

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF REVELATION

I. AUTHORSHIP

A. John, the Apostle

1. External evidence from the early church fathers has always been strong for John's authorship
2. Internal evidence
 - a. Writer is called John in 1:1
 - b. Writer assumes to be well known to his readers as evidenced by how little is said about him

B. Other possibilities

1. John, the elder, (cf. 3 John 1)
2. John, the prophet (sometimes spoken of as an unknown prophet named John who wrote Revelation)

II. DATE

A. Normally accepted period

1. 90-95 AD
2. During the reign of Domitian
3. There is reasonable internal and external evidence for late first century date

B. Early Date

1. 68-80 AD
2. Certain internal statements and symbolic statements lead some to hold to an earlier first century date.

III. DESTINATION

A. Seven Churches of Asia

1. Seven named locations
2. Why only seven and only those seven is another question

B. Its message is for all the church of all the ages

1. Revelation 1:3 has long range effect
2. Predictions in Revelation have significance for all ages—some even as yet unfulfilled.

IV. PURPOSE

- A. To correct some problems in the seven churches
- B. To encourage the seven churches to faithfulness and steadfastness
- C. To admonish them to remain true during times of testing.

V. CHARACTERISTICS OF REVELATION TYPE OF LITERATURE

Apocalyptic literature: Literature that is unveiling or revealing something that has not been known before. This type of literature has certain identifying marks.

- A. Prophetic
- B. Symbolic language and imagery
- C. Often Poetic
- D. Eschatological (Study of last things)
- E. Frequent Use of the Old Testament
- F. Emphasis on heaven and earth; numbers; judgment and woes

VI. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN REVELATION AND INSPIRATION

- A. Revelation means that disclosure of divine truth which is immediately given to holy men by the Holy Spirit.
- B. Inspiration means the superintending power of the Holy Spirit which prevents error in which it is written.

VII. OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

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|------|--|------------------|
| I. | Christ in the Midst of the Seven Churches | Revelation 1-3 |
| II. | The Book with the Seven Seals | Revelation 4-7 |
| III. | The Sounding of the Seven Trumpets | Revelation 8-11 |
| IV. | The Introduction of the Enemies of the Church | Revelation 12-14 |
| V. | The Seven Bowls of Wrath | Revelation 15-16 |
| VI. | The Destruction of Most of the Enemies of the Church | Revelation 17-19 |
| VII. | The Destruction of the Dragon;
Followed by the New Heaven and the New Earth | Revelation 20-22 |

VIII. FIRST CENTURY BACKGROUND OF REVELATION

Romans Emperors

Augustus	27 BC-14 AD	Emperor during the birth of Christ
Tiberius	14AD-37 AD	
Caligula	37 AD-41 AD	Began Emperor worship, not taken seriously
Claudius	41 AD-54 AD	
Nero	54 AD-68 AD	Persecuted Jews and Christians in Rome
Galba, Otho, Vitellius	69 AD	Quick succession during civil war
Vespasian	69 AD-79 AD	Destruction of Jerusalem (70 AD)
Titus	79 AD-81 AD	
Domitian	81 AD-96 AD	Revived serious Emperor worship
Nerva	96 AD-98 AD	
Trajan	96 AD-117 AD	
Hadrian	117AD-138 AD	

Why Were Christians Hated in the 1st Century?

1. They were rumored to be cannibals.
2. They were called atheist because they did not believe in the gods
3. They were often accused of causing arson and plagues
4. They were associated with the Jews
5. They were a source of split families

Numerical Symbols Used in Revelation

Number	Definition
1	Unity or the ability to stand alone. God is one Lord. (17:13) Can also mean a short time (one hour) or something standing alone and comparatively weak.
2 (1+1)	Strength or courage. 2 are stronger than 1. The disciples of Jesus went out by 2's. See also Deuteronomy 17:6 and Ecclesiastes 4:9-11.
3	Symbolic of a complete and ordered whole. Often refers to Deity and is a divine or spiritual number. The Godhead is a 3-fold in nature, God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit.
3 ½ (7/2)	A time of despair or confusion. This number is expressed several ways such as time, times, and half a time (a 3 ½ year time), 1260 days, and 42 months. All of these ways of saying 3 ½ years signifies a time of trial, implying a hope for the future.
4	The physical world in which we live. The 4 winds and 4 corners of earth are frequently used. There are also 4 directions of the earth: north, south, east, and west. In Revelation, four refers to all of humanity.
5 (10/2)	The number "5" is used in connection with ten to mean half complete or more specifically, incomplete or short of persecution.
6 (7-1)	Evil. This number falls short of the perfect number "7". It carries with it the idea of impending doom or destruction.
7 (3+4)	Perfection. A sacred number, the perfect divine number, "3", plus the perfect number of this physical world, "4", equals "7" or total perfection. This number is used over 50 times in the book of Revelation. Remember the seven days of creation.
10	Completeness. If a person has all 10 fingers and toes, he is humanly complete. Remember the Ten Commandments.
12 (3*4)	Since this number was arrived at by multiplying 3 (God) times 4 (Mankind), it represented completeness (all that exists). It is seen throughout the Bible in the 12 apostles and the twelve tribes of Israel.
24 (12*2)	Religious completeness intensified
40 (4*10)	Completeness on a human level
144 (12*12)	Religious completeness intensified
666 (see 6)	Imperfection, evil, deceit, and failure intensified
1000(10*10*10)	Ultimate completeness
1600 (4*4*10*10)	Totality on a human level
144,000 (12*12*1000)	The entire redeemed from the earth; all God's people of all ages.

REVELATION PASSAGES THAT ARE ROOTED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Revelation Chapter:

Old Testament Reference:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. The description of the Son of Man | Dan. 7:9ff, Ez. 1:7, 26f; Ez. 43:2 |
| 2. | Observe such O.T. expressions as:
Tree of Life, Paradise of God,
Balaam and Balak, Jezebel, rod of iron |
| 3. Book of Life | Ex. 32:33, Ps. 69:28, Mal. 3:16,
Isa. 22:22 |
| 4. The throne set in heaven
The four living creatures | Is. 6:1, Ez. 1:26-28
Ez. 1:10, Ez. 10:14, Is. 6:1 |
| 5. The scroll
The Lion of Judah | Ez. 2:9, Zech 5:1-3
Gen. 49:9, Is. 11:10 |
| 6. The horses and their riders | Ps. 45:3-4, Zech. 1:8, Zech. 6:3 |
| 7. Sealing
Blessedness of the redeemed | Ez. 9:4
Is. 49:10, Is. 25:8, Jer. 2:13, Jer. 31:16
Ez. 34:23 |
| 8 & 9. The trumpets of Judgment | The plagues of Egypt, Ex. 7ff |
| 10. Angel swearing
The little book | Dan. 12:7
Ezek. 2:9, Ezek. 3:4 |
| 11. Measuring reed
The two witnesses | Ezek. 40:3, Zech. 2:1ff, Zech 4:2ff
Zech 4:2ff |
| 12. The woman, child, dragon
Michael | Gen. 3:15, Ps. 2:9
Dan. 10:13, 21 |
| 13. The beast out of the sea | Dan. 7, Daniel 2:13 |
| 14. The white cloud, one like the Son of Man | Daniel 7:13, Daniel 10:16 |
| 15. The song of Moses | Exodus 15 |
| 16. Har-Megedon | Judges 5, 2 Chron. 35 |
| 17, 18 & 19 The fall of Babylon | Isa. 13, Isa. 14, Isa. 21, Isa. 46, Isa. 47, Isa. 48,
Jer. 25, Jer. 50, Jer. 51, Dan. 2, Dan. 7, Hab. 3,
Compare also Ezek. 27 and the fall of Tyre |
| 20. Gog and Magog
The books of judgment | Gen. 10:2, Ezek. 38, Ezek. 39
Dan. 7-10, Dan. 12:1, Psa. 69:28 |
| 21. The new heaven and the new earth
The new Jerusalem | Isa. 65:17ff, Isa. 66:22ff
Ezek. 48:30ff |
| 22. The river of water of life
The tree of life | Gen. 2, Ezek. 47:1-12 |

It must be understood therefore, that the book of Revelation is rooted in and is in full harmony with the rest of Scripture and must be explained on the basis of the clear teaching of the Bible anywhere.

PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION

1. The Bible is the best and basic interpreter of itself. All guidance that the Book of Revelation gives to its own meaning should be followed. Its interpretation of symbols should be carefully followed.
2. The larger context should always interpret the immediate context since the Bible possesses unity. Out of this larger context, the immediate context of any passage can be taken into careful consideration. To attempt to understand one isolated unit apart from the whole is to misinterpret the book.
3. The historical background, purpose, style of writing and other background should be taken into consideration.
4. The New Covenant should be allowed to interpret the Old Covenant, Romans 15:4. Revelation uses Old Testament terminology with New Testament meanings.
5. The prophetic nature of Revelation should be noted. As a prophet, John was more concerned with spiritual principles than detailed predictions.
6. Because this is a book of visions and pictures, presented in a dramatic fashion, it should be understood to have a symbolic meaning. Full attention must be given to the pictorial and dramatic in this book.
7. One should get the total meaning of the vision, or series of visions, without pressing details.
8. Do not make the difficult passages in the book the key to the meaning of the entire book. Keep searching for the answers to the proper meaning of these passages.
9. While this book was primarily addressed to first century Christians, it contains a specific blessing to everyone who reads and to everyone who understands its message (1:3). It addresses the entire Christian age and covers it, but not in continuous succession. The principle of recapitulation holds that the book looks at the same period and the same events under different aspects in its different parts. For instance, the final judgment seems to be referred to in 6:12-17, 11:15-18, 14:14-20, 16:17-21, 19:11-21, 20:11-15.
10. The principle of prolepsis or anticipation shows itself in this book. Prolepsis is defined as the tendency of the writer to anticipate in earlier sections, by mere allusion, what he explains in a later section. For instance, the second death mentioned in 2:11 is not explained until 20:14. This is another way of saying that the book itself is one of the best interpreters to its ideas.

METHODS OF INTERPRETATION

I. FUTURIST

Description: *Futurists* place the book primarily in the end times.

1. Most events of Revelation are yet to be fulfilled, but will be in the future
2. Takes a literal meaning of 1000 years
3. Events for chapters 4-19 are expected to occur in chronological order just before the coming of Christ.
4. This is the popular view of the millennialists

A. Strengths

1. **Literal**—contains a very strong emphasis on taking the Bible literally.
2. **Evangelistic**—scars many people into obedience
3. **Easy**—simple to apply to today's current events.

B. Objections

1. **Shortly**—it is inconsistent with the statement made by John that the events were in the main to come to pass soon.
2. **No relation to 1st century**—it ignores those people of the first century who first received the book
3. **Inconsistent**—Chapter 12 is a problem for the futurist. The book is taken as literal until they arrive at chapter 12. Then they become believers in symbolism.
4. **Irrelevant**—this interpretation makes much of Revelation irrelevant today when adherents to the futurist view affirm, as many do today, that the church will be removed from the earth before the events described in 6:1ff. occur.
5. **Unbalanced**--Was all of this written to explain a seven year period thousands of years from the date writing?

A Futurist Outline of Revelation

Chapters 1-3	These chapters describe the 2000 years of the church's existence At some point, the Jews will come to accept Jesus as the Messiah
Chapters 4-19	This acceptance will usher in the Rapture and the Tribulation (7 years) These chapters detail the seven year period with 6-19 telling of the Tribulation
Chapter 20	Tells of the thousand year reign, the "little season" and the Day of Judgment Jesus will reign on earth (1000 years) at the end of seven years. At this time Jesus will return and be an earthly king in Jerusalem. A "little season" will follow the thousand years when Satan will gather a mighty Army that will be quickly defeated by Jesus in a great battle. Judgment Day. This battle will then be followed by the Day of Judgment
Chapters 21-22	These two chapters tell of heaven where the righteous will live eternally.

Proponents of the Futurist Approach

It began with Justin Martyr (d. 165), Irenaeus (d. c. 195) and Hippolytus (d. 236)
Modern proponents include the Scofield Reference Bible, Hal Lindsey and Tim LaHaye

II. PRETERIST (PAST or REVIEW APPROACH)

Description: *Preterists* understand the book exclusively in terms of its first-century setting, claiming that most of its events have already taken place.

A. Strengths

1. **1st Century**—it is true to the background of the work. It keeps the historical situation in view.
2. **Relevant**—it is the best method that gives meaning to those who first read this work.
3. **Practical**—the preterist view gives room for a universal application of the message of the book.
4. **Consistent**—it is the most consistent view as it relates to the entire New Testament. It also follows the typical example of 1st century Jewish Apocalyptic literature of present day interpretation.

B. Objections

1. Loses some meaning for people of the 21st century
2. Requires a date before 70 AD
3. Some events in the Book of Revelation seem almost certainly to bring the reader up to the ‘end time.’ Difficult if all events took place in the first century.

Proponents of the Preterist Approach

Began with a Alcasar, a Spanish Jesuit Priest in 1614

Modern proponents include Foy E. Wallace, Jr., J.W. Roberts, Max King

III. CONTINUOUS HISTORICAL (CHRONOLOGICAL, OUTLINE APPROACH)

Description: *Historicists* take revelation as describing the long chain of events from Patmos to the end of history.

1. It sees actual events in history in Revelation, the book is a “blue-print” of world history
2. Compares events of Revelation to specific historical battles, nations, peoples, individuals, etc.
3. Until a few decades ago, this view was held by most Protestants. This view generally is used to attack the Catholic Church

A. Strengths

1. **Applicable**—this approach has a message for today—“God is in control”

B. Objections

1. **Out of touch** – This view is entirely out of touch with the Christians to whom the book was written. They are being killed, threatened, and persecuted. How does learning about the rise of Russia or Hitler starting WWII help them?
2. **Catholic emphasis** – This view places undue importance on the Roman Catholic Church and ignores the other major branches. What about the Orthodox Church, which is larger than the Roman branch?
3. **Narrow** – The ability to interpret each passage is limited to your view of the passage on each side of it. If all the events are in sequence then you must find an event that fits the description and fits between the preceding and the following sections.
4. **Sometimes absurd** – In this search to make everything fit in its place, some passages are explained away to the point of being absurd.
5. **Calculations** – Like the futurists, it is necessary to do a lot of calculation of times, and periods to make everything fit. They must decide that a day = a year. That each year is 360 days. That each month is 30 days long. That 42 months = 3.5 years = 1260 days = 1,260 years. Then they must decide when to begin counting and when to end counting. Finally they must find a significant event to mark each end of the period.
6. **Chronological**—if you make the book’s visions to be chronological, what do you do with the birth of Christ in chapter 12?

A Continuous Historical Outline of the Seals

- 1st seal – Domitian death (180 AD)
- 2nd seal – Death of Commodus (193 AD)
- 3rd seal – Caracalla (211 AD)
- 4th seal – Gallienus (243-268 AD)
- 5th seal – Diocletian persecution (284-304 AD)
- 6th seal – Invasion of barbarians (365 AD)

This method interprets every section as a sequence of events in history. Some can see World Wars, Hitler, Russia, Kennedy assassination and other events. Of course as history continues, the final events must be adjusted. In the 1930's Hitler was seen as the antichrist and the end of the world was near.

Proponents of the Continuous Approach:

Began with Joachim of Floris (d. 1202)

Modern proponents include Albert Barnes, Adam Clarke, John T. Hinds

IV. SYMBOLIC (PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY, DRAMATIC, IDEALIST)

Description: *Idealists* view Revelation as symbolic pictures of such timeless truths as the victory of good over evil. Revelation deals with the great principles of God's dealings in history, and not with specific events. The overall thrusts of the visions are more important than any specific events or background. It is a message for all ages, basically a "good verses evil" story.

A. Strengths:

1. **Timeless**—does not get bogged down in trying to explain every symbol.
2. **Big Picture**—realizes the hand of God in history. He has not left the world to evil men. God is still in charge and He is still dealing with men in a consistent manner.
3. **Simple**—comprehends the goal of all history is moving toward a complete triumph. His purpose and His plan will not fail.

B. Objections

1. **Irrelevant**—it deemphasizes the political and spiritual situation in which Revelation was written.
2. **Narrow**—Revelation is more specific than this approach allows, the harlot of chapter 17 is obviously Rome. That must apply specifically to the Christians in the 1st century.

Proponents of the Symbolic Approach:

Began with Origen and the early allegorizing approaches of the Alexandrians of the 3rd century

Modern proponents include William Hendriksen

V. ECLECTIC (COMBINED APPROACH)

Description: This approach is not distinct from the previous approaches; rather it combines some of the previous approaches in order to strengthen their weaknesses. It uses the historical background but also looks for practical applications for today.

A. Strengths

1. This approach has more to offer all the readers of the book today.
2. This approach takes the best of each of the preceding approaches and combines them.
3. Best way to interpret Revelation under the command of 2 Timothy 2:15

B. Weaknesses

1. An effort must be made to stay consistent in your interpretation
2. Remember that no one method is fool-proof.

CHRIST AMONG THE LAMPSTANDS

Revelation 1

Chapter 1 contains:

The title of the book, vs. 1-3

The salutation, v. 4-6

Two announcements, v. 7-8

The first vision, v. 9-20

The Title (1:1-3)

The “revelation” or “apocalypse” of Jesus Christ. The word revelation occurs only at this place in the book. It means “an unveiling, revealing” of something which was not previously known. The line of revelation is God to Jesus Christ to his angel to his servant John for his servants.

BEATITUDE NUMBER 1: The book of Revelation contains seven beatitudes throughout the book. The first is here at 1:3. It pronounces a blessing on the readers, hearers and obeyers of the prophecy. The other beatitudes are in 14:13, 16:15, 19:9, 20:6, 22:7 and 22:14.

The Salutation (1:4-6)

The salutation used here is similar and common to other epistles in the New Testament. The seven churches of Asia refer to churches located in the Roman province of Asia. These seven cities were located in a rough semi-circle with Ephesus in the center. The use of the perfect number seven in reference to the churches leads us to believe that these seven churches stand for the church of all ages in all places.

The number seven was regarded as a highly perfect number. It was achieved by taking three—a perfect number representing the divinity—and adding four to it—representing the earth (four winds, four directions, four walls around a city, etc.)

The salutation comes from the three persons of the Godhead:

God—here described as “Him which is, and which was, and which is to come.”

Holy Spirit—here described as “the seven spirits that are before his throne.” Cf. Isaiah 11:2 where the Holy Spirit is spoken of with seven titles.

Jesus Christ—here described with three titles:

- (1) the faithful witness,
- (2) the first begotten from the dead and
- (3) the ruler of the kings of the earth.

Notice the doxology (a hymn or words of praise to God) attached to the salutation in vs. 5 and 6.

The Two Announcements (1:7-8)

1. Christ is coming. All will see him. To those who are faithful, it’s the promise of joy unspeakable. To those who pierced him (not just literally at Calvary, but all through the ages those who pierced him by unfaithfulness) it will be a dreaded, horrible day.
2. The Lord God is the Alpha and the Omega. Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. Notice the similarity between v. 6 and v. 4.

The First Vision (1:9-20)

vs. 9-11

John had been exiled to Patmos for his preaching the Gospel. Patmos was a small island off the coast of Asia Minor. It was one of many isolated spots where the Romans banished their political prisoners.

“In the spirit” has been a confusing phrase to many, but it seems from 4:2 that it may refer to John’s being caught up in the ecstatic vision.

The mention of the “Lord’s Day” in v. 10 is the only time it is mentioned in the New Testament. There is the similar phrase, “the day of the Lord” which refers in both the Old Testament and the New Testament to some judgment from God. The “Lord’s Day” refers to Sunday, the day of the Lord’s resurrection, the day of the founding of the church, and the day of Christian worship.

v. 12-16

“Seven lampstands” reminds us of the seven lamps in the old tabernacle and temple. The lampstands are the seven churches (1:20).

In the midst of the lampstands is the Christ. His description is extremely like that recorded in Daniel 7:13ff and Daniel 10:5ff.

“hair as white as wool or snow” symbolized his eternity and purity

“eyes like flames of fire” penetrating and searching

“feet like burnished bronze” shows strength and consuming judgment

“voice like the sound of many waters” strong commanding message

“seven stars in his right hand” right hand is symbol of power, shows power over the churches

“two edged sword in his mouth” power and force of his message of truth

“face like the sun shining at full strength” reflecting his full glory

v. 17-20

Jesus claims to be the first and the last (Alpha and Omega, v. 8). He was dead, but now lives and lives forever more. He has the keys of death and Hades. He controls, has power over death and Hades. Hades is the realm of the dead, and there really is very little difference in the two words.

John is instructed to write what he sees (v. 19). Later in the book, he’ll be instructed not to write about something he sees (10:4).

The seven stars in his right hand are the angels of the seven churches; the seven lampstands are the seven churches. There has been confusion for centuries about what the “angels of the seven churches” means. Dozens of explanations (many quite lengthy) have been proposed. May we suggest that the “angels” represent the spirits of the congregations themselves? That is, the “angels of the seven churches” are the spiritual quality of the churches, while the “seven lampstands” are the outward, visible embodiment of the churches.

LETTERS TO THE CHURCHES, PART 1

Revelation 2

CHAPTER TWO CONTAINS:

The Letter to Ephesus, v. 1-7
The Letter to Smyrna, v. 8-11
The Letter to Pergamos, v. 12-17
The Letter to Thyatira, v. 18-29

The Letter to Ephesus, v. 1-7 “The Loveless Church”

The City

The city of Ephesus was the capital of Asia Minor and was one of the most important cities in the Roman world. It had a population of over 250,000. It was the “home” temple of the goddess, Diana. The temple of Diana was one of the Seven Wonders of the World. It was 4 times larger than the Parthenon; had 127 marble pillars; 36 of them covered with gold and jewels. Diana was (in pagan folklore) the daughter of Jupiter.

The Church

Paul had done some great work in this area. He taught at the school of Tyrannas. He spent three years here. The church was started in the midst of the riot in the theater. (Acts 19) John was here before his banishment and returned here when he was released from exile.

Things Commended

- Their toil and work
- Patience in the midst of persecution
- Discipline of false teachers
- Dealing with the Nicolaitans (who retained pagan practices)
- Faithful to the doctrine, refusal to accept error
- They worked for the same of Christ’s name

Nicolaitans were of the branch of teachers teaching antinomianism. This is a big word that simply means, (in the words of a restaurant commercial) “No Rules, Just Right!” Free in Christ, they believed meant no rules, no law, no commands, no moral code. Anything goes, was their motto. They are identified with Baalam because he led Israel into fornication. Christ hated their teaching and so did the Ephesians.

