

## The Book of Revelation

The title of the Book of Revelation is actually "*The Revelation of Jesus Christ.*" The book was written by the Apostle John as given to him by an angel sent from God. The word "Revelation" means to unveil, in the Greek it is the word "Apocalupsis," from which we get the word "Apocalypse." This book is the unveiling of the Person of Christ, though it discloses His High Priestly and Kingly glory, as it is the unveiling of those events that shall precede and accompany His return to the earth.<sup>1</sup>

This is one of the most misunderstood books of the entire bible. Many people simply shy away from reading this book due to the nature of the book and the complexity they perceive it contains. Yet, there is a blessing recorded in the opening verses to anyone who would read and obey the things written in this letter. Within this book we find a variety of New Testament Theologies.

Like many books of the Bible, the explanation of the text is given within its pages. The opening verse of chapter one tells the reader that the writing contains future events which must come to pass. Though the angel is not identified we know that John is identified as the one writing down the information. While we are not dealing with a history book the breakdown of the book is presented in terms of the past, "Write down the things which thou hast seen," past-tense, "and the things which are," present-tense, "and the things which shall be hereafter," future (Revelation 1:19). The reader is given a clear message as to what the future holds for this world. The reader is briefly reminded of a few facts in chapter one. The nature of the writing would suggest that the writer is directing his comments to those who had some background with the "Word of God," and have some understanding. This book is for God's people to instruct them concerning the future and encourage them that God has a plan.

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<sup>1</sup> Clarence Larkin, *The Book of Revelation*, (Erwin W. Moyer Co., Philadelphia, Pa. 1919)

## The Salutation

Chapter 1 verses 4-6 introduce us to the ones the letter is intended for, the “Seven Churches Which are in Asia.” The specific area intended here is actually just part of Asia Minor, namely the western end bordering on the Aegean and Mediterranean Sea.<sup>2</sup> John will identify seven specific churches which are representative of all the churches in the area. Each of the seven churches will have a specific character and reputation which John identifies. These seven churches represent the different characteristics of the churches that existed then and what future churches would be. Each of these churches are represented a specific period where each church would dominate the civilized world. The seven churches show how the history of the church (as a whole) will develop and ultimately end. The church is unique to the New Testament and stands apart from Israel in God’s overall plan for the ages. Israel and the Church are distinct and separate, each playing a special role in the course of history. The term church means “called out assembly.” We understand the church as having two parts the local church and the universal church. The local church is made of up both saved and unsaved, while the universal church is made up of all believers in heaven and on earth. Each church characteristic can be clearly identified with a specific period of history. The salutation points to the threefold office of Jesus, as **PROPHET, PRIEST, and KING**. Jesus shed his own blood as our Priest, as a Faithful Witness he exercised the responsibilities of a Prophet, and when He returns He will exercise His right as King.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

## **The Announcement**

In **Revelation 1:7** we have an announcement, “Behold He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him...” This is a reference to the second coming of Christ to earth, the “Revelation” or “Appearing.” The entire book is directed at this event, with the exception of chapter one, which covers the things which were, and chapter two and three, the things which are.

Chapters two and three are interesting due to the nature of the content, dealing with the church age and the seven representative churches. Chapters four and following deal with future events all leading up to the “Second Coming.”

## **The Things Which Thou Hast Seen**

We are given a short review of past events as John addresses the Churches who are sharing in the present tribulation. This is not the same as the Great Tribulation, which still future.

When John wrote the Book of Revelation in A.D. 95-96 the Christians were experiencing some persecution under the Roman Emperor Domitian, which resulted in John being exiled to the Isle of Patmos, a small island in the Aegean Sea, just opposite from Ephesus.<sup>3</sup> John was sent there because of his testimony for “the Word of God, and his testimony to Jesus Christ.”

John records that he was “in the Spirit on the LORD’S DAY.” Whether this meant the first day of the week, or the “Day of the Lord,” is not clear. The Old and New Testament speak of the “Day of the Lord” and it always refers to the time of Christ’ return to the earth to set up His kingdom. This term includes the Tribulation as well as the Millennium period. The main idea is the revelation that is given to John to record. Verses 17 and 18 indicate that it is Jesus Christ speaking to John. The message involves the seven churches to whom Christ has a revelation.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

When John turned to see who was speaking he saw Jesus standing in the middle of the “Seven Candlesticks.” Actually a better understanding would be “Lamp stands.” John is told that the seven lamp stands are the seven churches. As the book unfolds there are numerous symbols, and the explanation is often found in the text itself, or in other books of the Bible, such as Daniel, Ezekiel and Isaiah.

### **The Vision of the Glorified Son of Man**

The description of Him is more that of a Judge. This can be seen in the fact that John was taken into the time period of the “Day of the Lord,” and that his vision of Christ is what Christ shall be after His Priestly responsibilities are finished and before He assumes His Kingly Office.<sup>4</sup> Christ is seen girded around the breasts, and not around the waist. The High Priest was girded around the waist, showing service, but a girdle over the shoulder and around the breasts was a sign of the Magisterial Office.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Sevenfold Glory of His Person**

His “Head” and “Hair” were “White like wool,” here is symbolism and we understand that his hair was NOT wool, but appeared as white as wool (Revelation 1:14). John Walvoord writes that the fact that His head and His hair are as white as snow corresponds to the vision of God described in Daniel 7:9, where “the ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool.”<sup>6</sup>

His eyes are described as a “Flame of Fire.” This description also is found in Daniel’s description of the Most High. The flame is symbolic of searching righteousness and divine judgment on all the impure.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, p. 44.

His feet are depicted as fine “Brass,” as though they had been refined in a hot furnace. The furnace removes all impurities and leaves the pure shining metal.

His voice has a very interesting description, that of the “Sound of many waters.” There is a very soothing effect of running water as it traveling down a mountain stream. At the same time the impact of a huge waterfall crashing down on the rocks beneath can be breath-taking.

His hand is described as holding “In His right hand seven stars.” Verse 20 tells us that the stars represent the angels of the seven churches. These angels are the messengers to the seven churches. Actually these could simply be people sent by God to the churches with the message He wanted delivered.

His mouth showed a “Sharp two-edged sword.” The sword seems to be the fact that judgment will come from the mouth of the Lord and with His mouth shall slay His enemies by the spoken word. The sword being two sided, one side for the destruction of the Lord’s enemies and one side for the protection of His people.

His countenance was as “The Sun shineth in His strength.” In Matthew 17:2 we read that when Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration “His face did shine as the sun.” In the New Jerusalem we will not need to have the sun for Jesus will shine and be all the light we will ever need.

### **The Division of the Book**

Chapter one verse nineteen is actually the key to the whole book. Here we see the three-fold division of the book; past, present and future. The majority of the book deals with future events, but chapters two and three give some very interesting material on the church age. One of the outstanding features of the book can be seen in its development. There are seven series of sevens recorded by John. We are told about the seven churches, the seven seals, the seven trumpets, the seven personages, the seven vials, the seven dooms, and the seven

new things. Between these series we are given some additional information that explains and expands the subject matter.

## THE THINGS WHICH ARE

The things which deal with the seven churches, they represent the present church age in which we are now living. The early church probably had a difficult time understanding fully the significance of these two chapters. The passing of time has highlighted and clarified some of the key points of the seven churches. It would have been hard for the early church to see the seven churches as periods that would develop and progress to the concluding period of Laodicea. While we know that all seven churches existed at the same time, yet each church represented a specific period where the characteristics of a particular church would dominate. We can see in church history that progression starting would the church at Ephesus and ending with the church at Laodicea.

Each church needed a particular message, and the spiritual state of each corresponded precisely to the exhortation which was given. The selection of the churches was also governed by the fact that each church was in some way normative and illustrated conditions common in local churches at that time as well as throughout later history.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 51.

## The Church of Ephesus

### Revelation 2:1-7

The church was founded upon the birth, life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. The first century church was an exciting experience. The memory of the apostles was still very fresh in their minds. There were many still alive who personally witnessed many of the great events that formed the foundation of the early church. This church was known as the Apostolic Church dating from A.D. 30 to A.D. 100.

**The Commendation:** "I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them who are evil; and thou hast tried them who say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars; and hast borne, hast patience, and for my name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted ... Thou hates the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate."

**The Condemnation:** "Thou hast left thy first love."

**The Counsel:** "Remember from where thou are fallen, and repent."

**Challenge:** "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

Ephesus is considered to have been one of the finest and largest churches of New Testament times. It was begun by the Apostle Paul on his second missionary journey. Considering the fact the church was located in the same city as the temple to Diana, the spiritual health of this church was amazing.

Of the seven churches mentioned in chapters 2 and 3, this is the only one where reference is made to the apostles. This church period was from A.D. 30 to A.D. 100. The name Ephesus means "desired one." It could be argued that this was the best of all the churches or church ages. It was evangelistic, doctrinally sound, working, and steadfast. This church had a large number of Jewish converts and laid the foundation for the rest of the churches. There is a

strong case to be made concerning their world wide evangelistic outreach. Romans 10:18 tells us, "But I say, Have they not heard? Yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." Romans 16:26 states the gospel is "made known to all nations for the obedience of faith." In Colossians 1:6, speaking of the gospel, the Holy Spirit asserts through the Apostle Paul that it "is come unto you, as it is in all the world." In Colossians 1:23 we find, "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature that is under heaven, of which I, Paul, am made a minister." Putting these four passages of Scripture together, we find that before the Scripture canon had been completed, the early church accomplished more widespread preaching of the Gospel through the ministry of the Jewish Christians than has ever been done since the Church has become predominantly led by Gentiles. Not until the time of the tribulation will the evangelistic outreach be as great as it was under the Ephesian age. The interesting note here is the fact that the Jews will be predominant leaders during the tribulation just as it was during the Ephesians' period.

**Christ's Commendation:** Nothing goes unnoticed by the Lord. And it is true that God expects us to work for Him, not to gain our salvation, but for Christian outreach. And anyone who has tried to live the Christian life knows that it is work, it takes effort. "I know ... how thou canst not bear them who are evil." A true church is one that is in the world but not like the world. This church faithfully honored the teachings of Scripture. They separated themselves from other Christians who did not walk according to the Word. They practiced church discipline as taught by the apostles.

This church was able to discern false teachers and false doctrine. They were not deceived because they studied the Scriptures and could easily see the errors when presented. They tried the spirits, "to see if they are of God." We desperately need the same attitude today.

Satan is creating havoc in the local churches with distorted doctrine and false apostles disguising themselves as angels of light. Many have taken Christian terms and applied other meanings. We must examine the words they use and the meaning they apply to those terms.

"I know ... thou hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted." This would indicate that this was a persistent church, not wavering in their commitment to the truth.

"I know ... thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate." The word "*Nicolaitans*" comes from two Greek words: *niko*, meaning "to conquer, or overthrow," and *laos*, meaning "the people or the laity." In the early church there was an individual named Nicolai who held two serious heretical views: they practiced sensuality by separating the spiritual and physical natures, thus giving themselves license to sin. And they tried to establish an ecclesiastical order. This latter heresy is known as "Nicolaitanism" Evidently an effort was made to set up bishops, archbishops, cardinals, and popes. This is an unscriptural idea that causes the local church to become enslaved by one man or a small group of men whose spiritual life can determine the spiritual success of the church. This is a dangerous principle, since every individual is dependent on their personal relationship to the Lord for their spiritual health. This practice causes people to look to men for the solution to their problems rather than to the Lord. When men get control of the spiritual training of other people and are in a position to dominate the church their theological position will eventually dominate that church. That is why we must search the Scriptures to see "if these things be so". The Ephesians rejected this ecclesiastic hierarchy, but the church at Pergamus embraced it.

**Christ's Condemnation:** "Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love."

There was only one condemnation against this early church-but a serious one. They lost their fire, their love and compassion. They were doing all the right things, but their hearts had become cool. The result can be seen in churches today that have left out the love of Christ in their daily walk. It appears in the form of coldness and harshness. In short it is the foundation for legalism. Saying and doing all the right things, but leaving out the compassion and love that the Savior provided. In the gospel of John Christ said, "the world will know that you are mine by your love one for another." The world will not respond to the message; even if doctrinally correct, if the love of Christ is left out.

**The Counsel of Christ:** Our Lord told the Ephesians to do three things:

1. Remember from where you are fallen. Christ sternly admonished them to recall their faithfulness of earlier years and to practice what they had lost, compassion.
2. They needed to repent. They were to make a change in their behavior, put off their coldness and indifference.
3. Do the First Works. They needed to work out of a love for Christ, not from strictly a duty. If we truly love the Lord, our love will shine and others will see and respond.

Doctrine alone is cold and indifferent; it is the love of Christ that makes doctrine useful.

**The Challenge of Christ:** Hear what the Spirit saith.

This was an expression of the Lord Jesus Christ which appears in many of His parables (e.g. Matthew 13). This statement implies three kinds of individuals:

1. Those without ears. Here, He is referring to those who have not received the Holy Spirit. This means they have no ability to hear spiritual matters
2. Those that are dull of hearing. Not all born-again Christians are willing to hear the Spirit of God when He speaks. This is directed at Christians who are in rebellion to the

leading of the Lord. By their rebellion they have become dull or insensitive to speaking of the Holy Spirit.

3. Those spiritually minded Christians who are willing to hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. The test of this hearer is seen in his conduct, for the Scriptures teach that we should be "doers of the word and not hearers only."

"To him that overcometh will I give to eat the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." This is probably the same tree that Adam and Eve were not permitted to eat in the garden. The tree of life will be given to the overcomers. 1 John 5:4, 5 says, "For whatever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that over cometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

The warning is clear, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

## **The Church of Smyrna**

### **Revelation 2:8-11**

The church in Smyrna was a persecuted church in a wealthy city that had no time for their faith. The city was founded about three centuries before Christ, by Alexander the Great. The city was in the middle of the main trade route from India to Rome. There was a large variety of people in this city from all parts of the empire. There is very little known about this specific church other than what is written in Revelation. Since the church was not wanted in the city, it is understandable that very little was written about the church. We do know that they were faithful to the Lord and unwavering in their commitment. No other church can match their faith and endurance.

**Commendation:** “I know thy works and tribulation, and poverty (but thou art rich).”

**Condemnation:** There is not one word of condemnation for this church.

**Counsel:** “Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer....be thou faithful unto death.”

**Challenge:** “He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.”

The Smyrna period of church history was the greatest period of persecution ever known.

Satan literally tried to wipe out the entire Christian population. The attacks were brutal, without mercy, and savage beyond imagination. It was not until the inquisition that persecution came close to this period.<sup>8</sup> Because of the effort of the Ephesian believers Christianity was on the move. Satan was worried and tried to destroy the church before it claimed a foothold. The more Satan persecuted the believers the more they responded in Christian love. The one complaint our Lord leveled against the Ephesians was a loss of their first love. The church of Smyrna could only continue because of their great love for the Lord. The lesson was learned and Satan backed off. Persecuting the church simply empowered the believers and strengthened their faith. I believe that there was a great out pouring of the Holy Spirit to this group of believers. What they endured and how they endured it can only be explained by the supernatural intervention of the Spirit of God in their lives. *“Where sin doth abound, grace doth more abound,”* (Romans 5:12).

*Some persecutions during this period:*

	A.D.	54-68	Paul was beheaded and Peter crucified.
Nero			
Domitian		81-96	John was exiled to the Isle of Patmos.
Trajan		98-117	Ignatius was burned at the stake.
Marcus Aurelius		161-180	Justin Martyr killed.
Severus		193-211	
Maximinus		235-238	
Decius		249-251	
Valerian		253-260	

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<sup>8</sup> MacArthur, *New Testament Commentary*, p.67.

Aurelian  
Diocletian

270-275  
284-305

By far the worse period of persecution.

According to historical records Diocletian was the worse emperor in Rome's history. Argument could be made that he was also the worse antagonist of the Christian faith. He actually tried to rid the world of all of the records of Christianity. His goal was to wipe all believers from the face of the earth. There were many public burnings of the sacred Scriptures during his reign. It was during the second and third centuries that Christians were fed to the lions and thousands watched this for entertainment. Many were killed in other ways; such as crucifixion, being burned alive, and having wild dogs attack them. Some were boiled in oil and burned at the stake, as was Polycarp in the city of Smyrna, in 156 A.D. One historian has estimated that during this period of persecution, five million Christians were martyred for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

In spite of all the persecution the church grew in a spectacular way. The ratio of Christians to the rest of the world was probably at its peak during this period. In addition to steady growth, this church age produced a large amount of manuscripts that were translated in many different languages. There were copies of the Scriptures made in Arabic, Persian, Syrian, and Armenian. In the second century the Bible was translated into Latin in what is called the ***Old Latin Version***. This was the main text for western churches for more than a thousand years and has been the basis for other translations. The more the scriptures were copied and sent out the more the church grew. It became such a dominant factor that in 312 A.D. Constantine made it the state religion.<sup>9</sup> While this stopped the persecution it also weakened the church body. Instead of the pagans destroying the church they were now joining the church. If you can't beat them join them and that is exactly what happened. This assimilation of the pagans

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 72.

immediately started taking its toll. The believers started to lose their fire, and received serious judgment from the Lord.

The message of Christ to Smyrna: *“These things saith the first and the last, who was dead, and is alive.”*

If you notice, Christ begins each message to the churches by picking one of the characteristics of Him from chapter one. To Ephesus He referred to Him as the one who “holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks,” showing His care over the churches. To Smyrna He emphasized His eternal nature “who was dead;” and His resurrection-“and is alive.”

**The Commendation of Christ:** The Lord gets right to the point with this church. This is the only church that the Lord does not condemn. The Lord commends them for their patience in tribulation, poverty, and affliction. “I know thy works, and tribulation.” This church was persecuted like no other church and the Lord recognized that point. Actually the word “works” in verse 9 does not appear in the best manuscripts, the emphasis here is on the tribulation. “I know thy poverty, but thou art rich...” It appears that they were not only killed by the scores, but also deprived of their physical possessions. It has been said that material poverty and spiritual power marked the churches of the first three centuries, where the churches of our day are marked by material wealth and spiritual weakness.

“...but thou are rich.” This points out a spiritual truth, when we know Jesus we are rich, no matter what our physical state. We see the power of God displayed in our lives when we lack the ability in ourselves to solve our problems.

“I know the blasphemy of them, who say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.” They had to endure false teachers who had claimed to be Jews but really were not. Satan has his own religious faith. He also has his churches, called the “synagogues of Satan.”

Any church that preaches a gospel other than the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a synagogue of Satan, regardless of what it is called.

There are two basic heresies that come from Satan, a false doctrine of Christ, and a mixing of law and grace. Almost every false religion that comes out of Christianity can be linked to one of these two heresies.<sup>10</sup>

**The Counsel of Christ:** The Christ of the churches counseled the church of Smyrna and those of that period to do two things: “fear nothing,” and “be faithful unto death.”

“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer.” The Lord predicted the suffering that would come to this church. The ten days of persecution the Lord speaks of are considered to be ten periods of persecution. This is not exactly clear; however, it is clear that the persecution was for a specific period of time. Some believe that this is referring to the last ten years of persecution under Diocletian. “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” It is interesting to note that the Lord knew persecution was coming and still allowed it to happen. This points out the fact that we have not been promised an easy road. The church at Smyrna was given to us to help us endure our times of trial and persecution. If they could maintain and keep the faith in the face of death certainly we should as well.

**The Challenge of Christ:** The challenge is given to those who have ears to “hear what the spirit saith to the churches.” The Lord is challenging them to respond correctly to their situation. Each of us is given a challenge and we must respond to trials in the proper manner. Thank God we do not have to face the trials of this church. However; their rewards will probably far exceed those of today.

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<sup>10</sup>

Ibid., p. 73.

We recognize this church period from A.D. 170 to A.D. 312, which doesn't help explain the ten days. However, the promise to this church is clear; "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the Second Death."

## The Church of Pergamos

### Revelation 2:12-17

Pergamum was an interesting city. The city was the capitol of Asia until the end of the first century. Due to its importance there were many different types of people and customs found in the city. Two of the most prominent religious systems of the city were the worship of Bacchus (the god of revelry) and the worship of Asclepius (the god of healing). At first glance you would think that the god of healing could possibly be something good, but this sect was devastating. Verse 13 twice refers to the city as the place where "Satan's throne is" or "where Satan dwelleth." This gives clear evidence to the fact that Satan is real and not just the result of someone's imagination. Babylon for a long time was acknowledged as the center for Satan's activities. When Babylon's glory began to decline and was left desolate, Satan looked for another location. Pergamum was probably selected due to the strong idolatrous religions. I have been in areas where you could simply feel the presence of evil. If you can imagine this condition and then magnify that feeling several times you would have some sense of what the believers at Pergamum had to deal with. This church period lasted from A.D. 312 to A.D. 606.<sup>11</sup>

Satan is not all knowing nor all powerful. He learns by his mistakes and makes adjustments. This is what took place with the church at Pergamum. For several hundred years Satan persecuted the church and it resulted in a stronger church. Satan learned his attack on the church of Smyrna that persecution only caused the church to flourish and continue in a perpetual state of revival. Diocletian was the last ruler to conduct a major campaign against the church. After Diocletian was removed from the scene Constantine ascended to the throne. His arrival marked a major change in the direction of the church.

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<sup>11</sup>

Larkin, *The Book of Revelation*, p. 21.

Roman history tells us that Constantine battled Maxentius for the throne after the death of Galerius. At this point Constantine was already fascinated with Christianity and allegedly saw a vision of a fiery cross in the sky and heard a voice saying "In this sign conquer."<sup>12</sup> Constantine believed he had received a message from God that if he accepted Christianity, he would have God on his side. Some believe that this was a true conversion experience; however, if you examine his life the evidence indicates that he had a very distorted view of Christianity or he had never been truly born again. There were some obvious benefits that came from his rule. The most important is the copying of fifty copies of the Holy Scriptures to be used by the churches. After Constantine solidified his control he turned his attention to the church. His attitude was one of protector. He issued an edict of toleration for Christianity and provided money for the operation of the church. Many of the existing temples were turned into churches. When the money was accepted by the church the pressure to appease was right behind. In order to please Constantine the church leaders began adopting customs that were parallel to pagan practices. The names were changed, but the practices were the same. What was thought to be relief from persecution turned into a greater problem. Over the next three centuries many pagan practices were adopted, which took away the fire and evangelistic emphasis.

The Commendation: The commendation falls into three categories.

1. "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's throne is."  
Satan learned during the first three centuries that attacking Christians directly would never conquer them; so, he changed his approach during the Pergamum period to one of indulgence and prosperity.

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<sup>12</sup> LaHay, *Revelation*, p.37.

2. "Thou holdest fast my name" their doctrine was sound, but the add-ons were a problem.

