

A notebook aid for studying...

THE
REVELATION
OF JESUS CHRIST

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Things to notice...

- Exaltation of Jesus Christ throughout
- Spiritual victory promised to Christians
- A message of hope in times of trial
- Groupings of threes and of sevens

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PREFACE

This study book is intended to aid a Bible class discussion of the book of Revelation. The material herein will not take the student on a verse-by-verse analysis of the text, but is intended to bring attention to significant portions of the text, and in particular, to shed light on the application of the book for our lives. This booklet differs from others in the series, in that it has textual insights and observations from the writer, and then follows with a few questions on the text under consideration. To avoid a wide variety of interpretations on numerous texts, this change has been made.

The usefulness of the material, and the success of the Bible class is primarily dependent upon the preparation which is given by each participant. Students should read the portion of text to be discussed before class, and give due consideration to the significance of the text. Class then becomes an arena for discussing in greater detail the things which the student has already looked at, and encouraging one another in the understanding and application of the same.

May this workbook be used to the glory of God and the strengthening of saints.

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Let's Have A Fresh Start...

Clear Out The Clutter

The best way to start studying Revelation (article penned by Tom Rainwater)

Are you intimidated by the book of Revelation? If so, have you thought about why? If your first answer is that the book is difficult, you're right. It is. But it may not be as difficult as you imagine. Though Revelation is unique in many ways, it's similar in style to some of the Old Testament prophets (such as Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah). Some Bible books require more study than others, but we can certainly come to understand them – and Revelation is no exception.



Are we afraid of the work? In sincerely hope not. Yet maybe it's more than that. Frankly, many of us have conditioned ourselves to think that the book is nearly impossible to grasp. Maybe we're scared away by all the wild theories surrounding it. Whenever a class study of Revelation is suggested, the reaction is sometimes automatic: "No way! I'm not teaching that. Let's study something easier, like Acts." If you're accustomed to seeing some preachers stammer and sputter at the mere mention of Revelation, you might also think: "It's too hard for me!" Well, it isn't. It's time to sweep away the fear lest you miss out on this important message Christ wants you to hear. In fact, the book is vital to understand in hard times in order to keep your faith.

Studying Revelation doesn't have to be an intimidating task. Sometimes when we begin, we make it more difficult than it should be. Likely it's because certain things are getting in our way and cluttering up our view. The solution is to clear away the clutter. Here are some tips to help you identify what may be hindering your study and how to get to the message of Revelation.

(1) Don't depend on commentaries to help you understand the book of Revelation. This is the worst way to learn and the easiest way to be confused. Too many books promote too many different theories and interpretations of the text. To sort through commentaries and attempt to balance what they say is a colossal waste of time. It only clutters up the picture. Start with the inspired text rather than the opinions of uninspired men. The inspired apostle John wrote the book to be understood. The early Christians understood it. We can, too. Consider that the very name of the book, "Revelation" (1:1), means "an uncovering" or "an unveiling." In other words, it uncovers truth to those who read it. So let's read it simply as it was given.



(2) Don't make your study of Revelation depend on a specific date of its writing. Brethren often ask, "Do you take 'the early date' or 'the late date' view of Revelation?" This incorrectly implies that only two credible viewpoints of the book exist among brethren. The 'early date' is the theory that Revelation was written before A.D. 70 to describe the destruction of Jerusalem (as promoted by Arthur Ogden and Foy Wallace Jr.). The 'late date' theory claims Revelation was written in A.D. 96 about the Roman Caesar Domitian's persecution of Christians (as advanced by Homer Hailey, Robert Harkrider, and Ferrel Jenkins). Both views depend heavily on the book's date. Supposed internal and external evidences for the date are advanced by both sides, but little conclusive evidence exists for either view. The fact is that the Holy Spirit chose not to reveal the exact time Revelation was written. That must mean its date is not important. So let's leave it at that. Any more than that is clutter.



(3) Don't force Revelation to fit a series of historical events. One of the biggest mistakes people make is to see it as detailing a series of events. Premillennialists incorrectly believe most of the book foretells future end-time events (in contradiction with many Bible passages). Some view Revelation as an almanac of every period of "church



history” from the first century A.D. through the Dark Ages to the present day. (This interpretation, like premillennialism, is forced onto the text with some rather ridiculous results.) Still yet, many brethren believe the book describes specific events in the first century A.D. (See #2 above.) They try to make much of the book fit what happened to either Rome or Jerusalem. For instance, Ogden forces Josephus’s account of the destruction of Jerusalem into Revelation to try to explain it. Others, like Hailey, want much of the book to fit Roman history. While Rome did persecute Christians, the principles of Revelation apply beyond that ancient city to *any* persecuting power. Instead of being a chronicle of human history and politics, Revelation is a “movie picture” of the Christian’s spiritual battle. “*For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.*” (Ephesians 6:12). The book of Revelation illustrates the prominent role Jesus plays in this great spiritual conflict against the forces of evil. Such a message was invaluable to the early Christians and helped them keep the faith no matter how severe the persecution. It will do the same for us.

(4) Identify the spiritual principles behind the visions. When you read Revelation, don’t “What events am I being shown?” Instead, ask, “What principles for perseverance am I taught?” This will cut down on the clutter and get you directly to what Christ wants you to understand. Don’t think all the details in John’s visions have to mean something. They don’t. Some only serve as a backdrop to the scene. Get the main message without getting lost in trivial details.



(5) Don’t take the signs and symbols literally. When we study other passages of Scripture, the general rule is to interpret the text literally, unless we are directed by the text to understand a word or statement figuratively. This rule doesn’t apply to the book of Revelation. Why? Because in 1:1, it says Jesus Christ “*sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John.*” (NKJV). The words “*signified it*” in Greek mean to “put it into signs.” (Think “*sign-i-fied.*”) In other words, Revelation is written in symbolic language. Jesus said so. Thus, when we read about the great dragon that “*drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth*” (12:4), we know not to take it literally. It is a symbol illustrating for us a spiritual truth. We can’t pick and choose what to interpret literally and what to interpret figuratively. We simply look for the spiritual principles behind the imagery. Say, “This is the picture; now what does it mean?”