Things Condemned

- They left their first love

Left their first love – Think back to the first time you were in love. Can’t eat. Can’t sleep. Excited. Write their name all over your notebook. Can’t stop thinking about them. Talk to them for hours. Spend every moment possible with them. What happens over time? One of two things – the love deepens or you “get over it.” The problem is that the Ephesians were “getting over it.” Jesus was saying, “You no longer love me as you once did.”



The Letter to Smyrna, v. 8-11 ***“The Persecuted Church”***

The City

Thirty five miles north of Ephesus was another harbor city of 200,000 people. It was known as a most beautiful city. Smyrna was a wealthy, prosperous and proud city. The city was founded by Alexander the Great. The original Olympic Games were held here. It is the only city still in existence today. Now it is called Izmir, Turkey.

The Church

The origin of the church here is not recorded in the New Testament. History tells of the persecution suffered here. Polycarp is a well known martyr from Smyrna.

Things Commended

This was a WEALTHY church.

- Rich in spite of real poverty. They had no money but had treasures in heaven.
- Rich in spite of slander. The Jews were blaspheming them. When Polycarp was burned, the Jews brought the firewood.
- Rich in spite of persecution. Polycarp would be burned at the stake some 60 years later. Some were beaten. They were not allowed to buy or sell in the open market. They suffered tribulation for 10 days.
- Rich because of a sympathetic savior. Jesus was on their side and aware of their problems.
- Rich because of the precious promises. They were promised a crown of life. There are two different words translated “crown” in the New Testament. There was the royal crown of power and authority, the royal diadem. But the crown mentioned here is the crown of victory (Gold medal from the Olympics). They will not be hurt in the second death (eternal punishment in hell) because they will have eternal life.

Things Condemned

There is not a single word of condemnation in this letter. Jesus found nothing to rebuke.

The Letter to Pergamos 12-17 ***“The Compromising Church”***

The City

Pergamos was a city high in the mountains. It was located at 1,000 feet elevation. It was another city with a large population of around 200,000 and held the world’s second largest library. It had a famous school of medicine. Pergamos was known for ointments, medicines, parchments and pottery. A large temple to Aphrodite, goddess of fertility, was located here. Pergamos was the beginning place of emperor worship.

The Church

We have no information about the planting of the church here.

Things Commended

They are living in the seat of Satan’s throne, the origin of emperor worship. Being faithful here was more than just attending church services. They had already suffered the death of Antipas. His death was a great testimony to his faith in Christ. They had not denied the faith, even in the face of such persecution. What would you do? Justify? Cave in to the pressure? Would you stand firm in your faith?

Things Condemned

Heresy had entered the church. The teachings of Baalam were here. (See Numbers 23-24) Baalam sought to make material gain at the cost of the spiritual and moral life of the people. He led the people to idol worship and fornication. Some were willing to make spiritual compromise in order to obtain personal safety. They would teach evil in order to save their own neck.

The Letter to Thyatira 18-29 “The Corrupt Church”

The City

Of the seven letters, the letter to Thyatira is the longest. The city was known for manufacturing and marketing. Here every trade (silversmiths, candle makers, carpenters, etc.) was organized into trade guilds. If you wanted to sell candles, you had to belong to the trade guild of candle makers. Each trade guild had a special god who was supposed to bless their work. Lydia, a seller of purple, was from this city. She was converted by Paul in Acts 16:14-15.

The Church

It is assumed that Lydia was the first influence to begin the church here. We know that Paul was aware of this church and wrote a letter to them. We do not have that letter. However, the letter to the Colossians was to be exchanged with the letter to Thyatira. (Colossians 4:16)

Things Commended

Jesus knows their works. He is aware of their service to God. He recognizes their love. Jesus appreciates their patience, their ability to hold their own under extreme pressure. They are increasing. Their works are more now than in the beginning. This is the opposite of Ephesus. They are a strong, faithful, growing, working, and loving church.

Things Condemned

The church is harboring heresy. They allow a woman, Jezebel, to teach error. It seems this was some woman in the church who may have claimed some mystic power. She was seducing them to commit fornication. Some think the name, Jezebel, was not her real name but symbolic of the Old Testament queen, wife of Ahab. She was a Jezebel in character, morals and conduct. Like the Old Testament namesake, she will not be allowed to continue. She and her followers will meet destruction. God is still in charge.

CHURCH	REFERENCE	COMMENDATION	REBUKE	ACTION
Ephesus	2:1-7	Hard work, Perseverance	Left First Love	Remember and Repent
Smyrna	2:8-11	Suffered Persecution, Poverty	None	Don't Fear, Be Faithful
Pergamum	2:12-17	True to the Faith	Compromise	Repent
Thyatira	2:18-29	Love, Faith, Service	Immorality	Repent
Sardis	3:1-6	Effective	Superficial	Wake Up, Repent
Philadelphia	3:7-13	Faithful	None	Hold On
Laodicea	3:14-22	None	Lukewarm	Be Earnest, Repent

LETTERS TO THE CHURCHES, PART 2

Revelation 3

CHAPTER THREE CONTAINS:

The Letter to Sardis, v. 1-6

The Letter to Philadelphia, v. 7-13

The Letter to Laodicea, v. 14-22

The Letter to Sardis 1-6

“The Dead Church”

The City

Sardis had once been a prosperous capital of the ancient kingdom of Lydia, but by the late first century, it was in a state of degeneration. The Persians conquered this kingdom and incorporated it into their empire. After that it came under Roman rule. Its wealth had been legendary. In 17 AD, it was devastated by an earthquake and had been rebuilt through the generosity of Tiberius, the Roman Emperor. However it had never achieved its former glory or importance.

The Church

The New Testament does not tell of the planting or history of this church.

Things Commended

In all the other letters, Jesus first commends then condemns. Here the order is reversed. There is so much wrong that Jesus first condemns – then commends the few that remain faithful. A few have not defiled their garments. They took no part in the pagan worship and worldliness around them. They had remained faithful and would be judged on their individual faithfulness, not on the faithfulness of the church.

Things Condemned

They had a reputation in the city as being active, alive and spiritual. In fact, they were dead. There was lots of outward activity, but no inner spirituality. A visitor would be impressed with the activities mentioned in the announcements – youth trips, fellowships, adult parties, outings, and camping trips. As far as the visitor could tell, this was a church involved, busy, well organized and alive. The forms were all correct, but the faith, power and devotion to God were missing. (2 Timothy 3:5)

Someone has observed, “There are few things better organized than graveyards.” Everything is neat, well kept, and orderly, but no life. This is what Jesus saw. Appearances of being alive but they were really dead.

Sardis was urged to “establish the things that remain.” What little life was left needed to be put on life support or they would soon die.

The Letter to Philadelphia 7-13

“The Faithful Church”

The City

Philadelphia was founded in the second century BC and named after King Attalus II Philadelphus. It was the newest of the seven cities of Revelation and was founded to spread Greek culture and language among the Lydians. Located some 28 miles southeast of Sardis, the region was subject to earthquakes. The city

of Philadelphia was also devastated in 17 AD by an earthquake, and was rebuilt, like Sardis, through the generosity of the Emperor Tiberius. This region is a wine producing area because of the fertility of the volcanic ashen soil, and the chief pagan cult was the worship of Dionysus, the god of wine. Philadelphia was probably not a large city. Today the city is called Ala-Sekar and has a population of about 10,000.

The Church

Again, we have no record of this church being planted. The best information is that while Paul spent 3 years in Ephesus he taught in many cities in this region. It is assumed that during this time many of these churches were started.

Things Commended

Jesus has set before this church an open door, which no man can close. The meaning is generally understood to be that, while the church is weak (has little power), yet she has remained faithful. Therefore, Christ is assuring them that the right-of-way to spiritual joy will not be denied them.

While Sardis was threatened by the coming of Christ, this church has nothing to fear. The coming of Christ, to the faithful, is a promise, not a threat. If you are faithful, the coming of Christ brings hope and encouragement. If you are not faithful, the coming of Christ brings fear and dread.

Jesus promises them that the synagogue of Satan will be made to recognize and respect the faithful Christians. Remaining faithful is urged even when persecution comes. All of us will have an “hour of trial” in which our faith will be put to the test. This persecution will come to the whole earth, not just Philadelphia.

God promises to “brand” the faithful by writing on them:

- The name of God
- The name of the city of God, the New Jerusalem
- The New Name

Things Condemned

Only good is spoken about this church.

The Letter to Laodicea 14-22

“The Lukewarm Church”

The City

Laodicea was located about 40 miles southeast of Philadelphia on the Lycus River. It had been named by Antiochus, King of Syria, for his wife, Laodice. Laodicea, along with Colossae and Hierapolis, were all three situated in the Lycus River Valley. Laodicea had become extremely wealthy under Roman rule. Although damaged in an earthquake in 61 AD, it rebuilt itself without any imperial subsidy. The city was on a major trade route. It was known for its raven black wool and a famous eye salve developed in its medical school. It was also a banking center for the region. Six miles away was the city of Hierapolis, known for its hot springs. This hot water flowed near Laodicea after falling over a 300-foot cliff. It was, thus, lukewarm when it got to Laodicea. Paul apparently wrote a letter to the church as Laodicea (Col. 4:16), but we have no known record of what happened to that letter.

The Church

We know that the church had existed for many years, because Paul wrote a letter to them. This letter predates the letter to the Colossians. Paul urged that the two churches exchange and read the letter. (Colossians 4:16)

Things Commended

There is nothing good to say about this church. In all the other letters Jesus first commends then condemns. In Laodicea there is nothing good to say, therefore, nothing is said.

Things Condemned

This is the church that made Jesus sick. They were lukewarm. Not hot, on fire for Christ, not cold, opposing the truth. They were just lukewarm.

Jesus pictures himself as on the outside of this church seeking permission to come in. Most often this verse (20) is used to invite those who have not obeyed the gospel to open the door of their heart and invite Jesus into their lives. However, Jesus is speaking to a church, body of believers, who have not allowed Jesus into their hearts.

Because Christ loves them, he rebukes them.

Jesus uses the fame of the city to urge them to become an alive, active and faithful church.

1. **Banking center** – This city was proud, arrogant, and self-sufficient because of their riches. Their thinking was, “We have gold, and we need nothing else.” Jesus requests that they buy some gold from him, tried in the fire of persecution and trial. This is the only way they can be rich.
2. **Black wool** – Since there was pride in their black wool, Jesus requires them to buy some WHITE (pure) garments. In their black wool – they were naked and failed to realize it.
3. **Eye salve** – The city was famous for an eye salve developed by the medical school. Jesus said, “You have all this eye salve at your disposal, but you are not using it.” They were commanded to apply some of the salve to their spiritual eyes so they could see. The sight here is spiritual discernment, ability to see and understand the will of God.

This church had everything – everything except Christ! He was on the outside looking in. He was knocking, seeking permission to come in and fellowship with them.

Conclusion:

Here is the summary conclusion of Ray Summers in his book, “Worthy is the Lamb”, page 127.

“The message delivered first to the churches of Asia Minor is universal. Its truth applies wherever similar conditions are found today; and it is difficult to find churches where at least some of these conditions are not found. The warning against spiritual apathy still stands.”

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

THE THRONE ROOM SCENE

Revelation 4

CHAPTER FOUR CONTAINS:

The Open Door, v. 1

The Throne of God, v. 2-3

Twenty-Four thrones, v. 4

Four Living Creatures, v. 5-8

Heavenly Hymns, v. 9-11

The Open Door, v. 1

The expression “After this I looked” or “After these things I saw,” is an expression which always introduces an important vision in the revelation. However, important visions are introduced sometimes without that phrase preceding them.

The open door was for John to look through into the heavenly realm. He hears a voice calling him to come see the vision of things to come. The voice is the same as the voice he heard in 1:10 telling him to write to the seven churches. The voice in chapter 1 seems to be from Jesus himself (see 1:12-16).

The Throne of God, v. 2-3

v. 2 “in the Spirit” this expression is just like the one in Rev. 1:10. John was caught up in the Spirit’s power to see a vision of great things.

“one seated on the throne” this is a vast throne room (as seen in the description in the rest of chapter 4), and the throne and the one seated on it are the focal point of the entire scene. This picture of one seated on the throne signifies the majesty and dominion which that one has. Up to this point, we’ve not been given any clear indication that one is on the throne. The remainder of the chapter will make that more clear.

v. 3 “he who sat there” the figure on the throne is not described here with any personal human qualities at all. He is described in terms of three precious gems.

“jasper...carnelian...emerald” scholars differ on the exact identification of these three gems. The jasper is often identified as a diamond or opal, the carnelian (sardis-ASV; sardine stone-KJV) was likely a stone of red color. The emerald has accepted as like our modern day emerald or perhaps like a colorless rock crystal capable of reflecting light into the colors of the rainbow. The figure on the throne looked like the first two gems—brilliant in color and light reflecting. Around the throne was a rainbow described as looking like an emerald. It must have been a glorious scene. Compare it to Ezekiel 1:26-28.

The Twenty-Four Thrones, v. 4

Twenty-four elders occupy the 24 thrones surrounding the great throne. These 24 elders are dressed in white garments of pure spiritual lives, and they are wearing golden crowns (stephanos). These crowns are crowns of victory. These 24 probably represent the redeemed from both sides of the cross—12 from the Old Covenant and 12 from the New Covenant—perhaps the 12 patriarchs from the Old Testament and the 12 apostles from the New Testament. Some have seen these as angelic representatives of the 24 orders of priests in 1 Chron. 24:7-18 who offered their services to the Lord. These 24 elders offer their worship and praise to God. A variation of this interpretation suggests that the 24 simply represent the faithful of God from all times who continually worship and serve him.

Four Living Creatures, v. 5-8

v. 5 “lightning...voices,,thunder” These show a display of majesty and power from the throne of God. Similar terms are used in Exodus 19:16ff to describe God’s presence in Mount Sinai with Moses.

v. 6 “four living creatures, full of eyes” these four creatures (beasts-KJV) are quite similar to those 4 creatures in Ezekiel 1:4-14. The fullness of eyes on the creatures symbolizes sleepless vigilance upon their part as they surround the throne. They would seem to be angelic beings, perhaps the highest order of angels in the heavenly court.

v. 7 “like a lion...ox...man...eagle” there is no clear understanding why these four figures appear on the creatures. Some have suggested that they represent the noblest (lion), strongest (ox), wisest (man) and swiftest (eagle) upon the earth. Later church writers would adopt these four figures to represent the writers of the four gospels. There is no biblical support for that representation.

v. 8A “SIX WINGS” In Isaiah 6, angels are said to have had six wings. They used two to cover their faces, two to cover their feet, and two to fly (Isaiah 6:2-3). In Revelation 4, no such mention is made of the use of the six wings. In addition, the song the angels sang in Isaiah 5 is similar to that of Revelation 4. God is described in eternal terms, “who was and is and is to come.”

Heavenly Hymns, v. 8b-11

v. 8b “holy, holy, holy...” the song of praise and adoration which the four creatures sang was very much like the song in Isaiah 6. The holiness of God is one of his most recognized attributes. It involves the separation of God from the limited, finite, sinful nature of mankind and implies his natural purity.

v. 10 “twenty four elders fall down” when the four creatures fly around and sing this song of praise to God, then the 24 elders also fall down in worship to God and cast their crowns (stephanos) before the throne. Their crowns of reward came from God, and casting them before the throne shows their understanding that he is responsible for their salvation.

v. 11 “our Lord and God...did create all things” the Lord is praised for two reasons: (1) He is Lord and God, the sovereign of the universe; and (2) He is the creator and origin of all things. Notice that here God is called “Lord and God” in contrast to the title which Domitian (the Roman Emperor) claimed for himself in the late first century: “Dominus et Deus” i.e. “Lord and God.”

THE LAMB AND THE BOOK

Revelation 5

CHAPTER 5 CONTAINS:

The Closely Sealed Book, v. 1-3

The Prophet Weeping, v. 4-5

The Lamb Taking the Book, v. 6-7

Hymns in Heaven, v. 8-14

The Closely Sealed Book, v. 1-3

v. 1 “and I saw” notice the formula which so often introduces the visions.

“A scroll written within and on the back” this was quite uncommon because scrolls were usually written on only one side—not both sides. Compare Ezekiel 2:10 where a scroll was written on both sides indicating an extensive message.

v. 2 “worthy” the word refers to the moral integrity and character needed to reveal the contents of the scroll.

“open the scroll and break its seals” breaking the seals would, by necessity, precede opening the book. But in order of thought the opening of the books takes preeminence.

v. 3 “in heaven...on earth...under the earth” this threefold division of the universe reminds us of Paul’s statement in Philippians 2:10. It appears to refer to the inhabitants of heaven (some of whom have been described in chapter 4), the dwellers of earth, and the demons of the underworld.

“no one...was found worthy” no where was any person or being found of such noble and righteous character as to be worthy to open the book and bring its contents to pass.

The Prophet Weeping, v. 4-5

v. 4 “I wept much” John is disturbed and cries because none is found worthy to open the book. It looks as if Satan and sin may go on forever in control of the world.

v. 5 “Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David” the “Lion of the tribe of Judah” is a concept found in Genesis 49:9. Often the noblest son of the tribe was called the “lion” of the tribe. Thus, the “lion of the tribe of Judah” would be Judah’s noblest son. Genesis 49:9 was interpreted as a messianic prophecy by the time of the 1st century A.D.

The “Root of David” is an idea coming from Isaiah 11:1 which speaks of a “shoot coming from the stump of Jesse.” This passage was also interpreted as a Messianic prophecy by the Jews of the 1st century A.D. Growing from the cut down stump of the old tree of the house of Jesse (David’s father), a shoot would grow to reestablish the Kingdom of David.

“he can open the scroll” this offspring of David, the Lion of Judah was counted worthy and capable of opening the scroll.

The Lamb Takes the Book, v. 6-7

v. 6 “I saw a lamb” the word of v. 5 would lead us to expect a lion to appear to open the scroll. Instead John sees a lamb standing near the throne of God. Twenty-nine times in twelve chapters of Revelation, Christ is called the lamb, as he is also so described elsewhere in the New Testament (John 1:29, John 1:36, Acts 8:32f, 1 Peter 1:19). The lamb appears to have been slain, yet he lives. As “lion” and “lamb” he is both conqueror and sacrifice.

“seven horns with seven eyes” the “seven horns” represent all power and strength. This lamb with seven horns may be contrasted with the seven headed beast with ten horns in Revelation 13:1. The beast in chapter 13 was the agent of the great dragon.

The “seven eyes” are described in v. 6 as the seven spirits of God sent to all the earth. There 7 eyes represent the fullness of his vision. Nothing escapes his sight. The seven spirits of God, we interpreted in Revelation 1:4 as the Holy Spirit. Revelation 5:6 says these seven spirits of God (the Holy Spirit) have been sent to all the earth. After Christ’s (the lamb) death, he sent the Holy Spirit (the seven spirits of God) to the world (John 14:26).

v. 7 “took the scroll” the lamb takes the scroll. Only with symbols in a vision could a lamb take a scroll from the hand of another. The lamb will now reveal what God wants revealed.

Hymns In Heaven, v. 8-14

v. 8 “a harp,...with gold bowls of incense, which are the prayers of the saints” the four creatures and the twenty four elders worshipped the lamb with harps and bowls of incense. Some have used these symbols to suggest the use of instrumental music and incense in modern worship. This verse gives no support to those doctrines. These are only symbols and not to be taken literally. Even if taken literally, they refer to worship in heaven, not on earth.

The incense in the bowls represents the prayers of those on the earth. The prayers of the faithful of God have a great effect (James 5:16).

Notice that the three hymns sung in heaven in vs. 8-14 all are directed not to God only, but to the lamb.

v. 9 “a new song” the word translated “new” emphasizes something different from anything that has ever been before. It is different in quality and in essence. There are several things in the Revelation referred to as “new.”

“”For you were slain...and...did ransom men for God from every tribe” praise to the lamb who is worthy to open the book. He’s not worthy because he’s the Son of God or because he lived a perfect life (although both concepts are true); he’s worthy because he was slain—because of redemption.

The death of Jesus and the redemption of God reaches beyond fleshly Israel. It’s now the redeemed from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

v. 10 “a kingdom and priests” we’ve become both a part of the kingdom of God and priests of God (cf. 1 Peter 2:5, 9). Under the Old Testament law, there was a special group of priests. Under Christianity, the priesthood of all believers is a vital doctrine.

“they shall reign on earth” there is a textual variant at this point in the Greek text. Some manuscripts read, “they reign on the earth,” while others read, “they shall reign on the earth.” The second reading which is found in the KJV and RSV and others, should not be taken as support for an earthly reign of Christ sometime in the future. “they shall reign” is based on better manuscript evidence, but the context seems to require the present tense of “they reign.” In either case, the meaning seems to be the same. As a part of God’s kingdom and as his priests, we today reign spiritually on the earth.

v. 11 “the voice of many angels” joining the 4 creatures and the 24 elders (who sang the first song in verse 8) are thousands of angels, ready to sing the second song. The number of angels is unknown. The RSV uses the phrase “myriads of myriads,” while others use the phrase “ten thousands times ten thousands” (which would total 100,000,000). Then above that number, there are “thousands of thousands.” The multitude of the angels seems to be innumerable (Hebrews 12:22). This great host sings the song of praise to the Lord.

v. 12 “power...wealth...wisdom...might...honor...glory...blessing” this seven fold ascription implies a completeness of praise belonging to Christ. Note that what was said of God in Revelation 4:11 (and later in Revelation 7:11-12) here is stated about Christ the lamb (5:12). All praise belongs to Christ because of his sacrifice (Philippians 2:5-11).

v. 13 “every creature” the third hymn is sung by all in heaven, all on the earth, and under the earth and all in the sea. All of creation praises God and the Lamb. Its now a four-fold praise; blessing, honor, glory and might forever. The doxology reminds us of Psalm 148 where the whole creation—animate and inanimate praises God.

v. 14 “Amen” at the end of the singing of the hymn of praise to God and the lamb by all creation, as the sound dies away, the hearty “Amen” (so be it!) of the quartet is heard, and the 24 elders fall prostrate in worship. Thus, this throne room scene closes.