It was during this age that many pagan practices were mingled in. But, to their credit many important battles were fought and won. The Arian controversy was fought at the council of Nicea in A.D. 325. Arius and his followers denied the personal deity of our Lord. They thought He was great, just not God.

Because this church held fast to Christ's name, the organized church did not teach anything but the personal deity of Jesus Christ for over a thousand years. Satan did succeed in subverting this teaching by making it merely a doctrine rather than a vital relationship. However; most so-called Christian churches today at least pay lip service to the deity of Christ.

3. "... and hast not denied my faith." Antipas is referred to in verse 13 as one who sealed his testimony with his own blood.

**CONDEMNATION:** The condemnation of Christ to the church of Pergamum reveals that, although their theological doctrine was correct, their practical doctrines were radically evil. These false practices fell into two main categories.

1. The Doctrine of Balaam. Numbers, chapters 22-31 deal with Balaam and his sin. The basic problem was one of separation from the world. This was typical of the church of Pergamum that, although they were faithful to Christ's name and held the faith regarding theological doctrine, they did not remain separated from the world, but mingled in pagan practices. An illustration can be found in a British museum, they have a coin from the reign of Constantine. On one side are Christian emblems, on the other side emblems of heathen gods.

2. The Doctrine of the Nicolaitans. "So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate." Even though the Ephesian church rejected this doctrine, the church of Pergamum accepted it.

This practice is the strong ecclesiastical hierarchy ruling over the laity. This practice is the strong ecclesiastical hierarchy ruling over the laity. Laymen were given no voice in church affairs, but were required to obey blindly the decrees of the clergy. The clergy gradually drifted into isolation and elitism. The Lord stated that this was something He hated.

**The Counsel:** The message was simple and easy to understand: repent or be judged by the Word of God. This principle has never changed and applies to churches and individuals.

**The Challenge to the Church:** The Lord addresses the over comers (1 John 5:4) and is divided into two symbols full of meaning – "hidden manna" and "a white stone." The hidden manna is a symbol of heavenly food sent by God to the children of Israel in the wilderness. It typifies the spiritual food provided by God in His Word. It is an individual feeding, not a group function. Just as the children of Israel had to go and gather the manna in the wilderness, so the child of God in the Pergamum church age or in any church age is dependent on God for his individual spiritual supply of food.

The white stone is a little harder to understand, but not impossible. White refers to the righteousness of God. In this place it signifies that the individual here is righteous before God. In ancient times a white stone meant acquittal. The white stone then stands as a beautiful symbol of the editorial acquittal we gain through faith in the Lord Jesus.

The pagan influence on the church was gradual over the years. It was a step by step process, some here and some there, never so dramatic as to cause major objections. The

basics were still in place, but practices were changing. Gradually these changes took over the prominence in the church.<sup>13</sup>

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

The name Pergamum literally means "marriage" or "elevation." As the Church became married to the civil government it declined in spiritual blessing and power. Prior to Constantine the church was made up of independent local churches, working together whenever possible but not dominated by a central authority.

If you notice John in his vision sees seven attributes of Christ and in each church one of those attributes is revealed. To Pergamum He revealed the "sharp two-edged sword," which, refers to the Word of God. The answer for their problems could be found in the word.

The answer to every church need is found in the written word. Christ used the Word of God to sanctify His Church (John 17:17); to clean it (John 15:3); to bring it joy (John 15:11); and to bring it peace (John 16:33). If the church of Pergamum had obeyed the written word, the Dark ages may never have been.

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<sup>13</sup>

Ibid., p.37.

## The Church of Thyatira

### Revelation 2:18-29

The city of Thyatira was probably founded by Alexander three hundred years before Christ. It was a wealthy city in Macedonia, known for its outstanding dyes. It has been suggested that the city was reached with the gospel by members of the Ephesian church, possibly by Lydia (Acts 16:14). The outstanding plus for this church was its works rather than its doctrinal belief. The main complaint of our Lord was false teachers. This church became known as the Pagan Church of the Dark Ages, A.D. 600 to A.D. 1500.<sup>14</sup>

**Commendation:** “I know thy works, and love, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works, and the last to be more than the first.”

**Condemnation:** “Thou allowest that woman, Jezebel, who calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols.”

**Counsel:** “That which ye have already, hold fast till I come.”

**Challenge:** “And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers, even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star.”

The church age of Thyatira produced what is known in history as the Dark Ages. This was the time when paganism and Christianity began to merge. The more they merged together the darker it became. Jesus said, “I am the light of the world...” Paganism excludes Jesus and leads people into darkness. The church is the light of the world and during this time the light was all but extinguished. A glimmer was present, but it was a shadow of the former light. The trend started during the Pergamum period and was expanded by the

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

Thyatira period. More pagan changes and doctrine were added to the church during this period.

- A.D. 607- Boniface III was made the first POPE
- A.D. 709-Kissing the Pope's foot
- A.D. 786-Worshiping of images and relics
- A.D. 850-Use of "holy water" began
- A.D. 995-Canonization of dead saints
- A.D. 998-Fasting on Friday during Lent
- A.D. 1079-Celibacy of the priesthood
- A.D. 1090-Prayer beads
- A.D. 1184-The Inquisition
- A.D. 1190-The sale of indulgences
- A.D. 1215-Transubstantiation
- A.D. 1220-Adoration of the wafer (host)
- A.D. 1229-Bible was forbidden to laymen
- A.D. 1414-Cup forbidden to people at communion
- A.D. 1439-Doctrine of seven sacraments affirmed
- A.D. 1439-Doctrine of purgatory
- A.D. 1508-The Ave Maria approved
- A.D. 1534-Jesuit order founded
- A.D. 1545-Tradition granted equal authority with the Bible
- A.D. 1546-Apocryphal books put into the Bible
- A.D. 1854-Immaculate conception of Mary decreed
- A.D. 1870-Infallibility of the Pope declared
- A.D. 1950-Assumption of the Virgin Mary
- A.D. 1965-Mary proclaimed Mother of the church<sup>15</sup>

The church that resulted from the changes listed is very different from its beginning.

"Thyatira" comes from two words meaning "sacrifice" and "continual;" this is the root heresy that has resulted in many other false doctrines. This heresy denies the finished work of Christ on behalf of believers. This doctrine teaches a continuing sacrifice which produces such things as sacraments and praying for the dead, burning candles, holy water, etc. All heresy can be divided into two groups: a false concept of the personal deity of Christ or mixing works with faith. There are those who believe in the deity of Christ but teach "continual sacrifice." This rejection of our Lord's finished work creates a concept that

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p.44.

causes man to try to earn his own salvation by works, penance, indulgences, and many other strange ideas referred to in Revelation 2:24 as “the depths of Satan.”

“These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine bronze.” The selection of the title “Son of God” is very similar to the description in 1:13, where he is called the “son of Man.” “Eyes like a flame” and “feet like bronze” denotes that Christ is looking with an attitude of anger on the Church because she has permitted the false teaching to creep in and seduce “my servants.”

Christ’s Commendation: Our Lord’s commendation to the church of Thyatira comes in the form of six attributes. He commends them for their:

1. Works-showing that many throughout the ages have continued to faithfully serve the Lord.
2. Love – A love for mankind has characterized this church, in this time period most of the humanitarian work was done by the church.
3. Service – This is referring the means of ministry, what they did.
4. Faith – Although it is not the main characteristic it is still prominent.
5. Patience – They are praised for their endurance and it speaks of the long time period this church operated.
6. Works – And the last to be more than the first. Works is listed twice, showing that their works actually increased as time went on, but that was also an indicator of the false teaching taking a grip on the people, thinking that the works would help them into heaven. So naturally the last works were greater than the first.

The achievements of this church were amazing (except for the period of the inquisition). Even though the vast majority of the people were kept ignorant of the Scriptures, many

kept the faith as well as they were able. There are many outstanding believers during this period; Martin Luther, John Huss, John Wycliffe and many others.

**Christ's Condemnation:** "Notwithstanding, I have a few things against thee, because thou allowest that women, Jezebel, who calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols." The condemnation is two-fold:

- (1). He condemned her for allowing a false teacher to have an audience, leading some astray.
- (2). He condemned her for not repenting when she had the opportunity.

The Lord reached back into the Old Testament for the name of a woman who brought Baalism into Israel and perverted the nation. There are several possibilities concerning this woman,

- (1). She could be a woman teaching false doctrine and simply had the label "Jezebel" given to her;
- (2). She could actually be someone named "Jezebel." The best answer is the first possibility.

"Behold I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds." This church will go into great tribulation, probably referring to the tribulation period. This church is full of professing but not possessing believers (unsaved).

**Christ's Counsel:** Our Lord's counsel to the church at Thyatira was directed to the faithful individuals within the church who rejected the false doctrines. "Hold fast till I come" refers to the fact that many will not be taken in by all the false teachings, but will hold unto the foundational truths.

**Christ's Challenge:** "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him I will give power over the nations." There are two aspects of this challenge of our Lord to the individual over comer of this period:

- (1). He will be given a position of leadership during the Millennial Reign of Christ;
- (2). "And I will give him the morning star." This refers to Christ's presence with that individual forever. Revelation 22:16 states that Christ is the "bright and morning star." I John 5:1-4 states that "whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ" is an over comer.

When Rome introduced images and pictures into its churches for the people to bow down to it became idolatrous. This church extended from A.D. 606 to the Reformation A.D. 1520.

## REVELATION 3

### The Church of Sardis

**Revelation 3:1-6** *“And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”*

The city of Sardis was located in West Asia Minor about fifty miles east of Smyrna and thirty miles southeast of Thyatiara. It was a very important city located on the commercial trade route running east and west through Lydia. Most of the wealth of the city came from its textile manufacturing and dye industry and its jewelry trade. Most of the population practiced some form of pagan worship, and there were many different secret organizations. The local church there seems to have had an acceptable name in some areas but was for the most part dead. The temple of Artemis dating from the fourth century B.C. was a prominent fixture in this city and the ruins still exist today. The remains of the Christian church building, which had been discovered immediately adjacent to the temple indicate there was a witness of this pagan city known for its riotous living, or possibly due to the closeness of the two buildings shows that they were very tolerant of the pagan worship.

The main complaint from our Lord was the fact that they had a name that they were alive, but were in fact a dead church. The church continued its existence until the nineteenth century, but it never was prominent. Today only a small village known as Sart exists among the ruins./

**Commendations:** “I know thy works , that thou has a name that thou livest...”

**Condemnation:** “(thou are dead...I have not found thy works perfect before God.”

**Counsel:** “Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain, that they are ready to die...Remember, therefore, how thou has received and heard, and hold fast and repent.”

**Challenge:** “He that overcometh, thee shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.”

G. Campbell Morgan points out that there is a change in approach beginning with this letter: “There is a marked change in our Lord’s method of address to the church at Sardis. Hitherto He commenced with words of commendation. Here, He commenced with words of condemnation. In the other churches, evil had not been the habit, but rather the exception, and therefore it was possible first to commend. Here the case is reversed, and no word of commendation is addressed to the church as a church.”<sup>16</sup>

Sardis means “escaping ones” or those who “come out.” This name together with our Lord’s condemnation of the church, gives a very accurate description of the *Reformation churches*. They had ritual and majesty but no power. Form was accepted over substance. Our Lord sees through to the heart and this church was a shell of what it should have been. Barclay observes that a church is in danger of death when it begins to worship its

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<sup>16</sup> Morgan, The Letters of Our Lord, p. 109.

own past....when it is more concerned with forms than with life... when it loves systems more than it loves Jesus Christ...when it is more concerned with material than spiritual things.

The aspect of Christ's nature revealed to Sardis is very instructive; He selected two characteristics of Himself: seven spirits and seven stars. "These things saith he that hath the Seven spirits of God, and the seven star." The seven spirits refer to the sevenfold character of the Holy Spirit that rests upon Christ. If we look at Isaiah 11:2-5 we have a description of "the spirit of the Lord...the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord." There The Holy Spirit is described as coming from God and resting upon Christ. A similar description is found in Revelation 5:6, this portrait of Christ points out the qualities which ensure the righteous judgment of the wicked, and it is in this character that Christ is introduced to the church of Sardis.

**Christ's Commendation:** The church of Sardis received the shortest commendation from our Lord of any of the churches. In fact, some Bible scholars do not include any commendation for this church, but list the commendation as a condemnation because of the way it ends, "I know thy works."

The reason for what we do is often more important than what we actually do. The Lord knows the heart and can see the real purpose for what we do. The Lord knows the heart and can see the real purpose for what we do. There is no deceiving the Lord. Sardis had a name that it was alive, but the Lord clearly states that was not true, the church was dead. However; there were some who defied the organized church and stood firm on the foundational truths. Martin Luther was a prime example of one who sought the truth. He risked his own life to proclaim the errors of the organized church.

**Christ's Condemnation:** "Thou...art dead. This church put their trust in ceremony and tradition neutralizing the power of God. Instead of trusting God to meet their needs they trusted in material things. Christ said, "I have not found thy works perfect before God." The word perfect means "**complete.**" Although they had the outward appearance there was nothing inside. The reformation churches started out well, but failed to totally break with the errors that had slipped into the church over the last 1500 years.

**Christ's Counsel:** Our Lord stated five things that they needed to do.

1. "Be watchful" They needed to pay attention to their way of life and the things they practiced in their daily living. God has called us to live a life that is separated from the world.
2. "...and strengthen the things that remain." There were some that were still scripturally correct. They needed to get back to the basics and build on them; salvation by faith, the sinfulness of man and the authority of the Word of God.
3. "Remember therefore how thou has received and heard" They needed to get back to searching the scriptures of truth and depending on God rather than the state church.
4. "Hold fast" Do not let go of the truths of scripture that were clearly taught by our Lord and the apostles.
5. "...and repent" They needed to recognize the error they were involved in and turn from it.<sup>17</sup>

**Christ's Warning:** If, therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." Because the reformation churches have not heeded this warning they are going to be surprised when our Lord comes. "Thou hast

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<sup>17</sup> Larkin, The Book of Revelation. P.28

a few names even in Sardis that have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy.” As in every age the Reformation had individuals who were faithful to their Lord. They refused to defile themselves by compromising.

**Christ’s Challenge:** “He that overcometh” An over comer is one who sees through the false teachings to embrace the truth. The over comer is the born again believer. “The same shall be clothed with white raiment,” is a reference to the righteousness of Christ with which we are clothed when we are born again (2 Corinthians 5:21). “I will not blot his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.” This is the foundation for our security, our confidence that we will never leave us or forsake us. The Church at Sardis is a sad commentary on what can happen if a church is not obedient and vigilant in following the scriptures. The commendation simply refers to their reputation for being alive, when in fact they were dead. But, even in a dead church there were some things that remained true to God. The Lord always has those who are His in spite of the times or circumstances the general church finds itself in.

The deadness of this church can be seen in its formality, ritual without heart, programs without purpose. There was a form of Godliness without the power of God present among them. Yet there were still some who had not defiled themselves and had maintained their separation from the apostasy surrounding them. To these God promised that they shall walk with Him in white. In addition their names would not be blotted out of the Book of Life. The name Sardis means “escaping one,” or those who “come out” and thus a very good representation of the Reformation Churches. The Sardis period went from A.D. 1520 to approximately A.D. 1750.

## The Church of Philadelphia

**Revelation 3:7-13** *And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold I will make them to come to worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: I will write upon him my new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”*

It seems that the study of the churches has been a downward spiral. Each church seems to have deteriorated in its quality and practice. This church is a movement back to the original qualities of the first two churches. Just when one thinks that there is no hope the Lord intervenes and shows his power and control.

The church of Philadelphia was located in the center of a Greek community. This city was founded about 189 B.C. This was the youngest of the seven churches, founded by King Eumenes of Pergamum or his brother, Attalus II, who succeeded him as king. The city received its name from Attalus II's nickname *Philadelphus* (“brother lover”), which came

from his deep love of his brother Eumenes.<sup>18</sup> The church must have had a very strong impact on this city, for Philadelphia remained an independent Christian city until the close of the fourteenth century, when it was conquered by the Turks.<sup>19</sup>

The Lord Jesus Christ, the divine author of the seven letters, always introduces Himself with a description reflecting His character. In the previous five letters, those descriptions had come from the vision recorded in 1:12-17. But this description of Him is unique and not taken from the earlier vision. It is clearly Old Testament in character and features. The title “Holy One” is used in the New Testament as a messianic title for the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus’ identification of Himself as “He who is holy” is a statement of deity. Not only is Jesus Christ the Holy One; He also describes Himself as “He who is true.” Truth is used in combination with holiness to describe God in Revelation 6:10; 15:3; 16:7; 19:2, 11.

Next we read He is the One who has the key of David. David symbolizes the messianic office. A key in Scripture represents authority; whoever holds a key has control (cf. 1:18; 9:1; 20:1; Matthew 16:19). The term key of David also appears in Isaiah 22:22, where it refers to Eliakim, the steward or prime minister to Israel’s king. As the one who has the key of David, Jesus alone has the authority to determine who come into His kingdom, Jesus also has the keys to death and hell.

Next Jesus identifies Himself as “He who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens.” This description stresses His power to open and close doors of ministry, service, blessing, etc.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, p. 99.

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

The church had a little power. That was not a criticism on their weakness, but actually a compliment of their strength; the church was not large numerically (cf. Luke 12:32), but still had a huge impact on its city. In spite of its small size, spiritual power was abundant in the Philadelphia church.

This church was characterized by obedience; they kept the word of God. Christ went on to commend the church for not denying his name, despite the pressures they faced to do so. Finally, Christ commended the Philadelphia church because its members had kept the word of His perseverance. They simply endured everything patiently.

**Condemnation:** Not a single word!!!

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

He commanded them to stand fast, continue as they had been until the end. Those who continue in the faith to the end prove the reality of their faith, (Matthew 10:22; 24:13).

According to I John 2:19, those who abandon the faith reveal that they were never truly saved to begin with: *“They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.”*

As He ended the letter to the believers at Philadelphia, Christ promised four eternal blessings to the one who overcomes (another name for a Christian; I John 5:5). The first promise is that Christ will make him a pillar in the temple of God, and he will not go out from it anymore. A pillar represents stability, permanence, and immovability. Pillars can

also represent honor, in pagan temples they were often carved in a way as to honor a certain deity. The promise here is one of honor in the temple of God (heaven).

The second promise to the one who overcomes is that He will write on him the name of His God. That shows ownership, indicating that all true believers belong to God.

Third, Christ promises to write on believers the name of the city of My God the New Jerusalem, described in Revelation 21. This is another indication of security and glory for the believers.

Finally, Christ promises believers His new name. Christ's name represents the fullness of His person. The exhortation He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches closes all seven letters. Believers must obey the word God has given to us if we are to receive the blessings God wants to pour out upon us. Faithfulness, loyalty and patience should be the characteristic of all believers throughout all ages.

**Challenge:** The name Philadelphia literally means "brotherly love." Our Lord selected that church to describe the kind of church age that was initiated around the year 1750 and will continue until the Tribulation. Just as Sardis came out of Thyatira, so the Philadelphia age came out of Sardis. The Reformation Church became dead and cold as a state church. Philadelphia was full of life and expectation as the word of God was preached with a new vitality. It was during this age that great revivals broke out in Europe and the British Isles, spreading even to America. These revivals produced what is now called the modern missionary movement.<sup>20</sup>

It was the fervent preaching of the Word of God that touched the heart of William Carey. He believed the Word when it said "Go ye into all the world." Carey was the first modern day missionary. In 1793 his burden for souls moved him to action and he went to India.

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<sup>20</sup> LaHaye, *Revelation Illustrated*, p. 58.

The Lord said, "I will set before thee an open door." Others who followed Carey were Adoniram Judson, David Livingston, Jonathan Goforth, and thousands of other people going out to Africa, China, Japan, Korea, India, South America, and the Islands of the Sea. It is clear that the Lord was pleased with this church and gives vindication and preservation.

1. Vindication: "Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee."
2. Reservation: "Because thou has kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." I do not think this statement could be any clearer; the church will not be present for the tribulation period.

At the heart of this church is Bible teaching. Where the Word of God is taught there is life and vitality. People find meaning and purpose for living. This church stands as a clear alternative to the Sardis and Laodicean churches.

## The Church of Laodicea

**Revelation 3:14-22** *“And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness of beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him, and will sup withhim, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”*

The name means “Justice of the People” and this is the last of the seven churches. This church is the most disappointing of the seven. Our Lord speaks about totally discarding this church because it was neither hot nor cold.

Laodicea was a wealthy city about forty miles from Ephesus. Steeped in Greek culture and learning, it was a thriving center of industry and trade. The local congregation must have been fairly well off financially, as evidenced by the fact that among present day ruins are three churches dating back to the early days of Christianity. In spite of the fact that three different churches were known to have existed there, nothing is known concerning the

ministry of these churches in regards to preaching the gospel. If you remember the impact of the Ephesus church was felt worldwide.

**Commendation:** Not one word of commendation is spoken.

**Condemnation:** “Thou art neither cold or hot; I would thou were cold or hot. So, then, because thou are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”

**Counsel:** “I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with salve, that thou mayest see.”

**Challenge:** “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne.” It should be kept in mind that the first three church ages differ from the last four in that each of the former stopped at the beginning of the next church. Ephesus was replaced by Smyrna, Smyrna was replaced by Pergamum, and Pergamum by Thyatira. Thyatira, Sardis, and Philadelphia are still with us today. The Laodicean church comes from the previous three and adds to the total number currently active. The Laodicean church age began around 1900 and is increasing in intensity at a scary rate. Laodicea easily fits into the apostate ecumenical church that is growing worldwide.<sup>21</sup>

Only one of the three titles our Lord used to describe His nature to the Laodicean church is found in John’s vision of chapter one. It is the first one mentioned by John. “Amen” is a Hebrew word which means “True,” and carries with it the meaning of finality. In this sense, Christ is the final truth. That is, all God’s revelations to man about Himself are found in the person of Jesus Christ. If you want to know more about God, all you have to do is study

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<sup>21</sup> Larkin, *The Book of Revelation*, p. 21.

the life of Jesus Christ. Dr. Merrill C. Tenny has stated it this way, “Christ is the seal of God’s revealed truth, the finality of all that the Father has spoken. Beyond Him, God has nothing more to say to man.”<sup>22</sup>

“...the faithful and true witness...” The Lord Jesus is truth and the faithful witness of truth. Because He knows the end from the beginning, His word can be accepted as absolute authority for two reasons. He is God, and “God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him” (John 3:34). In other words, nothing was held back from him.