(6) Don’t approach the book as you would the Gospels or the book of Acts. Revelation is not a chronological story from beginning to end. It contains several visions given by Jesus to John. The visions often overlap in content. Later ones expand on earlier ones and actually cover some of the same ground for emphasis or to provide a different angle. Please keep this in mind. It will make things easier.



(7) Let the book interpret itself. Revelation doesn’t need our help to make it better. It doesn’t need our theories to make it work. Many times it explains itself or borrows familiar language and imagery from the Old Testament. Let’s not go beyond that in our study. Wild speculation always fruitless and will inevitably lead us away from the message. Remember, Revelation is an “uncovering.” Simply see what truths the Lord has uncovered for those He loves, and be content with what is actually there. What is unrevealed will have to remain unrevealed. We can’t be dogmatic about things we can’t know for sure.



(8) Most importantly, remember that this is a book about Jesus Christ. He is the central person throughout the entire text. Bottom line: Jesus has accomplished a great victory for us. Evil cannot win. Good always triumphs. The book reveals to us the truth of Christ’s present glory and His power to sustain and reward us. If we don’t see Him when we read Revelation, we’ve missed the whole point.



“The Revelation Of Jesus Christ”

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

Things to notice...

- The source of the revelation (1:1)
- The content of the revelation (1:2)
- The benefit of the revelation (1:3)
- The recipients of the revelation (1:4)
- The motivation for the revelation (1:5)
- The reminder of the revelation (1:6)
- The expectation of the revelation (1:7)

The Revelation of Jesus Christ (1:1)

The Lord Jesus is the central figure in the Revelation – this is His revelation. The book both begins (1:1) and ends (22:21) with eyes focussed upon Jesus Christ.

What is a “revelation”? The Greek word αποκαλυψις [ap-ok-al'-oop-sis] is sometimes transliterated as “apocalypse.” Modern definitions of “apocalypse” are largely the result of mistaken interpretation of the book of Revelation, and unfortunately these now commonly accepted definitions perpetuate the confusion. The word has been defined as “a great disaster”, “a prophetic revelation, especially concerning a cataclysm in which the forces of good permanently triumph over the forces of evil”², and “a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involved another, supernatural world.”³ I don’t know about you, but reading such definitions makes my head hurt. Quite simply, “apocalypse” or “revelation”, αποκαλυψις means to uncover or reveal something. Strong’s defines it as a “disclosure: – appearing, coming, lighten, manifestation, be revealed, revelation.”⁴ (Compare Romans 2:5; 16:25; 2 Corinthians 12:7; Galatians 1:12; Ephesians 3:3; 2 Thessalonians 1:7)

Signified – Gr. σημαιω [say-mah'-ee-no] from sema (a mark; of uncertain derivation); to indicate: – signify. (Strong’s Concordance, via Power BibleCD)

σημαινω is also used in John 12:33; 18:32; 21:19. The noun form of the word is used in Matthew 16:3-4; 24:3; John 2:18 and other places. It is a symbol or token used to represent something else.

What was being revealed? John received “...witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw.” (1:2) Of particular note is the method whereby it was revealed. We are told that it was “...signified...” (1:1) The message was given in a series of visions containing symbols. As such, the content of the Revelation is not to be taken literally, but as figures.

Things Which Must Shortly Take Place (1:1,3)

Jesus did not reveal to John and the seven churches of Asia (1:4) events and circumstances which would be fulfilled in a future generation. The details given were of consequence to the people of the first century to whom it was originally written. The urgency of the message is emphasized; John received a revelation which “...must shortly take place.” (1:1; cf:1:3; 22:6-7, 10, 12, 20) However, let us not jump to the opposite extreme then, concluding that the book has been fulfilled and has no application for us. The Revelation is intended to encourage Christians who are suffering, and addresses questions pertinent to all Christians of all generations.



¹ Apocalypse, merriam-webster.com

²Apocalypse, dictionary.reference.com

³Collins, John J., The Apocalyptic Imagination, p. 5; 1998.

⁴Strong’s Concordance, via Power BibleCD

Blessed Is He Who Reads... (1:3)

Some are prone to avoid Revelation through fear. We should not. In fact, Jesus proclaims the one who reads and keeps the word revealed blessed. This is a consistent theme in God's word, that those who hear and obey the message of God will be blessed (Deuteronomy 10:12-13; Psalm 128:1; Luke 11:28). This blessing pronounced in Revelation 1:3 is the first in a series of seven beatitudes in the book of Revelation.

Seven Beatitudes Of Revelation

- Read, hear and keep the word (1:3)
- Death in the Lord, rest from labours (14:13)
- Watch and keep your garments (16:15)
- Called to the marriage supper (19:9)
- Have part in the first resurrection (20:6)
- Keep the word (22:7)
- Do His commandments (22:14)

To The Seven Churches Which Are In Asia (1:4)

The urgency of the message (1:1, 3) has already pointed to John's contemporaries as the primary audience of the writing. Further to that, he identifies seven churches in Asia specifically. That does not exclude other first century disciples. Paul's letter to the church at Colosse was equally applicable to the saints in Laodicea (Colossians 4:16). Likewise, the material, though not originally written to us, is for our benefit as well, just as the rest of the Scriptures.

Seven Letters Within The Letter

- Ephesus (2:1-7)
- Smyrna (2:8-11)
- Pergamos (2:12-17)
- Thyatira (2:18-29)
- Sardis (3:1-6)
- Philadelphia (3:7-13)
- Laodicea (3:14-22)

The greeting to these seven churches is noteworthy.

DESCRIPTION	DESCRIBES	EXTRA NOTES
"...He who is and who was and who is to come..."	THE FATHER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Eternal nature of God; <input type="checkbox"/> Also describes the Father in 11:17; 16:5; <input type="checkbox"/> Used by Jesus to describe Himself in 1:8.
"...the seven Spirits who are before His throne..."	THE HOLY SPIRIT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Seven is not describing quantity, but nature. Recurrences of "seven" throughout the Bible suggest it identifies complete or perfection.
"...Jesus Christ..."	THE SON OF GOD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Being the central figure of Revelation, the text now proceeds to describe Him and what He has done for us (see below).