THE OPENING OF THE FIRST SIX SEALS

Revelation 6

CHAPTER 6 CONTAINS

The First Seal, v. 1-2

The Second Seal, v. 3-4

The Third Seal, v. 5-6

The Fourth Seal, v. 7-8

The Fifth Seal, v. 9-11

The Sixth Seal, v. 12-17

Introductory Note

A short outline of Revelation:

Chapter 4	Have faith in the power and dominion of God.
Chapter 5	Keep your faith in the power and dominion of Jesus Christ.
Chapters 6-18	Learn the wrath of God upon those who persecute His church.
Chapters 19-22	See the final and complete victory of God and His church.

The first four seals are in actuality a series of four horsemen which go together. They seem to build upon one another. They shouldn't be taken as representing any one military nation, but rather as representative of all military forces of all ages.

The First Seal, v. 1-2

v. 1 “one of four living creatures” one of the four creatures introduced to us in chapter four new calls, in a thunder-like voice, for one to come as the first seal is opened by the Lamb.

v. 2 “a white horse, and its rider...” the rider on the white horse has been interpreted variously over the years. A popular interpretation has been that he is the Christ. The basis for this interpretation comes from the vision of a white horse and rider in Revelation 19:11ff. In that later passage the rider on the white horse certainly seems to be Christ. However, there are significant differences between the white horses and riders in Revelation 6:2 and Revelation 19:11ff.

- (1) The rider in Revelation 6:2 seems to be a military leader, as evidenced by the bow. The rider in 19:11ff is clearly the Christ and although he does wage war (19:11), it's a spiritual warfare. When Christ is pictured with a weapon, it's not a bow, but the sharp two-edged sword of the Word of God.
- (2) The rider in 6:2 wears a crown of victory (stephanos) while the rider in 19:12 wears many crowns of royalty (diadema).
- (3) The rider in 19:11ff is the Christ of the gospel. The rider in 6:2 is associated with no one in 6:3-8 who is connected with the gospel.

“conquering and to conquer” the rider of the white horse is victorious. He seems to represent the conquering armies which rise and fall from time to time. The initial fulfillment may have been in the armies of Rome which marched conquering around the world (and also the armies that marched against Rome). However, it continues to have fulfillment in military armies which conquer through all ages of time.

The Second Seal, v. 3-4

v. 4 “another horse, bright red,...” this red horse with rider defeated peace and caused men to slay one another. He represents the bloodshed caused by war and by civil strife with frequently follows warfare. This horse is a natural aftermath of the conquering, first horse.

The Third Seal, v. 5-6

v. 5 “...a black horse,...a balance in his hand,...” this horse and rider represent famine which follows warfare and civil strife. The balance in his hand was for measuring and weighing out grain for sale.

v. 6 “...a quart of wheat,...three quarts of barley,...oil and wine...” a denarius was worth about 20 cents. It was the wages for a laborer for a day’s labor. Barley was the grain of the poor. Wheat was more expensive. The “measure” was the amount needed to make enough bread for a man for a day. Thus, a day’s wages could buy enough wheat for a man, or enough barely for a small family. There would be nothing left over from the wages for other necessities of living. These prices reflect great inflation which often follows war. Ordinarily, a denarius would purchase 8 to 12 times as much grain. The rich, who would suffer less than the poor during economic turmoil, would still be able to purchase their oil and wine. Thus, they would not be harmed.

The Forth Seal, v. 7-8

v. 8 “...a pale horse, and its rider’s name was Death, and Hades followed him;...” following war, bloodshed, and near famine is death—here personified as a rider. Following closely behind is Hades, also personified. Hades is not the eternal place of punishment; it is simply the realm of the dead. Thus, Hades would be a natural companion of death. The four means of death named are reminiscent of judgments of God on the disobedient in the Old Testament (see Ezekiel 14:21). The pair killed a forth part of the earth, showing it is a limited judgment on the earth. The full, complete judgment will come later.

The first four seals together reflect recurring periods of history. Time after time men have tried their way of conquest followed by bloodshed, hunger and death. These first four seals show the story of man endeavoring to make his own way apart from God in rebellion to his will. The first four seals belong together as a unit.

Summary of the first four seals:

- The first seal makes it clear that they deal with events on the earth. These will occur during the Christian age. The first seal=wars fought between proud nations. The second seal=bloodshed suffered for this pride. The third seal=physical hardships that are brought about by man’s greed. The fourth seal=physical persecutions which people will suffer until Christ comes.
- All these seals will not affect all people. Some will suffer hardship or poverty. Others will suffer war. Some will endure persecution.
- The next three seals are very different. The first four dealt with humans (Christians) on earth. The next three describe events that God will set in motion.

The Fifth Seal, v. 9-11

v. 9 “under the altar the souls of...slain...” the altar appears to be a reference to the old brazen altar of the temple where the blood of sacrifices was poured. These souls under the altar are martyrs who have been condemned and killed by the courts for their faith.

v. 10 “how long...” their cry is for justice and vindication, not personal revenge. They were condemned and killed unfairly, but they cry for God to vindicate them.

v. 11 “...white robe and told to rest...” the robe of white shows God’s reward of victory for their faith. They had won a great victory in giving their lives for Christ. They are told to rest until God’s time is complete. Others must also die for their faith (during the days of the Roman persecution and also in centuries later). The “rest” they are told to take is probably the same as that named in Revelation 14:13.

The Sixth Seal, v. 12-17

v. 12-14 “...earthquakes...sun...moon...stars...sky...mountain and island...” several descriptions of judgments are described in these verses. Some see them as a description of the final judgment. Even if this is not the final judgment, its message to men seems to anticipate the final end time. Each of the descriptions named have roots in the Old Testament: the earthquake (Ezekiel 38:18ff, Joel 2:10, Haggai 2:6-7), the sun becoming black like sackcloth and the moon becoming blood (Joel 2:31, Isaiah 50:3); the stars falling like green, unripe figs swept off the tree prematurely by a strong wind, the rolling up of the heavens like a scroll (Isaiah 34:4), the moving of the hills and the islands of the sea (Jeremiah 4:24, Nahum 1:5). The whole universe is convulsed, and even the most enduring things fall into chaos.

v. 15 “kings of earth...great men...generals...rich...strong...slave and free...” seven classes of men are described in Rev. 6:15 as trying to hide in terror from the wrath of God. They seek refuge in the caves of the mountains. Those described include all from the wealthy and powerful to the poor and weak. None will escape God’s wrath.

v. 16 “wrath of the Lamb...” their fear is of the wrath of the lamb who was slain and now lives. They plead with the mountains to fall on them and kill them so they don’t have to face the lamb.

v. 17 “who can stand before it” there’s no one who can stand before or withstand the great day of wrath of the lamb. The question of 6:17 is rhetorical. It expects a negative answer.

Comments on vs. 12-17

The breaking of the sixth seal brings a series of judgments from God. For the first century, they o doubt had a fulfillment in the judgments against the Roman Empire. The empire had brought great and widespread persecution against the church. Seal number six tells that God is still in control and will bring his vengeance on those who work against him. It’s also a response to the martyr’s questions in v. 10. For later centuries, the promise of the sixth seal finds fulfillment in God’s judgment on wicked nations throughout the centuries. The vision should not be taken as referring to one single nation—not even Rome. It has meaning for the wicked nations for all time, as long as time endures. Even in periodic, partial judgments, the events of the sixth seal anticipate the final judgment at the end of time.

AN INTERLUDE IN HEAVEN

Revelation 7

CHAPTER 7 CONTAINS:

Sealing of the 144,000, v. 1-8

The Innumerable Multitude, v. 9-17

Sealing of the 144,000, v. 1-8

v. 1 “four angels...holding back the four winds...” these four angels are servants and messengers of God. They are restraining the four winds from blowing great storms upon the earth. Remember the number four represented the earth. These storms were judgments upon evil men. They were not evil angels even though they had this power. It was God’s directions they were obeying.

v. 2 “...with the seal of the living God...” this fifth angel to appear comes from the east of from the direction of the sun rising. This implies newness and freshness. He comes with the light. There is no clear insight into who might be represented by this fifth angel.

v. 3 “...till we have sealed...” the four angels are to continue to hold back their storms of judgment from the earth until such a time as the faithful of God can be sealed with the seal of God.

“...upon their foreheads” the sealing is like that of the ancient custom of sealing something as a sign of both ownership and protection. With God’s seal upon them, they were both possessed by God and protected by him. This sealing of God’s seal upon their foreheads will be in contrast to those who have the mark of the beast on their foreheads in 13:16-17.

The sealing is not to be taken literally. No physical mark is to be placed on the foreheads of those who are faithful to God. It is a symbolic sealing. It implies that with the seal conspicuously placed on the forehead, those who are God’s people will be clearly evident to all men. It also implies that the Lord clearly knows those who are his own. By the same reasoning Satan knows those who are his own, and it is evident to all whom they serve for they too have a mark on their lives (13:16-17). This sealing does not mean Christians are not going to suffer hardship or hurt on the earth. It does mean that whatever difficulties there are on earth, the Lord will reward the faithful with him in heaven.

v. 4 “a hundred and forty-four thousand sealed” The number 144,000 is derived by multiplying the number 12 by itself, and then multiplying it by 1000. Twelve was a special number for the ancients. The multiplying of $12 * 12 * 1000$ simply shows a great completeness of the faithful of God. None who is counted as God’s child will be omitted. The sealing of the people will be complete.

“out of every tribe of the sons of Israel”—the tribes of Israel should not be taken as being literally the physical nation of Israel. In the first place by the 1st century A.D., most Jews could no longer even trace their heritage to a specific tribe. Their identities had all been lost due to many captivities and too much intermarrying. The tribes of Israel refers to spiritual Israel—the church of the Lord. Thus the 144,000 refers to Christian people and the church.

Vs, 5-8

...Judah...Reuben...Gad...Asher...Naphtali...Manasseh...Simeon...Levi...Issachar...Zebulon...Joseph...Benjamin”—the arrangement of the list of the 12 tribes of Israel is somewhat unusual. However, there are 19 different arrangements in the Old Testament. We would expect Reuben to be first, but Judah is listed first. That may be because of the Christ, the Lion of the tribe of Judah. Also the tribes of Dan and Ephraim are omitted. The reasons for those omissions are only speculation, but possible explanations are these: (1) Dan may have been omitted because the tribe of Dan left its inheritance in Canaan and moved to Laish where it practiced idolatry (Judges 18); (2) Ephraim may have been omitted because Jeroboam 1,

a descendant of Ephraim (1 Kings 11:26), led the Israelites into idolatry (1 Kings 12:25-33). Of course, these explanations are only conjecture. It should also be noted that Levi who received no inheritance as the other tribes and who is frequently not listed with the 12 tribes, is listed in these verses.

The Innumerable Multitude, vs. 9-17

v. 9—“...nation...tribe...people...tongues...”—this great host of people which was more than could be numbered, comes from all points of the earth. This assembly of God’s people does not belong to one country on earth like the Jews of old.

“white robes...palm branches...”—the robes of white symbolize the clothing of the multitude in garments of spiritual purity. These people have been redeemed by the Lamb and brought to salvation. The palm branches signify a festive attitude. They are ready to celebrate. Palm branches were used in conjunction with the great Feast of Tabernacles of the Jews (Leviticus 23:40); they were also used in a festive way upon the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem at the beginning of the Passover week (John 12:13). The celebration here in 7:9 involved praise to the Lamb and to God for the salvation of this great multitude.

v. 10—“our God who sits upon the throne”—if there had been any doubt earlier in the book about who was meant by the phrase “the one who sits upon the throne,” that question is clearly resolved by this statement in vs. 10

v. 12—“Amen”—with the Amen of the angels surrounding the throne, there follows another seven-fold doxology of praise to God.

v. 13—“who are these,...”---the question of the elder was rhetorical. He was not looking for information from John, but was focusing John’s attention on the scene at hand.

v. 14—“great tribulation”—these people of the great multitude have come through great tribulation. What that tribulation is has been a controversy through the ages. It seems a good explanation that the tribulation is the persecution which began in the first century against the church and continues until the time of the coming of Christ.

“washed their robes”—these people had been sinners, but have now been made clean and pure by the blood of Christ upon their lives.

v. 15—“before the throne of God”—having come successfully through the tribulation of persecution, they are now before the presence of God day and night, and they are sheltered by the presence of God.

v. 16—“...hunger...thirst...scorching heat”—further stated as protection for these redeemed is protection from hunger, thirst and the heat of the sun. While in life on the earth, these who are now before God, suffered from hunger, thirst and the heat of the day. Now in God’s heaven, those burdens are gone. Their affliction on earth was but for a moment compared to the eternity of God (2 Corinthians 4:17).

v. 17—“shepherd”—the Lamb is described as their shepherd. Their shepherd has taken the characteristics of these he leads.

Note: Notice that the series of judgments of God in chapter 6, including what appears to be a final judgment in 6:12-17, is followed by what appears to be a scene of God’s redeemed around the throne of God for eternity. That corresponds well with the order in chapters 20 and 21. Even though there is a description of the heavenly redemption in chapter 7, there is still much more of the revelation to come and many more glorious things for John to witness.

THE SEVENTH SEAL AND THE FIRST FOUR TRUMPETS

Revelation 8

CHAPTER 8 CONTAINS:

The Seventh Seal, vs. 1-6

The First Trumpet, vs. 7

The Second Trumpet, vs. 8-9

The third Trumpet, vs. 10-11

The Fourth Trumpet, vs. 12

The Eagle in Mid-heaven, vs. 13

The Seventh Seal, vs. 1-6

v. 1—“silence in heaven for about half an hour”—following the dramatic events of the first 6 seals in chapter 6, the silence accompanying the broken seventh seal is quite striking.

v. 2—“the seven angels who stand before God,…”—these seven angels are introduced with the definite article “the”, indicating a specialness about them. Some have speculated that they were arch-angels, though that is not necessarily evident from the above passage. In fact, in Scripture, only Michael is called an arch-angel (Jude 9). The fact that there were 7 indicates that they have a unity about their purpose and message. It is said that they stand before God. That is an expression which indicates they were special servants of God.

v. 3—“another angel”—this is not the Christ, but an angel (servant) of God who prepared the censer with incense and prayers.

v. 4—“...much incense to mingle with the prayers of all the saints...”—there is an earlier reference to the prayers of the saints rising like incense unto the Lord (5:8). In addition, there is the reference in 6:9-10 to the cry of the martyrs from under the altar where they were slain. These prayers continue to rise up to the Lord, but now the angel adds much incense to these prayers of the saints. This should not be taken to mean that the angel adds of to the prayers as some sort of mediator between man and God. In fact whatever he is adding to the prayers of the saints is given to the angel to add (8:3). If there is to be anything of great significance ascribed to the “added” incense, it may be a reference to the intercessory work of Jesus himself which accompanies our prayers to the Father.

v. 5--“...took the censor and filled it with fire from the altar of and threw it on the earth...”—after the prayers and incense rise up before God from the golden censer, the angel then fills it with fire and casts it down upon the earth. This symbol shows that the events which come about from the casting of the fire to earth are a result of the prayers which were offered by the saints of god. God hears his people when they pray to him. When the fire strikes the earth; there follows thunder, noises, lightening and earthquakes. They are in sharp contrast to the half-hour silence of heaven which immediately preceded them. It was like the calm preceding a violent storm. Judgment is about to come to the earth.

v. 6—“...seven angels who had the seven trumpets...”—these angels presenting a unified message, now prepare to blow their trumpets. The trumpets in the Old testament were used to announce special triumphs, celebrations, warnings of danger, etc. Here they announce the partial judgments of the first four trumpets and the woes of the last three trumpets. Remember the mention of the trumpet blast in the New Testament heralding the resurrection and the great judgment day (1 Corinthians 15:52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16).

The First Trumpet, vs. 7

v. 7—“...hail and fire, mixed with blood...”—the hail and fire remind us of the seventh plague brought upon by Egypt during the days of Moses (Exodus 9:24). The blood may also be a reference to the first plague in Egypt, that of turning the waters into blood, but it is more likely that the blood here in Revelation 8 refers to the harm upon those who have been guilty of shedding blood themselves.

“... a third of the earth,...and a third of the trees..., and all green grass was burnt up.”—when the fire and hail and blood were cast upon the earth it did not harm mankind directly. It damaged the environment. But anything that harms man’s environment harms him at least indirectly. A third of all living vegetation was destroyed. That’s an excessive amount, but it is limited. This is not the final judgment upon wicked man, but a warning judgment to all men that all are to follow the Lord.

The Second Trumpet, vs. 8-9

v. 8—“...something like a great mountain, burning with fire,...”—the symbol of a mountain ablaze or a mountain being moved in the Old Testament shows great trouble and commotion (Psalm 46:2, Isaiah 54:10, Ezekiel 38:20, Micah 1:4).

v. 9—“...a third of the sea became blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.”—when the mountain strikes the sea, a third of the sea becomes blood. That reminds us of the first plague in Egypt when the Nile waters became blood (Exodus 7:20-1). In addition to this harm to the sea itself, a third of all living creatures died and a third of the ships at sea were destroyed. The destruction is wide-spread, but still limited. It’s not the final destruction that has come. When disasters occur at sea, it is a warning judgment against mankind.

The Third Trumpet, vs. 10-11

v. 10—“...a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers...”—this great star fell blazing into the fresh water supplies of the earth. Stars or meteors fall from the sky regularly to the earth. Some see this as a symbol, however, of a falling monarch. Such imagery was used in the Old Testament. Yet, there in Revelation 8, there seems to be no real reason for supposing this to be any particular fallen monarch or power. The point seems to be upon the waters into which this blazing star falls. They are harmed.

v. 11—“the name of the star is wormwood.”—Wormwood is used in the Old Testament as a sign of suffering for evil-doing (Jeremiah 9:15, 23:15). It is also used as a metaphor for injustice and unrighteousness (Amos 5:7, 6:12).

“a third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died...”—the blazing star contaminated a third of the fresh waters of the earth, making them bitter to men, and a third of the men died because of it. Such things as wells drying up, rivers flooding, and springs drying up may be under consideration in these two verses. While the damage is not to mankind himself, still he suffers indirectly because of it. Still it is a limited judgment and a warning to all men to repent.

The Fourth Trumpet, vs. 12

v. 12—“...a third of the sun,...a third of the moon,...a third of the stars...”—the heavenly bodies are affected by these warning judgments of the Lord. These heavenly bodies were created to do the bidding of the Lord (Psalm 148:3). Even when there are eclipses and other disturbances in the heavens, they are still serving the Lord, for the send a warning to mankind to repent. Throughout the Old Testament, light from the sun, moon, and stars signifies happiness, truth, wisdom, joy, etc. Now a third of this is removed.

The Eagle in Mid-Heaven, vs. 13

v. 13—“...an eagle...flew in midheaven...”—the King James Version says an angel flew in midheaven, but eagle is a better translation of the passage.

“Woe, woe, woe...at the blasts of the other trumpets...”—this flying eagle announces that the following three trumpet blasts will be worse than the first four. These are introduced with woes. The first four trumpets dealt with the world of nature directly and man only indirectly. The last three trumpets deal with mankind directly.

THE BEGINNING OF THE WOES

Revelation 9

Revelation 9 Contains:

The Fifth Trumpet, vs. 1-12

The Sixth Trumpet, vs. 13-21

“The Seventh Seal contains the Seven Trumpets and the Seventh Trumpet contains the Seven Bowls.”

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Seal One II. Seal Two III. Seal Three IV. Seal Four V. Seal Five VI. Seal Six VII. Seal Seven 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Trumpet One B. Trumpet Two C. Trumpet Three D. Trumpet Four E. Trumpet Five F. Trumpet Six G. Trumpet Seven 	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>The seals are broken: Revelation</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>The trumpets are blown: Warning</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>The bowls of wrath are poured out: Punishment</i></p>
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The Trumpets Are To Warn!

The First Six Trumpets	The Effect of Sin	A Warning to Rome	A Warning to All Sinners
First through fourth: Calamities on land, the sea, fresh waters and the universe	The effect of sin on the universe (the entire universe is out of kilter)	Natural Disasters	This world is not our home!
Fifth: Locusts who torment—but do not kill	The effect of sin on the individual (spiritual and moral deterioration)	Internal Decadence	The way of the sinner is hard!
Sixth: Angels/army that destroy	The effect of sin on others (as illustrated by the atrocities of war)	External Invasion	The effects of sin are terrible and far-reaching!

The Seventh (Last) Trumpet Will Be Too Late! Repent NOW!

The Fifth Trumpet, vs. 1-12

v. 1—“...a star fallen from heaven to earth...”—a star usually represents some personage of high ranking. This particular star was seen after it had fallen from heaven to earth. The KJV translation of seeing “a star fall from heaven unto earth” is not an exact translation. When John sees the star, the “falling” has already occurred. By virtue of having the key to the great abyss (as well as the language in v. 11), we’re led to the conclusion that this star represents Satan who controls the great abyss of the demonic world.

v. 3—“...came locusts...and they were given power like...scorpions...”—locusts in the Old Testament period were a highly dreaded force of nature. They were one of the plagues brought upon Egypt during the days of Moses. They are occasionally mentioned in terms of destruction upon the crops of a people. A specially devastating locust plague is described in Joel 1 and 2. These locusts in Revelation are even worse for they have the power like scorpions to harm people directly.

v. 4—“...not to harm the grass...or any green growth...but only those...have not the seal of God...”—in contrast to the first four trumpets which are directly sent to the trees and grass and other parts of the earth itself, this trumpet is directed not at the earth, but at mankind—particularly mankind without God’s seal. Normally locusts harm the growth of the earth and not man. Their power in this vision is strictly to those who have not been sealed by God (that is, non-Christians) bringing suffering, heartache, pain, sorrow—like the sting of a scorpion. Sin spawns its own means of ravage, ruin and perdition.

v. 5—“...torture them for five months, but not to kill them...”—its not clear what the five months represent (perhaps the allusion to the literal life span of a locust), but the period of the torture is limited. Yet while limited, five months of torture is severe just as the destruction of one-third of the vegetation of the earth (8:7) or one-third of the sea becoming blood (8:9) is severe yet limited. There’s more to come.

v. 6—“...seek death and will not find it...”—this torture from the locusts coupled with the other suffering of the first four trumpets have made living almost unbearable for these people. Sin and evil bring horrible suffering to those who engage in them. The vast number of suicides each year show how unbearable life becomes for many, most of whom are living without God in their lives.

v. 7—“In appearance the locusts were like horses arrayed for battle;”—such a description is used for the locust swarms in the great passage in Joel 2:4ff. They were like an army of horsemen going to war.