“...the beginning of the creation of God.” This title does not teach, as some would have us believe, that Jesus is the first of God’s creation. On the contrary, when considered in the light of the Word and parallel passages (Colossians 1:15), this could be translated, “the beginner of the creation of God.” It is obvious that all things are created by him; and without him was not anything made that was made,” and Colossians 1:16, 17, “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers—all things were created by him, and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.”

Taken in reverse order, the three titles here selected by our Lord present Him as the beginner of creation, the faithful witness of everything which emanates from God, and the final authority (as He certainly will be at His second coming).

Christ’s Commendation: The church of Laodicea has the distinction of being the only one whose conduct was so reprehensible that even the Christ of Glory, who knew all about her, could not find one thing upon which to commend her. This is our twenty-first century church.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Tenny, *The Book of Revelation*, p. 116.

<sup>23</sup> Walvoord, *The Revelation*, p. 100.

**Christ's Condemnation:** They are disgustingly lukewarm. It was not "hot," meaning "zealous of good works," nor was it "cold," meaning "lifeless." Instead it was "lukewarm" or indifferent. What a description of the modern-day church, all kinds of organizations, programs, committees, activities, but no power. The Holy Spirit warned us through Paul in 2 Timothy 3:5 that in the last days many would be characterized as "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from such turn away." This church is more interested in social action than Gospel action, more interested in reformation than transformation, more interested in planning than praying. The Lord lays no claim to this church even though she may make claims to Him.

They are deceived about themselves, "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." All deception is bad, but self-deception is the worse.

Laodicea said of herself, "I am rich, and increased with good, and have need of nothing." Material abundance is not conducive to spiritual vitality. The Laodicean church of today is "rich." Her churches are the finest. She has fabulous architecture, million-dollar buildings, large fund raising organizations and a large unconsecrated church membership. The real test of any church is: Does it glorify Jesus Christ? This church age does not.

The plight of the Laodicean church when she stands before Jesus Christ in the judgment will be the same as that of the group of religionists described by our Lord Himself in Matthew 7:22-23; "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out demons? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

The true state of the Laodicean church can be seen by noting what Christ said to this church. To our Lord the church was “wretched and miserable.” Even though they abounded with material possessions they were poor in what really counted a personal relationship to Christ.

Although they thought they knew and understood through their sophisticated education and experience, they did not understand the ways of God. The churches today are trying to solve the social issues through education instead of transformation. Until a man’s heart is changed you will never change his actions.

The modern church is wrapped in everything possible; religion, burning candles, waving symbols, offering chants, reading creeds, but missing the most important ingredient, “Real Faith.”

Our Lord told this church to do four things, all of which are part of the salvation experience, indicating that this group of people were not born-again believers.

1. “I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in fire, that thou mayest be rich.”

Eternal riches are not seen in material possessions. They are called poor, yet told to buy something. In Isaiah 55:1 we read God’s invitation to men to come and buy what they need “without money and without price.” Salvation is not purchased through man’s efforts. It has been purchased for man by the death of Christ on Calvary’s cross. Therefore the poorest of the poor can pay the price, which is to humble ones self, calling upon the name of the Lord and believing by faith.

2. “I counsel thee to buy of me....white raiment.” This indicates the righteousness required to come into God’s presence (referred to in 3:5). He knew their nakedness and their need for the “white raiment” that represents

righteousness. In Isaiah 61:10 we read of God's provision of "garments of salvation" and the "robe of righteousness" as a bride groom would wear.

Righteousness is imputed to men when they call upon the name of the Lord and are saved.

3. "...anoint thine eyes with salve, that thou mayest see." This points out that we are blind to spiritual matters. No matter how brilliant a person may be in the flesh, unless the Holy Spirit is present spiritual matters will be a mystery. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (I Corinthians 2:14).
4. "Be zealous therefore, and repent." This lukewarm, indifferent materialistic church was challenged by our Lord, on the basis of His love for them even in that lost state, to repent of their sins and turn to Him.<sup>24</sup>

Christ's message to Laodicea contains a most interesting counsel that is specifically directed to individuals of this church age. Although the church has excluded Him, those who are willing to receive Him are given this special invitation which is also applicable to individuals of all church ages: "Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hears my voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." This verse of Scripture has been beautifully described by one saint of God as the "simplest explanation of the plan of salvation encompassed in so brief a statement within the lids of God's word." The Bible says, "Out of the heart are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23). We still find Christ knocking at the door of this emotional center called the heart, asking to come in. He does not force His way, but patiently knocks and waits.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

For almost two thousand years our Lord has faithfully, patiently, wonderfully knocked on the door of man's heart. There are four ways that God knocks on the door of your heart.

1. Through His Word. The Lord said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24).
2. Through His People. The Scriptures say, "How shall they hear without a preacher?" We usually think of great preachers like Billy Sunday, D.L. Moody, and many others, but God uses ordinary, often obscure people to tell others.
3. Through His Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus made it clear in John 14 that He sent the Holy Spirit to convict the heart of man of "sin, righteousness, and coming judgment." Many a person has awakened in the middle of the night because of the conviction of the Holy Spirit.
4. Through providence. Many a person who has had a near death experience recognizes that he was saved by the providence of God. There are different types of knocks from God on your heart, have you responded to that knock at your door?

The challenge here is similar to the other churches; it is directed to the "overcomers." "He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." The message to the churches is clear, there is the right way to come to God and then every other way. All the good intentions in the world will not compensate for error, neglect, stubbornness, hypocrisy, indifference or rejection of God's truth. There is one way to God and that is through His Son, Jesus Christ. "Broad is the road that leads to destruction and many there are that follow it, but narrow is the road that leads to life and godliness, and few there are

that find it” (Matthew 7:14). If man refuses to voluntarily open the door of his heart, he rejects the one who is knocking, Jesus Christ.

Looking at history and the progression of the seven churches it is easy to identify the churches of today with the Laodicea Church. There is a form of godliness but no power, function with no true goal. The counsel to this church is plain, find what is pure and grab hold of it, repent open your eyes and see things as they appear to the Lord. This church period started about A.D. 1900 and is still going on, waiting for the Lord’s return. What we see with the seven churches is a steady decline in the power and effectiveness of the church. As the Laodicean Period closes the “Church Age,” the Church disappears at the end of chapter three, and Israel once again becomes prominent in the working of God on earth.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 29.

## Revelation 4

### The Things Which Must Be Hereafter

Chapter four begins the final phase of the book and is the largest portion of the Revelation. From this point forward there is no mention of the church, giving a strong argument that the rapture of the church takes place at the end of chapter three. The tribulation begins when the church is removed.

Having heard the voice of God in chapter one, John once again hears God speak to him in a very dramatic fashion, in a voice that is described as a trumpet. Chapter four begins the third and final division of the book. Chapter one described things which were (past tense), chapters two and three the things which are (present tense), and now we are beginning the things which shall be hereafter (future).

John is told to come up, as if he had the ability to transport himself to heaven. What we are seeing is an invitation by God to John. He is not the only one to get a glimpse of heaven, Paul was caught up and Ezekiel also saw the glory of heaven, but John describes it in much greater detail than the previous two.

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

### The Heavenly Throne

Notice some interesting items mentioned in verse one: a door and it was open, then a voice sounded similar to a trumpet. The message of the one speaking appears to be the Lord Jesus himself and the scene has shifted from earth to heaven. The central theme of John’s vision is the throne of God, mentioned 11 times in this chapter. John describes for us: who is on the throne, what is going on around the throne, what comes from the throne,

what stands before the throne, which is in the center and around the throne and what is directed toward the throne.

**Chapter 4:2**, “*And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.*”

John immediately brings our attention to the throne; the throne was obviously very impressive to John. Seeing heaven for the first time there must have been many things that were exciting to see, but the one thing that stood above everything else was the throne. The throne was set in heaven, indicating that God’s rule is unshakable and unmovable. I believe this points to the fact that God is in control of the universe.

While John does not name the one on the throne, it is clear who He is. He is the One Isaiah saw in his vision: “*I saw the Lord sitting on a throne high and lifted up, with His robe filling the temple*” (Isaiah 6:1). Micah also saw Him on His glorious throne: “*I saw the Lord sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right and on His left*” (I Kings 22:19). “God reigns over the nations,” declared the psalmist, “God sits on His holy throne” (Psalm 47:8). Daniel also saw a vision of the heavenly throne, (Daniel 7:9-10).

The one sitting on the throne is *God the Father* and not Christ, (cf. 5:1&7). Christ is seen taking the book from the hand of the one on the throne, (cf. Ezekiel 1:4, 26-28).

**Revelation 4:3**, “*And he that sat was to look upon like jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.*” The jasper stone and sardius appearance is similar to the flashing light, blazing fire, and bright colors in Ezekiel’s vision.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>

Walvoord, *The Revelation*, p.104.

Revelation 21:11 describes *jasper* as “crystal-clear,” probably this would be what we call a diamond. The glory of God is associated with the brightness and beauty of a diamond. This could also refer to the purity of God.

A *sardius* is a fiery, blood red ruby. This also is part of the description of God’s glory. It may also refer to the wrath of God, or the redemptive work of Christ on the cross. Another possible connection between these two stones, the *sardius* and *jasper*, could be the fact that they are the first two stones on the high priest’s breastplate (Exodus 28:17-20), representing the firstborn (Reuben) and the lastborn (Benjamin) of the twelve sons of Jacob. While they represent the first and the last, we must conclude that the ones in between are to be counted as well. It is important to note that God the Father is not described as a person with human characteristics but is described in terms of colors. While He is said to be sitting on the throne, it is the colors that impress John. The intent is toward the glory of God rather than the detailed description of Him.

### **The Four and Twenty Elders**

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

John’s attention is now drawn to the twenty-four thrones upon which the twenty-four elders are seated. The term “seats” is properly understood as “thrones.” The elders were seated, clothed in white and were wearing crowns. The first question at this point is “who are these elders?” Some see them as a representative body of all the saints of all ages. Others regard them as representative only of the church, The Body of Christ. Still a third view is that they represent an order of angels. It seems clear that they are a representative group. The Old Testament speaks of the priesthood as being twenty-four orders of priests. There were actually thousands

of priests in the time of David, and not all of them could minister at the same time. They were divided into twenty-four groups with a priest assigned to represent his group. When there was a meeting the twenty-four priest would meet, but they spoke for the entire group of thousands. Their description is helpful to determine who they are: They are clothed in white raiment and having on their heads crowns of gold.

There are two kinds of crowns in the book of Revelation, involving two different Greek words. One is the crown of a ruler or a sovereign. The other is a crown of a victor, such as the winner of a contest, like a race. The word here describes the crown of a victor not a sovereign. The Elders already have their crowns of gold as victors.<sup>27</sup>

If this passage is regarded as chronologically before the time of the tribulation which is described in the following chapters, it would eliminate angels, at this point they have not been judged and rewarded since their judgment seems to come later. For the same reason the elders do not seem to be a proper representation of Israel, for Israel's judgment also seems to come at the end of the tribulation. Only the church, which is raptured before chapter four, has finished their work and is in heaven, ready for their reward of crowns.

Crowns are never promised to angels, nor are angels ever seen wearing them. Christ did promise a crown to the loyal believers at Smyrna: "*Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life*" (2:10). Paul wrote of a crown in I Corinthians 9:25, and again in 2 Timothy 4:8. Peter mentioned a crown in 1 Peter 5:4. The only question remaining is which humans are represented here. The number 24 represents completion, the order of priests were number by 24, the order of singers in the temple was 24 (I Chronicles 25). The position of some is to divide this group between the Old Testament saints and the church age saints.

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<sup>27</sup>

Ibid.

**Revelation 4:5**, *“And out of the throne preceded lightnings and thundering and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.”*

John now turns to the seven lamps of fire which are seen burning before the throne.

These are identified as the “*Seven Spirits of God*” mentioned earlier in 1:4 and 3:1. These are best understood as a representation of the Holy Spirit in a sevenfold way rather than seven individual spirits which would require that they be understood as seven angels. Usually the Holy Spirit is not humanly visible unless embodied in some way. When the Holy Spirit descended on Christ after His baptism, the people saw a dove which provided evidence of the Holy Spirit. In a similar way on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit appeared in the form of “cloven tongues like fire” (Acts 2:3). The seven lamps of fire are the way John sees the presence of the Holy Spirit.

All three persons of the trinity are present, each in a particular form. The sevenfold representation of the Spirit is described for us in Isaiah 11:2 and Zechariah 4:1-10.

In Isaiah we see, wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge, reverence, and deity. In Zechariah we see the display of power. In Revelation 1:4 grace and peace; and here fiery judgment.

**Revelation 4:6**, *“And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.”*

The sea of glass like crystal is not explained for us by John. Since there is no sea in heaven, this must have some symbolic meaning for us. Heaven is a bright even brilliant place. What John saw was a large pavement of glass, shining. Exodus 24:10 records a similar scene when Moses and Aaron, and the elders of Israel “*saw the God of Israel; and under His feet there appeared to be a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the sky itself*” (Ezekiel 1:22, 26). The

bottom line here is simply this, no explanation is given and any conclusions on our part are just speculation.

### **The Four Beasts**

The four beasts are interesting, if not a little terrifying. The translation “beasts” is not really accurate and should be changed to “living ones.” In the Greek the word used is “*zoon*,” which means, “living ones.” A different word, “*therion*” meaning “a beast,” like a wild animal, is used in Revelation 13 to speak of the beast coming out of the sea. The word here denotes a quality of life and the things attributed to life.<sup>28</sup>

Ezekiel 10:15 identifies these four living beings: “*Then the cherubim rose up. They are the living beings that I saw by the river Chebar.*” The four living creatures are to be understood as cherubim, a high order of angels associated with God’s power (1 Samuel 4:4; 2 Samuel 6:2; 22:11; Psalm 80:1; 99:1). The fact that the creatures are full of eyes is taken as significant of the omniscience and omnipresence of God who sees all and knows all. They are respectively a lion, a calf, a man, and an eagle, all different aspects of divine majesty. All of these are supreme in their respective arenas. The lion is king of beasts and represents majesty and omnipotence. The calf or ox, representing the most important of domestic animals, signifies patience and continuous labor. Man is the greatest of God’s creatures, especially in intelligence and rational power. The eagle is greatest among birds and is symbolic of sovereignty and supremacy.

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<sup>28</sup>

LaHaye, *Revelation*, p.81.

## REVELATION 5

### The Seven Sealed Book

**Revelation 5:1** , *“And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.”*

Chapter five continues with the vision of the throne in heaven. John is about to introduce the book that contains the future. This book is really a scroll that is held by God, who is sitting on the throne. The scroll is written on both sides, and appears that the contents are important to everyone present. The scroll becomes the central theme for this chapter. Notice several things: the scroll is sealed with seven seals in succession. Stauffer points out that the Roman law required a will to be sealed seven times as illustrated in the wills left by Augustus and Vespasian for their successors. John points us to the scroll by a pronouncement of a strong angel. The Greek word here for “strong” means *“mighty or powerful.”* This is no small announcement, as seen by the fact that a special angel is used to make the announcement.

J.B. Smith makes the following observation:

“The vision opens with three notes of emphasis: a strong angel-only two other references are made to a strong angel in the book, 10:1 and 18:21 (Greek). The angel proclaims-not merely says. The word signifies to announce as a herald. With a loud voice denotes urgency and great concern...Who is the strong angel making the challenge? The answer is, doubtless, Gabriel, the one who ordered the closing and sealing of the book of Daniel.”

**Revelation 5:2-4** *“And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.”*

The challenge is given, “Who is worthy to open the scroll?” There is only silence; John states that there is no one on earth, in heaven, or under the earth able to open the book. The word “able” actually means, “have the power or authority.” John shares that he wept because no one was able to open the book. The purpose of this dramatic presentation was to show to John the importance of the contents of the book.

W.A. Criswell explains why John wept:

*“John’s tears represent the tears of all God’s people through all the centuries. Those tears of the Apostle John are the tears of Adam and Eve, driven out of the Garden of Eden, as they bowed over the first grave, as they watered the dust of the ground with their tears over the silent, still form of their son, Abel. Those are the tears of the children of Israel in bondage as they cried unto God in their affliction and slavery. They are the tears of God’s elect through the centuries as they cried unto heaven. They are the sobs and tears that have been wrung from the heart and soul of God’s people as they looked on their silent dead, as they stand beside their open graves, as they experience in the trials and sufferings of life, heartaches and disappointments indescribable.”<sup>29</sup>*

John did not have to weep long. God was about to show him some amazing things that would encourage and strengthen him. John wept because he saw first hand the evil that sin produces and wanted to see and end to Satan’s power. John knew that the Messiah had been slain. Jerusalem destroyed, and the Jewish people massacred and scattered. He was aware that the church faced intense persecution and was struggling with sin.

**Revelation 5:5-7**, *“And one of the elders saith unto me, weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals*

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<sup>29</sup> Criswell, *Expository Sermons on Revelation*, p. 184.

*thereof. And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.”*

One of the Elders comes to John and tells him to stop crying. It is so easy for us to get to the point of tears simply because we can only see what is in front of us. The future is hidden and we often fail to remember that God is in charge and the future belongs to Him.

John now notices a new figure in front of the throne. No ordinary human and no angel can redeem mankind and the rest of creation, but there is a redeemer, the Lion from the tribe of Judah. The Jews expected a powerful and mighty leader to come forth and deliver them from the Roman occupation. It was partly because Jesus failed to take a stand against this Roman occupation that the nation rejected him. Jesus offered a spiritual kingdom (cf. John 6:15; 18:36), no supernatural power was displayed against the Romans. Unfortunately the Jews failed to understand what was happening; Jesus was going to establish his kingdom, but not then.

The Scriptures seem to distinguish between the opening of the book and the actual authority to break the seven seals. Remember under Roman law, anyone who broke an official seal without being the one authorized to do so, was subject to death. The more seals the more important the document, seven was the maximum number of seals applied to any document. This scene shows that Christ is completely worthy and has full authority to open the book. John now composes himself in anticipation of the opening of the book, but is surprised by what catches his eye next. The lamb is described as having been slain and is now alive. There are seven horns and seven eyes.

J. Vernon McGee contrasts the lion and the lamb characteristics of Christ; he states that the lion character refers to His second coming, since the lion speaks of his majesty. As lion He is sovereign; as lion He is Judge. The lion speaks of the government of God. As lamb He is Savior; the lamb speaks of His meekness at His first coming. As a lamb He is judged. This goes directly to God's Grace.<sup>30</sup>

In the Book of Revelation Jesus is referred to as the Lion only once, here in 5:5, but is called the lamb over and over. The emphasis certainly is focused on his sacrificial work at Calvary. The horns seem to point to the power of a King (cf. Daniel 7:24; Rev 13:1). The seven eyes are identified as "the Seven Spirits of God" sent out into all the earth (cf. Zech.3:9; 4:10). Seven is the number of perfection, and symbolizes the Lamb's complete and absolute power. The seven eyes indicate perfect omniscience and complete understanding and knowledge. These eyes represented the seven spirits of God, while this could refer to angels, it more likely is a description of the Holy Spirit.

**Revelation 5:7**, *"And he came and took the book."* This is what John had been waiting for, the opening of the book. It is not clear whether or not John understood what was in the book, but he desperately wanted to see the book opened. The time has now come for the Lord God to claim what is rightfully His.

**Revelation 5:8-14**, The scene in heaven is one that will be marvelous to behold, true worship will fill heaven. All those around the throne will rejoice and praise God, singing and playing instruments before the throne. This is the beginning of the end, the final stage of God's plan is about to unfold. The praise comes from the awareness that sin and rebellion are about to be put down in a mighty way. A glorious return is near; the earth will soon receive her rightful king. We see by the worship of the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures that the

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<sup>30</sup> McGee, *Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee, Biblesoft CD.*

Lamb must be the Lord Jesus Christ. Harps are present as symbols of divine worship, and the prayers of the saints are poured out. The same Lamb of God who suffered at the hands of sinful men and bore the agony of the cross is now given the proper worship that is due Him. Clearly our prayers are important to God; they have a place of prominence in this scene. The mention here of the prayers shows that God does not neglect nor overlook the prayers directed toward Him. In fact they are safely stored in golden vials.

**Revelation 5:9-10**, *“They sang a new song, saying, Thou Art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”*

There was some question as to the identity of the twenty-four elders in chapter 4. In this section we have some additional information about them. Here we are told that the blood redeemed them. They have been made kings and priests vs. 10. This could not apply to any angels, but must be redeemed men. There is now a “New Song.” This song would not have been possible prior to our Lord’s death and resurrection. The whole world has and will benefit from Calvary, people from every tribe and nation on earth will be saved.

Revelation 5:11-12, *“And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy I the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessings.”*

John once again sees something that catches his eye. Imagine how overwhelming it must have been for John to focus on just one thing. This time John hears something, “many angels.” The chorus is growing, first the elders, then the four living creatures and now the

angels. The description given is simply indicating a host that cannot be numbered by John. This is no timid chorus of angels they are loud. They are not ashamed to honor the Lord or be identified with Him. Their message is once again directed at His sacrifice for mankind.

“Worthy is the Lamb,” the message is shouted for all to hear.

The sevenfold attributes ascribed to the Lamb sum up their worship: power, riches, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, and blessing.

**Revelation 5:13-14**, *“And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them heart I saying, Blessings, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.”*

The time is coming when the whole world will acknowledge Him. This will be the fulfillment of Psalm 69:34; *“Let heaven and earth praise Him, the seas and everything that moves in them.”*

John Walvoord states:

“Revelation puts earth and heaven in proper perspective, the scenes of earth ending in the tragic denouncement of the great tribulation, and the scenes of heaven fulfilled both in the millennial glory and in the eternal state. The true occupation of the child of God should be one of praise and worship of the God of glory while awaiting the fulfillment of His prophetic Word.”<sup>31</sup>

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Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, p. 121.

## REVELATION 6

### The First Seal

**Revelation 6:1**, *“And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, come and see.”*

As this passage unfolds John hears the noise of thunder, a symbolic token of a coming storm.

This revelation is unfolding a series of successive events. The six seals seem to unfold successively in a chronological order. Out of the seventh seal comes the seven trumpets and out of the seventh trumpet come the seven vials or bowls of the wrath of God.

It is interesting to note that the Lamb opens the seals, the angels sound the trumpets, and God Himself pours out the vials. Remember that the trumpets and bowls are all included in the seventh seal.

One of the four beasts says to John come and see. The first four seals involve horses and riders.

The first seal 6:1-2:

1. White horse –success
2. Bow – Military power, lack of arrows indicates a diplomat, peace maker
3. Crown – similar to victors crown
4. Conquering-temporary success

The second seal 6:3-4:

1. Red horse – takes peace from the earth (war)
2. Having established himself he now reveals his true colors
3. Revelation 13:7, he makes war with the saints, marks the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the tribulation.
4. See I Thessalonians 5:1-3, The false delusion of peace prior to the rapture

The third seal 6:5-6:

1. Black horse –famine
2. There will be a great loss of food supply because of the wars
3. Rationing of food will be everywhere, approximately 1/8 of the normal supply of food will be available

The fourth seal 6:7-8:

1. Pale horse – death
2. Authority over ¼ of the earth's population to destroy it
3. C.F. Rev 9:18 another 1/3 killed, totals ½ the world's population

4.