Has Made Us Kings And Priests (1:6)

Two benefits experienced by those who have come to Jesus Christ are identified. The first qualifies us for the latter. Motivated by His love for us, Jesus has "...washed us from our sins in His own blood..." (cf. Hebrews 9:14; 1 John 1:6). Throughout Revelation, we will see the Lord Jesus spoken of as the Lamb (Revelation 5:12-13; 6:1; 7:10, 14; 12:11; 13:8; 14:1; 17:14; 19:9; etc.). He is the Lamb that John the Baptist (John 1:29), Isaiah (Isaiah 53:7), and others prophesied about.



"...kings and priests..."

- "...to be a kingdom, to be priests..." (ASV)
- "...to be a kingdom and priests..." (BBE)
- "...a kingdom, priests..." (RSV)
- "...to be a kingdom, priests..." (WEB)
- "...to be a kingdom and priests..." (NIV)
- "...to be a kingdom, priests..." (NASB)
- "...a kingdom, priests..." (ESV)

Having forgiven our sins, He "...has made us kings and priests..." (cf. 5:10). We find this characterization of God's people elsewhere in the Scriptures. Peter calls those who believe "...a royal priesthood..." (1 Peter 2:5, 9). The people of Israel were referred to by God as "...a kingdom of priests..." (Exodus 19:6). We are not granted rulership, but access to the kingdom of God. In Christ Jesus, we are made "...a kingdom of priests..."

He Is Coming (1:7)

Acts 1 records Jesus' disciples gazing into heaven as Jesus ascended from them. Two angels then revealed, "This same Jesus... will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11) Jesus' coming is mentioned several times in Scripture, including Revelation (1:7; 2:25; 3:3, 11; 16:15; 22:7, 12, 20).



To what does the "coming" of the Lord in Revelation 1:7 refer? Some will immediately assume that it is His second coming, the final judgment. Certainly, that is the most frequently referred to "coming" of the Lord in the New Testament, but not exclusive. Matthew 21:5 speaks of Jesus coming into Jerusalem as the king of His people, while Matthew 24:3, 30 refer to His "coming" in judgment upon Jerusalem, which took place in 70 AD.

The language used in Revelation 1:7 is parallel to that which is employed in Matthew 24:30 ("...coming with clouds... all the tribes of the earth will mourn..."). This type of language is used to speak of judgments (ie. Egypt, Isaiah 19:1; Jerusalem, Jeremiah 4:13), and of the coming of the Lord with power in His kingdom (Daniel 7:13). Revelation 1:7 may be a promise of the Lord's second coming, when all the earth shall be

Revelation 1:7 & Matthew 24:30

Similar language does not necessitate that the texts address the same event. No solid evidence suggests that Revelation had been recorded or distributed prior to 70 A.D.. The language is consistent with a judgment of some sort.

judged and the righteous received into heaven (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17; John 14:3). However, it may be more generic than that, including, but not exclusive to the second coming. The "coming" of the Lord, whether in temporal judgment of the enemies of God's people, or for the eternal judgment is a comfort to His people and a terror to those who are in opposition.

Jesus Christ, The Faithful Witness... (1:5, 8)

In these introductory remarks, seven descriptions of Jesus are provided. Notice He is:

The Faithful Witness — Our English word martyr is derived from the Greek word μαρτυς [*mar'-toos*], here rendered "witness". Martyr is defined as

- 1** : a person who voluntarily suffers death as the penalty of witnessing to and refusing to renounce a religion **2** : a person who sacrifices something of great value and especially life itself for the sake of principle...⁵

Seven Descriptions Of Jesus

- "...the faithful witness..."
- "...the firstborn from the dead..."
- "...the ruler over the kings of the earth..."
- "...the Alpha and the Omega..."
- "...the beginning and the end..."
- "...who is and was and who is to come..."
- "...the Almighty."

Death is not necessary for one to be a martyr (Matthew 18:16; 26:65), though the word is used of Stephen, who died for his testimony of Christ (Acts 22:20). Jesus is "the faithful witness", who died, but has risen again! What more reliable source for "the testimony of Jesus Christ" than the Lord Himself?

The Firstborn From The Dead — This is the very thing which the apostles were commissioned by the Lord



to witness to, that He was risen from the dead (Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8, 22; 2:32; 3:15; 5:32; 10:41; 13:31; 22:15). Though He was dead, He now lives. Paul tells us, "...Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep." He continued, "...Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming." (1 Corinthians 15:20, 23). We serve a risen Saviour, in Whom we have the hope of resurrection from the dead also!

⁵ "martyr", www.merriam-webster.com

The Ruler Over The Kings Of The Earth — The Scriptures call Jesus the “King of kings” (1 Timothy 6:15; Revelation 17:14; 19:16). He is the ruler who is over all rulers. This was the lesson which Nebuchadnezzar needed to learn, “...that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men...” (Daniel 4:17; cf. 2:21; 4:25, 32; 5:18, 21). Notice the progression in these three descriptions — not only does He bring a true testimony to sustain His people, but He has conquered death, and has become the Ruler over all things. What an awesome picture, and yet there is more.



The Alpha And The Omega — These are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. It would be akin to saying “from A to Z” in English. Such a phrase also appears in Hebrew, מֵאֵת וְעַד תּוֹ [meeleph vead tau], specifically in Yalcut Rubeni, and expresses the whole of a matter, from beginning to end. ⁶ Such terminology also appears in Isaiah (41:4; 44:6; 48:12) regarding the nature of God. What is the significance of Jesus’ statement, “I am the alpha and the omega”? He is from beginning to end; He is eternal in His nature; He is God!

The Beginning And The End — This parallels the previous statement, “...the alpha and the omega...” It is also equal to “...the First and the Last...” (Revelation 1:11; 2:8). This speaks of Jesus’ eternal nature.

Who Is And Who Was And Who Is To Come — These words were used to describe the Father in Revelation 1:4. Again, just as the previous two statements, this attests to His divine nature, equating Jesus’ nature with the Father (cf. John 10:30).