“...crowns of gold...faces like human faces...”—only here is the word “stephanos” (the crown of victory) used in any other way than in reference to Christ and his people. This force of evil, working against God, may claim for itself a divine role in history, but even then they wear what only looks like crowns of gold. It’s only imitation, not the real thing. The human faces indicate that Satan works his evil and destruction in the world through human agency.

v. 8—“...hair like women’s hair...teeth like lion’s teeth;”—the hair like that of a woman is unclear. It may indicate that the evil of persons represented by these locusts is of both men and women (men’s faces; women’s hair). It may also indicate the deceptive nature of the locusts for they have the gentle appearance of a woman but coupled with the viciousness of the lion’s teeth.

v. 9—“...scales like iron breastplates,...noise of their wings like the noise of many chariots...”—the locusts appeared prepared to go to battle and their sound as they came over the horizon was like an advancing army with hundreds of chariots prepared to destroy anything in its path. Thus, the forces of evil in the world advance like an army selfishly destroying and taking whatever they find for the taking; using people like things and leaving behind wasted, destroyed lives because of the impact of sin.

v. 11—“angel of the bottomless pit; his name...is Abaddon, and ...Apollyon.”—the keeper of the abyss or bottomless pit is the king over these destructive locusts. He gives the orders for their lives. He spreads his destructive influence through them. The Hebrew name for Abaddon means destruction, and the Greek name for Appolyon means destroyer. Both of these titles are fitting descriptions for Satan, the commander of the locusts. He has been a destroyer and murderer since the beginning (John 8:44).

The Sixth Trumpet, vs. 13-21

v. 13—“from the four horns of the golden altar...”—this altar is not the same as that where we found the souls of the martyrs in 6:9f. The source of the voice is uncertain in this passage. It may represent the prayers of the saints of God or it may represent some angel who speaks for God himself.

v. 14—“...four angels...bound at the great river Euphrates.”—it was commonly thought in the first century that the great threat to the Roman Empire would come from the Parthians beyond the Euphrates. Some commentators believe that this passage is referring to that invasion. Still others see other invasions in later centuries as the fulfillment of the prophecy. Probably the truth is that it is fulfilled over and over by invading armies of secular power who do their best to overcome and destroy God’s power over men’s lives.

v. 15—“...the hour, the day, the month, and the year, to kill a third of mankind.”—the time elements described in the verse simply indicate that this angel had been prepared and was ready for the exact time when God would decide that this event would occur. Thus, we’re told that God is in control of the events of history.

v. 16—“...twice ten thousand times ten thousand:...”—this is the largest number which appears in the book of Revelation. Ten thousand times ten thousand is 100,000,000 (one hundred million). Twice that number is 200,000,000. That’s the number of this invading army. It’s obviously a symbolic number, for such an army would be near the size of the population of the United States. Someone has estimated that any army that size in regular marching formation would extend one mile wide and eighty-five miles long.

v. 17—“...this was how I saw the horses in my vision:...”—the description of the horses is extreme. It defies the imagination to picture such creatures. It seems that the description should not be pressed too far; it simply indicates the dreadful, destructive force they were.

v. 18—“a third of mankind was killed,...”—the destruction is widespread but still limited. The destructive apparently came from the three plagues mentioned in this verse—fire, smoke, brimstone.

v. 19—“...power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails;...”—this may simply be saying little more than that the destructive power of military armies comes when the army marches through and leaves suffering in its aftermath.

v. 20—“the rest of mankind,...did not repent...”—the purpose of the plagues and woes is to cause mankind to repent. Yet, even in the face of such destructive forces and the deaths of third of mankind, those who did not die still did not repent of their evil, immoral ways. They continue to ignore the warnings from the God of heaven.

THE ANGEL AND THE LITTLE BOOK

Revelation 10

Revelation 10 contains:

The Strong Angel, vs. 1-7

The Little Book, vs. 8-11

The Strong Angel, vs. 1-7

v. 1—“...another mighty angel...”—remember the first mighty or strong angel mentioned in 5:2. Here is another one or perhaps another appearance of the first one.

“...cloud,...rainbow...sun...fire...”—notice the similarity of these words to the description of Jesus in 1:7, 15-16, 4:3. This similarity has led some to believe that this angel is in reality Jesus himself. Yet similarity does not mean identity. No where else in Scripture is Jesus ever referred to as an angel. Angels are created beings; Jesus is not. To speak of Jesus as “another mighty angel” would place him on an equal standing with the angels, something which Scripture never does (Hebrews 1:4, 13). That there is similarity of description simply shows that this angel speaks by and with the authority of God. His message is from God and is vitally significant.

v. 2—“...a little scroll...”—this is distinguished from the larger scroll of chapter 5 which only the Lamb himself was capable of opening and which contained much of the purposes of God. This smaller book is open in the angel’s hand and is eaten by John. Its smallness indicates that it contains only a portion of God’s will to be revealed.

The angel takes his stand with one foot on the sea and one foot on the earth (or land). In doing so, he is showing that his message is for all mankind—it is universal.

v. 3—“a loud voice, like a lion roaring;”—the roaring lion’s voice is used in the Old Testament as a symbol of God’s message spoken to men (Amos 3:8). In response to the roaring voice, there is the crashing of the seven thunders. Thunder has often accompanied God’s messages to man (example: Exodus 19:16, 20:18).

v. 4—“I was about to write, but...a voice...saying, ‘Seal up...and do not write it down’”—John had been commissioned to write what was revealed to him (Revelation 1:11, 19), and as he prepared to do so, he is told by a voice from heaven not to write it down. He was to keep it to himself. Compare Daniel 12:4, 9. Also note 2 Corinthians 12:4.

v. 5, 6—“...lifted up his right hand to heaven and swore by him who lives for ever and ever...”—there could be no more solemn oath than that which is sworn here by the angel.

v. 6—“...no more delay...”—this is a slightly different translation from the King James Version which says, there will be time no longer. The statement from the angel probably implies that there is no more delay before the coming events of the seventh trumpet. The RSV rendering suggests that there will be no more delay in bringing about the consummation of all things. The KJV rendering suggests that there will be no more time, that is, the end is about to come. Both translations come out at about the same place.

v. 7—“...the mystery of God,...should be fulfilled.”—when the trumpet sounds, the mystery of God is to be revealed. That mystery had been given to the prophets to speak about in the past. It is referred to as

mystery because the world regards God's purposes as a mystery for they can know his will only through his word. Since they give no heed to his word, they regard God and everything about him as mysterious.

The Little Book, vs. 8-11

v. 8—"...the voice which I had heard from heaven...saying,... 'Go take the scroll...'"—the same voice which had forbidden John from writing down the message of the seven thunders in v. 4 now instructs him to go to the angel and take the open book from his hand.

v. 9—"...he said to me, 'Take it and eat;...'"—John approached the angel and asked for the little scroll. The angel instructed him to eat the scroll and he would find it to be both bitter and sweet as honey.

v. 10—"...sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter."—there is a dual aspect to the message of the Lord—it is both sweet and bitter. The promises, love and kindness of the gospel presents a sweet prospect to all; but the judgments, woes and punishment mentioned in the gospel are bitter to those who receive them. Compare similar passages in Psalm 19:7-10, Psalm 119:103 and Ezekiel 2:8-3:3.

v. 11—"...You must again prophesy..."—John's work is not ended. He still will prophesy to other people and have work to do. The proclamation of the message of God is not yet complete.

THE TWO WITNESSES

Revelation 11

Revelation 11 Contains:

The Measured Sanctuary, v. 1-2

The Two Witnesses, v. 3-14

The Seventh Trumpet, v. 15-19

The Measured Sanctuary, v. 1-2

v. 1—“...measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there”—John is instructed to “measure” the temple and the people within. The “measuring” of them is like the “sealing” of the faithful in chapter seven. It is for the protecting of the saints of God. Compare a similar passage in Ezekiel 42:15-20, especially v. 20. It’s suggested that the reed used for the measuring of the temple represents the Word of God or perhaps even more specifically the New Testament of Christ. The temple that is measured and those who worship within, represent the true church of the Lord in the Christian dispensation (cf. Rev. 3:12, 1 Cor. 3:16, 2 Cor. 6:16; and other passages.)

v. 2—“--...court outside the temple...trample over the holy city for forty-two months”—the court outside the temple in the literal setting was a place into which the Gentiles could come, but they could not go into the temple itself. Now, here, symbolically the court is given over to the Gentiles or the nations. That is, the court represents the world opposed to Christians. The measuring in v. 1, included the temple and those who worship therein. Thus, by necessity, it excluded the court or the non-Christians. They are not protected by the “measuring” of God. The wicked, un-Godly nations will trample or persecute the faithful church for 42 months. These 42 months represent the full time of the final dispensation or the Christian age. This period of time will occur over and over in the remainder of Revelation. It is sometimes spoken of as 42 months, 3 ½ years (42 months at 12 months per year); 1260 days (42 months at 30 days per month); and “time, times and half a time” (1 year + 2 years + ½ year = 3 ½ years or 42 months). Verse 2 is telling us that for the period of the Christian dispensation, the church of God will suffer at the hands of the wicked, unfaithful world.

The Two Witnesses, vs. 3-14

v. 3—“...my two witnesses power to prophesy for one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth”—these two witnesses who will prophesy for 1260 days are not specifically described at this point. Later in the chapter, they seem to be spoken of in terms representing Moses and Elijah (more information at v. 6). They will prophesy for God for the duration of the Christian Age (1260 days or 42 months). The prophecy will be in terms of witnessing for the message of God. They will be clothed in sackcloth, perhaps indicating that their message will be one of repentance.

v. 4—“...two olive trees and the two lamp stands...”—the two witnesses of vs. 3 are identified as two olive trees and two lamp stands which are before the Lord. This verse has given rise to much controversy about who the two witnesses actually are. The imagery of this vision obviously comes from an earlier vision to Zechariah recorded in Zechariah 4:1-14. The two olive trees are on either side of the lamp stand, and they supply olive oil for the lamps to burn. In Zechariah, the olive trees seem to represent Joshua, the priest, and Zerubbabel. In the vision in Revelation 11, the two witnesses are the two lamp stands bearing the light of God’s Word. In chapter 1, a lampstand represented the church. It’s suggested here that since there are two lamp stands spoken of here (and 2 is 1 doubled), they represent the church collectively around the world for all time. These two lamp stands are also like the two olive trees of Zechariah’s vision—they continue to express the witnessing of the gospel to the world. Thus, we have pictures here of the church “witnessing” or testifying of the gospel to the lost world.

v. 5—“...if any would harm them,...”—God’s blessings rest with these witnesses. If they are harmed in any way, God’s wrath will come upon those who harm them. Note that the fire comes from the witnesses’ own mouths. This seems to show that the power of God rests in the word which is spoken by his people upon the earth (Romans 1:16).

v. 6—“...shut the sky...to turn them into blood,...and smite the earth with every plague...”—these two statements show the two witnesses identified in terms of Elijah and Moses. Elijah shut up the heavens so that it did not rain for 3 ½ years (James 5:17-18). Moses turned the waters of the Nile River to blood and brought plagues upon Egypt during the days of the exodus (Exodus 7). The testimony of these men was substantiated by the power of God within them. So also the testimony of the two witnesses is substantiated by the power of God—the Word.

v. 7—“...the beast that ascends from the bottomless pit...”—this beast which comes from the bottomless pit may not represent Satan himself, but he is clearly the servant and ambassador of Satan. The beast makes war against the two witnesses after they have completed their testimony. It is not necessarily so that the attack on the two witnesses comes at the conclusion of the 42 months of their testimony. It may mean that as they continually witness of God’s message and the church prospers, then the beast makes war against them. Thus it would be a recurring situation.

v. 8—“...Sodom and Egypt, where the Lord was crucified.”—the dead bodies of the two witnesses lie unburied in the streets of the wicked cities where they were killed. The cities are called Sodom, Egypt and Jerusalem. Each of these three places has special significance for evil in the Bible. Yet, the reality is that no one city is meant in this passage. The vision is saying that the church is persecuted for its testimony in hundreds and thousands of cities around the world. From time to time, the forces of evil seem to conquer over the church, and it seems to lie dead in the streets. Christians, of course, realize that even with much bloodletting, there is never full defeat for the faithful Christian and for the faithful church.

v. 9-10—“...three days and a half men...gaze at their dead bodies and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb, and...rejoice over them...because these two prophets had been a torment to those who dwell on the earth.”—for three days and a half, a brief but definite period of time, these two prophets lie dead in the streets. The short period is the time of success of the beast over the prophets. There are those periods of time, when it seems that wickedness had conquered over the church, but the church has always responded with activity and righteousness once again. During the time of the bodies lying in the streets, the world rejoices and parties over its apparent victory. The rejoicing is because the world has been tormented by the words which the prophets spoke. The Word of God is a painful thing to those who chose to live away from God.

v. 11—“...a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood up on their feet,...”—even out of the ashes of apparent defeat, God’s church has risen again and again, by the power of God within the church and within his Word. Thus, it is pictured here, and it brings great fear upon those who operate with the world.

v. 12—“...a loud voice from heaven saying to them, ‘Come up hither!’...they went up to heaven in a cloud”—the voice from heaven is either that of the Lord or is spoken by his authority. The voice calls for those martyred prophets to come up to heaven. This should not be taken literally, but symbolically as representing that God has vindicated his church for her faithful living. The world “killed” it, but God’s call raises it, just as he raised Christ and took him to heaven. Thus, the world which killed the witnesses

now sees the justification of these prophets by God himself. They are “called up to heaven” in a cloud, just as was Jesus.

v. 13—“...at that hour these was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake,...”—even as the world seems to destroy the church, the world itself was shaken to its very foundations. The people of the ancient world were familiar with earthquakes and knew their destructive power. This is a great earthquake which shakes a tenth of “the city.” “The city” here refers to that great “world-city” spoken of in verse eight. In other words, this is the beginning of the downfall of the wicked, non-believing world. A tenth is destroyed, but the rest will follow in due time. Also, 7000 persons are killed. Perhaps no special significance is to be attributed to the number 7000 other than it is a sizeable number, but much less than the whole. The remainder of mankind on earth gave glory to God. Yet, their giving of glory seems to come out of their terror of the destruction, not out of their desire to serve the God of heaven. That kind of motive will not long sustain faith. Men may change their ways for a time when frightened, but when the fear passes, so often does the commitment as well.

v. 14—“The second woe has passed;”—with this verse woe number two finally concludes.

The Seventh Trumpet, vs. 15-19

v. 15—“...loud voices in heaven...”—when the lamb opened the seventh seal, there was great silence in heaven for the space of half an hour. In contrast, when the angel sounds the seventh trumpet, there is great noise in heaven in the form of praises to God. We’re not told specifically whose voices these are, but perhaps they belong to the living creatures. The twenty-four elders respond here in v. 16, and the elders and the living creatures are often associated together. Their song of praise heralds the transfer of power from the world to the Lord. The kingdom of this world (singular) has become (past tense in Greek) the kingdom of the Lord and his Christ. The world is spoken of as one kingdom, which in actuality it is. It has one ruler—Satan himself. The kings and princes of the nations merely work for Satan. With the preaching of the gospel and the events at Calvary, the Lord reclaimed rulership and authority over the kingdom of the world (cf. Matthew 28:18). From time to time, the powers at work seem to usurp the authority from God, but it’s only temporary (as it appeared to happen at the crucifixion). God is permanently and ultimately in control of this universe.

v. 16-17—“...the twenty-four elders...saying...”—the twenty-four elders join these other loud voices in the hymn of praise to God. He’s praised for his eternal nature (who are and who was), and for his matchless authority over the affairs of mankind.

v. 18—“...nations raged...rewarding your servants...for destroying the destroyers”—the time has come for judgment. The seven trumpets showed judgment on man and the world. Now the full judgment is near. The nations continue to rage in anger and in unrepentance. God will bring judgment on those who have been the destroyers of the earth, but he will bring reward for his servants—the prophets and the saints.

v. 19—“God’s temple in heaven was opened...”—this section which began in chapter four now comes to a conclusion with the vision of the opened Holy of Holies in the temple of heaven. The Ark of the Covenant within the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle and in the temple of Jerusalem represented the presence of God with his people in the wilderness and in Canaan. Now, here it is open for all to see in heaven, showing that God’s presence still abides with his people. The veil that concealed the ark is now mission, for Jesus opened to all the direct access to God. The lightning, noises, thunder, earthquake and hail make this picture all the more impressive.

Three Views of Revelation 11

Premillennial

$3\frac{1}{2} + 3\frac{1}{2} = 7$

Seven years of tribulation
After the Rapture of
Chapter Four

Symbolic

God measures (protects)
His people
Good people suffer
God raises them up

Continuous Historical

The church prospers

The Dark Ages

Reform/Restoration

THE CONFLICT

Revelation 12

Revelation 12 Contains:

The Woman and her Child, vs. 1-6

War in Heaven, vs. 7-9

Song of Triumph, vs. 10-12

The Dragon Attacks the Woman, vs. 13-17

The Woman and Her Child. vs. 1-6

v. 1—“...a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars”—the identity of this woman is not told clearly in the first few verses, but when the chapter is read entirely, her identity becomes more clear. She is gloriously dressed with the elements of the heaven about her. She is draped with the sun, the moon under her feet (cf. Song of Solomon 6:10, where the moon represents fairness), and she wears a wreath or crown (stephanos) with twelve stars. There may be no particular symbolism in these elements beyond showing the glorious nature of the woman. It is suggested however, that the 12 stars may symbolize the 12 patriarchs of the Old Testament and/or the 12 apostles of the New Testament.

v. 2—“she was with child and she cried out in her pangs of birth...”—the woman is clearly pregnant and, in fact, in the process of labor as the scene opens. Her child is about to be born.

v. 3—“...a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems upon his heads”—immediately upon the “stage” of the scene, another “portent” or sign appears. This time it’s a great dragon with seven heads and ten crowns. It seems clear that the dragon represents Satan himself, who works among men to bring destruction and evil upon the earth. His color, red, is the color of blood for he is the murderer from the beginning (John 8:44); his seven heads may show complete intelligence, the master-mind of craftiness and cunning; the 10 horns symbolize fullness of power within his realm of operation. Later in the book, the ten horns will take on fuller meaning. The 7 diadems show his power and royalty among men as their sovereign king. The word diadem appears only three times in the New Testament, all in Revelation. Here it refers to Satan himself; in Revelation 13:1, it refers to the beast, and agent of Satan; and in Revelation 19:12, it refers to Christ who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Nowhere does Satan ever wear the crown of victory (stephanos).

v. 4—“...a third of the stars of heaven...that he might devour her child...”—the picture is that of the great, red dragon slashing his tail around and pulling down a third of the stars in the sky. Some see this as only showing the size and power of the dragon, and holding no symbolism beyond that. Others see it as referring to the destructive power of Satan against the God’s people who are sometimes referred to as stars (Genesis 15:5). Still others see this as an allusion to Satan’s origin and thus it refers to his taking a third of the angels (stars) in heaven with him when he was cast out. Whatever the significance of the first part of the verse, the dragon is clearly the enemy of the woman and the child she is about to bring forth. He is waiting to devour the child.

v. 5, 6—“...a male child, one who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron,...caught up to God...the woman fled into the wilderness...nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days...”—a male child is born and, in fact, the Greek language is so strong on this point that it’s redundant. It literally says “a son, a male child.” This emphasizes the masculinity of the child. He is to be strong, one who rules with a rod of iron. That expression is taken from Psalm 2:9, which is a passage normally understood to

refer to Christ. Notice the child is caught up to be with God and to be on his throne. It seems beyond doubt that this child symbolizes the Christ, the Son of God himself.

After the birth and after the child is taken to be with God, the woman flees into the wilderness to a place prepared by God where he will nourish her for 1260 days. Perhaps there is now enough information to determine just who the woman in the vision is. From the totality of the first six verses, it's safe to say that she represents no one person, although Catholic scholars have said this is the virgin Mary. Later verses in the chapter make this seem impossible (cf. 13-17). At one point in the vision she seems to represent old Israel which brought forth (gave birth) to the Christ. Of course, in the Old Testament, Israel is referred to as the wife of God. Yet, other verses in the vision seem to show the woman as the church which is hunted and persecuted by Satan for 1260 days (the duration of the Christian Age). Yet it was not the church which gave birth to Christ. ***The solution seems to lie in the combination of these two concepts.*** The woman seems to represent the faithful of God during any and all periods of time—the true Israel, whether physical during the days of the Old Covenant or spiritual during the New Covenant. Thus, it was the faithful people of God who brought forth the Christ, and it is the faithful of God who still serve him and are hunted by Satan and persecuted. During the 1260 days, God protects and nourishes (feeds) the woman, his people.

Notice the two terminal points of Jesus' life described here: his birth and his ascension to heaven. Note also that the 1260 days seem to begin immediately after the ascension of Christ to heaven. Thus, the 1260 days, 42 months and 3 ½ years are the period of time from the beginning of the Christian Age to the Second Coming of Jesus. It is not, as some suppose, a literal period of time (3 ½ years) which will involve extreme tribulation just prior to the second coming of Jesus.

War in Heaven, vs. 7-9

v. 7, 8—“war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon”—this war fought in heaven should not be thought of in terms of a literal war between the dragon and Michael. This is apocalyptic literature and what we have described at this point is “apocalyptic drama.” What is described in terms of warfare is really symbolically telling us that Satan has been defeated by the flood of Jesus Christ shed at Calvary. The statement that there was no longer any place for them in heaven simply means that they were defeated. It does not imply that they had any permanent place in heaven. Neither does this passage have any bearing upon the origin of the devil. Notice that the casting out of heaven in Revelation 12 takes place after and because of the blood of Christ. Therefore, it could not pertain to the origin of Satan for he was already the deceiver of mankind long before Christ came to the earth.

v. 9—“And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world...”—if there had been any doubt in our minds earlier about just who the dragon was, those doubts are removed now, for he is clearly named as the Devil and Satan and the Deceiver. The serpent tempted Eve in the ancient garden (Genesis 1-3) and Satan has been known as man's deceiver for centuries (John 8:44). He has been defeated by Christ. In the great conflict between God and Satan over the souls of men, Satan has lost because the blood of Christ makes redemption fully possible.