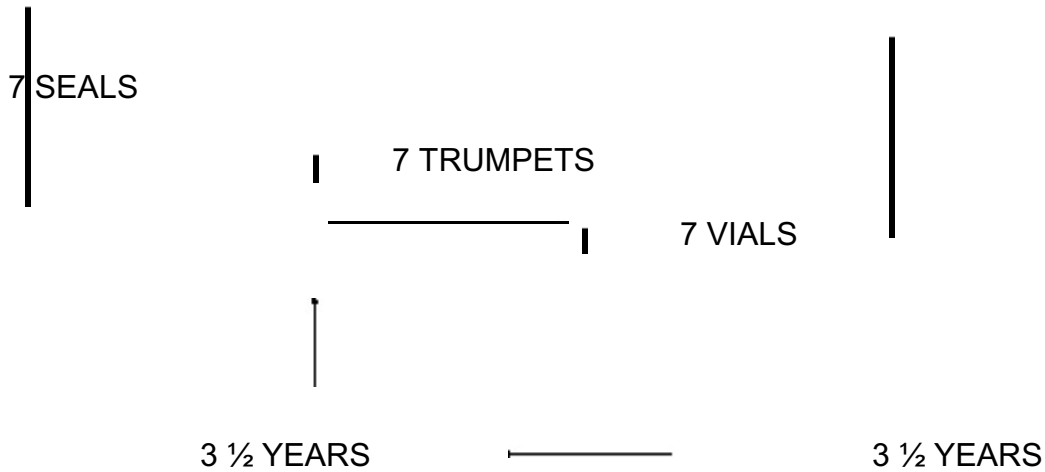


1/3 of what is left

The fifth seal 6:9-11, John sees the souls of the slain under the alter, they are martyred tribulation saints. Notice the Rapture took the saints out of the way in chapter 3, because vengeance is asked by the victims. Notice the persecutors are still on the earth. The answer is, "More must die before the end."

## CHRONOLOGY OF JUDGEMENT

### DANIEL'S 70 WEEKS



Support for this crescendo effect can be seen in the in The purpose of the tribulation period is the preparatory purging process to get Israel ready to receive the Messiah crease in trouble as seen in the 6<sup>th</sup> seal (6:12-17). Trumpets come out of the seventh seal, the last 3 trumpets are called “Woes” showing greater judgment then the first four (8:13; 9:12; 11:14). The seven vials finish the anger of God-implying that they stem from the trumpets (10:7; 15:1; 16:1). The last vial says “It is done” (16:17).

## Revelation 7

### The Second Seal

**Revelation 7:1**, *“And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.”*

The Jews are sealed during the first half against total destruction. If they were not protected the Anti-Christ would kill them all. Many other Jews may be saved during this time, but only the 144,000 are sealed and protected from death. There are certain chapters that provide fill in material that are vital to the complete picture. These chapters provide additional material to the chronology of the seals, trumpets and vials. Chapters 7, 12-14, 17-19 are all additional content. Chapter 12 tends to move back and forth. It is clear that a large number of Jews and Gentiles will accept Christ as Savior after the rapture. Though these are never described by the term “church,” they are constantly called saints. One question which needs to be asked is this, “How can anyone get saved in the tribulation if the Holy Spirit is taken out of the world?” The ministry of the Holy Spirit will not cease during the tribulation, but it will be different. The Holy Spirit probably will function in a similar manner as existed prior to the church age.

**Revelation 7:2**, *“And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea.”*

The reason for calm is clear as John sees another angel. Some people think this other angel is Jesus but that is not correct, it is *allos* (another) which simply indicates another angel in numerical sequence, another of the same kind as the first four angels.<sup>32</sup> This angel had the seal of the living God. This often was a ring from which Kings would prove ownership and

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<sup>32</sup> MacArthur, *New Testament Commentary*, p.218.

authority. The seal showed authority to provide protection. This seal was not from an earthly king, but from the living God. With this seal the angel is going to identify those who belong to God.

The four angels had to wait before turning loose their destructive power until the servants of the living God were sealed (protected).

**Revelation 7:3**, “Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.”

When these four angels get going the whole earth is going to feel the pain, this group of sealed servants is the best, the cream of the crop, the faithful. They will be powerful messengers during a devastating time. They are also described as having been “*purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb*” (14:4). They also will be the most effective missionaries the world has ever seen.

### **The Third Seal**

**Revelation 7:4**, “*And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.*”

These will be the first to be redeemed as part of the nation of Israel. Some try to say this is the church, but it just does not fit. Israel is distinct and separate from the church. There are several New Testament passages people used to say Israel and the church are the same, but it is a stretch.

The fact remains that there is no clear passage where the church is called Israel. This problem is clear when you realize that the church would then have to be split into 12 tribes to match up with this passage in Revelation.

There is absolutely no reason not to take the 144,000 literally.

## **The Fourth Seal**

**Revelation 7:7**, *“When He opened the fourth seal, “I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, “Come and see.” So I looked, and behold a pale horse.”*

The pale horse represents death which is the natural result of famine and war.

## **The Fifth Seal**

**Revelation 7:9**, *“ After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.”*

The “after this” introduces a new vision by John. John saw a great multitude, this may have startled him, notice they were in white robes and held palms in their hands. The white robes indicate salvation, celebration, the palms victory. This is not the same group as the 144,000, this group is in heaven, and the other is on the earth. The first group was just from the nation of Israel, this group comes from all nations

**Revelation 7:10**, *“And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.”*

The constant shouting directed in praise to God would appear that the Lord delights in loud praise (Ps. 66:1; 100:1). Salvation is the theme of their praise.

## **The Sixth Seal**

**Revelation 7:11-12**, *“ And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.”*

This group was large but not alone, the angels were present as well, the elders and the four beasts. All of them are here worshiping God. This is one very large worship service; imagine the volume this will create, the heavens will rumble and shake.

**Revelation 7:13-14**, *“And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, what are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? 14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”*

Here we have a rhetorical question by one of the elders. He certainly knew the answer but wanted to bring John’s attention to it. The question John asks is this, “Who are they” and “Where did they come from?” These are tribulation saints. No one literally can make anything white by washing it in blood. Here is a spiritual truth being shown in figurative language. We are made spiritually pure by Christ’s shed blood.

**Revelation 7:15**, *“Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.”*

They have the privilege of being in the presence of God. Here is another point that supports the fact that the church is gone from earth and in heaven. The tribulation saints are viewed as a complete and separate group of people. They are identified as those who came out of the great tribulation. They are said to serve Him day and night before the throne, this is not a picture of the church age saints who are described as the bride of Christ.

**Revelation 7:16-17**, *“They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”*

This is a comforting statement to a group who has suffered terribly; there will be no more pain or sorrow for this group. They are before the throne, a place of prominence and honor. They will not suffer from hunger, thirst or the heat of the sun. This is probably a reference to the things which they suffered on earth.

## The Seventh Seal

**Revelation 8:1**, *“And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.”*

Notice that there is a reference to time in heaven, the “space of half an hour.” The silence here is in direct contrast to all the shouting, praising God and singing. Could it be the shock of what was about to take place? This is the last of the seven seals marking the prophetic judgments of God. With the opening of this seal the events pick up where they left off at the close of chapter 6.

The opening of the seventh seal is the biggest event thus far; out of this seal will pour the increased wrath of God. Included in this seal are all the final events leading up to the Second Coming of Christ, including the seven trumpets and the seven bowls. The trumpets do not double back and go over all or part of the Seals, but are brought out only after the sixth seal is opened. From the same idea, the Trumpets do not follow the seals but come out of the Seventh Seal. It is the same situation for the Bowls, they come out of the Seventh Trumpet, they are actually the Seventh Trumpet.<sup>33</sup>

## The Seven Trumpets

**Revelation 8:2**, *“And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.”*

Here are some additional angels standing before the throne of God. It is their responsibility to execute the judgments assigned to them in the form of the Trumpets. This could be a special group of angels who are in the presence of God all the time. The verb translated **stand** is in the perfect tense, which means they were in the presence of God and had been for some time.

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<sup>33</sup>

Larkin, *The Book of Revelation*, p. 69.

The Bible mentions several different classes of angels; we have seraphim (Isaiah 6:2), cherubim (Genesis 3:24), archangels (I Thessalonians 4:16). Possibly Gabriel could have been a member of this group, remember he told Zacharias, “I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God” (Luke 1:19).

Jesus had said that the angels will play a vital role in future as well as present events (Matthew 10:39-41, 49-50; 16:27; 25:31). Trumpets are the most important musical instruments in Scripture; they are linked to many different events. In the Old Testament, they used the trumpets to call the people to worship (Numbers 10:2), to sound the alarm for danger (Numbers 10:9; 2 Chronicles 13:120, they were used to announce the beginning of feasts (Psalm 81:3), to inform the people of news (I Samuel 13:3), and religious gatherings (Numbers 10:10).

These angels are to be distinguished from the angels who pour out the seven vials and are not the same as the seven spirits of God.

**Revelation 8:3**, *“And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.”*

Here we are introduced to yet another angel. Apparently this angel was not there from the beginning of John’s vision, but came on the scene at the appointed time. The angel was holding a golden censer, filled with the prayers of the saints. Incense is symbolic of worship and prayer and a reminder that intercession to the Lord has a sweet savor.

The altar in heaven is mentioned seven times in this book (6:9; 8:3a, b; 5: 9:13; 14:18; 16:7). We need to ask the question, “Is it the altar of burnt offerings or the altar of incense?” Most would agree it is the altar of incense.

John MacArthur says:

*“That altar is the heavenly counterpart to the altar of incense in the temple, which also was made with gold (Exodus 30:3). It was the same golden incense altar seen by Isaiah in his vision (Isaiah 6:6) and by Ezekiel (cf. Ezekiel 10:2). The further description of this altar as before the throne assures John’s readers that the altar of incense was the earthly counterpart to this heavenly incense altar. That is evident because the altar of incense in the tabernacle and the temple was the nearest thing to the Holy of Holies where God’s glory dwelt (Exodus 30:6). Consistent with that identification is the fact that the angel held in his hand a golden censer, or firepan. In the Old Testament era, the priests would twice daily (morning and evening) take hot, fiery coals from the brazen altar (where sacrifices were offered) and transport them into the Holy Place to the incense altar (Exodus 30:7, 8; 2 Chronicles 29:11).”<sup>34</sup>*

**Revelation 8:4**, *“And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel’s hand.”*

The incense represented the prayers of God’s people, while we are not told who gave the incense to the angel, the verb *didomi* (was given) often refers to things given by God (6:2, 4, 8, 11; 7:2, 9:1, 3, 5, 11). This incense was in addition to the prayers of the saints. The prayers, along with the incense indicate an agreement between God and the saints concerning their prayers.

You can almost feel the anticipation as the prayers and incense is offered up to God. His wrath and their prayers are tied together.

**Revelation 8:5**, *“And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thundering, and lightnings, and an earthquake.”*

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34 MacArthur, *New Testament Commentary*, p. 241.

The silence is broken by the action of the angel, voices and thundering and lightning and earthquakes are the order of the day. The censer represents the judgment of God. The act of throwing the fire to earth shows God's response to the prayers.

There are no details given about the earthquake, but God never does anything halfway. Even with all of this, along with the preaching of the two witnesses and the 144,000 sealed Jews, people will still rebel against the Lord and refuse to bow and acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Messiah.

Sadly we see over and over the truth of Scripture that says, "*Men love darkness rather than light.*" They willingly choose not to accept and refuse to receive the love of God that they might be saved.

The world rejected Christ when he came two thousand years ago, they continue to reject him even up to this hour and they will continue to reject Him during the tribulation. Certainly the heart of man is wicked and who can really know it?

### **The First Trumpet**

**Revelation 8:7**, "*The first trumpet sounded: and hail and fire followed, mingled with blood,*"

Once again we simply need to take this account at face value; there is no reason to spiritualize this event.

### **The Second Trumpet**

**Revelation 8:8**, "*Then the second angel sounded: And something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea and a third of the sea became blood.*"

Here is some figurative language to help us understand what John saw. It was not a mountain, but appeared like a mountain. The effects will be devastating.

### **The Third Trumpet**

**Revelation 8:10**, *“Then the third angel sounded: And a great star fell from heaven, burning like a touch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water.”*

Man’s ability to simply survive is being attacked. The need for fresh water is critical to life and here we see that God both gives it and can take it away.

### **The Fourth Trumpet**

**Revelation 8:12**, *“Then the fourth angel sounded: And a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened.”*

This is similar to what happened from the “Sixth Seal,” just an increase in intensity.

## REVELATION 9

### The Fifth Trumpet

**Revelation 9:1**, *“And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.”*

Upon the sounding of this trumpet, things start happening. A star falling from heaven to the earth. Some think this star represents some eminent bishop in the Christian church, some angel of the church; for, in the same way of speaking by which pastors are called stars, the church is called heaven; but who this is expositors do not agree. Some understand it to be Boniface the third bishop of Rome, who assumed the title of universal bishop, by the favor of the Emperor Phocas, who, being a usurper and tyrant in the state, allowed Boniface to be one in the church, as the reward of his flattery.<sup>35</sup>

The increasing intensity of judgment on the earth has reached a new high, the “First Woe.” This is clearly a very dramatic event presented to us in the first twelve verses of this chapter. As the trumpet of the fifth angel is sounded, John records that he sees a star fallen from heaven having the key to the bottomless pit. In chapter 6, the stars of heaven fall even as a fig tree casts her untimely figs. In chapter 8, a great star from heaven described as “burning as it were a lamp’ falls on the rivers and fountains of waters. These two references probably refer to material stars or parts of them.

The star mentioned here is a person rather than a literal star. The star is described as “fallen,” in the best manuscripts, the word is in the perfect tense meaning it is a completed action. It is not mentioned who exactly this star represents, but this may be the result of warfare in heaven mentioned in Revelation 12:7-9, where Satan is cast out of heaven to the earth. This act of

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<sup>35</sup> Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, electronic database.

God, probably at the start of the great tribulation, ends Satan's ability to accuse the brethren in heaven as he has been doing for a long time.

It seems clear that this star is not Satan. This is the same "Star Angel" that in Revelation 20:1-3 comes down from Heaven, having the "Key" of the "Bottomless Pit," and a great chain in his hand and binds Satan. This is the first time this expression is used in Scripture; it is used three times in this chapter and again four additional places later in Revelation.

The bottomless pit (Greek, *abyssos*) is the place where demons are being held according to Luke 8:31. This is the same place Satan is going to be held during the millennial reign of Christ (Revelation 20:1-3). What we are seeing is the release by this angel of those wicked demons who were being held in the abyss.

**Revelation 9:2**, *"And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit."*

In this verse we see the use of the key to open this terrible place. The resulting smoke gives some indication of the nature of the abyss. The contents of the Abyss are poured out upon the earth, creating havoc and darkness. Following their release we can expect to see demonic and satanic oppression. These are absolutely the most viscous, vile, and perverted of all the fallen angels. Jude describes them as "angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode." This is a terrible place, remember the demons who came out of the demonic asking not to be sent to the abyss (Luke 8:31).

John Phillips comments:

Picture what the world would be like if we were to pen the doors of all the penitentiaries of earth and set free the world's most vicious and violent criminals, giving them full reign to practice their infamies upon mankind, something worse than that lies in store for the world.

Satan, cast out of heaven, is not permitted to summon to his aid the most diabolical fiends in the abyss to act as his agents in bringing mankind to the footstool of the Beast.<sup>36</sup>

**Revelation 9:3-6**, *“And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads. And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man. And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.”*

Peake observes:

“Now these descriptions of heaven and hell were meant by the author to be very literally taken. They are not figures of speech; and if we are to be true to the writer’s thought we can scarcely represent the scenes to our imagination with too much realism. And similarly the scorpion locusts are quite literally intended; they are not heretics, or Goths, or Mohammedans, or the mendicant orders, or the Jesuits, or Protestants, or Saracens or Turks, but they are uncanny denizens of the abyss, locusts of a hellish species, animated by devilish instincts and equipped with infernal powers.”

There are those who refuse to look at this event as literal, and do not give credence to the idea of an actual event taking place here. I believe that is simply wishful thinking and fails to recognize that John is describing events in terms he thinks we can understand. Often in Scripture locust are used by the Lord as a divine judgment on a wicked world. When Moses confronted Pharaoh, one of the plagues came in the form of locust. Pharaoh pleaded with

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<sup>36</sup> Phillips, *Exploring Revelation*, p. 195.

Moses to have God stop them. He went on to say, *“I have sinned against the Lord your God, and against you,”* (Exodus 10:16-17).

What we now see is something similar but far worse. These creatures torment men in a way similar to the sting of a scorpion. It seems the entire world is subject to these creatures except for those who were sealed by the Living God. The torment is capable of lasting five months; this corresponds to the length of time that locusts are active. This sting is so bad that men will seek to die and will not be able to. In addition to the natural plagues of the first four trumpets, now they have to deal with the attacks of demons.

**Revelation 9:7-11**, *“And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions. And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months. And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon.”*

It is obvious that these locusts are not ordinary and probably called locust because of their function as a judgment and plague from the Lord. They are much larger than ordinary locusts and are actually compared to horses prepared for battle. The locusts are described as having crowns of gold on their heads, usually a sign of victory, but here simply a headdress or decoration. Their faces are similar to men. Their hair like women and their teeth like lions. This awesome combination of the features of beasts and men shows the fearful appearance they present.

In verse 9, the locusts are said to have breastplates of iron, implying that they are immune to destruction. They are also equipped with wings that make an awful sound, like chariots running to battle. Special attention is given to their tails, which are compared to those of scorpions and by which they have power to hurt men for five months.

I cannot imagine facing one of these creatures let alone a whole army of them. Notice that they have a king over them called “Abaddon” in the Hebrew and “Apollyon” in the Greek, both mean “destroyer.”

**Revelation 9:12**, *“One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter.”*

As bad as all of this seems, it is only the beginning of the intense wrath of God on an unbelieving world. In verse 12 we are told the first woe is now past and the second woe is about to begin. The term “woe” refers in Scripture to some great tragedy, usually some type of judgment from God. The tribulation period uncovers the wickedness of man and brings to the surface the true nature of the demonic forces that have disguised themselves for generations.

## REVELATION 10

### The Little Book

**Revelation 10:1-4**, *“And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire: And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth, And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried seven thunders uttered their voices. And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.”*

Here is another section that is adding information to what we have already been given.

Like chapter 7 it does not move the events along but gives additional details. Here we are introduced to “another mighty angel.” The word “*another*” (Greek, *allon*) usually means “another of the same kind,” like the other angels that were introduced earlier.

It appears that this angel is not the sixth angel mentioned in 9:13, nor the angel, which sounds the seventh trumpet in 11:15. While there is no clear identification of this angel we have to look at the description given to us and try to determine the character of this angel.

Some commentators believe that the angel mentioned here, as well as the angel of 8:3 is the Lord Jesus Christ. They look at the description and agree that it sounds similar to the characteristics attributed to Jesus. In the Old Testament Jesus appeared on various occasions as the “Angel of the Jehovah.” They assume that this is similar to those appearances.

- a. The use of “*allos*” (another of the same kind) identifies this angel as just like the previous ones mentioned. If this is Christ the word *heteros* (another of a different

- kind) would have been used. Christ is not like the angels, he is different on many levels.
- b. Second, Jesus is always referred to with a specific title by John in this letter. The fact that this angel is not specifically identified would seem to eliminate the Lord.
  - c. Third, even though Christ does appear in the Old Testament as the Angel of the Lord, no place in the New Testament is he referred to as an angel.
  - d. Fourth, the oath that this angel makes indicates that he is separate from the one he swears by, “*who created the heaven, and the things that therein are.*” Yet, we know that Christ was the one who created all things.<sup>37</sup>
  - e. Fifth, this angel came down from heaven to earth. If this is in fact Jesus, we have two separate returns during the tribulation. This does not agree with other passages that describe the second coming of Christ.

Consider the fact that other angels have a similar description given to them, (Ezekiel 28:11-15). Now the contents of the little book are unknown, we are not given a clue as to the contents of this little book. This is not the same book that we have in 5:1, there the book is described by the Greek *biblion*, and here the word used is *biblaridion*. Possibly the book contains the authority for this angel to do what he is commanded to do. This angel roars like a lion producing seven thunders in return.

Some would argue that the seven thunders represent the perfection of God’s judgment. Remember that Daniel was told not to write a specific event that he witnessed, Paul was caught up to the third heaven and then told not to write about it. Perhaps we have three individuals witnessing the same event, but told not to reveal it. Evidently John understood the seven thunders, but was told not to tell us what was said.

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<sup>37</sup> Walvoord, *The Revelation*, p. 169.

This part was for John alone, no one on earth was to be given the interpretation of the seven thunders. What we see here is the fact that there are things, which are going to take place that God has not revealed to us. But, He has given us everything we need to know, the rest is just speculation.

**Revelation 10:5-7**, *And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, And swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be no longer. But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.*

One of the indications that the angel here is not Christ is the fact that he swears by God, implying that God is greater than the angel. Some think that this oath by the angel is contrary to what Jesus talked about in Matthew 5:34-35. Jesus said, "But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King." Clearly the angel was under authority of God. Being holy he could not do anything that would violate that holiness.

The Bible does not forbid the taking of vows, but does speak against oaths designed to deceive or defraud another. The Bible actually records the fact that God Himself has taken oaths (Genesis 22:16). Notice the special authority that God has over the earth and this angel is acknowledging this truth.

God only can do away with time, and that He will do. The end of God's program is close at hand; things will shortly change forever. The end has come, no more delay. We see reference to the mystery of God. The explanation of the seventh trumpet points to the concluding of the mystery of God. That mystery is explained by Kelly, who states:

“The secret of His allowing Satan to have his own way, and man too (that is to say, the wonder of evil prospering and of good being trodden underfoot). God checks, no doubt, the evil in a measure, partly through human government and partly through His own providential dealings.”<sup>38</sup>

This mystery of God seems to mean truth concerning God Himself, which has not been fully revealed to us. Yet, this same mystery was declared to his servants the prophets (vs. 7). This mystery of God involves the establishment of His kingdom here on earth.