The Context Of Revelation 1:8

- v 1 – it is “the revelation of Jesus Christ”
- v 2 – witness is given to “the testimony of Jesus Christ”
- v 4 – grace and peace from the Father and Holy Spirit
- v 5 – grace and peace from Jesus Christ
- v 6 – Jesus has made us a kingdom of priests
- v 7 – Jesus is returning, and all will see Him
- v 9 – John was on Patmos for the testimony of Jesus
- v 13 – “one like the son of man” spoke to John (v 10-16)
- v 17 – He describes himself as “the first and the last”
- v 18 – “I am He who lives, and was dead...”

The Almighty — The all-ruling, the all-powerful. This Greek word, παντοκρατορ [pan-tok-rat'-ore] appears ten times in the New Testament (2 Corinthians 6:18; Revelation 1:8, 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14, 19:6, 15; 21:22). Since all these, except Revelation 1:8, refer to the Father as Almighty, some have concluded that Revelation 1:8 is in fact the Father speaking, and not the Son. The context of Revelation 1 (see right) demonstrates that here, Jesus refers to Himself as Almighty, equating Himself with His Father.

As we have indicated already, Jesus is the central figure in the book, and so it is in the introduction. The Father is mentioned in verse 1 and again in verse 4, but the primary focus throughout the text is upon Jesus. It is His revelation, His testimony, His witness. He is the Lord God who reveals Himself to John.

⁶ Adam Clarke’s Commentary, via Power BibleCD

Revelation 1:9-20

“One Like The Son Of Man”

I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death. (Revelation 1:18)

Things to notice...

- John's kinship with the readers (1:9)
- The setting for John's writing (1:9-11, 19)
- Jesus' location and appearance (1:12-16)
- Words of comfort and victory (1:17-18)
- The Lord helps John understand (1:20)

I, John, both your brother and companion... (1:9)

John had already established a kinship with his audience, as we all have been made a “royal priesthood” (v 5, cf. 1 Peter 2:9). Further to that, the apostle now identifies himself as a brother *αδελφος* [*ad-el-fos*] and companion *συγκοινωνος* [*soong-koy-no-nos*] of his readers. What an uplifting thought for the suffering Christian, that John, who personally knew the Lord Jesus (1 John 1:1-3), should refer to us with such terms of fellowship. He identified three areas in which he is a brother and companion to his readers, “...in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ...”

Brother – Gr. *αδελφος* [*ad-el-fos*]

from *a* (a connective particle) and *delphus* (the womb); a brother....(Strong's Concordance, via Power BibleCD)

NOTE — *α* is used “occasionally in the sense of union” (Strong's). Thus, *αδελφος* pictures brothers as “union” of the “womb”. What an intimate picture!

Companion – Gr. *συγκοινωνος* [*soong-koy-no-nos*]

from *sun* and *koinonos*; a co-participant: – companion, partaker with.(Strong's Concordance, via Power BibleCD)

NOTE — Both *συγ* and *κοινωνος* individually refer to an “associate” or “companion”. Does their combination perhaps enforce the nature of the fellowship held?

John knew what it was like to suffer affliction for faith. Paul assures us that “...all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” (2 Timothy 3:12). The apostles were no exception (Acts 5:40-41; 12:1-2). Understand, this is not a ‘misery loves company’ statement, but is intended to boost the faithful, even as the beaten apostle Paul boldly exhorted the saints, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.” (Acts 14:22).

What cause are John and his companions suffering tribulation for? It is the kingdom of Jesus Christ. John the Baptist came preaching that the kingdom of heaven was at hand (Matthew 3:2). Jesus took up the same message in His ministry (Matthew 4:17). The Lord sent out the twelve and also the seventy, also proclaiming that His kingdom was at hand (Matthew 10:7; Luke 10:9). As John writes to the seven churches of Asia, the Lord's kingdom was a reality, not a future expectation (Mark 9:1; Colossians 1:13), and as we read their mail, it is as much a reality today as it was then.

And thus, the need for patience. We are called upon to be patient, while the Lord exercises His patience (2 Peter 3:9). In Revelation, we will eventually meet to those who inquire, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood...?” (Revelation 6:10) Indeed, “...He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end.” (Ecclesiastes 3:11) We must exercise patience, as we wait for the time to be right for the Lord to return in judgment.

I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day... (1:9-10)

John was on the island of Patmos when he wrote the Revelation. Patmos is located in the Aegean Sea, not far from the seven churches he writes to. Early



Patmos and the seven churches of Asia

writers such as Tertullian, Clement, Irenaeus, and Justin Martyr, as well as church historians Eusebius and Jerome speak of John being exiled to Patmos by Domitian (81–96 AD), and then later returning to Ephesus, where it appears he had been labouring for the Lord. John said he was on Patmos “...for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ...” This may be understood as Eusebius reports, that John was

banished as punishment for his preaching activities. It might also be taken to mean that God commissioned John to Patmos for the receipt of the Revelation. Even further, it does no harm to the text for John’s statement to mean both — that he was exiled by the emperor because of his stand for the gospel, and that God was happy to have it so, that He might there unveil the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

...where the Apostle John was first plunged, unhurt, into boiling oil, and thence remitted to his island-exile.
 (Tertullian, Prescription Against Heretics, XXXVI; Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. III)

In the fourteenth year then after Nero Domitian having raised a second persecution he was banished to the island of Patmos, and wrote the Apocalypse... ..Domitian having been put to death and his acts, on account of his excessive cruelty, having been annulled by the senate, he returned to Ephesus under Pertinax...
 (Jerome, Lives of Illustrious Men, IX)

It is said that in this persecution the apostle and evangelist John, who was still alive, was condemned to dwell on the island of Patmos in consequence of his testimony to the divine word.
 (Eusebius, Church History, III; Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers, Vol. I)

John tells us that he was “...in the Spirit...”, which is contrasted elsewhere in Scripture with being in the flesh (cf. Romans 8:9; Galatians 3:3; 5:16; 1 Peter 4:6). Specifically, in Revelation, it seems to indicate a vision or trance state (Revelation 4:2; 17:3; 21:10; cf. Acts 10:10; 2 Corinthians 12:2). This happened “...on the Lord’s day...” This is not one and the same as “the day of the LORD,” a phrase used in both the Old and New Testament to refer to a day of judgment (Isaiah 13:6, 9; Jeremiah 46:10; Joel 2:1, 11, 31; 1 Corinthians 5:5; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10). The Revelation does speak about impending judgment upon the wicked and the salvation of the righteous, but such things were not accomplished on the day John received the message. Though the phrase appears nowhere else in Scripture, it can be reasonably concluded that John refers to the first day of the week, the day upon which Christians meet to worship the Lord (cf. Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2).