Song of Triumph, vs. 10-12

v. 10—“a loud voice in heaven, ...salvation and the power and kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, ...the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down...”—there is no clear identification of the source of the voice, but it does speak with authority. The doxology which is spoken tells of the power and work of God himself among his people. It also speaks of the authority of his Christ. Satan is described in this verse as the accuser of God's people. He has, since earliest times, set himself against God to “bring charges” against God's people before the Lord. Like a prosecuting attorney, Satan

stands to have all mankind convicted by the Great Judge. Now the accuser has been cast out of the great courtroom of heaven. No longer is he able to obtain convictions of sin against God's people if they seek mercy through Christ. The accuser's work is damaged.

v. 11—"...they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony,...loved not their lives...unto death"—notice who conquered Satan in this war in heaven. In verse 7, we're told Michael fought against the dragon, but this verse tells us that it's those who have been cleansed by the blood of Christ and because of the blood of Christ and because of the word of their (the brethren) testimony. Through the blood of Christ, Christians can defeat Satan and overcome evil in this world and in their lives. In addition, the testimony of their own lives contributes to his defeat in the world. Not only the power of the message itself with its redeeming message; but also the power of godly lives out of which the testimony comes. Many of these under consideration had given their lives as martyrs.

v. 12—"Rejoice then, O heaven and you that dwell therein! But woe to you, O earth...for the devil has come down to you...because he knows...his time is short"—Heaven and those who dwell therein are to rejoice over the defeat of Satan. Those who dwell in heaven would include angels, but would also include those persons who still live on earth but whose citizenship in heaven—they are really God's people. A woe is pronounced upon those who live in the earth, that is, those who serve the things that are earthly, and whose citizenship is not in heaven. Woe is upon them because Satan is cast to the earth. He is loose on the earth working his evil. It's a remarkable thing about Satan that he brings a great misery and heartache upon those who are his servants. Woe upon them! Satan's work in the earth is with great wrath because he knows his time is limited. He's been defeated by those who have been washed by the blood of Christ and his time is short. It should not be taken to mean that he has only a short time left literally, for no one knows how long there is left. It means that whatever length of time Satan has left, it's coming to an end; it can't last forever. It may correspond with the little time the martyrs are told to wait at rest in Revelation 6:11.

The Dragon Attacks the Woman, vs. 13-17

v. 13—"...he pursued the woman..."—after the dragon's defeat in that he was unable to stop the redemptive work of Christ, he set his attention to destroying the woman who had given birth to the male child. As earlier noted the woman represents the people of God of all time—the Israelite nation from which the Christ was born and the church which continued to be God's people, spiritual Israel. Thus, it appears that after the ascension of Christ to heaven and the woman's fleeing into the wilderness to be protected by God for 1260 days, Satan seeks to kill her. She, in this point in time, seems to represent the church. Satan seems to be trying to destroy the church.

v. 14—"...the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle..., to be nourished for a time, and times and half a time"—the woman is spoken of as having been given two wings of an eagle to fly from the wrath of the serpent. When the Lord led the Israelites out of Egypt, it was said that he delivered them on Eagle's wings (Exodus 19:4). It's a way of saying that the Lord will deliver his church from destruction of the dragon. Jesus said that even the gates of Hades would not prevail against his church (Matthew 16:18). The Lord would nourish the woman (the church) for time, times and half a time. If we consider the "time" as one year; the "times" as two years and "half a time" as one-half year, then we end up with three and a half years or forty two months or 1260 days (using 30 day months). Thus, the church will be protected and nourished by God as his people for the period of time from the beginning of the Christian Age to the Second Coming of Jesus.

v. 15-16—"The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth...to sweep her away...but the earth came to the help of the woman...and swallowed the river..."—from the mouth of the serpent came a

flood that threatens to destroy the woman (church). The flood is described in terms of water, but it's actually delusions of lies, false impressions of power, false religious teachings, false philosophies, false charges and malicious reports intended to destroy the church. In some way, however, the earth itself swallows up the flood of these lies and falsehoods so that the church is not destroyed by them. It's not altogether clear just how the earth does this "help" for the church, but it does. Perhaps it's in the fact that the earth and its people swallow or accept the lies and false doctrines of Satan while the church continues to drink from the fountain of life, the word of God.

v. 17—"...the dragon...went off to make war on the rest of her offspring,...who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus"—because the dragon is not able to destroy the church (either before its beginning or following), he becomes angry and sets about to do the next best thing—that is to destroy individual Christians on at a time. He goes after those who are spoken of as offspring of the church. He goes after those who obey God's commandments and bear testimony to Jesus by the things they say and the way they live. While Satan has been unable to destroy the church through twenty centuries of trying, he has been able to destroy many individual lives who had set about to serve the Lord. We must always beware of his advances (1 Peter 5:8).

v. 17—"And he stood on the sand of the sea"—the King James Version places this sentence with the following chapter, but the better manuscript evidence includes it at the close of chapter 12. Having been so frustrated in his efforts to defeat the Christ (the male child) and the church (the woman) and her offspring (individual Christians), Satan stands beside the sea to call for help from the beast that rises out of the sea as pictured in Chapter 13.

THE TWO BEASTS

Revelation 13

Revelation 13 Contains:

The Beast From the Sea, vs. 1-10

The Beast From Under the Earth, vs. 11-17

Understanding 666, vs. 18

The Beast From the Sea, vs. 1-10

v. 1—“And he stood on the sand of the sea”—this sentence is sometimes placed at the end of chapter 12, but the KJV puts it at the beginning of chapter 13 and says, “I stood on the sand of the sea.” The better manuscript evidence (and the context) suggests that the other versions have a better translation. Thus, it’s the dragon standing on the seashore ready to welcome the two beasts to his aid.

“...a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems upon its horns and a blasphemous name upon its heads”—the similarity between this beast and the dragon in 12:3 is striking. There is one difference. The dragon has seven diadems on his seven heads; the beast has ten diadems on his ten horns. In addition the beast has a blasphemous name on his seven heads. The seven heads represent completeness of intellect and cunning; the ten horns represent great power, while the ten diadems represent authority and rule over others.

v. 2—“...like a leopard,...feet...like a bear’s,...mouth...like a lion’s...”—the description of the beast is given further. We must look to Daniel Seven for a better understanding of the description here. There, Daniel sees a vision with four beasts: the first like a lion, the second like a bear, the third like a leopard (but with four heads), and the fourth like a terrible beast with ten horns. There, they represented four great world powers which would come: Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. Here in Revelation Thirteen, we see a beast which represents to us world power without God.

“...dragon gave his power...throne...authority”—the very things which Satan had promised to Jesus if he would worship him are now given to this great beast of the sea. Thus, as Satan stands opposite God in striving for the control of the lives of humanity, so now the beast stands opposite Christ serving as the dragon’s messiah. Combined in this beast is all the brutality, ruthless power, persecuting vigor and evil of the four beasts of Daniel’s vision, representing the four great world empires. Later in Revelation Seventeen, we’ll see a more specific application of this symbolic beast, but for now he stands as corrupt power of godless men.

v. 3—“One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound...but was healed...”—in mock parallel to the death and resurrection of Christ, one of the heads of the beast was believed to have been wounded mortally, but to have revived so as to cause wonder among his followers in the world. This mortally wounded head has been variously interpreted. Some see it as representing Nero, who died by suicide and about whom a legend arose that he had not really died, but had escaped to the eastern kingdom of Parthia. From there he was expected to lead a conquering army against Rome—thus seen as a death and then healing back to life. A more likely interpretation of v. 3 is that the persecuting power of the empire (at that time in the late 1st century, the Roman Empire) would cease, but later be revived in other evil world powers.

v. 4—“Men worshipped the dragon...and they worshipped the beast saying, ‘Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?’”—the praise which is here ascribed to the dragon and the beast is in language which is normally reserved for praise to God in the Bible (cf. Exodus 15:11, Isaiah 46:5, Psalm 89:6-8, Psalm 113:5).

v. 5—“...exercise authority for forty-two months”—the beast is given power to work for forty-two months, the same period of time which the church will be in the world and face persecution from evil powers.

v. 6—“...blasphemies against God...his name and his dwelling,...those who dwell in heaven”—the beast (world power) uses his mouth to blaspheme God, his kingdom and his people who dwell in the kingdom. Powers of this world work constantly against the church of God.

v. 7-8—“...allowed to make war on the saints...authority was given it over every tribe...and all who dwell on the earth will worship it,...whose name had not been written...in the book of life of the lamb...”—like the dragon in Chapter Twelve, the beast sets about to war against God’s Christians and to conquer them. He does succeed in defeating many Christians so that they no longer walk according to the ways of God. He rules over the nations of the world with absolute authority.

v. 10—“...to captivity he goes,...with the sword must be slain.”—those who persecute the church and Christians either to lead them to captivity or to kill with the sword will suffer retribution from the Lord. Those who live by the sword will die by the sword.

The Beast From the Earth, vs. 11-17

v. 11—“...another beast which rose out of the earth, it had two horns like a lamb...”—the second beast rose from the earth, whereas the first had risen from the sea. This beast is a much more docile looking creature. He has two horns like a lamb. His appearance at first reminds us of the Lamb of God. Yet, when the beast speaks, there is really no misunderstanding whom he serves. He speaks like a dragon. *This second beast represents false religion in the world.* Notice other passages in Revelation, such as 16:13, 19:20, and 20:10. He has the power of the dragon displayed in the river of false doctrines, etc. which came from his mouth. In the imagery of the Lamb of God, this agent of Satan himself deceives mankind and leads them into false, idolatrous worship.

v. 12—“...exercises all authority of the first beast...and makes the earth...worship the first beast...”—the false prophet beast has the same authority as that of the first beast (corrupt, evil world powers). He cause mankind to reverence and worship worldly powers and governments.

v. 13-15—“...works great signs, deceives those who dwell on earth...give breath to the image of the beast so that the...beast should even speak, and to cause those who would not worship...the beast to be slain.”—this false religious beast was able to work signs which deceived men into believing that the beast was worthy of worship. One of those signs was making fire come down from heaven, not unlike Elijah in the Old Testament. Whatever the nature of the “signs” was, Scripture says that the second beast deceived mankind with them. In the deception, mankind was so convinced of the deity of the first beast as to make images of him in worship to him. Of course, the first century saw literal emperor worship widespread throughout the empire. Those who would not worship the emperor were often persecuted and put to death. The priests of the emperor worship cult would often employ ventriloquism to make the images appear to speak to people.

v. 16-17—“...it causes all...to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name.”—through the workings of the false prophet (the second revelation) all men, regardless of the position, status or economic situation in life, must be marked on their right hands or their foreheads if they expect to engage in the daily process of buying and selling goods. Remember that God has sealed his people unto himself by

impressing his own name and the name of the lamb upon their foreheads (7:3, 9:4, 14:1). In addition he promised to write his name upon the foreheads of the victors (3:12, 22:4). Now the false prophet causes those who are aliens from God to be similarly marked upon their foreheads by the mark of the beast (world powers). The seal of God upon the foreheads of his people protected and sustained them. The mark of the beast upon the foreheads of his people protects them in that they cannot buy and sell without it. Obviously the pagans of the first century did not have any trouble serving the emperor and the empire, but the Christians would find themselves in serious circumstances without the mark of the beast. It may have been that this “marking” was a literal marking, but probably not so. More likely, it represents some sort of identification for those who serve the empire and worship the emperor—a certificate perhaps showing that one had sacrificed to Caesar. Faithful Christians, who would not do so, were often hurt economically. Such device would put great pressure on everyone to worship the emperor. Thus, the false prophet causes all to worship the beast and be marked.

Understanding 666, v. 18

v. 18—“...the number of the beast...it is a human number, its number is six hundred and sixty six.”—each person must have the name or number of the beast (v. 17). His number is told as 666. Few passages in Revelation have been more controversial than this one. One of the peculiarities of Greek and Hebrew and Latin is that numerical value can be assigned to letters of the alphabet. Thus, names could be given numerical value. We’re all familiar with Roman numerals which are actually letters of the alphabet that had certain values. For centuries, people have been trying to ascribe 666 to some particular person in history. Dozens of suggestions have been made. One of the more popular ones was to ascribe 666 to Nero. However, to do so, you must spell Nero’s name in Hebrew instead of the customary Latin or Greek and you must misspell it. Another popular understanding in modern times has been the name of Adolf Hitler.

Probably it does not refer to any one person at any particular time in history. If seven is the perfect number, then six is just short of it. Six hundred and sixty-six is six three times, showing that Satan continually strives to replace God, but continually falls short. The King James Version translates verse 18 to say, “...it is the number of a man.” However, in the Greek, the indefinite article “a” does not appear. Thus the verse actually says, “It is the number of man.” So the other translations have translated it as “it is a human number.” The number probably refers to the human, fleshly realm which is in opposition to God. It represents who ever stands against God.

Those who make their alliances with the governments and powers of this world will prosper and benefit from them regardless of how much they must prostitute themselves before them. The Christian must remain true to God regardless of how much suffering the world directs toward him and how much persecution and pressure the world brings to bear against him. We must avoid the mark of the beast for we are marked with the seal of God upon us.

RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT

Revelation 14

Revelation 14 Contains:

The Lamb and the 144,000, vs. 1-5

The First Angel, v. 6-7

The Second Angel, v. 8

The Third Angel, v. 9-11

The Blessed Dead, v. 12-13

The Forth Angel, v. 14-16

The Last Two Angels, v. 17-20

The Lamb and the 144,000, v. 1-5

v. 1—“...on Mount Zion...a hundred and forty-four thousand who had his name and his father’s name written on their foreheads”—Mount Zion is a phrase which refers in the Old Testament to the faithful people of God (Micah 4:1f; Joel 2:32). Thus, we see pictured here the Lamb of God standing with his faithful followers. The 144,000 mentioned here are probably the same as those named in 7:4 who are sealed of God. These in 14:1 have the name of the lamb and his father on their foreheads. These are God’s people.

v. 2-3—“...a voice...like the sound of many waters and...loud thunder...like the sound of harpers...”—this voice heard from heaven was loud and impressive to John. It appears to be the collective voice of the 144,000 singing a new song before the throne of God. Note that the Scriptures do not say that John heard harpers playing on harps in heaven. It says that the voice John heard sounded like harpers playing harps. The new song which they sang was reserved for the redeemed. Only they could know it. This 144,000 is defined in verse three as those who been redeemed from the earth.

v. 4-5—“...who have not defiled themselves with women...who follow the lamb...redeemed from mankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb, and in their mouth no lie was found...”—it is said that those who make up the group of 144,000 have been pure and not defiled themselves with women. They are still virgins. The imagery is that of a pure marriage partner. The reference is not necessarily to physical virginity, but to spiritual purity. These 144,000 redeemed of the earth have been kept pure spiritually for their mate, Jesus Christ. They follow the lamb, he is their leader. In addition, they are called the “first fruits for God.” The first fruits of the harvest were to go to God in sacrifice. This group of 144,000 have been offered as a sacrifice of their very lives unto God. They are honest and spotless, a characteristic of acceptable sacrifice in the Old Testament.

The First Angel, vs. 6-7

v. 6—“...angel flying in midheaven, with an eternal gospel to proclaim...and he said with a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come...’”—the first of several angels appears in heaven flying around proclaiming the eternal gospel to those who live on the earth. It’s a complete proclamation—to every nation, tribe, tongue and people. The angel admonishes believers to do three things: fear God, give him glory and worship him. The reason for this kind of adoration is because his judgment is about to come.

The Second Angel, v. 8

v. 8—“Fallen is Babylon the great, she who made all nations drink the wine of her impure passion”—the second angel introduces good news to the scene. His announcement tells of the fall of “Babylon the Great.” At this time, we’re not told exactly just who are what “Babylon” is. This is an example of “prolepsis,” that is, introducing an element that is more fully described later in the writing. Babylon will be discussed much more fully in chapters seventeen and eighteen. On the basis of what is said in those later chapters, we can conclude that Babylon represents ancient Rome. Ancient Babylon in the Old Testament had dealt much trouble to God’s people. She had long been a fierce enemy and had caused Israel to sin against God by worshipping other gods. So out of that background, Rome is referred to as Babylon who has caused the nations to drink the wine of her impure passion. It’s not just physical lust that is under consideration here, it has to do with immorality and impure living in general. Those who have made their peace with Rome have engaged themselves in her idolatry and immorality against the ways of God. Rome was a real threat against the young church of the first century, persecuting her whenever possible and causing Christians to denounce Christ and serve and worship the emperor. So the announcement of the fall and end of Babylon (Rome) was a cause of great rejoicing among the faithful people of God. While ancient Rome has passed from the scene, there have always been pagan, evil governments which have caused God’s people to sin. Thus, the principle of the rejoicing over Babylon’s fall is replayed over and over for the faithful when a corrupt, evil ruler passes from the earth.

The Third Angel, v. 9-11

v. 9-10—“...If any one worships the beast...he also shall drink the wine of God’s wrath...unmixed...and he shall be tormented...in the presence of the holy angels and...the lamb”—the third angel brings announcement of a warning and judgment upon those who have prostituted themselves to serve the beast. Those who have been marked with the sign or mark of the beast will be punished by God’s fierce wrath. They will be made to drink the wine of God’s wrath mixed with his anger. The imagery here is that of being forced to drink poison. The wrath of God is poured unmixed into the cup. It is not diluted at all. They will feel the full fury of God’s wrath. They will be tormented with fire and brimstone, and it will be in full view of the angels and the lamb. That may be an allusion to the fact that Christians were often tormented and persecuted in the presence of the populace. Now those who have served the beast are going to be tormented in the presence of much more important company.

v. 11—“...smoke of their torment goes up for ever...and they have no rest...”—the smoke of their torment refers to the evidence of their punishment rising for all to see. They have no rest, the punishment endures forever.

The Blessed Dead, v. 12-13

v. 12—“...call for the endurance of the saints...”—in view of what has been written previously, the saints of God should endure whatever hardships they face. In remaining faithful to God, the saints are assured that they will be eternally rewarded and in addition, the wicked will be duly punished by God.

v. 13—“...a voice from heaven...’Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord...they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them”—the voice from heaven, though not specifically identified does speak with the authority of heaven.

BEATITUDE NUMBER 2: Here we have the second of the seven beatitudes of Revelation. The blessing is pronounced on those who have died in the Lord and who do die from this time forward. Many of God’s people had died in persecution, but the voice from heaven assures us that their deaths are not in vain. They are blessed in their death because they died in the Lord. The Spirit then adds his

blessing in adding that they now have rest (in contrast to those who face God's wrath in v. 11) from their labors and their works in the Lord are not to be forgotten by those who remain. The word "labors" means not only deeds we do, but also hardships and persecutions we may endure.

The Forth Angel, v. 14-16

v. 14—"...a white cloud...one like a son of man...golden crown...sharp sickle..."—the white cloud represents purity in the whiteness of its color. The one seated on the cloud is described "like a son of man" which seems to be a reference to Christ himself. He is wearing a crown of victory (stephanos) upon his head. He holds in his hand a sickle, which has long been a symbol of judgment.

v. 15—"...another angel came out of the temple... 'Put your sickle, and reap, for the hour to reap has come...'"—the forth angel of this vision appears with the command to begin reaping from the earth. Note that an angel of lesser rank than Christ gives the command to reap to Christ. But remember that the angel is only a messenger from God himself. In addition, remember Jesus' own words in Matthew 24:36 that no one knows the day and hour of the end except the Lord God only. It's now time for the great harvest to begin. We see pictured in v. 14-16 the harvest of grain or the harvest of God's people. In vs. 17-20, we'll see the harvest of those who served the beast and are to be punished.

The Last Two Angels, v. 17-20

v. 17—"another angel came out of the temple..."—still another angel (the 5th one) appears coming from the temple in heaven. This shows that he comes speaking and doing the will of God. He is also carrying a sharp sickle.

v. 18—"...another angel came out from the altar...who has power over fire...gather the clusters of the vine of the earth..."—this is now the sixth angel who has appeared in this vision. He comes from the altar and has power over fire. In chapter eight, we saw an angel take fire from the altar and cast it upon the earth as a judgment. Thus, we now have a similar description in chapter fourteen. The sixth angel tells the fifth angel to put his sickle and begin harvesting of those who have been unfaithful to God. The grapes are ripe, that is, they are now ready to be harvested. God is not harvesting anything before its ready. He's given plenty of time for these wicked ones to repent (2 Peter 3:9).

v. 19—"...gathered the vintage of the earth, and threw it into the great wine press of the wrath of God..."—the angel carries out his instructions and gathers the ripened grapes for the harvest. Grapes were put into a wine press after harvesting. These wicked ones are now cast into the wine press of God's anger and wrath.

v. 20—"...wine press trodden outside the city and blood flowed...as high as a horse's bridle, for one thousand six hundred stadia..."—the grapes are trodden outside the city. The city referred to is spiritual Jerusalem. These wicked ones were cast out of the holy city and trodden down in God's wine press. Where we would expect to find grape juice flowing from the press, instead we see blood. This is a symbol of God's great judgment upon the wicked. The depth of the blood is described as high as a horse's bridle which would be several feet. The stream of blood flowed for 1600 stadia or furlongs, a distance of about 200 miles. It is not stated if that 200 miles was the circumference, diameter or the radius of the stream of blood. In fact, it matters little. The purpose of the picture is to cause men to be so shocked by the scene that they will repent of sin. The symbolism of the number 1600 is unclear, but two ideas are suggested: (1) it is a large number that merely represents the completeness of God's judgment on the wicked; or (2) it is the number 40 multiplied by itself. Forty was a common number connected with punishment in the Old Testament (such as forty lashes or forty years of wilderness wanderings).