**Revelation 10:8-11**, *“And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth. And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Gve me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. And I took the little book out of the angel’s hand and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey; and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.*

John is given a very unusual commandment, take the book and eat it. The same one who commanded John not to write what he had just heard now gives this command. No longer is John a spectator, he is now part of the cast. Go and take the book from the one who holds it. That in itself would be a scary proposition, just image walking up to the angel who was described in some very powerful terms and taking something out of his hand.

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<sup>38</sup> Kelly, *Lectures on the Book of Revelation*, p.502.

## REVELATION 11

### The Two Witnesses

**Revelation 11:1-14** We are now about to look at the passage that has long been a dream of the nation of Israel, the rebuilding of the temple. Chapter 11 looks at the spiritual attitude of the Jews during this period. Remember the Jews are still functioning under the Old Testament Law and are still looking for the Messiah. They will rebuild the temple, with the blessing of the Anti-Christ, and establish animal sacrifices once again. Tim LeHaye refers to this temple as the “temple of rejection.” The two witnesses and the 144,000 that have been sealed will not be able to convince the majority of Jews of the Messiah is Jesus. Israel will stay in unbelief until the great persecution breaks out in chapter 12.

The temple is critical to understanding the Jewish people. After Israel came into the land of Palestine, David wanted to build a temple to the Lord. God would not allow him to build it, but he was allowed to accumulate the money necessary for the building of the temple, which was done by his son Solomon.

The temple is critical to understanding the Jewish people. After Israel came into the land of Palestine, David wanted to build a temple to the Lord. God would not allow him to build it, but he was allowed to accumulate the money necessary for the building of the temple, which was done by his son Solomon.

The temple was to be built in Jerusalem. God’s presence was seen in the Shekinah Glory which appeared in the temple and showed that God was present. The people put so much confidence in the temple that they felt invincible as long as they had the temple. Jeremiah and Ezekiel both warned them of their sin and coming judgment, but this fell on deaf ears. The city and the temple were destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar around 606 B.C. The temple was rebuilt by order of Zerubbabel, but was no way the quality of the one destroyed. This new temple

lasted until Antiochus Epiphanes desecrated it. Forty years before Christ, Herod the Great had this temple destroyed and he built a new one, referred to as “Herod’s Temple” (John 2:20).

Matthew 24:2 records the Lord statement that the temple would be destroyed: *“There shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.”* This was completed in

70A.D. by the Roman General Titus. The temple has been destroyed for the last 2000 years.<sup>39</sup>

Another temple is yet to be built. In Matthew 24:15 the Lord calls this temple the “abomination of desolation,” spoken of by Daniel the prophet. What we see is a prediction that a temple would be defiled by the Antichrist. So there must be a temple in place for this to take place, it has not been built yet, but it will be.

We are told that the beginning of the tribulation starts with the signing of the covenant with the Antichrist (Daniel 9:27). When this treaty is signed most of the nation of Israel will not be believers. The 144,000 and the two witnesses have a huge task in front of them as the tribulation continues to unfold.

**Revelation 11:1**, *“And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.”*

The measuring of the temple would seem to indicate that this temple is inferior to the previous temple of Solomon and perhaps even the temples that followed that one. This temple will be built at the beginning of the tribulation because at the middle of the tribulation the antichrist will break his covenant with Israel and defile the temple (13:2).

The two periods of time mentioned here could be the first half and then the second half of the tribulation period, since both are equal in the number of days.

**Revelation 11:2**, *“But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.”*

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<sup>39</sup> LaHaye, *The Revelation Illustrated*, p. 149.

Here is a statement showing God's sovereignty, the outer court is given unto the Gentiles.

Mention is made of the "Times of the Gentiles." This period corresponds to the "Church Age."

**Revelation 11:3**, *"And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth."*

Here we are introduced to the two witnesses. They will preach for 3 ½ years with power and protection from God. They will be able to send fire from their mouths and kill anyone who attacks them. They will also have the power to stop the rain from falling. They will be able to turn water into blood and call for all types of plagues.

What we are seeing is the power of God up against the power of the antichrist. Their unusual garments indicate that they are prophets of doom (cf. Isaiah 37:1-2; Daniel 9:3).

A wide range of possibilities exist as to the identity of the two witnesses, Elijah and Enoch, or Elijah or John the Baptist are two possibilities.

Malachi 4:5, 6 predicted that Elijah would come before *"the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord."* Fire was limited to Elijah in the Old Testament. He called down fire to consume the altar when Ahab was King (2 Kings 18:20-40). He was also able to stop the rain for three years. Elijah seems more than likely that he is one of the two witnesses.

In Luke 1:17 Gabriel told Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, that John would come "in the spirit and power of Elijah;" but that does not mean he would be with Elijah at this time.

There are only two reasons to think this might be Enoch:

- a. He did not die, in Hebrews 9:27 we read, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."
- b. We read in Jude 14 and 15 that Enoch prophesied that "the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all."

Enoch lived hundreds of years before Abraham and is not identified with Israel in any way.

The fact that Enoch and Elijah never died is not enough to match these two together in this event. We see in Hebrews 11:5 the reason Enoch was taken was to prevent him from seeing death. Both of these two witnesses die before it is all over.

There are three reasons why I believe the two witnesses are Elijah and Moses:

- a. In Matthew 17:1-5, when the Lord was transfigured before Peter, James and John, it was Moses and Elijah that appeared with Him.
- b. Moses was able to produce plagues and turn the water to blood during the confrontation with Pharaoh. Elijah called down fire, between the two of them we have the same actions as depicted in Rev.
- c. Moses is critical to the Jewish history; between him and Elijah we have the major representation of the Old Testament to the Jewish nation. When the rich man asked Abraham to send Lazarus back to his father's house to warn his brothers, Abraham said, "They have Moses and the prophets let them hear them" (Luke 16:27-29).

**Revelation 11:4**, *"These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth."*

This may be a reference to Zechariah 4, where a lampstand and two olive trees are mentioned. In answer to the question in the Zechariah case, "What are these?" the answer was: *"This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, "not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."*

It is clear that the same meaning should apply here. The olive oil from the olive trees in Zechariah's image gave them fuel for the two lampstands. During this period of history Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel were the leaders during Zechariah's ministry. Just as these

two were raised up to be witnesses for God and were given power from the Holy Spirit, represented by the olive oil, so were the two witnesses in Revelation 11.

Their main function will be to witness to the people concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. They will minister during the first half of the tribulation and will be overcome and killed at the middle of the tribulation. They are killed between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the third woe, verse 14.

**Revelation 11:5-6**, *“And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoured their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.”*

These have power to shut heaven that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.

Here we see the actual power given to these two witnesses. This power provides an instant judgment from God on those who would seek to hurt or destroy them. This is similar to the ministry of Elijah who was able to call down fire from heaven to destroy 50 soldiers sent to capture him (II Kings 1). In a similar fashion, the enemies of Moses were destroyed (Numbers 16:35). They can also stop the rain, which they will do. They have combined more power than any previous prophet before them.

**Revelation 11:7-10**, *“And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. And they that dwell upon the earth shall*

*rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.”*

As is often the case with the prophets of God, when their ministry is finished, God permits them to be killed by their enemies. According to verse 7, the beast from the bottomless pit, which is Satan himself, makes war against them and overcomes them and kills them?

This is the first of thirty-six references in Revelation to the beast (do not mistake the beast here for the creatures in chapter 4). The beast out of the pit is Satan. The beast out of the sea is the world dictator (13:1). The beast out of the land is the false religious leader (13:11).

This unholy trinity is the satanic counterfeit of the divine Trinity, The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

This victory seems so dramatic that the people celebrate and exchange gifts to each other.

The two witnesses lie in the streets of Jerusalem for three and a half days. Great crowds come to view the dead bodies. The celebration extends around the world. It would seem that the people rejoicing view this as a victory over God Himself and that their judgment will not cease. Could not be further from the truth, the judgment will now intensify with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Woe about to be unleashed.

**Revelation 11:11-12**, *“And after three days and a half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them.*

*And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.”*

Suddenly the spirit of the living God will enter into their bodies and restore them to life. It is no wonder that great fear fell on all the people. Not only did they come back to life, but also everyone there heard a voice from heaven saying, “Come up hither.” Just like the Lord Jesus was resurrected and then taken up to heaven in a cloud so will the two witnesses.

**Revelation 11:13-14**, *“And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell and in the earthquake was slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven. The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.”*

Similar to our Lord’s death there will be an earthquake after the witnesses are raised up. We read that they gave glory “to the God of heaven.” This is one of two references to “the God of heaven” in the New Testament (cf. Revelation 16:11).

This is common in the Old Testament where it was used to distinguish between the true God from pagan deities. Here the significance is that they know who the true God is and acknowledge Him after this judgment. Even though they recognize the power of the God of heaven, it does not mean they placed their faith in Him for salvation. Mere recognition is what is being acknowledged here. With this event, the second woe is finished and the sixth trumpet is done. The third woe is about to begin and will be introduced by the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet. The end of the age is approaching rapidly and the Lord’s return will be soon.

**Revelation 11:15**, *“And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.”*

The party is cut short when the two witnesses stand up. Imagine how disappointed the people must have been to see them come back to life. Fear replaces astonishment, as they look on these two. The fear increases when they hear a voice from heaven say, “the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.”

Some would try and associate this event with the rapture of the church. While there are some similarities, there are also some differences

- a. The rapture will happen in an instance and people will not be able to watch it happens so fast.
- b. The real parallel here is to the ascension of Christ on the Mount of Olives, when the disciples saw him go up into heaven, and like the two witnesses he was in a cloud.
- c. This may be a final act of God's grace to give one proof or warning of the power of God over man.
- d. This act of resurrection and ascension into heaven is different from any other mentioned in Scripture because it occurs after the rapture and before the resurrection in chapter 20.<sup>40</sup>

Christ is now declared to rule for ever and ever, his authority has begun and will not end.

Never again will the earth be under the control of sinful men.

**Revelation 11:16-17**, *“And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshiped God, Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.”*

The twenty-four elders fall down to worship God, as they have done in the past. They have been mentioned seven times previously doing the same thing. In this case they are praising God for being ETERNAL. That is very important when one is placing their eternal destiny in His hands.

This event is the fulfillment of Psalm 2:9, where Christ the Anointed of God reigns over the earth.”

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<sup>40</sup> Walvoord, *The Revelation*, p. 184.

**Revelation 11:18**, *“And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldst give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldst destroy them which destroy the earth.”*

With the obvious fact that God is supreme and will have His way, the nations get angry. There is a humorous fact here, the word used for the nation’s anger means impotent, the word for God’s wrath is omnipotent. The wrath of man is wicked; the wrath of God is holy. It is not clear whether the praise of the twenty-four elders is continued into verse 18 or just an observation of John. This will be the judgment of the righteous in heaven, not the wicked dead. This will take place in heaven, not on the earth, but this is the time frame on earth for the rewards. However, judgment on earth will continue against those who destroy the earth.

## REVELATION 12

**Revelation 12:1**, *And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.”*

While the earthly temple may have been desecrated, the temple in heaven is holy and pure. Notice that the ark of his testament is seen in heaven. This speaks of the law of God and God’s righteousness. Aaron’s rod that budded speaks of resurrection, and the golden pot that had manna represents Christ as the basis of the shed blood sacrifice. Notice the lightening and thunder that go along with the viewing of the heavenly temple. God’s wrath is growing. The sight of the Ark of the Covenant could be a reminder to the people of God’s faithfulness and promises to Israel.

**Revelation 12:7-9**, *“And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”*

In the first six verses we see the characters that will play out this event. Revelation 12:7-12 describes the war in heaven. This event can be divided into three sections: the battle, the victory, and the celebration. The primary conflict at the end of the age will be on earth; however, there will be an interesting contest in heaven. It is difficult to even image war in heaven, after all that is the place we all long to end up, the place of happiness and love and blessings. The idea of war in heaven seems hard to comprehend. Michael and the other angels defeat Satan (the dragon) and his angels and throw them down to the earth.

In verse nine Satan is described as “the great dragon,” a term which also describes the empire which he rules over during the tribulation period. He is also called “that old serpent,” a reference to the Garden of Eden and the temptation of Eve.

The title “Devil” is from the Greek *diabolos*, from the verb *diaballo*, which means “defaming” or “slandering.” Satan is the master accuser of the believers. The name “Satan,” from the Hebrew, has the idea of “adversary.” This name is mentioned fourteen times in the book of Job, and occasionally in other books.<sup>41</sup>

Coates notes that Satan is seen in three distinct areas in opposition to Christ. As accuser of the brethren, he is in opposition to Christ as priest. As the one who empowers the first beast, he is in opposition to Christ as king. As bringing forth the second beast, the false prophet, he is opposed to Christ as prophet.

Many commentators refuse to believe that the war takes place in heaven, but try and place the battle in the atmosphere or the starry heaven rather than in the presence of God. This battle was predicted by Daniel the prophet in Daniel 12:1, where we read, “*Michael shall stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people.*” This marks the start of the second half of the tribulation.

It seems strange that Satan should have access to the very throne of God, but this is exactly what we read in Job 1, where Satan along with other angels presents himself before God and accuses Job.

Satan has been accusing believers for a long time and continues to do so. But, he is now kicked out of heaven and cast to the earth, which is the reason for his great wrath. Once again we need to take things at face value. Remember that we are seeing events dealing with the end of the age, but not necessarily in chronological order.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

**Revelation 12:10-12**, *“And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.”*

As John watches Satan being kicked out of heaven, he hears another loud voice. We cannot identify the source of this voice, but the message is perfectly clear; *“Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ.”*

Some believe this is God speaking, some think it may be an angel, some believe it to be the twenty-four elders, some the martyred saints in heaven mentioned in 6:10. The “loud voice” may be the shout of triumph of the tribulation saints looking for their ultimate victory and payback.

The salvation here is in reference to deliverance and completion of God’s program, not salvation from sin. The expression “his Christ,” also mentioned in 11:15, parallels “his anointed” in Psalm 2:2, against whom the kings of the earth rebel. The victory of the saints is clear in verse 11, where it is stated that they will be victorious over Satan by the blood of the Lamb, by the word of their testimony, and by the fact that they loved not their lives unto death. The accusations of Satan are destroyed by the blood of the Lamb which makes the believer righteous in the sight of God. The word of the saints’ testimony opposes the deceiving work of Satan in that the preaching of the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. The believer’s commitment to witness even if it cost them their lives is clear from the statement, *“They loved not their lives unto the death.”*

The word for “loved” is the strong sense of godly love (Greek, *agapao*). Though they did not seek death, they did not let the possibility of death stop them. They imitated the church at Smyrna (2:10) of being faithful unto death as well as the example of the Saviour who laid down His life for the sheep (John 10:11).<sup>42</sup>

The voice now tells everyone in heaven to rejoice and then warns the inhabitants of the earth to look out. The word for “wrath” here means a strong passion or emotion but is not speaking of a rational response, but purely emotional.

### **The Seven Personages**

**Revelation 12:13-16**, *“And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.”*

The immediate result of Satan being cast to earth is the persecution of Israel, the woman that brought forth the man-child. This is the time that Jesus warned the nation about (Matthew 24:15). Satan understands that Israel is still special to God and that God is not finished with her. This is an attempt by Satan to stop God’s program.

Understand that Israel is hated by Satan simply because she is the chosen of God and essential to the overall purpose of God. The woman (Israel) is described as being given two wings of a great eagle in order to fly into the wilderness. This seems to indicate special protection from God toward at least a remnant of Israel. Reference to this event is similar in

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p.186.

Exodus 19:4 and Deuteronomy 32:11-12 where God uses the strength of an eagle to show his ability to care for Israel.

Some believe there is a special place such as Petra, where at least a few will be protected.

Verse 14 implies that there is some supernatural care of Israel during this time. The reference to times, time and a half of time would indicate 3 ½ years. A parallel passage is Daniel 7:25 and 12:7 referring to the same period of the great tribulation. The persecution of Israel is described as a flood from the serpent (Satan) that the women might be carried away.

Verse 16 says that the earth helps the woman by swallowing the flood. Unable to wipe out Israel to this point, Satan will muster all of his forces and as a vast army sweeps over the land, attempts to swallow up the woman.

Satan is described as a serpent so we probably should see this event as symbolizing Satan's attack on Israel. Perhaps the earth will open up once again and swallow up those who are pursuing the woman. As the Red Sea swallowed up Pharaoh's army and likewise during the rebellion of Korah, perhaps it will do it once again. The flood thrown at Israel is the ultimate attempt of Satan to exterminate the nation, but the terrain in the Middle East, including many areas that are not very populated, provide for many places to hide from pursuers.

So, we see God using both divine and natural means to protect his people and save a remnant.

**Revelation 12:17**, *“And the dragon was wrath with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”*

This last verse shows the wrath of Satan and the anger that he has toward the woman (Israel). His anger is especially violent towards those who are attempting to honor and obey the

commandments of God. Anti-Semitism will rise dramatically during this period. Those who are Jews and accept the Messiah will be singled out for the worse treatment.

Many will be killed, but others will survive including the 144,000 sealed in chapter 7. The remnant mentioned here (Greek *ton lipon*), literally “the rest,” is not the same term for remnant used in other references. While this is not the same it is similar which would indicate that possibly this is in reference to the Gentile believers who become children of Abraham by faith. Chapter 12 is a good introduction to the information given in chapter 13. Israel, Satan, Christ, the archangel, and the godly remnant figure largely in the closing scenes of the age.

Next we will see the two principal actors introduced: the *beast* out of the sea and the *beast* out of the earth, the human instruments which Satan uses to direct his program during the great tribulation.

## REVELATION

### CHAPTER 13

Chapter 13 of Revelation provides some of the most memorable and powerful images of John's entire visionary account – the beast from the sea, the beast from the land, 666, the mark of the beast, the antichrist (the term “antichrist” is never used in Revelation).

John uses these images to portray the earthly struggle between the forces of evil and the church.

This chapter smoothly flows from the preceding chapter about the heavenly battle between Michael and the dragon.

The heavenly voice in chapter 12 warns that the dragon, after his expulsion from heaven, was then going to vent his wrath on the people of earth – specifically the church.

Chapter 13 presents that earthly struggle, in which the work of the dragon is carried out by his two lieutenants, the beast from the sea and the beast from the land. The struggle in chapter 13 is the same struggle that is seen in chapter 12, only from a different perspective. Chapter 12 represents the heavenly battle against evil; chapter 13 portrays its earthly counterpart. The question is: Who is ultimately in charge of the world – Satan and his cohorts or God? To whom does one owe allegiance?

#### **Revelation 13:1-10 The Beast from the Sea**

1. We are left after chapter 12 with an angry, vengeful dragon (Satan) standing alone on the shore of the sea. He is not alone for very long. John sees a terrifying beast rising from the sea. The sea here represents the Gentile nations of the world which are in turmoil.
2. His alignment with the dragon is clear; they both have ten horns and seven heads adorned with crowns. This is John's way of saying that the beast from the

- sea is a manifestation of the dragon. (See Daniel 7.) John has combined the vision of Daniel of the four creatures into one terrifying beast from the deep.
3. Combining with chapter 17, we see that the beast from the sea represents the Roman Empire and specifically the empire as embodied in its emperors. This explains the statement: “on its head were blasphemous names” (13:1), likely a reference to divine titles that were given to emperors – “savior,” “lord,” “god,” or “son of god.” This is the final Gentile world ruler, also known as the “little horn” (Daniel 7:8, 20, 21, 24, 25), the “wilful king” (Daniel 11:36), the “coming prince” (Daniel 9:26), and the “man of sin” (2 Thessalonians 2:3). In Revelation, he is both a person and an empire. He is connected closely with the dragon (Satan) Daniel 12:3 and to the fourth beast in Daniel 7 (the Roman Empire, [Daniel 7:7,23]), although his actions are somewhat distant from both (the heads and the horns are identified in chapter 17).
  4. John unmask the empire and its pretensions to dominance and authority and the recognition of the real power behind the empire when he says, “the dragon gave it his power and his throne and great authority” (13:2). The emperors may claim to be divine, but their real power comes from Satan.
    - a. His resemblances to a leopard, a bear, and a lion refer to the three beasts in the vision of Daniel 7 (representing the empires of Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece). This Beast includes the people and cultures of the three previous empires, and is an outgrowth of the Roman empire itself. Satan has his own false “trinity..” Satan acts as the Father, the Antichrist as the Son, and the False Prophet as the Spirit who attempts to bring glory to the Antichrist (cf. vv. Daniel 7:11,12).

5. The beast from the sea is presented as a parody of God and Christ. The only power and authority the beast has is that which comes from Satan. The beast “seems to have a death-blow, but its mortal wound has been healed: (13:3).
  - a. This fatal wound that had been healed is likely a parody of the “lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered” (5:6). The beast is an antitype of the Messiah.
  - b. This description likely has an historical significance for John, recalling the Nero *redivivus* myth that claimed that Nero would come back once again and reclaim his throne (cf. 13:14, “The beast that had been wounded by the sword and yet lived”). Nero held a special place of infamy in the minds of Christians because he was responsible for the gruesome execution of Christians in Rome in AD 64. This beast is another Nero, an agent of Satan.
  - c. The parallelism between the beast and the Lamb is more evident in the Greek text. The statement that one of the beast’s heads “seemed to have received a “death-blow” reads literally that one of its heads was “as slaughtered (nos esphagmenen) unto death.” The same Greek words are used to describe the Lamb standing “as if it had been slaughtered” (nos esphagmenen).
  - d. The wound may refer either to the apparent death of the Antichrist himself or to the decline and apparent disappearance of the Roman Empire. The healing of the wound may be either the apparent resurrection of the antichrist or the revival of the Roman Empire (cf. 17:10,11).

6. Verse 4 is apparently a reference to the imperial cult, which was particularly strong in Asia Minor. The churches of the Book of Revelation were located geographically, organizationally, and culturally where the imperial cult was most heavily distributed.

City	Imperial Temple	Imperial Altar	Imperial Priest
Ephesus	X	X	X
Laodicea	X		
Pergamum	X	X	X
Philadelphia	X		
Sardis	X	X	X
Smyrna	X	X	X
Thyatire	X	X	X

- a. The mouth in verse 5 depicts the blasphemy of the Antichrist against God (cf. Thessalonians 2:4). He will gain some type of worldwide authority for 42 months or 3 ½ years. Verse 7: **“and it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them; and authority was given him over all kindreds, and tongues and nations.”**

Question: Who are the saints? Be sure to look at the verse just quoted.

Discuss

- b. The unbelievers of the world will be deceived into believing that the Beast is a god (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:4,11) and they will worship him. But believers, the saints, whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of Life from the foundation of the world will be persecuted by the Antichrist until they are raptured.

Many of the Christians in these cities participated in these cults with a “clear conscience in the activities of the imperial cult, convincing themselves that such

practices were acceptable since they knew that the emperor was really no god.