- Groups Of Sevens**
- seven churches of Asia (1:11)
 - seven golden lampstands (1:12)
 - seven stars in His right hand (1:16)
 - seven descriptions of Christ (see below)

I turned to see the voice that spoke... (1:10-16)

At first, John heard a voice (v 10); afterward, he turned to see whom it was that spoke to him (v 12). He provides a detailed description of the One whom he saw. In it, we find a grouping of seven attributes:

ATTRIBUTE	DESCRIPTION
HIS VOICE	“...I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet ...and His voice as the sound of many waters...” (1:10, 15)
HIS COUNTENANCE	“...One like the Son of Man ...His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.” (1:13, 16)
HIS CLOTHING	“...clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.” (1:13)
HIS FACE	“His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire...” (1:14)
HIS FEET	“His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace...” (1:15)
HIS RIGHT HAND	“He had in His right hand seven stars...” (1:16)
HIS MOUTH	“...out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword...” (1:16)

I am the First and the Last... (1:17-19)

The Lord identified Himself to John before the apostle had turned around to look. In verse 11, Jesus declared, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last.” Seeing the Lord, John “...fell at His feet as dead.” What an awesome sight! John saw the Christ, no longer in the confines of the earthly body, but in the glorious appearance of His heavenly countenance. Recall, John was given a glimpse of Jesus’ glory while upon the earth, as he, along with James and Peter saw Jesus “...transfigured before them. His face

shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.” (Matthew 17:2; cf. Mark 9:3; Luke 9:29) The Lord comforts John with the simple words, “Do not be afraid” (v 17). He had heard these same words at the mount of transfiguration (Matthew 17:7). Further identifying Himself, leaving absolutely no doubt, He declared, “I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore.” Powerful!! It was John who had outrun Peter to the tomb, when told by Mary that the body of Jesus was gone (John 20:1-5). Of himself, John wrote, “The other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed.” (John 20:8) Jesus here reminds him of His victory over death, and furthermore, He now held the keys of Hades (the realm of the dead) and Death itself!



What confidence and hope this gives the follower of Christ. For, as Paul wrote, *...when this corruption has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’ O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* (1 Corinthians 15:54-57)

It is this victory of the people of God which John was commissioned to write about in the Revelation. Thus, John is commanded, “Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.” (1:19; cf. 1:1-2, 11) He was told to write, and to share it with the seven churches (1:11). The message needed to be spread, for these “...things which must shortly take place” (1:1, 3).

The mystery of the seven stars... (1:20)

There is no indication that John inquired about the seven stars and seven golden lampstands; perhaps the question was on his heart, or perhaps he was so amazed that his mind was a blank slate. Whatever the case, the Lord saw fit to explain the mystery to him.

The seven lampstands are identified as being the seven churches (ie. Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea), and the seven stars as the angels of the seven churches. What a fitting symbol for the churches! Jesus identified every Christian as the light of the world in Matthew 5:14-16. We need to shine in a world of darkness, giving glory to the Father. So it is with the assembly of God’s people – collectively, we are a lampstand, a beacon of light in a dark world. The church which fails to faithfully uphold the cause of Christ will be removed as a lampstand for Christ (Revelation 2:5).

Angels – Gr. ἀγγελος [ang'-el-os]
 a messenger (from angellō, to deliver a message), sent whether by God or by man or by Satan
(Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words)
 from aggelō (to bring tidings); a messenger; especially an “angel”; by implication, a pastor:—angel, messenger.
(Strong's Concordance, via Power BibleCD)

Who are the angels mentioned? Each of the seven churches had an “angel” associated with them, to whom the message was addressed (2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14). Thayer affirms that these angels are

...heavenly spirits who exercised such a superintendence and guardianship over them that whatever in their assemblies is worthy of praise or of censure is counted to the praise or the blame of their angels also, as though the latter infused their spirit into the assemblies...¹

There were angels established over the nations (Deuteronomy 32:8, LXX), but there is no indication that God did the same with regard to local churches. Both the Lord and the Hebrew writer speak of angels who are charged with the care of God’s people (Matthew 18:10; Hebrews 1:14), but neither remotely infer that these were congregational angels. And, would it not seem awkward for the Lord to commission a man to pen a message intended for heavenly spirits? The letters were

When the Most High divided the nations, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the nations according to the number of the angels of God.
(Deuteronomy 32:8, LXX)

¹ Thayer, J.H., Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, p. 5

to be sent "...to the seven churches which are in Asia" (Revelation 1:11), not to heavenly spirits governing over them. The angels (messengers) would no doubt be individuals at each of the local churches, whether it be an evangelist or simply someone who was charged with the duty of reading Scripture, letters, etc. to the congregation.

“To The Angel Of The Church...”

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches... (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22)

Things to notice...

- Descriptions (2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14)
- Jesus knows (2:2-6, 9-10, 13-16, 19-25; 3:2-4, 8-11, 15-20)
- Promises (2:7, 11, 17, 26-28; 3:5, 12, 21)
- Hear! (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22)

To the angel of the church of Ephesus write... (2:1-7)

Jesus Identifies Himself: “He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands” (Revelation 2:1; cf. 1:13, 16, 20). What a reminder! The messenger to whom these words are penned is in the Lord’s hand. The church also is His possession, as He is pictured walking in the midst of all the churches.