THE SEVEN ANGELS OF GOD'S WRATH

Revelation 15

Revelation 15 Contains:

The First Vision: Sea of Glass, v. 1-4

The Second Vision: Angels With Bowls, v. 5-8

The First Vision: Sea of Glass, v. 1-4

v. 1—“...another portent in heaven...seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last...”—the initial words of the chapter indicate the revealing of still another vision to John. What he sees is seven angels, each possessing a plague which comes from the wrath of God.

v. 2—“...a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who had conquered the beast...standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands.”—the sea of glass has a two-fold description—it is like glass, but also like fire. Perhaps the light flashing off this great sea flashes like lightning or fire. Could it be that the fire symbolizes the fire of judgment about to break forth; or could it represent the fiery trials which the faithful of God had already passed through? Standing beside the sea (“on” the sea—KJV) is a great host of people who have overcome the beast and his image and the number of his name. They now stand redeemed of God and ready to give him the praise he deserves. They hold harps of God in their hands. Whether these are literal harps or symbolic may be debated, but it appears they use them to praise God. There is little else in the passage which is understood as literal (cf. sea of glass, bowls of wrath-v. 7), thus it is consistent to regard the harps as symbolic as well. Even if they are regarded as literal, we still are not looking at the worship of the church on earth.

v. 3-4—“...the song of Moses...and the song of the Lamb...all nations shall come and worship thee, for thy judgments have been revealed.”—the song of Moses was sung by the Israelites after they had been delivered from the Egyptian army by crossing the Red Sea. They sang their praises unto God for deliverance. It is recorded in Exodus Fifteen. Now here in Revelation Fifteen, we have the song of Moses referred to again along with the song of the Lamb. This reference to both Old and New Covenants probably signifies the redeemed of all the ages—from both covenants—are included here. They sing a great song of praise unto God concluding with the statement that all nations will worship God because his judgments have been revealed. Not everyone will worship God during their lives on earth, but certainly when the final judgment of God comes on earth, all will acknowledge God as Lord.

The Second Vision: Angels With Bowls, vs. 5-8

v. 5-6—“...the temple of the tent of witness...seven angels with the seven plagues...pure bright linen...golden girdles.”—John sees the temple of the tent of witness opened. This is a phrase which refers to the Old Testament tabernacle the Israelites built in the wilderness. It was called the tent of witness because it contained the Ark of the Covenant. It is used in this passage to represent the dwelling place of the presence of God. Sent from the temple are the seven angels with seven plagues. Each angel is dressed in pure bright linen with golden girdles. There is a textual variant in verse six. Some ancient manuscripts use the word stone (LITHON) in the place of the Greek word linen (LINON). The context however, seems to lean toward the word linen.

v. 7—“...one of the four living creatures gave...golden bowls...of the wrath of God...”—one of the four creatures we met in Chapter Four now issues the seven bowls to the seven angels. These bowls or vials (KJV) were shallow dishes used for incense or for pouring out drink offerings. Apparently each angel received one bowl. The bowls contain the wrath of God. Although not stated in Chapter Fifteen, we’re led to anticipate that the bowls are to be poured out.

v. 8—“and the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God...and no one could enter...until the seven plagues were ended.”—the figure of God’s glory filling the sanctuary with smoke comes from the Old Testament (Isaiah 6:4, Ezekiel 10:4, Exodus 40:35). It may also refer to the angel of the Lord as he prepares to pour out his wrath on wicked mankind. No one was allowed into the temple until the time of the wrath was finished. During the Old Covenant period, the High Priest would enter into the Temple to intercede for the people. Here we’re told no one may enter for any kind of intercession for the wicked. The wrath of God will be complete and will be accomplished.

THE BOWLS OF WRATH POURE DOUT

Revelation 16

Revelation Sixteen Contains:

The First bowl, v. 1-2

The second Bowl, v. 3

The Third Bowl, v. 4-7

The Fourth Bowl, v. 8-9

The Fifth Bowl, v. 10-11

The Sixth Bowl, v. 12-16

The Seventh Bowl, v. 17-21

The First Bowl, v. 1-2

v. 2—“...foul and evil sores came upon the men who bore the mark of the beast...”—this first plague poured out on mankind reminds us of the sixth plague of Egypt. However there seems to be little connection other than the similarity of the plague. This first plague from the angel is directed at evil men and involves their physical suffering. It is severe and full. Burton Coffman suggests that the sores described here represent the festering sores of the corruption and immorality so wide spread in today’s world. It was wide spread in the first century world, has existed through the centuries, and still rages. This kind of evil has brought untold suffering upon people who engage in it. Seeing the nature of this suffering brought by God upon the wicked ought to cause people to turn to God to avoid the final judgment of wrath, but they do not.

The Second Bowl, v. 3

v. 3—“...into the sea...like the blood of a dead man, and every living thing dies that was in the sea.”—the second bowl resembles the second trumpet which sounded. The second trumpet caused the sea to become blood in a third of it; the second bowl causes the entire sea to become like the blood of a dead man. We also are reminded of the first plague in Egypt when the Nile was turned to blood. The image of the blood of a dead man is foul. Thick, coagulated blood is now where oceans had previously been. If the waters become blood, what happens to the land around them? Coffman suggests that the second bowl is a continuation of the first. He says that the figure used is that of the physical environment of our world. The wickedness which continues almost unchecked is foul smelling like death. Suffering comes as a result of the wrath of God poured out. It is also leading up to the final judgment of God. Where there are calamities at sea, there ought to be warning heeded from God of coming judgment.

The Third Bowl, v. 4-7

v. 4—“...the rivers and the fountains or water...became blood.”—the third trumpet caused a portion of the fresh waters to become bad. Here all the fresh waters become like blood. The seas are blood, now also the fresh waters are blood. Extreme hardships are coming upon mankind. To affect the great rivers was to affect commerce. When commerce fails and people are not able to buy and sell, they suffer. It’s a judgment from God to warn of a much more severe judgment to come.

v. 6—“For men have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink.”—this seems to be a reference to persecution against God’s people either in the church or in the Old Testament period. Those who have persecuted God’s people will have to pay in like manner. If they have caused the faithful to suffer, God will make them drink blood—that is, they will be justly repaid.

v. 7—“And I heard the altar cry...true and just are they judgments!”—in Revelation 6:9-10, there are the souls under the altar who cry out to the Lord for justice. Now, we see again a similar image of the altar crying out that the judgments of God are true and just. With the approaching final judgment, the unholy and immoral deaths of the martyrs are about to be vindicated.

The Forth Bowl, v. 8-9

v. 8—“...on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch men with fire.”—this plague has similarity to the forth trumpet in that both involved heavenly bodies. Beyond that there is no similarity. The forth trumpet brought darkness, the forth bowl brings scorching heat to mankind. When the sun and its effect bring suffering upon mankind, then man ought to be made to turn to God in repentance.

v. 9—“...they cursed the name of God who had power over these plagues, and they did not repent...”—even as they are heading quickly toward the final, eternal judgment from God, they continued in their wickedness. The patience and mercy of God had failed to bring them to repentance. Now also the judgments and warnings of God have failed to turn them. Instead they cry out in anger over their predicaments and curse the name of God.

The Fifth Bowl, v. 10-11

v. 10—“...on the throne of the beast and its kingdom was in darkness; men gnawed their tongues...”—the fifth bowl of wrath is poured out on the Kingdom and throne of the beast itself. It is plunged into darkness. Not only has the devastation described to this point been critical, now there is darkness all around. It’s a hopeless situation. Because of this hopelessness, men begin to gnaw their own tongues out of their extreme anguish.

v. 11—“and cursed the God of heaven...and did not repent of their deeds.”—even in this state of utter despair, they still did not turn to God. Rather they cursed him and continued right along in their wickedness, without any thought of repenting.

The Sixth Bowl, v. 12-16

v. 12—“...on the great river Euphrates...to prepare the way for the kings from the east.”—the image being described in these verses has to do with the final conflict between good and evil, between Satan and God. It’s leading up to the description of Armageddon. With the pouring of the sixth bowl, the waters of the Euphrates dry up thus allowing the kings of the East to invade. The Euphrates had been a natural barrier from the invading armies of the East. Now that is removed and John says the powers are about to be invaded.

v. 13—“...from the mouth of the dragon and from the mouth of the beast and from the mouth of the false prophet, three foul spirits like frogs:”—the three great evil creatures—the dragon, beast and false prophet—all issue foul spirits from their mouths. These spirits are like frogs which reminds us of the plague of frogs upon Egypt. The dragon is clearly that dragon of Chapter Twelve; the beast is the first beast of Chapter Thirteen and Verse One; an apparently the false prophet is the second beast of Chapter Thirteen and Verse Eleven.

v. 14—“...demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings...to assemble them for battle...”—these frog-like creatures are in truth demonic spirits whose purpose is to deceive the kings of the earth into making war against the forces of the Lord. The signs which they perform are deceptive in

nature, but convincing to the kings that these spirits really reflect the proper way to go. This gathering of armies to fight against God on the “great day of God the almighty” shows the continuing struggle between the forces of evil, always directed by the lies and deceit of Satan; and the ways of the Lord. It also refers in this passage to the final confrontation between good and evil—that is, the final judgment of God, when God brings his wrath and judgment against evil men.

v. 15—“Lo, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is he who is awake, keeping his garments...”—the Lord says that his great day will come like the coming of a thief—unexpected and without warning. Such a phrase is used elsewhere in the New Testament with reference to the coming of Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:2-4; 2 Peter 3:10).

BEATITUDE NUMBER THREE: Here we see the third of the seven beatitudes. There was a long gap between the first and the second beatitude (Chapter One to Chapter Fourteen). Now the third comes more quickly. The blessing is upon those who remain awake, that is, watchful; and on he who keeps his garments lest they be stolen and he be seen naked. It’s the idea of a guard standing his watch. If he is faithful to his task, he remains awake against the enemy and all is secure. If he falls asleep, and perhaps removes his garments to sleep, the enemy may come and steal them from him. Then the next morning he must go back home naked and everyone will know he has been unfaithful in performing his duty as a guard. If the Christian is not careful, the enemy, Satan, will steal from him his pure, white garments of righteousness and he will be shown to have been unfaithful.

v. 16—“...they assembled them at Armageddon.”—this great confrontation between the forces of the dragon, the beast and the false prophet on one side and God on the other is to occur at a place named in Hebrew Armageddon. It’s quite interesting that no such name appears in Hebrew literature. Most scholars associate Armageddon in some way with Megiddo which was a famous fortress in the land of Palestine. “It was here that Barak and Deborah overthrew Sisera and his forces (Judges 5:19-21), and Pharaoh Necho defeated slew Josiah (2 Chronicles 35:20-24). Therefore the best interpretation of Armageddon is “the mountain of Megiddo.”

The Seventh Bowl, v. 17-21

v. 17—“...poured his bowl into the air...”It is done!”—the pouring of the seventh bowl into the air completes the full scope of nature—earth (bowl #1), water (bowls #2 and #3), fire (bowl #4), and air (bowl #7). The pouring into the air seems to imply that it covers all that has to do with mankind—the totality of his environment and his world. The great voice from the temple and the throne can be none other than that of God himself. He pronounces that it’s done or finished—Not only the first six plagues, but all of life on earth for that matter. The final judgment is about to occur.

v. 18—“...lightning, ...voices,...thunder,...earthquake...”—the description in v. 18 is language that has been used throughout the Old Testament to describe the events of the Lord. It’s language that was used to describe the scene with Moses on Mt. Sinai.

v. 19—“The great city was split into three parts...and God remembered great Babylon, to make her drain the cup of the fury of his wrath.”—the great city here probably refers to the “world city” introduced to us in Chapter Eleven. It’s really the world described as a city that is under consideration. The city breaks up into three pieces. Not only this one city but all the allied cities along with it are destroyed. God remembers Babylon and makes her drink the fullness of the fury of his wrath. Babylon probably refers to Rome initially, but later refers to any nation which lives in opposition to God. God’s full fury comes on the wicked.

v. 20-21—“...island flew away...no mountains...found;...great hailstones, heavy as a hundred-weight...till men cursed God...”—it’s a picture of the world flying apart. Islands are disappearing into the sea, mountains are vanishing from sight. A great hailstorm begins with hailstones weighing nearly one hundred pounds falling upon men. This last plague becomes so intense that men curse God because of it. Rather than seeking his forgiveness, they continue in their sin with curses before his name.

Special Note on Armageddon:

There is wide variation among scholars as to the meaning of the battle at Armageddon. The scene is of the great battle between the forces of Satan and those of the Messiah. How it is conceived is another question. Listed here are several different interpretations:

1. There are those who think of it as a battle between two groups of nations existing today and endeavor to identify those nations. The United States and Russia are two nations commonly suggested. This view will likely be revised in light of the events in the former Soviet Union over the past few years.
2. It is sometimes interpreted as the last great battle during the “rapture” immediately preceding the establishment of the millennial kingdom when Christ will reign upon earth. The wicked nations, led by antichrist, will come up against Jerusalem, and Christ with his saints will suddenly come down and rescue the Jews.
3. Those who follow the continuous historical method see this as the struggle between the Roman Catholic Church and the Lord’s faithful, in which the roman Catholic Church will be completely overthrown. Thus, this battle would still be in the future.
4. Those who hold to the Preterist view hold that this is the symbolic representation of the struggle between paganism and the gospel of Christ, which was fulfilled when people in large numbers turned to Christianity during the time of Constantine.
5. Still others hold that this is a symbolic battle having nothing to do with any kind of temporal warfare. It represents the struggle between all the hosts of wickedness and the Son of God. The context in which this passage occurs would indicate that this is the final and decisive battle between God with the Messiah and Satan with his agents. Whatever may have been the struggle that through the ages have taken place, this is a kind of climaxing struggle. This seems to be the best explanation in keeping with the meaning and nature of the Book of Revelation.

THE GREAT HARLOT AND THE BEAST

Revelation 17

Revelation 17 Contains:

The Vision of the Great Harlot, v. 1-6

The Beast Interpreted, v. 7-11

The Ten Horns Interpreted, v. 12-14

The Woman Sitting on Many Waters, v. 15-18

The Vision of the Great Harlot, v. 1-6

v. 1—“...I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who is seated upon many waters.”—one of those seven angels who poured the wrath of God upon men comes to John with the offer to show him the judgment to come upon the great harlot. The harlot is not specifically identified in this verse nor are the many waters interpreted here. The word judgment implies condemnation to be brought to bear upon her.

v. 2—“with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication...the dwellers on earth have become drunk.”—the various kings of the earth had committed political, economic and religious harlotry with this great harlot. It’s interesting that in the Greek, she is called a harlot (porne) and not an adulteress (moichlas). This is not a bride who has gone after other lovers; this is a blatant harlot who commits whatever vile act she pleases. These dwellers on earth would be those whose citizenship belongs to the earth rather than to heaven. The unfaithful of the world have always made their alliances with the wickedness of the world.

v. 3—“...into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns.”—the description of the beast which the harlot sits upon reminds us of the dragon of Chapter Twelve and the beast from the sea of Chapter Thirteen. Both had seven heads and ten horns. We may conclude that this new beast in Chapter Seventeen is to be likened to those earlier ones. The seven heads and ten horns represent intelligence and authority. The scarlet color was a sign of luxury and royalty. The woman herself is adorned with scarlet (v. 4). The beast was full of blasphemous names. Blasphemy originated in the Romans Empire against the church and became widespread around the world. It is still common.

v. 4—“...arrayed in purple and scarlet, and bedecked with gold and jewels and pearls,...a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her fornication.”—she is dressed in the garments of luxury and royalty, for she has lived a luxurious life at the expense of others. There is quite a contrast between this harlot and the godly woman of Chapter Twelve who represents the people of God. This harlot is pictured as holding (and drinking) from the cup of wickedness.

v. 5—“...on her forehead wa written a name of mystery: ‘Babylon the great...’—the woman is marked upon her forehead with her name. That is probably an allusion to the custom of prostitutes in the public brothels wearing headbands with their name son them. The word mystery suggests that this name of the woman had been concealed, but now is revealed. Her name reveals her true character. Three things are said of her: (1) she is called Babylon, referring to the ancient, wicked enemy of God’s people; (2) she is called the mother of harlots, signifying her great wickedness; and (3) she is called the mother of abominations. She is the source of all worldly lust. The world may try to hide its real evil nature, but God shows it for what it is.

v. 6—“drink with the blood of the saints...of the martyrs of Jesus.”—she is so wicked that she sits drinking the blood of those who have died I their faith to Christ. She has become intoxicated with their blood. Like a drunkard consumed with a desire for more alcohol, she is consumed with the desire for more and more blood of the saints to drink in.

The Beast Interpreted, v. 7-11

v. 7—“but the angel said to me,...’I will tell you the mystery...’”—the angel who had opened the vision in v. 1, now offers to explain the vision to John. He’ll tell him of the woman and the beast with seven heads and ten horns. However we see that he begins with an explanation of the beast first.

v. 8—“...was, and is not, and is to ascend from the bottomless pit and go to perdition;...”—the beast is described in terms of existing in the past, not existing now, but later to exist again. Myriad interpretations have been given to that statement. Some see it as referring to a long line of Roman emperors. Some see it as a reference to Nero himself about who a legend arose that he had not really died but would soon lead an invading army from the East to attack Rome. It is similar in nature to the passage in Chapter 13 and Verse Three. There we stated it probably referred to the persecution against the church by the governments of the world. They had been severe but would stop for a time only to be revived again. It was as if the beast had disappeared for a while. The imagery here reminds us of God and his Messiah, Jesus, who lived, died and lives again. The difference is that he rose to go to glory; the beast rose to go to perdition.

v. 9-10—“the seven heads are seven hills on which the woman is seated; they are also seven kings, five of whom have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come, and when he comes he must remain only a little while.”—this is one of the more difficult passages in Revelation. These seven heads upon the beast the woman rides are interpreted in two ways: (1) as seven hills; and (2) as seven kings. The seven hills bring to mind instantly the seven hills of Rome upon which the city is literally built. This would suggest to us that the beat represents Rome itself which gives support to this wicked harlot. But clearly, we’re also looking at a symbolic meeting in the seven kings. Some have speculated that they represent seven literal kings of Rome, five of whom had already lived and died, one who ruled then, and one who was yet to come. Lists of Roman emperors are drawn up to support this idea. To do so however, one must leave out several names to get the list to fit properly. Also it removes the passage from having much meaning for the people of later centuries. Another popular interpretation is to see the seven kings as seven kingdoms stretching from early times down through john’s day. The problem with this interpretation is that scholars can’t agree as to which kingdoms should be included or left out. The best understanding seems to be to see the number seven as symbolizing perfection or completeness and the ten (the horns) the fullness of power. Thus, the beast would represent the totality of forceful anti-Christian opposition. In the seven kings we see the completeness of kings and kingdoms which oppose the Kingdom of God. Each new one which appears on the scene would therefore be a part of the “seven.” Each new one appears but for a brief period, then passes. However, the Kingdom of God endures forever.

v. 11—“...was and is not, it is an eighth but it belongs to the seven, and it goes to perdition.”—the beast himself is described in terms of being an eighth head of the beast. This is a reference back to v. 8 where the beast was, and is not and is to ascend to the bottomless pit. It is all a continuation of the rising and falling of powers and governments appearing and disappearing on the scene of history, but all passing quickly on their way to perdition.

The Ten Horns Interpreted, v. 12-14

v. 12—“...the ten horns...are ten kings who have not yet received royal power, but they are to receive authority as kings for one hour,...”—the ten horns on the seven headed beast represent future royal power. These future kings who were yet to come, would receive authority from the beast and would rule for an hour, a brief period of time. These are probably kings of smaller nations who made their alliances with Rome. That type of thing continues to happen as smaller nations align themselves with the more powerful nations for protection. Instead, they ought to look to God for their deliverance. We’ll learn in a later verse that these ten kings later turn on the great harlot and help destroy her.

v. 13-14—“...give over their power...to the beast; make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them...and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.”—these ten kings turn over their power to the beast in exchange for the protection it could give. Together with the beast, the ten plan to war against the lamb of God, but the lamb will be victorious. Along with him are his chosen and faithful ones who also are victorious over those who had persecuted and harmed and even killed the faithful of the lamb.

The Woman Sitting on Many Waters, v. 15-18

v. 15—“The waters...are people and multitudes and nations and tongues.”—the great harlot of v. 1 is seated on many waters. Now we are told that those waters represent people from all parts of the earth. The idea of sitting implies rule and authority over those people. It’s not just the people of the Roman Empire under consideration here, although that is the language that is used. It includes all the nations of all time who give themselves to Satan’s influence in exchange for what he offers to them.

v. 16-17—“...the ten horns...and the beast will hate the harlot; they will make her desolate and naked, and devour her flesh...for God has put it into their hearts to carry out his purpose by being of one mind...until the words of God shall be fulfilled.”—the ten horns or ten kings referred to earlier along with the beast itself, finally turn against the harlot and bring about her destruction. This is a classic example of evil’s self-destruction. Because of her own evil ways, she has come about. God somehow put it into their hearts to do his purposes. His providence is at work in the lives of men. Nations have throughout history done God’s will without even knowing it. All of God’s purposes come about. God is still in control of events and history.

v. 18—“And the woman...is the great city which has dominion over the kings of the earth.”—if any mystery remains of the woman’s identity, it is removed with the statement that she is the great city which rules over the lives of men and kings. It seems clear that she is the city of Rome. However, Rome in the book of Revelation seems to represent not only the literal Roman city and empire, but world power of all generations. She symbolizes the world of lust, seduction and the allurements of all that appeals to the flesh.

THE FALL OF BABYLON THE GREAT

Revelation 18

Revelation Eighteen Contains:

The Fall Announced, v. 1-3

The Call to God's People, v. 4-5

The Call to God's Ministers of Justice, v. 6-8

The Threefold Cry Over Her Fall, v. 9-19

The Call to Rejoice, v. 20

Completeness of Her Fall, v. 21-24

The Fall Announced, v. 1-3

v. 1—"...earth was made bright with his splendor."—When the angel comes from heaven, the earth itself is lightened with the greatness of the angel and with the greatness of his mission to announce the fall of Babylon.

v. 2—"Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!...a dwelling place of demons,...a haunt of every foul and hateful bird;"—the fall or doom of Babylon is announced in the past tense which shows the certainty of what is to occur even though it had not yet come to pass. Instead of being a city of great importance and social standing, it has become a place where the demons dwell. The pagans had worshipped their false gods and emperors there, now there are only demons. The demons haunt the pagan temples where they once were worshipped. The city has become a haunt for unclean birds. It's not a prison or a cage as the KJV suggests, but more like a roost for the vultures. The passage reads like some of the Old Testament doom prophecies against God's enemies (see Isaiah 21:9).