“We know that ‘no idol in the world really exists,’ and that ‘there is no God but one,’” (1 Corinthians 8:4)). However, John saw no room for compromise.

The acclamation of the people – “Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?” – is a parody of the praise rendered to God in the Hebrew Bible (Exodus 15:11; Psalm 89:6; 113:5; Isaiah 40:25; Micah 7:18). This statement is not a statement of fear, but a song of praise, extolling his greatness over all the earth.

These blasphemous claims are reminiscent of the boastful claims of King Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4. After surveying his mighty kingdom, he proclaimed, “Is this not magnificent Babylon, which I have built as a royal capital by my mighty power and for my glorious majesty?” 4:30)

7. The blasphemy of the beast is directed against God and “his dwelling,” that is, those who dwell in heaven” (13:6). The blasphemy against those living in heaven is more than likely the martyrs under the altar in heaven (6:9). In venting his arrogance and rage on the martyrs and taking their lives, the beast is blaspheming God, the source of life.
  - a. The authority of the beast “over every tribe and people, and language and nation” is a parody of the universal authority of God and Christ (cf. Philippians 2:9-11).
  - b. Throughout vs. 5-8, John describes this power and authority of the beast as that which “was given” (13:5,7) or “was allowed” (13:7), a different agent is in mind here. These passive verbs are examples of the use of “divine passives’, a way of referring to the activity of God (God is supreme over the entire universe). Satan is never an equal adversary of God. The

outcome is already decided. Satan continues his assault against the church only because God allows it.

- c. Satan and his beasts may be able to “make war on the saints and to conquer them,” but such conquests are illusory. The true victors are the faithful followers of the Lamb whose very influence help assure Satan’s defeat (12:11).
8. The power and influence of the beast will be so great that those “whose names have not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slaughtered” (13:8) will worship the beast. Those whose names are in the Lamb’s Book of Life will refuse to yield allegiance and homage to this false god (John gives a great warning for true Christians to hold fast and not be fooled into taking the mark of the beast or to worship him, because if they do, they will be those that come to Jesus and say Lord, Lord, and He will say, “depart from me, I never knew you.”)
9. John prefaces the message in verse 10 with a declaration in verse 0: “let anyone who has an ear listen.” This admonition is John’s way of saying that the following statement is important. A colloquial translation might be “Pay attention” or “Listen to this.” John has used this admonition at the close of the messages in chapters 2 and 3 to exhort his readers to be conquerors, that is, faithful followers. But let this be clear as well: Unless God removes the scales from one’s eyes and from one’s ears, they will not be able to see and/or comprehend the message that God is sending to his chosen in Christ (before the foundation of the world).
10. Verse 10 is a reformulation of Jeremiah 15:2 and 43:11, which declare the inevitability of God’s punishment. It emphasizes endurance and fulfillment of

God's will, as well as the inevitability of persecution and martyrdom for the church. The Christian is to accept whatever persecution brings, whether it be imprisonment or death. "If anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed," or "If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed" are two translations applied to this verse, which is similar to Matthew 26:52. It appears that John is meaning the first, for the first couplet is concerned with the faithful believers and so the second couplet likely refers to them as well. The message to John's readers, then is that they prove themselves faithful witnesses, not by armed resistance and violence, but by suffering for the gospel when necessary.

11. Verse 10b says, "Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints." The early church began the transformation of society and persons from the pole of steadfastness in prayer and the refusal of idolatry, manifesting that *hypomone* which the Book of Revelation regards as the highest Christian virtue. It is usually somewhat limply rendered 'patient endurance,' but it is in fact closer to 'absolute intransigence,' 'unbending determination,' 'an iron will' 'the capacity to endure persecution, torture, and death without yielding one's faith.' It is one of the fundamental attributes of nonviolent resistance."

**Revelation 13:11-12**, *"And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed."*

After seeing the first beast John now sees another beast coming up out of the earth and taking on a secondary role of support for the first beast. In contrast to the first beast, which comes up out of the sea, the second beast is said to come out of the earth. He is similar in nature to the

first beast. Some have interpreted the word *earth* as a reference to the Holy Land, but it is the general word used for the earth. If the sea, mentioned as the source of the first beast, represents the mass of humanity indicating the racial background of the first beast as a Gentile, the reference to the second beast as coming out of the earth indicates that this one is a product of the earth and not heaven. His geographic origin is not mentioned nor his racial make-up. He is described as having two horns like a lamb and speaking like a dragon. The description of him as a lamb seems to indicate that he has a religious character, and he is called a prophet. Remember Satan will imitate everything God does. Jesus was pictured as the Lamb of God; this may be Satan's attempt at the same idea.

The beast out of the earth causes men to worship the first beast out of the sea. They both have a prominent role during this time period and both will pay the price for their rebellion against God. They will be cast into the lake of fire at the end of this period (19:20).

**Revelation 13:13-14**, *“And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.”*

The first miracle by the false prophet is described as a great wonder, literally, one of many “great signs.” The frequent use of *poieo* in the present tense seems to indicate repeated action.<sup>43</sup> Fire coming down from the sky will be a regular occurrence. The miracles may imitate those of God, like Moses with Pharaoh and Elijah with King Ahab. Don't forget the two witnesses, they will be able to have fire come out of their mouths, the false prophet will probably be able to do the same thing.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 187

The deceptive power of the beast is mentioned specifically in verse 14. He does miracles in the sight of the first beast. Based on this power the 2<sup>nd</sup> beast convinces people to make an image of the 1<sup>st</sup> beast then to worship it.

The wound by the sword apparently refers to the decline of the historic Roman Empire and its revival is indicated by the expression “did live,” the man who serves at the head of the empire is the symbol of this miraculous restoration.

The image made to the beast is not necessarily an image of the beast, like Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 3, is the symbol of his power and majesty. This image, mentioned to three times in this chapter, is mentioned seven more times in the book of Revelation (14:9, 11; 15:2; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4). The image is the center of the false worship and the focal point of the final state of apostasy.

**Revelation 13:15-17**, *“And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.”*

A literal translation of the expression “he had power to give life unto the image of the beast” should be “It was given to him to give spirit to the image of the beast.” The word translated “**life**” (Greek *pneuma*) is usually translated “spirit” or “breath,” this is very different from *zoe*, which means “life.”<sup>44</sup> Most would agree that Satan does not have the power to give life to something that is lifeless. Only God is the life giver. The idea here seems to be that the image

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

was able have the appearance of life, i.e. movement, speech, but actually it will probably be more like a robot.

Even though the image can speak, that is easily accomplished by today's technology. This image will be very convincing to the ones who will see it. Anyone who refuses to worship the image of the beast will be killed.

Here comes the mark, just as every one of God's children received the mark of God (unseen to natural eyes) the beast will give his mark to everyone who worships him. This mark will go on the right hand or forehead.

**Revelation 13:18**, *"Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six."*

This number is now famous, 666. Wide speculation has been given to the meaning of the number. Letters in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek had numerical equivalents. A great number of people have tried to fix the number to a person, Caesar, Nero, Caligula, Stalin, Hitler, and others. The simplest explanation here is the best, it is the number of a man, each 6 just one short of 7, the number for God. Satan's best effort here falls short, and will never equal what God does or is.

We are not sure who will be the first beast, but it seems that he will be the same as the "little horn" of Daniel 7:8; *"the prince that shall come"* of Daniel 9:26; the willful king of Daniel 11:36-45, and the man of sin, or the lawless one, of II Thessalonians 2:3. It is unlikely that either of the two beasts of Revelation 13 will be a Jew because they both persecute the Jewish people and are the final Roman rulers of the times of the Gentiles. The present attempts at unification of the ecclesiastical and political powers are a shadow of what is coming. While the world is clamoring for world peace only God will be able to provide it.

## The Seven Vials

### Revelation 14

Once again we see the judgments preceded by the introduction. This chapter introduces the final series of judgments from God. There are seven items that need to be mentioned in this chapter: the 144,000 sealed ones on Mount Zion vs. 1-5, God's closing testimony to earth: the everlasting Gospel" – verses 6-7, the announcement that Babylon is fallen – verse 8, the terrible doom of the Beast-worshippers - vs. 9-11, the blessedness of those who die in the Lord- vs. 13, the harvest of earth is reaped – vs.14-16, and the fullness of God's wrath and vengeance poured out – vs. 17-20.

**Revelation 14:1**, *“And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.”*

We get a break from the destruction seen in chapter 13. Here we are introduced once again to the 144,000. These are the same ones that were introduced in chapter 7. God's name is written on their foreheads. Satan wants to imitate everything God does, so he makes everyone receive his mark on their forehead or hand. This is the only reference to Zion in Revelation, and the Lamb (Christ) is standing on it.

Zion, literally the southern hill in the city of Jerusalem, was a name also given to the whole city; and, as that was the seat of the divine worship on earth, it became an emblem of heaven – the dwelling-place of God.<sup>45</sup>

**Revelation 14:2**, *“And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:”*

God is speaking and John is paying close attention. The voice of harpers is heard, a great multitude of people who have been redeemed. There seems to be a great amount of rejoicing

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<sup>45</sup>

Barnes, *Notes on Revelation*, p. 506.

in heaven, something big is about to take place. The harpers seem to understand what is coming and are letting their feelings be known.

**Revelation 14:3**, *“And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.”*

The song here was in celebration of the complete redemption of the church, and was the song to be sung in view of its final triumph over all its foes. To appreciate fully the songs of Zion; to understand the language of praise; to enter into the spirit of the truths which pertain to redemption; one must himself have been redeemed by the blood of Christ.<sup>46</sup>

He must have known what it is to be a sinner under the condemnation of a holy law; he must have known what it is to be in danger of eternal death; he must have experienced the joys of pardon, or he can never understand, in its true import, the language used by the redeemed.

**Revelation 14:4**, *“These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb.”*

Many get hung up on this verse and insist that it is not to be taken literally. However, if we consider the fact that the scriptures do teach that if a person is married they must divide their time between ministry and their mate. Here we simply have those who have taken a path of total commitment to the Lord and the things of God. Nothing wrong with marriage, but in this time frame things are certainly different.

The defiled statement is probably in reference to the unrestrained sexual activity that will be promoted by Satan, in contrast to the holy union between one man and one woman.

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<sup>46</sup>

Ibid., p.507.

**Revelation 14:5**, *“And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.”*

There will be no deceit, fraud, hypocrisy, what a refreshing thought. The word here rendered "without fault" - amoomoi - means, properly, "spotless, without blemish," (1 Peter 1:19).

Here we have encouragement for those who are suffering now. They need to fix their eyes on the final state and take courage. How often in the life of each believer, when sorrows come upon him like a flood, and earthly consolation is gone, is there occasion to look to that blessed world where all the redeemed shall stand before God; where all tears shall be wiped away from every face; and where there shall be the assurance that the last pang has been endured, and that the soul is to be happy forever?<sup>47</sup>

**Revelation 14:6**, *“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,”*

This is when every tongue, tribe and nation shall hear the gospel. God will make sure that everyone hears, and this angel will go with the message. This one is described as another angel, similar to the rest but with a different task to perform. The everlasting gospel, good news that will not end. The message is the same today as it was 2000 years ago; it has not changed nor will it.

**Revelation 14:7**, *“Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.”*

We now have a description of three successive messages of three different angels. The first has an eternal gospel, proclaimed to everyone on earth, consisting of the following admonition:

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<sup>47</sup>

Ibid.

*"Fear God, and give him glory; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made the heaven."* They are called on to worship God, but there is no indication that this is the message of the redeemed, but rather a general call to those on earth. There is no indication that the people who hear this message even respond. Swete says that this proclamation *"contains no reference to the Christian hope; the basis of the appeal is pure theism. It is an appeal to the conscience of untaught heathenism, incapable as yet of comprehending any other."*<sup>48</sup>

(from The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1962 by Moody Press)

**Revelation 14:8**, *"And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication."*

A century ago the Seventh-Day Adventists seized upon these verses as being fulfilled in their particular convictions regarding the church. They regarded the early Millerite movement as a warning to the church that she is Babylon. Hence, believers should come out of organized Christendom-and the message of the third angel was immediately to follow.

Adventists insist that this is a promise that in the last days only those will be acceptable to God who keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus (v. 12), and that this is "a call to men to honor the true Sabbath of God, the seventh-day Sabbath of the Decalogue"<sup>49</sup>

Babylon is both a real place and a system. Babylon is seen as a life style and different places have been called Babylon due to their sinfulness and unrestrained lifestyle. Jerusalem is even referred to as "Babylon," (Rev. 17:5-11).

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<sup>48</sup>

Wycliffe, *Bible Commentary*, Electronic database, Biblesoft.

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Nichol, *The Midnight Cry*, p.462.

**Revelation 14:9-11** *“And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.”*

This describes a special judgment for those who accept the mark of the beast. This group will be visible for eternity, rejecting the testimony of Jesus is one thing but this is clearly in a different category of sin. It would appear that the rejection of Christ is compounded due to the amount of clear revelation from heaven, the two witnesses, the 144,000 Jews and all the clear judgments from God. There is no excuse for ignorance, this is simply defiance in the face of God himself.

**Revelation 14:12-13**, *“And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.”*

Here is a warning to all those who choose to worship the beast. This decision is going to have eternal consequences for those who follow the beast. On the other hand this is a great encouragement to those who suffer for the Lord and stay the course. Some will face death, while others will have a full time job just trying to stay alive. Hiding in the mountains is one option available to them.

As hard as it might be during this time period it is far better than what is going to happen to the unsaved. The saints are listed as those “who keep the commandments of God, and the faith

of Jesus.” This is a clear connection between faith and works. There is a strange comment here about those who die in the Lord; they are to receive a special blessing from God.

There have been four previous accounts of a voice from heaven (10:4, 8; 11:12; 14:2). There are two more times this will occur (18:4 and 21:3). These represent a direct message from God, there is no one in between. The reference to the blessing of those who die in the Lord from this time on is not a general statement concerning all saints who have died or will die, but specifically to those who die during this time frame. Those who die as martyr’s are said to rest from their labors with God giving them rewards for what they accomplished on earth.

**Revelation 14:14-16**, *“And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.”*

After receiving this reassurance, John sees another revelation. John now sees one like the Son of Man sitting on a white cloud wearing a golden crown and having a sharp sickle in his hand. Once again we hear John say, “And I looked, and behold,” this gives us a warning that something new and important is about to be revealed.

This is most likely Jesus himself, all judgment has been given over to him by the Father. The golden crown shows his glorified position and royal status.

Alford says, *“This clearly is our Lord Himself.”*<sup>50</sup>

The harp sickle indicates this is the final harvest that the Scriptures have predicted. John also sees another angel crying to the Son of man to use the sickle and reap the harvest. This is a

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<sup>50</sup> Alford, *The Greek New Testament*.

little startling when you consider that it is an angel addressing God and telling him what to do. But, if you look at this as encouragement and not a command it fits better.

The expression “*the harvest of the earth is ripe*” (Greek *exeranthe*), meaning “*to become dry or withered,*” has a bad sense about it (cf. Matthew 21:19-20; Mark 3:1-3; 11:20).

The idea here is of a fruit or vegetable that has become so ripe that it has begun to dry up and wither. So the rotten moral state of the world is what is described here. Verse 16 indicates that the Son of man does as the angel requests, possibly using the angels to help in this service (Matthew 13:30, 39-42). Some commentators make a distinction between the reaping in verses 14-16 and the vision in verses 17-19. They list the first group as the harvest of saints and the second group as the harvest of the wicked.

Alford says,

“The verdict of Commentators is very much divided. There are circumstances in the context which tell both ways. The parallelism with the vintage which follows seems to favor a harvest of the wicked: but then on the other hand, if so, what is the distinction between the two in gatherings? And why do we read of the casting into the wine-press of God’s wrath in the second case, and of no corresponding feature in the other? Again, why is the agency so different—the Son of man on the white cloud with a golden crown in the one case, and no corresponding feature in the other? Again, why is the agency so different—the Son of man on the white cloud with a golden crown in the one case, the mere angel in the other? Besides, the two gatherings seem quite distinct. The former is over before the other begins. On the whole then, though I would not pronounce decidedly, I must incline to think that the harvest is the ingathering of the saints, God’s harvest, reaped from the earth: described here thus generally, before the vintage of wrath which follows.”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>

Alford, *The Greek New Testament*, IV, 690.

We are not clearly told what the first harvest is. There is no distinct event in this passage that separates the one from the other. Possibly we have the first part as the general judgments from the start of the tribulation to the final climatic one in verse 17.

**Revelation 14:17-20**, *“And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.”*

Verse 17 clearly says that the angels are going to do the bulk of the work when it comes to the harvest of the earth. This angel is the 5<sup>th</sup> one mentioned in this chapter, and like the angel from verse 15 comes from the Temple in heaven. This angel also has a sharp sickle and is prepared to put it to use. Still another angel in verse 18 encourages the angel from verse 17 to start using the sickle. This angel has power over fire and comes from the altar.

This could be a response from the prayers of those saints who were killed and cry out for vengeance. Fire has been generally connected with God’s judgment and purging of sin. The expression “*fully ripe*” (Greek, *ekmasan*) is a different expression from the verb used previously in verse 15. Here it is describing grapes fully grown and in their prime about ready to burst open. While this is a little different in the words used the meaning is the same.

In Scripture Israel is often referred to as part of the vine, them being the branches (Psalm 80:8, 14-15; Isaiah 5:2-7; Jeremiah 2:21; Ezekiel 17:5-8). It is also used of the church in John 15:1-6. In the same manner that the church and Israel were to produce fruit on the vine, we now see the fruit of wickedness and corruption from those who are left on earth. In verse 19 the sickle is put

to the harvest and the reaping begins. This is referred to as “*the great winepress of the wrath of God.*” This actually is accomplished in Revelation 19:15 where the same figure of speech is used. In verse 20, the winepress is described as trodden without the city, and the blood is said to come even to the bridles of the horses as far as 1,600 furlongs. The squeezing of the grapes when they are stood on by those who tread the grapes in the winepress is now compared to the spurting of blood and speaks of the terrible destruction that will take place.

The area in question is 200 square miles. Many find it hard to believe that this is literal.

Alford again objects to a literal distance, and prefers to give this a symbolic interpretation. “This is one of the riddles of the Apocalypse to which not even an approximate solution has ever yet been given.”<sup>52</sup>

I do not believe that it is impossible for this to be literal. The scene is immense in the sheer volume of human participates. Consider this point, God is going to strike down His enemies in a moment and instant, men, horses and everything involved will be dead instantly. The horses will not be standing so the blood reaching the bridle is very possible.

In summary we can say that the chapter lays out for us several facts: the 144,000 will be protected through all of this, Israel will be still there at the end, the chapter clearly promises the judgment of the wicked, and the saints will be rewarded.

Remember that today is a day of Grace, but God will still judge sin. We have the opportunity to receive the grace of God and escape this final judgment, the choice is ours.

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

## REVELATION 15

### THE SEVEN VIAL JUDGMENTS

**Revelation 15:1-2**, “*And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God. And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.*”

Chapters 15 and 16 finish the chronological events just preceding the Second Coming of the Lord described in chapter 19. These events are called “the seven last plagues,” which are directly from God as a judgment on the earth. The order of events is listed as the seven seals, the seven trumpets and now the seven vials. The seven vials or bowls are all coming out of the seventh trumpet. The scene has been one of increasing intensity.

The chapters in between these events such as 10:1-11:14; 13:-14; 17-19 do advance the events, but give additional detail. Chapter 19 follows immediately after chapter 16 in the chronological order of events. Here John introduces this final set of judgments when he sees “*another sign in heaven.*”

The word *another* refers to the two preceding signs of chapter 12, the woman who appeared as “*a great wonder in heaven,*” literally *a great sign in heaven,*” and the “**great dragon**” (12:3), referring to the control of Satan through the beast. If we look at these three signs together we see the key elements in this drama: Israel, that is, the woman, the final world empire under the control of Satan and the beast and the seven angels who have the seven last plagues.

The sign in heaven is described as “*great and marvelous.*” This appears to be a new group of angels with these last 7 plagues. The fact that they are called the last plagues indicates that God’s wrath is finished.

The description of heaven as seen by John: *“as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire.”*

This is probably a reference back to 4:6 where a *“sea of glass like unto crystal”* is in the midst of the throne. Clearly this is not a real sea; John says it appeared as *“a sea of glass.”* The sea is designed to reflect the glory of God. Some suggest that the sea of glass is actually the Word of God, with the Saints standing on it, indicating God’s faithfulness upholding His own. The ones standing here are the martyred saints from the Tribulation. Notice the harps in their hands.

**Revelation 15:3-4**, *“And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? For thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.”*

The hymn of praise sung by the martyred saints in glory is identified as *“the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.”* The fact that “song” is repeated with a definite article in both cases would seem to indicate that two songs are in view rather than one.<sup>53</sup> The first one tells of the faithfulness of God to Israel as a nation. The song of the Lamb speaks of redemption from sin made possible by the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, and would include all the saved saints.

There is some question as to what exactly is the song of Moses. Some believe it is the traditional interpretation in Exodus 15 sung by Moses and the children of Israel when they defeated Pharaoh at the Red Sea. Some believe it is the personal song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32, a song personally written and spoken to the children of Israel by Moses near the end of his ministry. Verse four is future and speaks of that day when all will sing praises to the Lord.

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<sup>53</sup> Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, p. 228.

**Revelation 15:5-6**, *“And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles.”*

Here comes another vision by John. He is startled to see another vision that takes his attention directly to it. The Holy of Holies is opened. The expression “*the temple,*” refers to the inner holy place of the Tabernacle, the design that God gave to Israel during the wilderness journey. The expression “*the tabernacle of the testimony*” is a reference to the whole tent-like structure, which contained the Holy of Holies. This is described as “the tabernacle of the testimony” because of the presence of the tables of stone containing the Ten Commandments.”

As the curtain is opened John sees the seven angels coming out, showing that what is about to happen is coming from God.

**Revelation 15:7-8**, *“And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.”*

The seven angels described as already having the seven plagues in verse 6 are given seven golden vials or bowls full of the wrath of God in verse 7. The reference to plagues in verse 6 may be prophetic, or the giving of the vials may be the final go ahead to use them. The extent of the divine judgment is indicated by the word *full* indicating there is no more room for further judgment.

The word for “*wrath*” is *thymos*, literally means “*anger,*” rather than *orge*, meaning “*wrath.*”

The one is the action (*wrath*) and the other (*anger*) is the thought process. As the angels leave the temple, it is filled with smoke, which comes from the glory of God and His power. This is similar to the time when the cloud filled the Tabernacle in Exodus 40:34-35. Access into the sanctuary is impossible due to the smoke until the judgments are completed.