Assessment Of The Church: The Lord acknowledged the Ephesian zeal for purity, as they “...cannot bear those who are evil...” and had “...tested those who say they are apostles and are not...” (Revelation 2:2, 6; cf. Galatians 1:6-9; Ephesians 4:14; 1 John 4:1). It appears that they were doctrinally sound and active in the work, but their love for the Lord had dwindled from where it once had been. They had left their first love (Revelation 2:4).

Recommendation For The Church: Their stand for truth and zeal for what was right was made vain — the Lord was no longer at the forefront of their lives and services.

It was not so much that they were “going through the motions” (as he does describe their stand as zealous), but they had left the Lord behind. He was no longer the central purpose behind their labour. Jesus admonished them:

Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works; or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place – unless you repent.
(Revelation 2:5)

Overcomes – Gr. νικᾶω [nik-ah'-o]

to subdue (literally or figuratively): – conquer, overcome, prevail, get the victory.
(Strong’s Concordance, via Power BibleCD)

...In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. (John 16:33)

For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (1 John 5:4-5)

Nicolatians

Though Revelation does not specifically tell us who the Nicolatians are, it does reveal that their deeds (2:6) and their doctrine (2:15) were evil, and hated by the Lord.

Many early writers mention the Nicolatians (Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Augustine, etc.). Irenaeus and Hippolytus indicate that it is the Nicolas of Acts 6:5 who has apostatized, and that these were his followers. This may be, though there is no certain evidence in the Scriptures to support their conclusion.

1) Adam Clarke’s Commentary

Promise To Those Who Overcome: In the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve had access to the tree of life. After they had sinned, that access was taken away (Genesis 3:22-24). Those who overcome will “...eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.” (Revelation 2:7) Later in the book, John would write,

Blessed are those who do His commandments that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.
(Revelation 22:14)

To the angel of the church of Smyrna write... (2:8-11)

Jesus Identifies Himself: “...the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life...” (Revelation 2:8 cf. 1:8, 17-18). Jesus identifies His eternal nature, and His victory over death. The Christian should gain much confidence from knowing that the Lord has conquered death, and so can we (1 Corinthians 15:51-57).

Assessment Of The Church: It seems that the church at Smyrna endured much for the Lord. They went through trials and were blasphemed (Revelation 2:9; cf. Romans 2:28-29; 9:6-8). Jesus speaks of their poverty (physically), but encouraged them, for they are rich (spiritually).

Recommendation For The Church: As much as they have gone through tribulation, more is to come. In fact, some of them would be thrown into prison and tested. But, the Lord encourages, “Do not fear...” Why? Because “...in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.” (Romans 8:37) Further, He reminds them of the reward which awaits: “Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.” (Revelation 2:10)

You will have tribulation ten days

This could be understood as a literal 10 days of persecution which would come upon them. Or, it may simply be a reference to a short period of time.

Promise To Those Who Overcome: These suffering Christians have already been assured of the crown of life, if they continue faithfully. In addition, the Lord promises that “He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.” (Revelation 2:11). Though many Christians have tasted death for the cause of Christ, and perhaps so in the city of Smyrna, they will rise again to be with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Temporal death held them for a time, but eternal death has no power over them (Revelation 20:14; 21:8).

To the angel of the church of Pergamos write... (2:12-17)

Jesus Identifies Himself: In Revelation 1:16, we are told that the “sharp two-edged sword” proceeds from the Lord’s mouth. The word of God is described by the Hebrew writer as a two-edged sword (4:12).

Assessment Of The Church: Pergamos, described as “Satan’s throne”, was a center for idolatry. However, these Christians persevered, even amidst excessive trial. Though one of their own, Antipas, had been killed for the cause of Christ, they did not deny the faith.

However, the Lord testified against them, for they had in their midst “...those who hold the doctrines of the Nicolaitans...” (Revelation 2:15) Also, some were of the same sort as Balaam, encouraging people to “...eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.” (cf. Numbers 31:16). Though they stood against attacks on their faith from outside, they seemed to accommodate those who attacked the faith from within.

Recommendation For The Church: Repent! They needed to make a stand against those in their midst who practised and promoted error. If they would not correct the problems in their midst, the Lord would, by “...the sword of My mouth.” Exactly how or what He would do, He does not say; but the church must be kept pure.

Promise To Those Who Overcome: Those who overcome have two promises given to them. First, the Lord would give them “some of the hidden manna to eat.” In John 6, the people sought for Jesus to give them bread, calling to memory the manna which Moses had given. Jesus revealed that He was the bread of life, the bread which is from heaven.

Again, those who overcome will receive “...a white stone, and on the stone a new name written...” Of this, J.T. Robertson notes:



*This old word for pebble (from *psaô*, to rub) was used in courts of justice, black pebbles for condemning, white pebbles for acquitting. The only other use of the word in the N.T. is in Acts 26:10, where Paul speaks of “depositing his pebble” (*katênegka psêphon*) or casting his vote. The white stone with one’s name on it was used to admit one to entertainments and also as an amulet or charm.¹*

The “new name” written on this stone of justification would not be of the same manner as when Jesus said to Peter, “You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas” (John 1:42), but rather would seem to be an association of the one who has been justified with the One who has justified. We shall wear the name of Christ upon us for eternity.

¹ Robertson’s Word Pictures, via Power BibleCD

To the angel of the church of Thyatira write... (2:18-29)

Jesus Identifies Himself: The Son of God, “who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass.” Once more, His divine nature is declared, and images conveying His power and steadfastness.

Assessment Of The Church: The Lord lists off the “...works, love, service, faith and patience...” of the people in Thyatira, and comments of their works, “...the last are more than the first.” (Revelation 2:19) Their labour for the Lord has increased, as it well should.

As wonderful as their work, love, service, faith and patience are, some at Thyatira were walking in the same wickedness which was formerly called “...the doctrine of Balaam...” (Revelation 2:14). They were being taught to “...commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.” (Revelation 2:20). There may have been a woman by the name of Jezebel responsible for this apostasy, or the Lord might be comparing those who were behind this wickedness with the Old Testament queen, Jezebel.

