg 247.
9. *Agents of the Apocalypse: A Riveting Look at the Key Players of the End Times*; Jeremiah, David; Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.. Kindle Edition 2014; pg 198.

Chapter 20

1. *Revelation*; Walvoord, J. F., Revised and Edited by Philip E. Rawley and Mark Hitchcock; Moody Publishers, Chicago 1966, 2011; pg 261-262.
2. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; MacArthur, John F.; Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition 2007; pg 296.
3. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; MacArthur, John F.; Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition 2007; pg 301.
4. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; MacArthur, John F.; Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition 2007; pg 312.

Summary & Chapter 21 & 22

5. *Because the Time is Near: John MacArthur Explains the Book of Revelation*; MacArthur, John F.; Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition 2007; pg 321.
6. *Insights on Revelation* (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 15; Swindoll, Charles R.; Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.. Kindle Edition 2014; location 8216.