There some similarities between the seven bowl plagues and the seven trumpet plagues, and both are similar to the plagues of Egypt. The intensity of the bowl plagues is much greater than the trumpets. There is a clear similarity between the trumpet judgments and the bowl judgments, but there are differences. These are not the same judgments. The first four trumpets deal only with one-third of the earth, while the bowl judgments seem to be universal. The voice that John hears is the voice of God commanding the angels to execute His judgment. This voice is described as being a “*great*” voice, this term is used several more times in this section.

## REVELATION 16

### First Vial

**Revelation 16:1-2**, *“And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth. And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast and upon them which worshiped his image.”*

These bowl judgments will take place very rapidly. The bowls will climax God’s divine judgment on earth, which leads to the Second Coming of the Lord. This series of judgments will take us right up to the end.

The first bowl will hit all those who possess the mark of the beast; this is a target group of beast worshipers. The judgment is described as a sore or ulcer which is bad or malignant (Greek *poneros*). This will produce some severe suffering.<sup>54</sup>

This is the same word used here to describe the sore inflicted on the Egyptians in Exodus 9:9-11. The only ones not affected by this are the ones who refused to receive the mark of the beast.

### The Second Vial

**Revelation 16:3**, *“And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea.”*

The second bowl is poured out on the sea and it then turns to blood (literally “it became blood as of a dead man”), and every living soul in the sea dies.

This may be a reflection on the plague of Egypt where the Nile turned to blood and all the fish died.

Is this really blood? It is possible that the sea does not become literally human blood, but it appears to be and has the same qualities about it, in either case the result is the same, all die.

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

The second trumpet touched one-third of the sea, here the entire planet is touched.

### **The Fourth Vial**

**Revelation 16:4-8**, *“And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.”*

This third bowl now touches the rivers and fountains. All source of water is taken away. At this moment John hears one called *“the angel of the waters”* give a justification for God’s judgment. This is yet another angel who seems to be responsible for water. There is a wide range of responsibilities given to angels over God’s creation.

The angel declares that since men have spilled the blood of the saints, it is only fitting that God should repay them in kind, giving them blood to drink. God is just in His dealings with men. The saints will be rewarded and given rest, and the wicked will be given punishment without rest. The number of people killed by the anti-Christ during this period will be unparalleled in history.

There will be no mercy at this point from God. Another angel now speaks up and declares that God is righteous in His dealings with men. All water everywhere is turned into blood, showing everyone everywhere that God will avenge his martyred saints.

**Revelation 16:8-9**, *‘And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory.’*

Similar to the fourth trumpet, the fourth bowl judgment affects the heavens, specifically the sun. In the fourth trumpet the judgment touched a third of the sun, moon, and stars creating darkness on the earth for a third of the day.

Now the fourth bowl touches only the sun and increases rather than decreases the sun's strength. The result is the sun, scorching with fire burns men. This is just a sample of the future judgment in the lake of fire. This does not produce repentance just more blasphemy toward God.

It seems once again that God can and does protect his own. Only the ones who worship the beast will be involved, the implication is that true believers in the Lord will not suffer. This destroys the idea that men would repent and come to God if they only knew the real power of God and the judgments that he inflicts. The hardness of the human heart can be staggering.

### **The Fifth Vial**

**Revelation 16:10-11**, *“And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, **11** And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.”*

The fifth bowl is a direct assault on the throne of the beast and his worshipers. What we see is darkness, pain and the results of previous judgments. The noun clause *“the seat of the beast”* is more correctly translated *“the throne of the beast.”*

The beast here is probably the first beast from Revelation 13. The description of their pain is intense, with a gnawing of their tongues, a sign of agony. Again they refused to repent and blasphemed God, this is the last reference to their refusing to repent. This shows that men will not necessarily repent when faced with obvious choices. When confronted with the righteous judgment of God, their blasphemy is increased.

## The Sixth Vial

**Revelation 16:12-16**, *“And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.”*

The sixth bowl has created a lot of attention and comment. The river Euphrates is mentioned and becomes the central focal point for the action. As a result of God’s judgments the river is dried up and this provides a way for armies to cross over into the Promised Land. This river forms a natural barrier between what was the ancient Roman Empire and the eastern boundary of the land of Israel. The best way to understand this is a literal interpretation. The river will literally be dried up and a path made for the armies of the East to come into the Holy Land.

In verses 13-16 John has an additional vision introduced by the phrase *“and I saw.”* He now sees three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. These are simply spirits of demons and that is all we are told. They work miracles and gather the kings of the earth together for *“the battle of that great day of God Almighty.”* The evidence points to a final conflict as a result of on going battles, a climax from a series of military events mentioned in Daniel 11:40-45, where the reference to the *“tidings out of the east”* may be pointing to this event. The problem here is simply this, how could a war be possible when there is a world

government under the control of Satan and the beast. This probably is a conflict among the nations themselves in the latter stages of the tribulation as the world empire begins to crumble under the weight of God's judgments.

Satan cannot stop the judgments of God and they clearly affect the entire world stability. Nation after nation will try to survive and that often results in conflict with those around them as they struggle for food, water and shelter. While they may start out struggling with each other, ultimately they will unit to face the Lord when He returns in the clouds. Verse 15 appears to be a direct quote from God. He declares he will come quickly and unexpectedly. It is amazing that the people on earth will not have a clue that the Lord is coming back soon. Even with all the direct contact from God and his wrath being poured out, the people will still be surprised when He comes.

The mention of garments is not clear as to the exact meaning. Some believe this refers to their salvation, but probably better seen as the righteousness of the saints seen in their life and testimony (cf. 19:8). The idea is being caught in an act that is not proper when the Lord returns. Not living in sin or living a life that does not honor the Lord. Knowing when the Lord is coming we should be ready.

The conclusion here sees the armies gathered together in a place called Armageddon. It is possible that the "he" of verse 16 refers to God Himself. The meaning of "Armageddon," is "Mount of Slaughter."<sup>55</sup> Geographically, it refers to the Mount of Megiddo located next to the plain of Megiddo to the west and the large Plain of Esdraelon to the northeast. Megiddo is the Hebrew word corresponding to the Greek word Armageddon. This area was the scene of many of the great battles of the Old Testament. This is where Saul and Josiah died.

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<sup>55</sup> Lahaye, *Revelation Illustrated*, p. 205.

The area is not large enough for all the armies of the world to meet, though the valley is fourteen miles wide and twenty miles long. What probably is going to take place here is the central point for the military conflict. Actually the armies were spread over a 200-mile area up and down from this central location. At the time of the second coming some of the armies are still in Jerusalem itself (Zechariah 14:1-3).

### **The Seventh Vial**

**Revelation 16:17-20**, *“And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.”*

The seventh bowl is poured out into the air and the result was hard to imagine. John now hears a great voice saying, “It is done.” The Greek word indicates a completed action; it is the final act of God before the return of Christ. An earthquake follows and is more severe than any previous, the mountains were leveled, the islands disappeared, cities were destroyed and Jerusalem was divided into three sections.

I am not sure if this is spiritual Babylon either Rome or physical rebuilt Babylon. However, we see special judgment from God shown graphically here. The fact that the final judgment is an earthquake should indicate a physical city. The fierceness of the wrath of God in verse 19, literally the anger of His wrath, is shown in the destruction of the entire world. The hail that

accompanied the earthquake was huge, weighing about one hundred pounds. With all of this men still would not repent, but “*blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail.*”

The next event is the return of Christ in 19:11. We see men rejecting the sovereignty of God in the face of such overwhelming evidence, confirms that even the lake of fire will not produce repentance on the part of those who have hardened their hearts against the grace of God.

## REVELATION 17

### The Seven Dooms

**Revelation 17:1-2**, *“And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.”*

This chapter and chapter 18 talk about the destruction of Babylon in both ecclesiastical and political forms. As we look at this section we need to understand that the events described here may actually begin at the start of the Tribulation. John looked at all the events of this book in the future and not every thing was seen in chronological order.

There are a wide variety of opinions concerning the next two chapters. Chapter 17 is dealing with Babylon as a spiritual force, while chapter 18 looks at Babylon as a political system.

John sees the destruction of Babylon, as a false religion, by one of the seven angels who has the seven vials. This appears to be directed at those who say they have a relationship with the True God but inwardly do not. The picture is not usually one of pagan people but those who outwardly declare themselves to be God’s children, but actually worship others gods. This is typical of the description of Israel’s apostasy (Ezekiel 16 and 23; and all of Hosea). The danger seems to be of having an alliance with the political powers that exist during this time. When the church unites with the world it always destroys the church. The hardest people to win to Christ are those who are religious. Here we see the church seeking a union with the political powers that exist and therefore is the instigator of this apostate union.

**Revelation 17:3-4**, *“So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and*

*ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:”*

John is now given a very clear picture of events; he sees the woman (which is the city) called the great harlot. She is seated on a scarlet-colored beast, this is the same one talked about in 13:1 where the beast is the revived Roman Empire. The picture of the woman riding the beast and is not the beast indicates she represents ecclesiastical power, which is separate from the beast which is political power.

The scene showing her riding the beast suggests that she is support by the beast and at least in some degree is controlling the beast; at least it appears that way outwardly. The timing here is before the events of chapter 13, where the beast has already taken over all authority.

The seven heads is viewed by most as seven forms of government, and the ten horns to the kings who will reign at the same time near the end of this period. The outward indication is that the church will decay in character to a very low point. Keep in mind that the true church has been raptured leaving behind unsaved people to run the ecclesiastical remains.

The description of the woman clothed in purple and scarlet and covered with gold, jewels, and pearls has a familiar ring to it. There are church groups today that would fit this description. Spiritual truth and purity will disappear almost entirely during this stage.

**Revelation 17:5**, *“And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.”*

Here we have “*Babylon the Great*” given to the woman as a reference to a religious force, not the city or as a nation. Many rituals and practices were brought into the early church and resulted in a corrupting of the faith, which ultimately lead to the Great Reformation. Babylon

has been a major theme throughout the Scriptures, beginning in Genesis 10, where the city of Babel is first mentioned, and continued throughout the Scriptures ending in Revelation. Satan tries to counterfeit everything God does and Babylon is a poor attempt to offer something better than what God has planned. The teaching of the mystery religions of Babylon seem to have spread throughout the ancient world, creating numerous mystery religions, each presenting a counterfeit religion and a counterfeit god in opposition to the true God. Babylonian practices actually showed up in cities like Pergamos, the site of one of the seven churches of Asia.

In the early years of the Christian church in Rome, some confusion developed as they tried to mix some of the practices of Babylon with the Christian faith. We have only begun to see the apostasy that will present during this stage of history. The church will continue to drift away from the foundation on which it was established, Jesus Christ.

**Revelation 17:6-7**, *“And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration. And the angel said unto me, wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.”*

The true nature of the apostate church will be very clear, not only will it leave the truth, but will actually persecute those who follow the truth. It is amazing how the true believers will be and have been in the past attacked by the so-called church of God. John was astonished at what the angel was showing him. The degree of persecution was beyond what John had seen up to that point.

**Revelation 17:8**, *“The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose*

*names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is."*

The source of power is Satanic and demonic for the apostate church. There will be great wonder by people as they see the wonders and power displayed by the beast. These wonders will actually convince the masses to follow and worship the beast. It is hard to understand the descriptions given to Satan who is called the king over the demons in the abyss (9:11), "*the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit*" (11:7), the beast whose "*deadly wound was healed*" (13:3), and the beast of 18:8. The answer lies with the identification of Satan with the future world ruler and identification of the world ruler with his world government. Each is called "a beast." Only Satan himself actually comes from the abyss. The world government is identified with Satan, a very close relationship exist between the two.

This eighth beast is better understood as a revived political power rather than an actual individual. What is revived here is the imperial Roman government, not an imperial ruler. That which disappeared in history never to be seen again is miraculously resurrected at the end of the age.

**Revelation 17:9-11**, "*And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.*"

The seven heads are seven mountains. Most believe this to be Rome. Seven hills formed the center of the ancient city on the left bank of the Tiber River. During its long history Rome has been called the city of seven hills.

The seven heads are seven kings. Five have already passed, one is (that is, in John's period) and one is yet to come and will be followed by an eighth, which is the beast itself. There is

another position that sees the seven hills as seven governments, thus eliminating Rome and putting the emphasis back on physical Babylon. Looking at the seven mountains as imperial powers we see Greece, Persia, Babylon, Assyria, and Egypt, the five that were, Rome is the one that is and there will be one more yet future. The woman rode all seven and was activity seeking to destroy the true faith by offering false worship to all who would respond.

**Revelation 17:12-14**, *“And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.*

*These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.”*

Now John is given some final details of the last empire. These ten kings all rule at the same time and are given their power by the beast. They will not last long and will be under the direct rule of the beast, which is the eighth ruler. They will be opposed to God and will do all they can to attack the saints and resist the God of heaven.

**Revelation 17:15**, *“And he saith unto me, the waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.”*

In verse one the harlot is seen sitting on many waters and we are now told that this represents people, multitudes, nations, and tongues. There is huge political power given to the beast, but the woman has great sway over the multitudes of people.

**Revelation 17:16-18**, *“And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.”*

Look at these ten horns, they will turn on the woman and destroy her. These are the ten kings, which are given power by the beast. Apparently the beast and the ten kings will combine to attack the whore. The ten kings are said to have the same mind as the beast. Here is the end of the apostate world church, evidently its usefulness has ceased and is no longer needed. At this point the worship of the beast is at its fullest and the rejection of God is outward and widespread. Any pretense for worship of the God of heaven is taken away; all that is left is the blaspheming people on the one hand and the saints of God on the other.

The worship of the beast is now the order of the day and the church becomes useless. The possibility exist that the city here is not Rome or Babylon but is simply the mysterious working of a religious system as described in verse 5. One thing we know all of this will be destroyed, both the political and religious systems designed to corrupt the Word of God and to offer adulterous worship. Whether a literal city or a system, God will deal with it in righteous judgment.

## REVELATION 18

### The Fall of Babylon

**Revelation 18:1-3**, *“And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.”*

The statement of this chapter, *“after these things,”* describes another revelation coming after the events of chapter 17. John says, *“I saw another angel come down from heaven.”* The phrase *“another angel”* indicates that the angel is different from the angel in 17. Even though this angel has great power, it is still an angel and not Jesus. The fact that the angel has great power shows that the angel is given the responsibility of doing a great work for God.

The repetition of the verb *“is fallen,”* is in the aorist tense, indicating a sudden event seen as completed, even though the context makes it clear this is a future event. The announcement of chapter 18 coming so closely after the destruction of the harlot in chapter 17 that it raises the question of whether the two are the same event.

There are some reasons to understand this as two separate events. The woman who is destroyed in chapter 17 is made desolate, naked, and burned with fire by the beast with the ten horns. This points to the destruction of the ecclesiastical or religious part. The world church is destroyed in favor of a world religion with the political dictator as its head. In chapter 18, the context seems to indicate that Babylon here is viewed in its political and economic character rather than its religious. The term “Babylon” can be used in three ways: religious,

political, and physical. Looking at verse 9 the kings of the earth as well as the merchants will mourn the passing of the Babylon of chapter 18. There is no indication of mourning with the destruction of the woman in chapter 17.

The fall of the city of Babylon in 18:2 creates an environment for the habitation of demons, the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. This is a threefold description of the inhabitants of fallen Babylon, it is describing fallen angels in their various characteristics as demons and evil spirits, symbolized by the bird (cf. Isaiah 34:11-15; Matthew 13:32). Here is another judgment of God on the wickedness that has developed from this city.

**Revelation 18:4-6**, *“And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.”*

As John thinks about the fall of Babylon, he hears another voice from heaven speaking to the children of God instructing them to come out of Babylon. Previously the people of God were told to leave Babylon, to get out (Jeremiah 51:45).

Alford looks at this command as being similar to the command to Lot and his family to leave Sodom (Genesis 19:15-22).<sup>56</sup> The idea of leaving has two purposes: by leaving they will no longer partake of the sin of the city and they will not have to suffer the plagues that will come on the city. In verse 5 the sins of Babylon are said to reach right up to God resulting in judgment. Even though God does not stop sinful activity, He will ultimately judge it.

### **The Indictment on Babylon**

**Revelation 18:6-8**, *“Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double. How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in*

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<sup>56</sup> Alford, *The Greek New Testament*, p. 720.

*her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judges her.*

The voice from heaven now calls for the righteous judgment of God on this wicked city. The reward spoken of in verse 6 is the repayment of a debt, or to give back what is due. Here we see the law of retribution sometimes called ***lex talionis***. Divine justice exacts the “eye for an eye” and the tooth for a tooth.” But, the normal law of retribution is doubled in response to the greatest of the offences. There is no mercy here, the time of repentance has come and gone. The same law of retribution is seen in verse 7 where the standard of her judgment is compared to her luxurious living in which she was given to self-glorification. The expression “*lived deliciously*” means “*to be wanton*” or “*to revel*” and comes from a word meaning “*hardheaded*” or “*strong*.” Her willful sin against God is now going to result in torment and sorrow. Like the church at Laodicea her wealth has brought a false sense of security. Her destruction will be swift and sudden.

**Revelation 18:9-10**, *“And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.”*

The Kings of the earth now mourn the destruction of Babylon. These kings who took part in the wickedness of Babylon now sorrow over what they have lost. In spite of the greatness of this city, it is no match for the power and judgment of God.

Many believe that Babylon will be rebuilt and then the destruction will come at the end of the tribulation. Some believe this city is Rome, the center for the apostate church. It is possible that Rome might be the ecclesiastical capital and rebuilt Babylon the political capital.

Hoste believes that it is not necessity that Babylon should be rebuilt, because another city has, as we see in this chapter, taken her place.<sup>57</sup>

Regardless of location, the burning of the city is a symbol of the fall of its political and economic power, and the kings of the earth are surprised at her sudden destruction. Their mourning also involves their fear of retribution coming to them as it did to Babylon.

**Revelation 18:11-19**, *“And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men. And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all. The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, And saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, and cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city! And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate.”*

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<sup>57</sup>

Hoste, *The Vision of John The Divine*, p. 192.

Here we have the merchants of the world weeping over the destruction. Their sorrow is due to the financial loss they will suffer as a result of this judgment. The last item mentioned is frankincense. All of the items were identified with the rich.

Next we have the mention of food and then the different forms of transportation and finally the slaves. It seems that what we are seeing here is a mind set that was totally materialistic and opposed to anything spiritual. Verse 14 describes the removal of all these things held dear. Their sorrow is simply the result of personal loss.

### **The Hallelujah Chorus**

**Revelation 18:20-21**, *“Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles has come and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.”*

Here is a contrast between those suffering the loss of their wealth on earth and those in heaven rejoicing that the judgment that was long over due has come. The expression *“hath avenged”* literally means *“God hath judged your judgment on them,”* that is, *“God hath inflicted your judgment on them,”* bringing the vengeance of God for all the martyred saints.

It is another case where the righteous ultimately triumph as victory follows suffering.

**Revelation 18:21-24**, *“And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all. And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived. And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.”*

The mighty angel throws a stone like a millstone into the sea, symbolizing the violent destruction of the great city. A similar situation is found in Jeremiah 51:61-64. In this passage Seraiah, a prince who went with Zedekiah into Babylon, is told to bind a stone to the book of Jeremiah and cast it into the Euphrates with the words “*Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her; and they shall be weary.*” Here the millstone is cast into the sea instead of the Euphrates (remember God had dried up the river earlier). The symbolism is clear, like a stone cast into the sea will not be seen again. Babylon will be found “no more at all.” The silence that will result will be deafening.

## REVELATION 19

### The Battle of Armageddon

**Revelation 19:1-3**, *“And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: 2 For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.”*

Once again John is hearing voices, this time there are many voices, not just one. The time line here is very clear; this event must take place just before the Lord’s descent from heaven at the end of the tribulation.

J. Vernon McGee mentions that chapter 19 marks a dramatic change in the tone of Revelation.

The destruction of Babylon, the capital of the Beast’s kingdom, marks the end of the Great Tribulation. The somber gives way to a song. The transfer is from darkness to light.<sup>58</sup>

The reference to “much people” is most likely the same group mentioned in 7:9 where “*a great multitude*” is a translation of exactly the same Greek words. This could be a reference to all the people in heaven, but more likely refers to the martyred saints from the tribulation.

This group cries out with loud voices praise to the Lord mentioning: salvation, glory, and power. God is being praised for meeting out the proper judgment to the harlot and avenging the blood of the saints. Notice that the smoke from the destruction of Babylon will rise forever.

**Revelation 19:4**, *“And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.”*

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<sup>58</sup> McGee, *Thru the Bible*, Electronic Database, Biblesoft.

Here is the same group mentioned in chapter 4. The fact that the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures are seen worshipping God in a different manner than the great multitude seems to support the idea that they are separate, being the martyred dead from the tribulation. If the twenty-four elders represent the church, they are witnesses of these events from heaven.

**Revelation 19:5-6**, *“And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”*

The group praising God is now joined by a voice from the throne telling everyone to praise God. It would seem that this is an angel not the voice of God or the voice of the saints. The reason for the praise is His judgment against the lawless wicked men who have killed the people of God. This call to praise is not limited to any one group, but is directed to all those who love the Lord. The verb “*praise*” is in the present tense and is a command to “keep on praising” the Lord.

**Revelation 19:7-8**, *“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come and his wife hath made herself ready. 8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.”*

Here is a clear statement concerning the marriage of the Lamb to His church. We are told that the bride has made herself ready for this great event. Arrayed in white, the bride is pure and cleansed. We are not told where the marriage takes place, but heaven is the likely place for this event. John Walvoord writes, “Marriage customs due vary in the Middle East but there are usually major parts to it:

- a. The marriage contract was often consummated by the parents when the parties to the marriage were still children and not ready to assume adult responsibility. The payment of a suitable dowry was often a feature of the contract.
- b. At a later time when a couple had reached a suitable age, the second step in the wedding took place. This is the background of the parable of the virgins in Matthew 25:1-13.
- c. Then the bridegroom would bring his bride to his home and the marriage supper, to which guests were invited, would take place. <sup>59</sup>

This was the type of setting where Jesus attended the marriage in Cana of Galilee. The righteousness spoken of here is not the justification by our Lord, but the actual works of the saints done for the Lord.

**Revelation 19:9-10**, *“And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God. And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”*

There is a clear distinction between the wife of the Lamb and the guests at the wedding. The wife is the church and the attendants at the wedding the saints of past and future ages. While some believe that God treats all saints from all ages exactly the same is very difficult to support. The dealings with the nation of Israel, the church, and tribulation saints are certainly different from each other.

John is so overwhelmed that he falls down in front of the angel in a position of worship and is quickly chastised by the angel. We should take special notice of the last part of verse 10.

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<sup>59</sup> Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, p. 271.