The Call to God's People, v. 4-5

v. 4—"...voice from heaven saying, 'Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins,...'"—again it is a voice from heaven that speaks with the authority of God to his people. He calls his people to come out of Babylon lest they partake of her sins and share in the plagues that come upon her. In no way should this be taken literally. The Lord is speaking of "coming out" of her in symbolic and spiritual terms. It's the same call he gave to his people of times past to separate themselves from the impure peoples living around them. He called Lot to leave Sodom (Genesis 19:12-14) and the Israelites to leave Egypt (Exodus 3:10). While they were to literally leave those locations, their real separation was meant to be spiritual as well as physical. In the same way God calls for his people to be separate from the ways of the world even though they live in the world (see 2 Corinthians 6:17 and Ephesians 5:11). In Revelation 18:4, he tells his people not to be allied with Babylon, but to be separate from her spiritually.

v. 5—"...her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered..."—her sins are described as being stacked one upon the other until the heap reaches to heaven itself. In addition God has remembered all her iniquities and will bring judgment upon her because of them. The people of God should stay separate from her so as not to partake in her judgment.

The Call to God's Ministers of Justice, v. 6-8

v. 6—"Render to her as she herself has rendered, and repay her double for her deeds;..."—this charge does not appear to be given to the people of God who are addressed in v. 4 and 5. The Lord has forbidden his saints from executing vengeance (Romans 12:17, 19). Probably this charge in v. 6 is directed to the

heavenly spirits who are to bring their plagues upon Babylon and will carry out God's judgments upon her. They are told to render to her in like manner to what she has done to others. In addition it is to be a double portion she receives. The phrase "mix a double draught for her in the cup she mixed" means that that which she prepared for and passed to others and by which she had made them drunken (v. 3), would now be hers to drink in extreme terms.

v. 7—"As she glorified herself and played the wanton, so give her a like measure of torment and mourning... 'A queen to sit, I am no widow...'"—She has made herself to be a wanton, unholy woman but in return God will bring judgment of torment and mourning on her. She has set herself up as queen who knows no sorrow; in exchange God will bring her pain and grief.

v. 8—"...her plagues come in a single day, pestilence and mourning and famine, and she shall be burned with fire; for mighty is the Lord god who judges her."—the plagues which God will bring upon her will come suddenly as if in one hour. Where affluence and happiness were once prominent, now death, mourning and famine will prevail. Her end is so great that she will be burned with fire, that is, totally destroyed. Notice that it is clearly the Lord God who brings this judgment upon her. The language here borrows heavily from the description of the fall of Babylon given in Isaiah 47:7-9. God's judgment will come upon this unholy city-nation. If in the first century this was understood to be Rome, then so it was that God brought his judgment upon Rome. But in centuries since then, God has judged many other nations which have oppressed and persecuted people trying to live righteous lives. This wicked Babylon repeats itself over and over again throughout the ages.

The Threefold Cry Over Her Fall, v. 9-19

v. 9—"And the kings of the earth...will weep and wail over her..."—in v. 9-20, there are three groups of people who mourn the end of Babylon. The first of those three groups is the kings of the earth who have allied themselves with her and profited from her and partaken of all her sins and wantonness with her. With her end, they see the end of their own prosperity and their own luxurious living. When they see the smoke of her burning (see v. 8), they weep over her loss, but their mourning is as much over what they have lost as it is over her destruction itself.

v. 10—"they will stand far off...In one hour has your judgment come."—they stand far off. Though they have profited from her and been allied with her, they do not come to her aid. They let her fall alone. Her fall is in one hour, meaning it comes swiftly and suddenly.

v. 11-13—"And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her since no one buys their cargo any more, cargo of gold, silver,---and slaves, that is human souls."—the merchants who buy and sell products mourn over her loss, because her loss is their loss. They have depended on her and her allies to buy their goods. Now there is no one to buy what they have to sell. The list of goods in these verses shows the items of a great commercial civilization. Seven categories of goods are described here: precious metals, beautiful cloth, wood, spices, food, property in beasts and chariots and slaves, and fruit. These merchants had gotten rich even from the buying and selling of human life. Their mourning over Babylon is over their won financial loss. Their concern for her is a selfish concern. They had put their trust in her, now everything they trusted has gone up in smoke.

v. 14—"The fruit...and all your dainties and your splendor are lost..."—the word translated "fruit" here is found only in the New Testament at this point. It means ripe, juicy, delicious fruit to be eaten. It's the fruit found in late summer or early fall of the year. The prophet says that when the harlot looks for that good fruit she's become accustomed to, she'll find it no more. In addition the "dainties" and "splendor"

she once knew are gone. Those words refer to great luxury and extravagance. She at one time has possessed everything desirable, and now she's destitute.

v. 15-17—"the merchants...who gained wealth from her, will stand far off, in fear of her torment...Alas, for the great city that was clothed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet...In one hour..."—the merchants mourn for the city just as the kings did in v. 10. Like the kings, they also stand far off, not willing to come to her aid. So it is with the alliances of this world—they are self-serving. These merchants have gained their wealth from her, and the loss of this marketplace is their main concern. She is described in terms almost identical with those used in Revelation 17:4, which confirms that both passages refer to the same thing. Again it is stated that her end will come in one hour—a brief, sudden period of time.

v. 17-18—"And all shipmasters and seafaring men...stood far off and cried out as they saw the smoke of her burning, 'What city is like the great city?'"—the third group of people to mourn her passing is that of the shipmasters and sailors, for they too have made their profit because of her. Now that she's gone, and she's not buying from the merchants, the merchants will not be shipping goods on their ships. Again, it is a fully self-serving concern. They, like the others, stand far off unwilling to come to help her, but cry over their losses as she burns. Their cry is "what city is like the great city?" There was none other like her. The kings saw her as indestructible, the merchants saw her as rich and luxurious, the shipmasters saw her as an unending source of trade. Their full trust and allegiance was put in her. Now she's going away—they have nothing left. Not at all unlike those today who put their trust in nations and government thinking that they are somehow eternal. When those nations fall (and every nation will fall), they have nothing left.

v. 19—"And they threw dust on their heads, as they wept... 'Alas, for the great city...In one hour'"—the throwing of dust on their heads was an oriental symbol of grief. Again we see clearly that their grief was selfish, it's because of their losses, not hers. Once again, we see the one hour stated, showing the quickness of her end.

The Call to Rejoice, v. 20

v. 20—"Rejoice over her, O heaven, O saints and apostles and prophets for God has given judgments for you against her!"—while those who have been allied with the harlot will weep over her fall, those who have suffered because of her will rejoice because of the judgment of God. Notice those included in the rejoicing—those in heaven, saints, apostles and prophets—thus covering the scope of those who serve God. It probably ought to be noted that their rejoicing is not a selfish rejoicing like the mourning of those in the previous verses. This rejoicing is because of the righteous judgment of God. These saints did not bring vengeance, God did. His judgments are true and right. But it was judgment because of her mistreatment of God's faithful.

Completeness of Her Fall, v. 21-24

v. 21—"...a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, 'So shall Babylon the great city be thrown down...'"—an angel appears and casts a large millstone into the sea as a sign. The millstone was a stone used in grinding grain at a mill and was extremely heavy. It would sink quickly to the bottom of the sea. The angel says that Babylon is going to be thrown violently in a similar manner, and she would be seen no more. Thus the end of Babylon (Rome and any other nation which has lived without God) comes to a complete and permanent end.

v. 22-23—"and the sound of harpers and minstrels...and craftsmen of any craft...and the sound of the millstone...and the light of a lamp...and the voice of the bridegroom and bride shall not be heard in you

anymore...for the merchants were the great men...and all nations were deceived by your sorcery.”—to describe the passing of Babylon, five items of daily life are said to be seen or heard no more in her. (1) The sounds of the musicians and singers are noticeably missing. There’s no rejoicing anymore. (2) There can be found in her no craftsmen of any kind. (3) There is no sound of the millstone—no grain is being milled. (4) There are no lamps lit—no light in the city. (5) The voices of the weddings are gone—no more giving and receiving in marriage. All this is past for the end has come. The angel names two reasons for this great destruction. One is the merchants became men of great wealth—the rich men—because of the buying and selling. Their greed and striving for wealth led to deceit and mistreatment of others. The second reason has to do with false teachings which went on within the city. She used her sorcery to deceive the people into sin. She caused them to drink of the cup of wine of her fornication (18:3).

v. 24—“And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slain on earth.”—the blood of God’s people had been shed in Babylon. She had persecuted his people. This is an added reason for God’s judgment upon her. Rome had been guilty of persecution and bloodshed of God’s people, so this passage finds fulfillment in Rome. But, other nations through the centuries have also been guilty of severe mistreatment of God’s people and the passage finds fulfillment in them as well.

CHRIST'S VICTORY

Revelation 19

Revelation Nineteen Contains:

Hallelujah Chorus After Babylon's Fall, v. 1-10

Rider on the White Horse, v. 11-21

Hallelujah Chorus After Babylon's Fall, v. 1-10

v. 1-2—"...the mighty voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying, 'Hallelujah! Salvation...belong to our God, for his judgments are true...he has judged the great harlot...and he has avenged...the blood of his servants.'"—here a great multitude of people begin a series of praises unto the Lord God. They cry hallelujah, which is a word found in the New Testament only in this chapter. It appears frequently in the Old Testament, particularly in a series of psalms known as the praise psalms (Psalms 113-118). Praise is addressed to God for his salvation of his people and for the just judgment on the great harlot who had caused men to sin and who had shed the blood of the people of God.

v. 3—"...smoke from her goes up forever and ever."—this is an indication of the thoroughness of the destruction of Babylon. She will never rise again to persecute the people of the Lord. Always that is the case. When God brings judgment upon the world for its wicked ways, it will be a complete, permanent judgment.

v. 5—"And from the throne came a voice crying, 'Praise our God...'"—the voice comes from the throne in heaven, yet from the instructions given, it seems not to be the Lord speaking. However, the voice speaks with the authority of the Lord. It's an instruction for those who dwell on the earth (men and women) to praise God.

v. 7-8—"Let us rejoice...and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready;...clothed with fine linen,...the righteous deeds of the saints."—the great multitude assembled praising God rejoices over the marriage of the lamb and his bride. The lamb, of course, is the Lord Jesus. The bride who has now made herself ready for him is the church. The New Testament supports the concept of the church as the bride or wife of Christ (Ephesians 5:22-31; Matthew 25:1-10; 2 Corinthians 11:2). In the Old Testament, the relationship of God to his people was that of a husband and wife. Now under the New Covenant, it's a similar relationship between Christ and his church. She is arrayed in clean, bright, pure garments with are described to us as the righteous deeds of the saints. Individual Christians are dressed in garments washed clean in the blood of the lamb (Revelation 7:9, 14). But here the church collectively is spoken of as being arrayed in pure garments of righteousness.

v. 9—"...'Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'... 'These are true words of God.'"—

BEATITUDE NUMBER FOUR: A blessing is pronounced on those who are invited to the marriage feast of the lamb. With the word invited is implied an acceptance of the invitation. One of the greatest honors one could give another person in that part of the world at that time was to invite him to his home for a meal. Here the Lord is inviting all who will come to the marriage supper for his Son. It's a blessing indeed! Those who are invited to the marriage feast are also those who collectively are the bride. There is no contradiction here, for it is simply two ways of stating the same truth that those who are faithful to God will be called home to be with him forever. The angel adds the confirmation that the words are true from God. That confirmation applies not only to this beatitude, but apparently also to all that has

preceded this verse. With verse nine, there is a bit of climax to the book and the following chapters are written from a slightly different perspective.

v. 10—“...he said to me, ‘You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you... Worship God.’... the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”—the angel who had been talking with John would not allow John to worship him. John is so overwhelmed by what has transpired in the series of praises that he wants to worship the one who has shown it to him. The angel says he is a fellow servant like John. That does not mean that people become angels after they die. It means only that the angels serve God just as faithful men and women serve God. His instructions to John are to worship God. The angel states that the testimony of Jesus (meaning the testimony about Jesus) is the life-breath of prophecy. It’s what prophecy is all about, whether coming from the Old Testament prophets, apostles, saints or angels. If it’s the true word of God, it’s directed to be about the lamb himself.

Rider On The White Horse, v. 11-21

v. 11—“...heaven opened, and...a white horse! He who sat upon it is called faithful and true, and in righteousness he judges and makes war.”—with the opening of heaven to John’s sight, he sees a majestic figure seated upon a great white horse. The rider is Jesus and will be more clearly described and identified in the following verses. Here he is called faithful and true. There is no deceit or falsehood to be found in him. In the following verse, he is called by two other names plus one which is kept a mystery. He is pictured here as a warrior who is waging war. But it’s not done through selfish imperialism; it’s done in pure righteousness.

v. 12—“His eyes are like a flame of fire,...many diadems; and a name...no one knows but himself.”—his eyes flash as if on fire penetrating into the hearts and minds of his enemies (see also 1:14, 2:18). He wears many diadems on his head. Only three times in the New Testament is it said that anyone wears a diadem. Normally any crown that is mentioned is the crown of victory (“STEPHANOS” in Greek). Satan wore seven diadems (12:1) and the sea beast wore ten (13:1); here Jesus wears many indicating the unlimited nature of his power and reign. He is inscribed with a name that remains a mystery to us. The name of a person stands for all that he is. Thus, the mysterious name of this rider is unknown to us for only he is capable of understanding the mystery of his own being.

v. 13-14—“...clad in a robe dipped in blood, and the name is...The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, followed him on white horses.”—the robe or garment this rider wears is stained with blood. It may be a reference to his own shed blood, but more likely it refers to the blood of his enemies splattered upon him. The language reminds us of the story found in Isaiah 63, where the Lord returns from fighting with his enemies in Bozrah. There he is sprinkled with the blood of his conquered enemies whom he has treaded in the wine press of his great anger. What we see in Revelation 19:13 is the Lord Jesus defeating the enemies of himself and his people and their blood splattering on him. A third name is given to Jesus here. He is called the word of God, a name made popular in earlier writings of John (see John 1:1-3, 14, 1 John 1:1). This name further helps us to identify the rider clearly as Jesus. Following him also on white horses are heavenly warriors clad in the whiteness of purity. Some see this army as representing the redeemed of earth. Yet Scripture does not support the concept that redeemed saints will be called back into service to war against evil after they have received their heavenly rest. This army riding with Jesus is more likely an army of the heavenly hosts—angels (see Matthew 13:41, 49; 2 Thessalonians 1:7).

v. 15—“From his mouth issues a sharp sword...and he will rule them with a rod of iron; he will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God...”—the sharp sword from the mouth of the rider fits with other New Testament symbolism. Hebrews 4:12, 31 and Ephesians 6:17 both speak of the sword of the

Spirit as being the word of God and likened to a sharp two-edged sword. The verse in Revelation 19 links also with Revelation 1:19 where a sharp sword issues from the mouth of Christ. It's the Word of God coming from him who will judge the nations. The gospel call is to repentance, now the message is not to repent but to stand in judgment. He'll rule the nations with a rod of iron. That shows his absolute authority. It may be a reference back to Psalm 2:9. The treading of the wine press of God's anger reminds us of the passage in Revelation 14:17-20 where God's enemies are pressed in the wine press of his wrath.

v. 16—"On his robe and on his thigh he has a name inscribed, King of kings and Lord of lords."—here is the fourth name ascribed to Jesus in this passage. It signifies that he is the supreme ruler of all the earth. There is none greater than he.

v. 17-18—"...an angel standing in the sun, and...he called to all the birds,... 'Come, gather for the great supper of God, to eat the flesh of kings,...captains,...mighty men,...horses and their riders,...all men...'"—the angel takes a position from which he can be seen and heard clearly—the sun. He issues a call to all the flesh eating birds of the air—the vultures—to come to a great supper prepared for them by God himself. This is now the second invitation to a supper of the Lord which appears in this chapter. The earlier one was for the faithful of God at his banquet table. This now is given as a symbol of the full and terrible destruction of the unfaithful and wicked before God. Rulers, military leaders, horse soldiers, important and unimportant men, free and slave—they all are to be destroyed if they've lived rebelliously before God. Satan tempts men and women into sin from any and all walks and stations of life.

v. 19-21—"...the beast and the kings...gathered to make war...the beast was captured, and...the false prophet...were thrown alive into the lake of fire...with brimstone...And the rest were slain...and all the birds gorged with their flesh."—it's another view of Armageddon that we see here. In 16:16, there is only the statement that the wicked armies were assembled for battle at Armageddon. Now in 19:19ff, the battle is engaged. There's never a doubt from the very beginning who is going to emerge victorious. One side of the battle is the rider on the white horse along with his heavenly army; and on the other side are the beast and the kings of the earth who serve him. The rider on the white horse is the victor. He captured the beast and the false prophet who were described in Chapter Thirteen, and he cast them into the lake of fire and brimstone. Those other kings of the earth who ride with the beast and the false prophet were slain by the rider on the white horse—slain by the word of his mouth. The birds called in verses 17 and 18 devoured their flesh. All of this is a way of saying that in the final time, God will triumph over evil. His justice and judgment is certain and righteous. Whoever or whatever kings or armies may have seemed to be in control of events throughout the centuries, the truth is that God has always been in control, and one day all people will know it.

THE THOUSAND YEARS AND THE FINAL JUDGMENT

Revelation 20

Revelation 20 Contains:

The Binding of Satan, v. 1-3
The Thousand Year's Reign, v. 4-6
Loosing of Satan, v. 7-10
God, the Judge, v. 11
Standing Before the Throne, v. 12-13
The Second Death, v. 14-15

Introductory Statement

Revelation 20 is a primary passage for the development of the erroneous doctrine of premillennialism. In order to achieve that doctrine from the passage however, other information from elsewhere in the scriptures taken from different contexts must be brought into the passage. One thing to remember is that for premillennialism to work, Revelation 20 must be interpreted as a continuation, chronologically, of events from chapter 19. The overall picture of the book of Revelation strongly argues against that approach. A second thing to remember is that hardly any of the major tenets of the doctrine of premillennialism are found in this chapter. The theory must be read into the passage (v. 1-10) all that it claims to draw from it, for the following are never mentioned in the text: (1) the Second Coming of Christ, (2) a bodily resurrection, (3) a reign of Christ on earth, (4) the literal throne of David, (5) Jerusalem of Palestine, (6) conversion of the Jews or (7) the church on earth. A theory that rests on a passage of Scripture in which not one of its peculiar tenants of doctrine is found cannot be true!

The Binding of Satan, v. 1-3

v. 1—“...an angel...from heaven,...the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain.”—its an angel that comes from heaven for this task; its not the Christ. The angel has the key to the bottomless pit or the great abyss which was first introduced to us in Revelation 9:1. It was from there that the great smoke cloud and the demonic locusts came to torment mankind. In chapter 9, Satan is mentioned as being given the key to the pit. That implies he was allowed to have control over it. Now in chapter 20, the angel comes with the key (indicating control) and also a chain (indicating the he was going to seize control from Satan). Thus, Satan's control and power over men and over nations was about to be severely curtailed.

v. 2—“...seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years,”—the angel seized Satan, implying that it was done against his will and without his consent. The dragon whom we've seen for several chapters is clearly defined for us here. He is that ancient serpent (who deceived Eve in the Garden of Eden), and he is the Devil and Satan. He is the commander of the forces of wickedness in the world. The angel binds him for 1000 years (a millennium) so that his power against men and nations is now limited. An animal chained is free to operate still in the lives of men, but his power is limited. He no longer can claim any person against that person's will. However, we must never underestimate the power which Satan still possesses. Even Peter said he is still like a roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8).

v. 3—“and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it...that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years were ended.”—Satan is cast into the bottomless pit there to be sealed up for 1000 years, so that he could not deceive the nations until after that time had passed. The meaning of the 1000

years has been a source of controversy and confusion for centuries. It is obviously a long period of time, but not eternity. We suggest that the 1000 years represents the duration of the Christian Age, beginning with the crucifixion of Christ (when Satan was bound or limited in his power) and ending with the Second Coming of Christ. That Satan has no power to “deceive the nations” indicates that the gospel message will not pass from the earth during this time.

“After that he must be loosed for a little time.”—Satan is to be loosed from his binding for a brief period following the 1000 years or at the conclusion of the Christian Age. Why this is so, is a mystery of the Divine Will, and we may never know until we stand face to face with the Father. But the Lord says it must come about.

The Thousand Years’ Reign, v. 4-6

v. 4—“...I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom judgment was committed...I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded...They came to life and reigned Christ a thousand years.”—John saw a vision of thrones, presumably with God. Seated on those thrones were the faithful dead (see 14:13). They are those who were beheaded because of their faithful testimony to Jesus. They were killed also because of the word of God which they taught. These faithful dead had not worshipped the beast or its image, neither had they been marked with the mark of the beast. It appears that these under consideration are truly those who had died while faithful to the Lord. While it states that these are those who died as martyrs, it should also be understood that those who died faithful to Christ even if not martyred still share in his glory. These faithful of God came to life after their deaths and now reign with him for 1000 years. They now sit in judgment over the beast which had caused so many to sin and be unfaithful to God. These now reign along with Christ for the period of the Christian Age—the 1000 years. They do not literally reign along with Christ for they are physically dead (cf. Hebrews 9:27). But there is a sense in which they reign with him because they are partakers of his glory. See Philippians 1:23.

v. 5—“The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection.”—the rest of the dead of v. 5 seems to be all those who are not included in these who came to life in v. 4. Thus, “the rest of the dead” would be those who had not been faithful to Christ, those who had not died for their faith, and those who did have the mark of the beast on themselves. At the end of the 1000 years, or the Christian Age, then these others would also be raised. The first resurrection is a symbolic, spiritual resurrection for those who have died faithful to God. It is God’s way of saying, “The pagan rulers found you guilty and put you to death, but I have found you innocent and therefore I will make you alive to reign with me.” At the end of time there will come what we might call the “second resurrection” when all will be raised from the graves in a changed bodily form (See 1 Corinthians 15).

v. 6—Blessed and holy is he who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and they shall reign a thousand years.”—

BEATITUDE NUMBER 5: this fifth beatitude of the book pronounces a blessing from God upon those who partake of the first resurrection. Those who have been faithful to God unto death and are symbolically and spiritually raised by him to reign for 1000 years with him are blessed indeed. These are priests of God and Christ. Not only the martyred dead are priests—all Christians are priests—but these enjoy the blessing with the Lord. The Second Death (which has not been defined yet) has no power over them. They are exempted from it (see v. 14).