Recommendation For The Church: The Lord reveals what He will do with Jezebel and those who follow her. Since she had not repented, though given time to do so, He would “...cast her into a sickbed...”, and those who sinned with her would meet “...great tribulation...” (Revelation 2:21), unless they repented. The troubles which would come upon her and “her children” would make “...all the churches ...know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts...” and renders to all “...according to your works.” (Revelation 2:23)



The rest, who have not shared in such wickedness, “...who have not known the depths of Satan...”, are simply told to “hold fast.”

Promise To Those Who Overcome: How shall one overcome? By keeping His works to the end. All such are promised “power over the nations” (Revelation 2:26). They are not rulers of nations, but the thought is clarified in the next verse. There, Psalm 2:8-9 is referenced, a promise of the Father to His Son. The faithful Christian is given victory with Christ, who has power over the nations and is established as the king of Kings and Lord of lords. All shall bow before Him (Philippians 2:9-11). Those who overcome share in His glory.

Also, those who overcome are promised “the morning star.” (Revelation 2:28). Jesus would later identify Himself as “...the Bright and Morning Star.” (Revelation 22:16). What a blessing, to both share in His glorious victory and to dwell eternally with His person.

To the angel of the church of Sardis write... (3:1-6)

Jesus Identifies Himself: Recall, the “seven Spirits of God” was a description of the perfection of the Holy Spirit (Revelation 1:4). The “seven stars” were identified as the messengers of the churches (Revelation 1:20). Both the Holy Spirit and the messengers of the churches are at His disposal to reveal His will.

Assessment Of The Church: The statement is made: “...you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.” (Revelation 3:1) To the average outsider, and perhaps even to those who were gathered at Sardis, the church may have looked fine. The Lord sees and knows what is not apparent to others – Sardis was dead. He admonishes those who are not quite dead – “Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die...” (Revelation 3:2)

Recommendation For The Church: The saints at Sardis are told to “Remember ...how you have received and heard...” (Revelation 3:3) The same sort of admonition was given in the book of Hebrews: “...recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle ...knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven.” (Hebrews 10:32, 34)

If they would not turn to the Lord and live, He “...will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.” (Revelation 3:3) Such is the nature of judgment — there is no warning siren to

prompt last minute preparation. When the cry was heard that the bridegroom was coming (Matthew 25:6), those who had not prepared had no time to do so. The Lord cautions us all, “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.” (Matthew 25:3).

Promise To Those Who Overcome: Those who have not defiled themselves shall walk with the Lord in white (Revelation 3:4-5). White, of course, characterizes them as pure (cf. 4:4; 6:11; 7:9,13). Jesus had formerly said, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” (Matthew 5:8). Their names will remain in the Book of Life (in contrast with those who do not endure and overcome), and Jesus will confess them to the Father (cf. Matthew 10:32-33).

To the angel of the church of Philadelphia write... (3:7-13)

Jesus Identifies Himself: The Lord reveals Himself to be holy and true. Jesus is set apart, consecrated; He is truth (John 14:6; 1 John 5:20). In addition to this, the Lord identifies Himself with a prophesy of Isaiah (see right).

The key of the house of David I will lay on his shoulder; so he shall open, and no one shall shut; and he shall shut, and no one open. (Isaiah 22:22)

This was written of Eliakim, son of Hilkiyah; whom God appointed as steward in the house of Judah due to the unfaithfulness of Shebna. He served for a time, and was faithful. Now, Christ is given the key of David – He is charged with the kingdom. He is both worthy and faithful of such a calling.

Assessment Of The Church: Having just described Himself as “...He who opens and no one shuts...” (Revelation 3:7), He now reveals to the Philadelphians, “...I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it...” (Revelation 3:8). The Lord opens many doors for His people (2 Corinthians 2:12; Colossians 4:3; Acts 14:27).

It seems that the church at Philadelphia was small (“...you have a little strength...”), but they were strong in faith (Revelation 3:8).

Recommendation For The Church: Those whom Jesus referred to as “...the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews but are not...” (Revelation 3:9; cf. 2:9), will be made to acknowledge the Christians as the children of God.

Because of their faithfulness, the Lord tells them that “...the hour of trial...” would not come upon them. The Lord is our help in trial (Matthew 26:41), and we have the confidence that even amidst trial, He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able (1 Corinthians 10:13), and will deliver us (2 Peter 2:9).



Promise To Those Who Overcome: A crown of life is promised to all the faithful (Revelation 2:10; 1 Corinthians 9:25; 2 Timothy 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Peter 5:4). The Lord admonishes His people to “hold fast”, so that their crown be kept secure. He will establish the faithful Christian as “a pillar in the temple of My God” (Revelation 3:12; cf. Galatians 2:9; 1 Peter 2:4-5); the spiritual house of God.

Three names are mentioned as being written upon His people. First, “...the name of My God...” Revelation 14:1 tells us that the 144,000 have the Father’s name on them. Revelation 22 pictures the faithful in heaven, seeing the Lord and having His name on their foreheads. Second, “...the name of the city of My God...”, described as the New Jerusalem. When the census is taken of the heavenly city, all the faithful are listed as citizens (Philippians 3:21). Third, “...I will write on him My new name.” There is an eternal association with the Christ — His name (Philippians 2:10-12) shall be upon those who overcome, and they shall be partakers of his mercy, glory and victory.

To the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write... (3:14-22)

Jesus Identifies Himself: Three descriptions are employed in this letter. Jesus calls Himself the Amen. This is a Hebrew word, אָמֵן [aw-mane], which had been transliterated into Greek, ἀμήν [am-ane], and then into

English. The word means "...sure ...faithfulness ...truly..."² The word "amen" (Heb. אָמֵן) is used in Isaiah 65:16 to refer to "the God of truth", or as is rendered in Today's NIV, "...the one true God." He also refers to Himself as "...the faithful and true witness..." He was already declared to be the faithful witness (Revelation 1:5), and later, "Faithful and True" is applied to Him as a name (Revelation 19:11). Both the previous description (Amen) and this one reveal His trustworthiness.