Jesus is the spirit of prophecy and points to the fact that prophecy is given to point people to Jesus. Christ is not only the major theme of the Scriptures but He is also the central theme of prophecy.

Now we see the conclusion of God's program when Jesus comes back to earth as King.

Everything that precedes Revelation 19:11 is leading up to the great event of Jesus' return in power and glory and every thing that comes after is an epilogue.

In the Gospels we see Jesus being rejected, humiliated, suffering and dying. His return will be nothing but power, majesty, and glory. The Second Coming is what the world has been waiting for since the fall of Adam in the Garden of Eden. If we fail to recognize the significance of this event we will fail to understand a major portion of God's dealings with His creation. This is huge and must be a major theme with any believer or church. Failure to look for and desire to see the Lord's return will minimize our commitment to worship and service Him.

**Revelation 19:11-13**, *“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.”*

This event will inspire and excite any true believer. The picture is graphic and powerful instilling wonder and awe. The difference before this event and the rapture of the church is unmistakable, they are not the same.

At the rapture the Lord meets the saints in the air and there is no indication of judgment on the earth. At the Second Coming the Lord brings the saints with Him as He descends upon the armies of the world and immediately destroys them. The Second Coming will be a magnificent event, filled with power, glory and visibility worldwide. There will be no mistake as to what is

happening and who is coming. This event is compared to lightning that shines from the east to the west, in other words, illuminating the whole heavenly sky. This whole scene begins when John sees “heaven opened.”

The passage answers the question, “will there be animals in heaven?” Well there will at least be horses there and each of us will have one to ride.

**Revelation 19:14-16**, *“And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”*

When Christ comes back he will bring with Him the armies of heaven. While some think this represents the church, there is no reason not to include the Holy Angels as well. Out of his mouth came a two-edged sword, which is going to slay the nations?

The sword here is the word used for a long Thracian sword or one unusually large and longer than most swords. This is symbolic reference to an instrument of war, which Christ will deal with the nations and set up his rule. He has the right to rule and is going to do so.

**Revelation 19:17-19**, *“And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.”*

After the vision of Jesus Christ and His return to earth, the Apostle John sees an angel standing in the sun. Actually what he sees is probably an Angel standing in the light of the Sun and the angel possibly even brighter than the sun itself. This is a brilliant display of the glory of God and His power. This angel cries with a loud voice indicating that something big was about to happen. The birds are called to gather together for a great feast. While the saints are called to the marriage supper of the lamb, the birds are called to feast on all the ones killed in the battle with Jesus. This is not much of a contest, Jesus speaks and they are all dead. God's judgment is no respecter of people or things. The destruction of the armies is the first event, which precedes the judgment of the beast himself and his cronies. The armies are gathered together to fight each other, but when the Lord appears in the sky they unit to do battle with God.

**Revelation 19:20** *“And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.”*

The outcome of this battle was never in doubt and the result was very predictable. The beast and the false prophet are cast alive into the lake of fire. It appears they are the first to be cast into the lake of fire. The unsaved dead are still in Hades at this point. They will shortly be called before the Great White Throne and give an account of their lives, and then they too will be cast into the lake of fire.

**Revelation 19:21**, *“And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.”*

The ones not killed in the first phase of the conflict are now put to death. The evidence seems to be that the entire army of the wicked is killed. Christ is the one who does the slaying the rest of the army of heaven is simply there to watch His power and judgment.

The Word of God makes it plain that God loves the world and would have all men to be saved and receive the blessing of God for all eternity. However, the same Word of God declares that all those who reject this great love of God will experience the wrath of God.

### **The Reign of Christ**

This is what the whole creation has been waiting for, the reign of Jesus on earth. The mystery is over when the reign begins. We are about to see some exciting events that deal with the millennial reign of Christ on earth. There will be a large number of Old Testament prophecies fulfilled during this period, such as the one in Jeremiah 23:5-6, *“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”* There is a wide range of interpretations on this chapter, but they all fall into one of four possibilities:

- (1) The literal and premillennial interpretation followed by Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Tertullian. This position states that this is a literal period of a thousand years preceded and followed by resurrection and judgment.
- (2) The amillennial view that the resurrection is spiritual in nature and there is no physical kingdom. The millennium began with the first coming of Christ, this is the view of Augustine.
- (3) The view of Grotius and Hammond that the resurrection referred to the revival of the church beginning at the time of Constantine when the pagans were defeated.

- (4) The postmillennial view which sees this as a resurrection of principles, doctrine, spirit and character of the Christian martyrs and saints departed: being thus one in part spiritual, in part ecclesiastical, and indeed in part too national; in that the Jews will be then nationally restored, as well as saved.

## REVELATION 20

### The Interval between the Fourth and Fifth Dooms

#### Satan Bound for 1000 Years

**Revelation 20:1-3**, *“And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.”*

Of course John sees another vision, another angel coming down from heaven. Some believe this is Christ but there is not adequate proof to support this. This angel has a key to the bottomless pit in his hand. This angel also has a large chain in his hand. The angel grabs Satan and will now bind him and throw him into the pit. The pit is sealed making escape impossible for Satan.

The whole argument of premillenarians and amillenarians is based on the interpretation of this passage. There is no reason to take this passage in any form but literal. What we clearly see is the angel instructed to do six things:

1. To lay hold on the dragon.
2. To bind him for 1,000 years.
3. To cast him into the pit.
4. To shut him up or lock him in.
5. To set a seal upon Satan, which will make him powerless?
6. To let him out after 1,000 years is finished.

Each one of these statements is clear and it is difficult at best to make them mean anything else. There is no evidence that Satan has been bound at all during the past 2,000 years making the amillennial view unacceptable.

### **The First Resurrection**

**Revelation 20:4**, *“And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”*

We see the thrones and someone is sitting there, possibly the twenty-four elders from chapter 5:10, who are said to reign on earth. Jesus said in Luke 22:29-30, *“ And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”*

This promise was given to the twelve disciples. The twelve are part of the church, the Body of Christ, so they represent the church. The ones who lost their heads are also listed here; the ones that Satan had special hatred for are now honored. This group will also reign with Christ for the 1000 years. This is another proof that we are not now reigning with Christ, the martyrs are not present yet. Notice that there is a 1000 years between the resurrection of the martyred dead from the wicked.

### **The Millennium**

**Revelation 20:5-6**, *“But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”*

John is making it very clear who has been raised and who is yet to be. The rest of the dead do not live again until the thousand years is finished. The resurrection at the beginning of the millennium is called “the first resurrection.” This can create some problems when we understand that Christ was raised from the dead before the tribulation saints. The answer is very simple the first resurrection has three parts, all involving believers. The second resurrection has one part, which deals with the unbelievers. The first resurrection includes Christ from the grave, the rapture of the church, and the tribulation and Old Testament saints at the end of the Tribulation. The second resurrection includes all unsaved from all ages at the end of the millennium.

### **Satan Loosed**

**Revelation 20:7-9**, *“And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.”*

John here is simply stating the fact of the millennium not the details. The nature of the kingdom is described for us in the Old Testament passages like Isaiah 2:2-4; 11:4-9; Psalm 72 and others. Jerusalem is going to be the capital city in the kingdom (Isaiah 2:3) and there will be no war (Isaiah 2:4). Isaiah 11 describes the righteous reign of Christ and the peace that will be a main part of the kingdom.

After the trauma of the tribulation the ones who survive will make up the initial population of the kingdom after the unsaved are separated from them and cast into hell (Ezekiel 20:34-38).

Israel who was often described as an unfaithful wife will be reunited with Jehovah as the restored wife. John does not spend much time on this subject. It is clear to the reader that John seems to see no need to elaborate on the details as if it should be understood.

Satan is once again let loose to roam and deceive. The ones who are caught up with Satan's lies are the offspring from the ones who initially entered into the kingdom. There are several possibilities why Satan is let loose again:

- a. To demonstrate that man even under the most favorable circumstances will fall into sin if left to his own choice.
- b. To demonstrate the foreknowledge of God who foretells the acts of men as well as His own acts.
- c. To demonstrate the incurable wickedness of Satan.
- d. To justify eternal punishment by exposing the unchanged character of wicked people under divine authority and leadership for long periods of time.

Here Gog and Magog is listed without any explanation. One possibility is that Gog refers to the ruler and Magog to the people; this is similar to Ezekiel 38, but not the same event. This could be looked at in the same way we talk about Waterloo being a disastrous situation, not the literal Waterloo that Napoleon experienced but another event that had bad consequences. The number of those who followed after Satan at this time is large, hard to number. What we see here is the last huge rebellion of man against God's rule in which the wicked meet their Waterloo. It appears that God allows this rebellion to go as far as surrounding the great and loved city of Jerusalem. We are told the saints are inside the city and see the approaching army. How strange this scene will be for those who had never experienced war. Like Sodom and Gomorrah God will send fire from heaven and wipe out the rebellion.

## Satan's Doom

**Revelation 20:10**, *“And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”*

Immediately after the fire from heaven Satan is taken and thrown into the lake of fire. Satan is the same at the end as he was in the beginning, a deceiver. He will join the beast and the false prophet who have been in the lake for the past 1,000 years.

Death is not annihilation and the wicked will last forever in a state of torment. The Greek is emphatic in its description of the punishment of the wicked, stronger terms could not be used.

**Revelation 20:11**, *“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.”*

Once again John gets to see the next event on God agenda, a Great White throne with God sitting on it. This throne is probably different from previous thrones mentioned in Revelation. Heaven and earth flee away or no longer exist. God will make a new heaven and a new earth. There was no place for anyone to hide, all was exposed and open before Him who sat on the throne.

## The Wicked Dead

**Revelation 20:12-13**, *“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.”*

Now we see the small and the great coming before God to give an account of their lives. This is the wicked or unsaved dead who were not part of the first resurrection. There is no respect

of persons with God; no matter what your station in life it carries no weight before the throne. These will be judged based upon the things written in the books, their life story rerun before the God of creation. All the final judgments are based on works, not to determine their salvation but their punishment.

The ones who die during the millennium will be included in this judgment along with the rest from the beginning of creation. Though men are judged according to their works, the book of life is introduced as the deciding factor as to where they will spend eternity.

**Revelation 20:14-15**, *“And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”*

All those who died previously were in hell and now have been transferred to the lake of fire.

This is what is called the second death. The key to where one would spend eternity is found in the book of life. If your name was there you spent the eternity with God, if not you went to the lake of fire. Do not make the mistake of thinking the lake of fire is symbolic, it is a literal place with literal punishment. Many born-again believers have tried to minimize the awfulness of the lake of fire.

## REVELATION 21

### The Seven New Things

**Revelation 21:1**, *“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.”*

After seeing the great white throne judgment the mood is solemn. The Lord now directs our attention to what is coming next. The new heaven and new earth are going to replace the old order. Again John is given the opportunity to see what is coming; three times in this chapter John sees something new. We are looking at a totally new creation by God. The old heaven and earth are destroyed and a new one is put in their place.

Notice that the new environment has no sea. There is very little information given to us to visualize this new place. The earth is presently covered with a large amount of water; the new creation will have the river of life running through the city of Jerusalem. The Scriptures say very little, but there are some references to the new heaven and earth, (cf. Isaiah 65:17; 66:22; II Peter 3:13). We need to be careful when reading these passages because the millennium is inter woven with the new heaven and new earth. It is not unusual for the scriptures to mention two different events in the same context even though they may be separated by a long period of time, such as the first and Second Coming of Christ. The new heaven and new earth clearly follow the millennium.

**Revelation 21:2**, *“ And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”*

John is captivated by the vision of the New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven. Reference is made to this city in Revelation 3:12 as *“the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God.”* It appears that this New

Jerusalem has been in existence for some time, perhaps this is the dwelling place now of departed saints.

**Revelation 21:3-4**, *“And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”*

John hears a great voice speak, this is the last of twenty-one times that “a great voice” or “a loud voice” is mentioned in the book. John hears the voice declare that the tabernacle of God is now going to be with men. This shows that God is going to dwell among men.

It is very clear that things are going to be different. Here God is going to wipe away all their tears, no more death, or pain. What a promise and encouragement for all believers. These tears probably are from the suffering of God’s people on earth and perhaps from viewing the white throne judgment where former family and friends were cast into the lake of fire. The promise that the former things are passed away is very important. There is a large amount of pain and suffering associated with the former things. Eternity will be a blessing and not a place to dwell on past pain and suffering. So we see a total transformation from the past, not only is the material part gone but the memory as well.

**Revelation 21:5-6**, *“And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, it is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.”*

Everything will be new, including the role of God in the affairs of His creation. The one sitting on the throne most likely is Christ; he will no longer be a mediator between men and the father.

That role is no longer needed. John must have been standing there in utter shock because he had to be reminded to write these things down.

The speaker here is identified as *“Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.”* This is the same title given to Christ in Revelation 1:8. This would support the idea that he is the one sitting on the throne.

**Revelation 21:7-9**, *“He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”*

The Saints are going to inherit all things, this is very exciting. There is a sharp contrast between the child of God and the unbelievers. This is the last mention of the second death and the lake of fire. While the saints receive all things, the unsaved are seen dealing with the lake of fire.

**Revelation 21:9-11**, *“And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;”*

John now meets one of the angels he had seen before and is invited to view the bride. This of course is the church and John is able to see the church separated from the flaws and sins. This is a picture of what God can and will do in the lives of His people, the sins removed and the beauty shows through. It is not clear whether this is chronological or if John is seeing the church from day one until the present glorification. What a beautiful and glorious scene as the

New Jerusalem comes down from heaven full of the saints from ages past. The millennium is past and the eternal state has begun.

**Revelation 21:12-14**, *“And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.”*

Here are some specifics about the city. Notice first of all the high walls, then the twelve gates. Walls are to keep out those who should not be there; often we connect protection with the walls of a city. The fact that there are gates indicates that there are some who should not have access to the Holy City. Only those who have permission may enter this city. The saints will have free access but there will be others that will be limited to their ability to enter.

The twelve angels, one at each gate will protect the gates from anyone who should not enter. The gates will have the names of the twelve tribes, whether each gate will have one name or all twelve listed on all twelve gates is not clear. Perhaps the names will be similar to the earthly city, according to Ezekiel 48:31-34 gives the following order: on the north side, going east to west, Levi, Judah, and Reuben; on the east side, going north to south, Joseph, Benjamin, and Dan; on the west side, going from north to south, Naphtali, Asher, and Gad; on the south side, going from east to west, Simeon, Issacher, and Zebulun.

The New Jerusalem will be the home of the saints, but it is clear that they will be able to go in and out as they have need. The twelve foundations are also prominent and will have the names of the twelve apostles. There is considerable speculation as to the names whether it is Matthias or Paul that will make up the twelve

There is a distinction made here between Israel and the church as seen in the twelve gates and the twelve foundations, both will occupy the holy city. There is only one eternal home for the redeemed and this is it.

**Revelation 21:15-17.** *“And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.”*

An angel measures the size of the city. The city is approximately 1342 miles long and wide and high. We often hear the measurement as 1500, since a reed was used to do the measurement we are not exactly sure the precise length of the reed, but normally is measured about ten feet. The city seems to rest physically on the earth because we are told that people go in and out of the gates. This would be difficult unless the city was on earth and not floating in the sky overhead. The measurement whether by a man or an angel would be the same.

**Revelation 21:18-21,** *“And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.”*

Here is a glimpse of the wonder of this city, its beauty and magnificence. The whole city is said to be of pure gold, transparent, not like the gold we have with us. The foundation is laid with all types of precious stones. The sapphire is a stone similar to a diamond in hardness and

blue in color. The chalcedony comes from Turkey, thought to be sky-blue with stripes of other colors running through it. The fourth is an emerald, a bright green color. The fifth is the sardonyx, a red and white stone. The sixth is the sardius which is reddish and sometimes found in a honey color which is less valuable. The sardius is used with the jasper in Revelation 4:3 in describing the glory of God on the throne. The seventh is chrysolite, a transparent stone golden in color. The eighth is beryl, a sea-green. The topaz, the ninth foundation, is yellow-green and transparent. The tenth foundation, the chrysoprasus, another shade of green. The eleventh foundation, the jacinth, is a violet color. The last stone, the amethyst, is commonly purple.

While we cannot be sure on the exact color of some of these stones, they do make for a beautiful picture of great majesty. The beauty is beyond anything we could possibly imagine.

**Revelation 21:22**, *“And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.”*

Once again John draws our attention to what he sees. There is no temple in the city and this immediately makes an impression on John. The temple was the center of Jewish life and for it to be gone would create some questions in John’s mind. However, God answers the question for him, *“For the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.”* The temple brought people face to face with the reality of God, but now they will see Him in all His glory, the temple is no longer needed.

**Revelation 21:23-24**, *“And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.”* There is no need of light by the sun because the Son will be the light. There will be no temple, no sacrifice, no sun, no moon, no darkness, no gates to shut, no abomination.

This is a clear separation between the millennium and the eternal state, they are separate and distinct.

### **The Epilogue**

**Revelation 21:25-22:1**, *“And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.”*

The gates will never be shut, because there is no night, just continual light. We will not need rest nor will we get tired. The word nations should be understood as “Gentiles.” Nothing will ever enter the city that is evil or corrupt and only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life are able to enter. The inhabitants of the city will be forever young and absolutely pure.

## Revelations 22

### The Epilogue

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**Revelation 22:2**, *“In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”*

Here is one of those situations where we step back and ask a few questions. Why would there need to be healing in heaven? If we look at the word translated “healing” it actually means *therapeutic*, it is for the promotion of the well being of the individual. It is there to make life more enjoyable, not to heal some sickness.

The tree seems to have similar qualities as the tree mentioned in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:22,24).

**Revelation 22:3**, *“And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it and his servants shall serve him.”*

The main thing that stands out here is the statement that there is no more curse. As a result there is no more sin, which removes the need for divine judgment. The throne of God and of

the Lamb will be in there, again indicating no presence of sin. There will be activity by his servants, who will serve the Lord. There will not be idleness in heaven nor on earth when the New Jerusalem comes down out of heaven to rest forever on the transformed earth, purged by fire and made new.

**Revelation 22:4-5** *“And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign forever and ever.”*

Imagine being able to look in the face of God. The fact that the name of God is written on the foreheads would indicate that there will be those present who do not have His name and thereby identify these individuals as special. There is no need of a sun because God is light and He will provide all the light needed. It is clear that the reign of Christ will not end when the Millennium ends, but will go on forever. The question is who will the saints be reigning over? Any King needs subjects to reign over, we are to reign with Him, so there must be another group of people subject to the rule of Christ and His bride, the church.

**Revelation 22:6-7** *“And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to show unto his servants the things which must shortly be done. Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keeps the sayings of the prophecy of this book.”*

The angel speaking to John simply reinforces the truthfulness of what was revealed to him. It must have been overwhelming to John as he tried to comprehend everything. The fact is Jesus will come back, and when He does it will be suddenly and without warning. There is a special blessing for those who are looking for His appearing, who are prepared to receive Him. In the meantime there is a blessing connected with faithfully honoring the book that God has given to His saints.

**Revelation 22:8-9**, *“And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things. Then said he to me, see thou do it not: for I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.”*

John’s response to certainly understandable, what else should one do in such a situation?

John was overwhelmed and wanted to respond properly, but his response was wrong, worship belongs to God alone. While the one speaking to John must have been magnificent in appearance, that did not mean he should worship him. The angel rightly instructs John concerning his response. And again we see a reminder to obey the book.

**Revelation 22:10-11**, *“And he said unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.”*

Remember there is a blessing connected with obedience to the book. It would be wrong for John not to proclaim the contents of the book for others to understand and respond. While it may seem strange for the messenger to tell John not to seal the book and then says let everyone be as they are. Actually what is being presented is the fact that if they reject the message of the book and the person of Jesus for their deliverance there is no other path for them and they will remain in their sin. However, just the opposite will take place for those who place their faith and trust in the Lord, they will be declared righteous forever.

**Revelation 22:12**, *“And behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.”*

Do not panic and think that your acceptance or rejection is based upon your works. However, your works will determine the degree of rewards or the degree of punishment one receives.

The Lord will appear instantly and without warning, but the believer will be greeted immediately with his rewards. God is just and righteous and will give what is due to each individual based upon what they have done. It is necessary to remember that the believer is saved by grace not by works lest anyone should be in a position to boast (Ephesians 2:8-9).

**Revelation 22:13-16**, *“I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.”*

Christ is speaking here and makes it very clear his position and power. Once again there is a reward for doing what God has called us to do, receive the Son whom He has sent (John 6:40). There is some question as to the identity of those listed as outside the gates. The possibility exists that these are the ones who received the mark of the beast during the tribulation period, a special judgment will be pronounced upon them (Revelation 14:9-10).

**Revelation 22:17**, *“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”*

Here is one last plea for the unsaved to accept the free gift of eternal life. The Spirit makes the offer and we see the church (represented by the bride) making the offer as well. The Holy Spirit working through the church is calling out to all to come. Notice the order that is presented, first you hear, then you thirst or desire it, and finally receive. The time to accept is now, because when the Lord returns with a shout it will be too late to make a decision, the decision at that point has already been made.

**Revelation 22:18-20**, *“For I testify unto every man that hears the words of the prophecy of this book. If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. He which testified these things saith, Surely I come quickly Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus.”*

The warning could not be any clearer, what God has written He has written, and no one can alter the book without terrible consequences. The judgment of God on one altering the book is really beyond description. Once again we are reminded that God is coming back, and when He does things will be changed forever. The world is not out of control, but simply moving toward the final condition declared by God before His return.

**Revelation 22:21**, *“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be will you all. Amen.”*

The grace of God is there for all who will reach out and receive it. God take no pleasure in the death of the wicked or in the final destruction of those who reject his love and forgiveness. Grace is critical to understand the whole process that God has put into place, He is in control and will do what He determines to do. Our role is to understand that we are not our own, we have been bought with a price, we belong to Him (1Corinthians 6:19-20). We were created to honor and glorify the Lord God, anything less than that deserves the punishment they receive.

## Evaluation

I enjoyed Larkin's approach and presentation of the book. I believe that he was able to make sense out of the difficult passages, if not completely explaining the passages; he at least gave a reasonable possibility to them.

Many New Testament doctrines were incorporated into this book, with eschatology being the major emphasis. Yet, we see confirmation to the presence of angels, the reality of demons, the security of the believers, the fulfillment of God's judgment on a sinful world, the promise of a New Heaven and a New Earth, the distinction between Israel and the Church, the atoning work of Christ on the cross, the power of prayer, the rapture of the church, the fulfillment of the second coming, and the eternal existence of Jesus among some of the doctrines touched on in this book.

This is the first time I have read anything from Larkin and would enjoy reading more if any other works are available. I would recommend this book to anyone who is interested in understanding the overall message of Revelation.