Loosing of Satan, v. 7-10

v. 7-8—“...when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be loosed...and will come out to deceive the nations...at the four corners of the earth, that is, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle;...”—at the conclusion of the 1000 years (the Christian Age) Satan will be loosed from the prison where he has been

kept bound (or limited). He will then have the ability to deceive the nations as he had done before. He'll deceive the nations from all over (the four corners of the earth). Those nations from all over the earth are called Gog and Magog. In the Old Testament, Gog is spoken of as a ruler of the land of Magog (Ezekiel 38:2). Those two names came to represent any nation which set itself against God and his people. That being the case, what we have in v. 7-8 seems to be a representation of a spiritual battle between God and his people and the forces of evil and wickedness. Satan will deceive people and nations into following his ways so that mankind will again come to serve him more fully than it has since the time of the death of Christ. The number of Gog and Magog is too great to be numbered.

v. 9-10—"...they marched up over the broad earth and surrounded the camp of the saints...but fire came...from heaven and consumed them, and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented...forever..."—the collection of the nations of the earth which were deceived by the devil seems to be a great number. They march in from everywhere and begin to lay siege on the camp of God's people and the holy city. The holy city is a symbolic reference to Jerusalem. Thus, we see the forces of evil arrayed against God's people to defeat them with wickedness. When there seems to be no deliverance or escape for God's people, God intervenes. It's fire from heaven that destroys the surrounding nations and delivers God's people. This is now something of a "second coming" for Satan. He tries desperately just prior to the second coming of Christ to deceive all nations away from God. Instead the devil too is destroyed by the power of God. The devil is thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone. We see that the beast and false prophet are already there. The three of them: the dragon or the devil (12:9), the beast from the sea (13:1), and the false prophet or the beast from the earth (13:11) will be tormented for eternity in this lake of fire and brimstone that is never extinguished.

God, the Judge, v. 11

v. 11—"...I saw a great white throne and him who sat upon it; from his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them."—John sees what amounts to another scene in the great vision of the end of time. He sees a throne he describes as great and white, words which symbolize its power and majesty along with its purity and holiness. John also saw the one seated on this throne. From his presence even the earth and sky fled away. It is clearly taught elsewhere in Scripture that the earth will pass away (2 Peter 3:10). This seems to be what is described here.

Standing Before the Throne, v. 12-13

v. 12—"...I saw the dead, great and small standing before the throne, and books were opened,...another book was opened,...the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books,..."—John sees all of mankind who has lived since Adam gathered before the great throne of God for judgment. All who had died, whether "great and small," that is, important or unimportant, rich or poor, famous or anonymous, educated or uneducated, etc.—they all keep this appointment before the Lord. In the scene, John sees books (plural) opened. Along with those books another book is opened, this one called the book of life. Out of what is recorded in these books, all mankind is judged before the Lord. It is suggested that these books are a symbolic representation of the record of the deeds of mankind firmly established in the mind of God. We should not look upon these books as being literal books. The "book of life" was mentioned earlier in Revelation 3:5, where it's stated that those who remain faithful to God will not have their names blotted out of the Lamb's book of life. Here in Revelation 20, it's used in reference to judgment. All those standing before the throne were judged by what was written in the books, that is, by what they had done in the flesh. Clearly other New Testament passages teach that we will be judged by our deeds (Romans 2:1-16) and other passages). While this verse focuses on the "dead"

it should be pointed out that all mankind—living and dead—will be judged by God. Those who are alive when the Lord comes will be changed (1 Corinthians 15:51) and those who are dead will be resurrected (1 Corinthians 15:52). The New Testament speaks clearly of God judging both the living and the dead (Acts 10:42, 2 Timothy 4:1, 1 Peter 4:5). Verse 15 of Revelation 20 seems to indicate that anyone whose name was not found in the book of life (whether dead or living) would be cast out.

The Second Death, v. 14-15

v. 14-15—“then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, . . . if anyone’s name was not found in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”—death and Hades were thrown in indicating their time is over. No more will they operate among men. This lake of fire which was introduced in chapter 19, is called the second death. All men experience the first death (Hebrews 9:27)—it’s physical death. The second death is the eternal separation from God. Death and Hades are cast into the lake and destroyed along with the devil and his servants because death and Hades are expressions of the power of the evil one (Hebrews 2:14-15). Death is spoken of in Scripture as the last enemy to be destroyed (1 Corinthians 15:26). In addition, all those whose names are not recorded in the book of life are also thrown into the lake of fire. Thus, this second death becomes symbolic of eternal punishment.

THE HEAVENLY CITY

Revelation 21

Revelation 21 Contains:

The New Heaven and the New Earth, v. 1-8

The New Jerusalem, v. 9-10

The Exterior of the Heavenly City, v. 11-21

The Interior of the Heavenly City, v. 22-27

The New Heaven and the New Earth, v. 1-8

v. 1—“Then I saw a new heaven and...earth; for the first heaven and earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.”—John sees the passing of the heavens and the earth which we’ve all known. In Revelation 20:11, we learned that the earth and sky fled from the presence of God and were found no more. This present world as we know it will disappear. Reference is made to that fact in both the Old and New Testaments (see Isaiah 65:17, 66:22, Mark 13:31, 2 Peter 2:12). In the place of the old heaven and old earth, God puts a new heaven and a new earth. The word “new” in Revelation means something new in quality or kind or essence. Thus, this is a new kind of heaven and earth, not just a renewed version of what we’ve already known. We need not interpret the verse literally and say that we will reside on the earth. John is simply telling us that we’ll live in a place that is new to us. He uses the words heaven and earth because that’s language we understand as a dwelling place. The sea also disappears. The sea had been associated with evil spirits earlier in Revelation: the dragon used waters to try to engulf the radiant woman in chapter 12; and from the sea came the beast of chapter 13.

v. 2—“...I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride...”—this present order of things has its physical Jerusalem; the new order will have its spiritual Jerusalem. It comes down from heaven, indicating that its origin is of God. The imagery of the bride and bridegroom is found again in v. 9 and in 22:17. While we don’t normally think of a bride as a city, this beautiful bride is set in contrast to the city of evil, Babylon the Great, who is also described as a woman, the drunken harlot. This new Jerusalem represents the church of the Lord, the bride of Christ, the Lamb’s wife (19:7-8). This is that great city which the patriarchs of old searched for (Hebrews 11:10). This is the one which Paul wanted to present to the Lord without spot or wrinkle or blemish or any such thing (Ephesians 5:25-27).

v. 3-4—“and I heard a great voice from the throne...‘the dwelling of God is with men...he will wipe away every tear...and death shall be no more,...neither shall there be mourning..., for the former things have passed away.’”—the voice again comes from the throne indicating the authority of the words spoken. We’re told that God chooses to dwell with men. In the Old Testament, God’s tabernacle was with men; now he still abides with men in his dwelling place. Because God dwells with his people, he will wipe away all tears and with the tears, he will remove every cause of tears: death, mourning, crying, pain. These things belonged to the former realm, but not to this new realm. It follows because all enemies of man have been destroyed, the last enemy being death itself (1 Corinthians 15:25-26).

v. 5—And he who sat upon the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new.’...”—here it is clearly stated that the one seated on the throne speaks. Before, it’s been somewhat uncertain. He assures John that all things will become new and that his words are fully trustworthy and should be recorded.

v. 6—“...‘It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega,...I will give water without price from the fountain of the water of life.’”—the Lord says, “It is done!” reminding us that Jesus also said it was done when he completed his redeeming work at Calvary. Now God says that the fulfillment of all things is accomplished. He identifies himself as he did in Revelation 1:8, as the beginning and the end of all things. He’s the source and the completer of everything. He offers water from the spring of life to those who thirst for it.

v. 7-8—“He who conquers shall have this heritage,...But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted,...murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their lot shall be in the lake that burns..., which is the second death.”—a contrast of dwelling places is pictured. Those who conquer over Satan and evil will enjoy the heritage of what has been described in the preceding verses—that is, dwelling eternally with God and drinking the water of life. But on the other hand, there is a place reserved for those who have God’s people, and it is in the lake of fire and brimstone which is the second death (see 20:10, 14-15). This is the lake into which the dragon and the beast have been cast. Several characteristics are named among those who will be cast into the lake. The cowardly are those who are fearful to stand for God. The polluted are those who corrupted themselves with idolatrous living among the pagans. The sorcerers were those who partook of the deceptive magic of the beasts.

The New Jerusalem, v. 9-10

v. 9-10—“...one of the seven angels...‘Come, I will show you the bride,...’ And in the Spirit he carried me away and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven...”—John is carried off in a vision to witness the arrival of the new Jerusalem coming out of heaven. Again the imagery of the bride and bridegroom is seen. It’s one from the last group of angels who shows this to John. This may have been the same angel which showed John the destruction of the contrasting figure, the great harlot (17:1).

The Exterior of the Heavenly City, v. 11-21

v. 11—“having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.”—the new Jerusalem is a glorious sight. It has God’s glory about it, and glitters like a rare jewel. It’s described like jasper, yet clear. The Lord himself is described in similar language in 4:13.

v. 12-13—“it had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel...on the east...north...south...west three gates.”—the city is a walled city like physical Jerusalem was. One of the distinguishing marks of a city was its protective walls compared to the more or less defenseless villages. This city is safe, for its walls are high. At each gate there is an angel posted. In ancient times, a sentry would be posted to protect the entrance to the city. Here the angels symbolize the safe security of the heavenly city. There are twelve gates, three on each of the four sides of the city. That may be a lot of gates, but when one considers the size of the city walls (1500 miles each direction, see v. 16), it is only one gate for every 500 miles. Each gate has the name of one of the sons of Israel. The Lord’s church is spiritual Israel. In a later verse, we’ll see that the names of the twelve apostles are inscribed on the 12 foundations of the city. Thus, we see the comprehensive nature of the city, involving God’s people of all times. Remember we interpreted the 24 elders of chapter 4 as representing the 12 patriarchs and the 12 apostles.

v. 14—“And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the lamb.”—this verse fits well with the preceding verses. It draws into the structure of the heavenly city the patriarchs of the Old Covenant and the apostles of the New Covenant. All of God’s faithful people are a part of the new, heavenly city.

v. 15—“...a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls.”—in chapter 11, John was given a reed-like rod to measure the sanctuary, altar and worshippers. That was understood to be the church which was to measure up to the standard of the Lord’s decrees. Here, however, it’s an angel who measures the Holy City.

v. 16—“The city lies foursquare,...twelve thousand stadia; its length and breadth and height are equal.”—to the ancient people, a cube was the perfect mathematical figure. The Holy City is a cube. It is equal in size in all three dimensions. It is 12,000 stadia, or about 1500 miles in length, width and height. Those numbers must be understood symbolically. John is trying to show us the greatness and grandeur of the city. The Holy of Holies room in the Temple was a perfect cube. Here the dwelling place of God is also a perfect cube.

v. 17-18—“He also measured its wall, a hundred and forty-four cubits by a man’s measure, that is an angel’s. The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, clear as glass.”—the angel takes his golden measuring rod and measures the wall about the city. Its size is also told in terms of “12.” One hundred, forty-four cubits is its size, but we’re not told if that is the height of the wall or the thickness of the wall. A cubit is about 18 inches, thus the dimension is about 216 feet. A wall which would reach the height of the city (1500 miles) would not support itself at a thickness of 216 feet. But a wall of 216 feet in height would be insufficient for a city 1500 miles in height. The problem may be solved by suggesting that the city has a wall about it because the ancient, physical city of Jerusalem was walled. But the wall is only there as a token, for it does not protect the city from invasion. Yet, there is no need for protection for there are no enemies left to protect from. The wall is made of jasper which is a jewel that is difficult to identify today. Many scholars believe that this jewel is more closely associated with the modern diamond. Whether this was the material the wall was actually constructed from or whether it was inlaid with these jewels may be in question. The city itself was constructed of pure gold, which sparkled like clear glass. Remember that in all these descriptions, John is trying to tell of his heavenly vision in earthly terms. We should not take them literally.

v. 19-20—“The foundations of the wall...were adorned with...jasper,...sapphire,...agate,...emerald,...onyx,...carnelian,...chrysolite,...beryl,...topaz,...chrysoptase,...jacinth,...amethyst.”—the foundations of the wall were decorated with twelve different jewels. Again, we have difficulty in identifying each jewel perfectly with the jewels we know today. But we are made aware that these jewels represented the precious stones of the First Century. God is seeking to impress upon us the splendor of being a part of his glorious city. Don’t lose sight of the fact that the city here described in such rich terms is the bride which is the church. This is us being described in such glorious language. Of these twelve stones named, eight were part of the breastplate of the High Priest in the Old Testament.

v. 21—“And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each...made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass.”—each of the twelve gates introduced in v. 12 is made of a single, huge pearl. Pearls were highly regarded then as now for their beauty. Before the days of cultured pearls, a pearl of great perfection was extremely rare and extremely precious. The gates are made of such pearls. The street of the city is pure gold, yet transparent. The gold we know today is not transparent. Probably John is trying to describe the grandeur of the heavenly city in some terms we’ll understand.

The Interior of the Heavenly City, vs. 22-27

v. 22—“And I saw no temple..., for its temple is the Lord God Almighty and the lamb”—it’s strange that a city would have no temple for worship to its God. But this new Jerusalem has none. The reason is that there is no need for a temple. A temple was the place where God met with his people. Now God is eternally with his people in the city. He and his son, the lamb, are the temple themselves.

v. 23—“And the city has no need of sun or moon . . . , for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the lamb.”—by the light of the glory of the Father and the Son, the redeemed from all nations will see clearly how to walk or live. It’s the glory from the various nations and kings of various nations which is brought, in submission, to the heavenly city by those who come to God out of those many nations.

v. 24—“By its light shall the nations walk; and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it, . . .”—the “nations” in Revelation refer to those who are not God’s people. Here the reference seems to be to those of the nations who have come out from the sinful people to serve God. Thus, they walk by the light of God. The kings of these nations, which are now destroyed with the harlot Babylon, give their glory unto the heavenly city in the sense that their glory on earth is ended and all glory rightfully adheres to God and his heavenly dwelling place.

v. 25—“and its gates shall never be shut by day—and there shall be no night there;”—the gates of ancient cities were shut routinely at night and sometimes in the day to prevent invading armies from entering. The gates of heavenly Jerusalem will never be shut by day (for there are no more invading enemies), and there is no night (so they’ll never be shut by night either). There is no night there because the Father and the Son give constant light to all.

v. 26—“they shall bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations.”—this is a repeating of the thoughts in v. 24.

v. 27—“But nothing unclean shall enter it, not any one who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”—those who are unclean or who served the dragon or the beast will not enter the heavenly city. The only ones who will enter are those who have been recorded in the lamb’s book of life (see 20:12).

THE CLOSING WORDS

Revelation 22

Revelation 22 Contains:

The New Jerusalem, v. 1-5
The Angel's Attestation, v. 6
Jesus Christ Speaks, v. 7
John's Attestation, v. 8-9
The Unsealed Book, v. 10-11
Christ's Promises, v. 12-15
The Final Invitation, v. 16-17
The Warning, v. 18-19
Conclusion, v. 20-21

The New Jerusalem, v. 1-5

v. 1-2—"...the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb...; on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."—as a continuation of the vision described in chapter 21, verses 1-5 tell us more about the appearance of the Heavenly City. From the throne of God flows a crystal bright river, called the water of life. God is the source of this water of life, for the river flows from his throne. Jesus spoke of himself as "living water" in John 4 and 7. John has used the expression "water of life" earlier in Revelation (7:17, 21:6, 22:1, 17). We're seeing the eternally flowing source of life. On either side of this river of life is growing a tree—the tree of life. It bears twelve kinds of fruit, one each month of the year. Perhaps a better rendering of that verse is "twelve crops of fruit," one each month. The tree probably produces only one fruit—the fruit of life, but it produces it all through the year, indicating a perfectness about it. Even the leaves of the tree provide healing to those who seek its benefits.

v. 3-4—"...no more anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the lamb shall be in it,...they shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads."—in this glorious city, there will be no more curses upon anyone or anything. All will be joy beyond description. The curse of Eden which caused God to remove the tree of life from Eden and transplant it in the new Jerusalem has been completely removed. The thrones of God and the Lamb are in the midst of the city and around those thrones the servants of the Lord worship and serve him. We'll be privileged to look upon the face of God; something that mankind has never been allowed to do. Upon the foreheads of those standing before the throne is written the name of the Lord (see also, Revelation 3:12, 7:3).

v. 5—"...night shall be no more; they need no light...for the Lord God will be their light, and they shall reign for ever and ever."—this is a repeat of what was told us in the preceding chapter that the Lord himself provides all the light that is needed. His saints are said to walk in his light (Revelation 21:3), but now they will reign in that light (v. 5).

The Angel's Attestation, v. 6

v. 6—"These words are trustworthy and true,...the Lord...has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place."—the angel who has been escorting John through the vision testifies that the words which have been spoken are true and can be trusted. The God who authorized the messages of the

prophets of old is the same one who speaks this prophecy of things which must soon occur. It's been shown through fulfillment that his messages delivered through the prophets have been true; thus we now know we can trust these words to also be true.

Jesus Christ Speaks, v. 7

v. 7—“...I am coming soon. Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”—the Lord assures John and us that he is coming soon. The return of the Lord Jesus has been imminent since the day he left the earth to return to heaven. To our way of reckoning time, the nearly 2000 years since his ascension seems to be a long time rather than a quick return. But to God who deals in eternity (not time) 2000 years is nothing. Thus, his return is still just as it is stated—coming soon.

BEATITUDE NUMBER SIX: this sixth beatitude is similar to the first one (1:3). A blessing from God is pronounced on those who keep (or obey) the words which are written in this prophecy. Certainly, those who obey the words of God will be blessed eternally with life forever with him.

John's Attestation, v. 8-9

v. 8—“I John am he who heard and saw these things...I fell down to worship...the angel...”—for the second time, John is so overwhelmed by the visions he sees that he falls down to worship the one who has shown the vision to him (see 19:10). Again the angel will not allow John to worship him. Before we are too critical of John for his actions, keep in mind that it's a natural feeling to honor those who lead us to Christ, and sometimes men honor and reverence other men far beyond what is proper.

v. 9—“...I am a fellow servant with you and your brethren the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.”—the angel aligns himself with all other beings who worship and serve God. Whether it's spiritual beings or human beings; whether ancient prophets or modern day Christians, we are all God's servants and should worship him only.

The Unsealed Book, v. 10-11

v. 10—“...Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.”—in a previous passage (10:4) John had seen a vision which he was to seal up and not reveal, but here he is to reveal what has been shown to him. The time is near for the fulfillment of these things to begin, thus the book is for those of the first century and for those of every century since that time.

v. 11—“Let the evildoer still do evil,...the filthy still be filthy,...the righteous still do right,...holy still be holy.”—the angel seems to be telling John that all men make their choices. If they choose to do evil and be filthy, and continue to reject the warnings and judgments of this book, then they will remain in that condition. So also, those who choose to do right and be holy will be so.

v. 12—“Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense, to repay everyone for what he has done.”—the Lord promises a quick and sudden return. The thread of urgency runs throughout the pages of the Bible. When the Lord Jesus returns he will bring just repayment for all according to the things which each has done.

v. 14—“Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates.”—

BEATITUDE NUMBER SEVEN: This is the final beatitude listed in Revelation. The washing of robes implies the cleanness of them. Those who keep their spiritual garments (their lives) clean and pure will be blessed by God. The blessing that is given is mentioned. Those who are blessed have the

right to access to the tree of life (v. 2) and he may enter the holy, heavenly city through the gates. To enter a city through the gates showed one had a right to come into the city. He didn't need to sneak in over the walls at night; he could come in safely in daylight through the gates. Those who live pure lives will enjoy safe entrance into the city and will enjoy access to the tree of life.

v. 15—"Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and fornicators and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who lives and practices falsehood."—while God's people are allowed safe passage into the city, those who do not belong to God must remain outside. Of course, we've been told that those who reject God will be thrown into the lake of fire, and second death. But here the imagery is of a city. Citizens of the city are within, aliens remain outside the city. Outside are several categories of sinners. In ancient times the word "dogs" indicated great contempt and disdain when applied to persons. Dogs ate the filth of the city and lived in the dumps. They were not well groomed family pets. Thus, a person who was called a dog was held in low regard. Sorcerers, fornicators, murderers, idolaters and liars also remain outside. Needless to say this means those who are guilty of such sins and have not sought and received God's forgiveness from them.

The Final Invitation, v. 16-17

v. 16—"I Jesus have sent my angel...with this testimony...I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star."—Jesus identifies himself as he speaks directly with John here. He says the testimony the angel brought is Jesus' testimony. Thus, he adds his "stamp of approval" to the message. Jesus' reference to himself as the root and offspring of David appears to be a reference to Isaiah 11:1. Jesus was the direct descendant of King David and also was the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy that a root would spring from the cut-down stump of King David. Jesus calls himself the bright morning star. The morning star heralded the coming, new day. Jesus heralds the coming, new, eternal day where there is no night.

v. 17—"The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come.' And let him who hears say, 'Come.' And let him who is thirsty come...take the water of life without price."—Jesus has issued his invitation to mankind in Matthew 11:28-30 (and elsewhere). Now the Holy Spirit adds his voice to the invitation for all to come. All those who hear the message and follow it also join in inviting others to come. In the city is the water of life and those who thirst for life should come and drink of it. While it is incredibly precious, it is offered without price. It's the free gift of God to those who obey him.

The Warning, v. 18-19

v. 18-19—"I warn every one...: if any one adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the word of the book...God will take away his share in the tree of life and the Holy City..."—a stern warning is added here about how we should treat this book of prophecy. It's from God and therefore should not be tampered with. Nothing should be added or subtracted from it. This principle is valid for all of God's Word, but these two verses appear to refer specifically to the prophecy which was revealed to John. Those who add to it will have added to them the plagues described in it. Those who take from this prophecy will have taken from them access to the tree of life and to the city. Those are severe punishments. The Lord is telling us to make no changes in his message, but to hear and obey it completely.

Conclusion, v. 20-21

v. 20—He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming soon.' Amen, come Lord Jesus!"—Jesus once more testifies to the genuineness of the book of Revelation and he adds that he is coming soon.

Again, remember that our sense of time is so different from God's that we cannot say the "soon" means less than 2000 years. "Soon" to God may still be thousands of years in the future. John then adds his feelings and his prayer, in requesting that Jesus come. This should be the prayer of all God's saints throughout all the ages. We should all always be ready and prepared for the Lord's coming.

v. 21—"The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen."—the book of Revelation opened with a pronouncement of grace and peace from the Lord (1:4); it's appropriate that the book closes with another statement of grace from the Lord to his Saints. John concludes with his "Amen"—let it be so!