A third phrase is applied by the Lord to Himself, "...the Beginning of the creation of God." Some have erroneously concluded from this that Jesus Himself was created – the first of all God's creations. The Greek word ἀρχή [ar-khay] does not necessitate that Jesus was the first creation, but could equally be understood to refer to Him as the origin of creation. As we consider other Scriptures (Colossians 1:15; John 1:1-3), we find that this is the correct understanding.

Beginning – Gr. ἀρχή [ar-khay]

...(properly abstract) a commencement, or (concretely) chief (in various applications of order, time, place, or rank) : – beginning, corner, (at the, the) first (estate), magistrate, power, principality, principle, rule.
(Strong's Concordance, via Power BibleCD)

Assessment Of The Church: The church at Laodicea was characterized as "...neither cold nor hot." Their lukewarm indifference was sickening to the Lord (Revelation 3:16). The Christians at Laodicea perceived themselves to be rich and thought they had "...need of nothing..." It is easy for us to deceive ourselves about our own condition. The Lord reveals that they are "...wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked..."

Recommendation For The Church: Jesus offered them the opportunity to become rich — "...buy from Me gold refined in the fire... and white garments..." (Revelation 3:18) Physical wealth is of no value; we must be spiritually rich (Luke 12:21; Matthew 16:26) In addition to acquiring this spiritual wealth, the Lord provides healing salve for the eyes, enabling those who once were blind to now see.



The Hebrew writer tells us to not "...despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the LORD love He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." (Hebrews 12:5-6) In this manner, the Lord encouraged the Laodiceans; His words are not intended to discourage them, but to motivate zealous repentance.

In fact, He encourages them to invite Him in; He knocks at the door of their hearts. "If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me." (Revelation 3:20; cf. 19:9)

Promise To Those Who Overcome: Those who overcome will reign with the Lord, even as He had said to the church at Thyatira (Revelation 2:26-27). He likens His victory and reward from His Father with our victory (in Him, 1 John 5:4), and the reward He extends to the faithful. His people are a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:6).

² Strong's Concordance, via Power BibleCD

Revelation 4:1-5:14

“You Are Worthy, O Lord”

You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created. (Revelation 4:11)

Things to notice...

- The Father on His throne (4:1-11)
- Jesus is worthy (5:1-6)
- Praise to the Lamb (5:7-14)
- Look for groups of seven and three

...a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne... (4:1-6)

John was privileged to enter the throne room of heaven “in the Spirit” (Revelation 4:2). Through the book of Revelation, there are several guides who speak to John about the things which he sees and hears. We are not told whom his heavenly guide is at this point, John simply tells us that “...the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me...” (verse 1).

“...In the Spirit...” (see page 10), John saw the throne of heaven and God upon the throne. He describes the LORD as “...like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance.” The description does not tell us about the physical appearance of God (ie. He does not look like a pair of rocks), but conveys His character to us. The jasper is later used to convey the glory of God in the new Jerusalem, and identified as “...a stone most precious ...clear as crystal...” (Revelation 21:11). The sardius, otherwise known as cornelian, is a fiery red stone.¹ If the clear look of the jasper is representative of God’s glory, perhaps the fiery red of the sardius represents His justice. Barnes notes that these gems are “entirely appropriate, as it suggests the idea of a prince or a monarch.”² The throne of God had a rainbow around it, and resembled an emerald (cf. Ezekiel 1:28). The rainbow first appears in Scripture as a sign of God’s promise that the earth would never again be destroyed by a flood (Genesis 9:12-16). It represents God’s mercy and faithfulness. The emerald, which is a soft green colour, completes the picture: the brightness of God’s holiness, the surety of His justice, and the serenity of His mercy.

John’s Heavenly Guides

- the Lord Jesus (1-3; 21:5-6)
- one of the elders (5:5; 7:13-14)
- the four living creatures (6:1, 3, 5, 7)
- unidentified voice (10:4, 8; 14:13)
- an angel (10:9, 11; 11:1; 19:9-10)
- one of the seven angels (17:1, 7, 15; 21:9; 22:6-10)

Twenty-Four Elders

- “clothed in white robes” (4:4)
- “crowns of gold on their heads” (4:4)
- “worship Him” (4:10; 5:14; 7:11; 11:16; 19:4)
- “each having a harp and golden bowls full of incense” (5:8)

The twenty-four elders sitting around the throne are mentioned specifically several times in the Revelation (4:4, 10; 5:8, 14; 11:16; 19:4). John describes them as being “clothed in white robes” and wearing “crowns of gold.” There is no text which specifically identifies who these elders are. As such, we cannot know for certain who they are. In fact, it is quite possible that they are not certain individuals, but rather representative of God’s people. It may be that the number

twenty-four is the result of adding the twelve patriarchal heads in Israel with the twelve apostles of the New Testament. If so, the picture is that of the total sum of the faithful surrounding the throne of God in heaven. This certainly does no harm to the descriptions given of them:

- the elders are “clothed in white” (Revelation 4:4), as are the faithful saints (Revelation 3:5, 18);
- the elders have “crowns of gold on their heads” (Revelation 4:4), as do the faithful saints (Revelation 2:10; 3:11);
- the elders “worship Him” (Revelation 4:10), as do the faithful saints (Revelation 11:1; 14:7);
- the elders “each have a harp and golden bowls full of incense” (Revelation 5:8), the harps indicating praise to God, and the incense identified by John as “...the prayers of the saints” (Revelation 5:8; 8:4).

¹ Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Commentary, via Power BibleCD

² Albert Barnes’ NT Commentary, via Power BibleCD

“...From the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices.” This is a similar description to that which caused the camp of Israel to tremble at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:16, 19; 20:18-19). A “sea of glass, like crystal” is seen before the throne. When John sees the “new heaven and new earth”, he tells us there is “no more sea.” (Revelation 21:1) This sea may represent the means of cleansing which allows one to approach before the throne of God. Recall, Solomon had made a great molten sea for the priests to wash themselves in before approaching the holy place (1 Kings 7:23-26; 2 Chronicles 4:2-5).

Seven Spirits of God

We already noted that the “seven Spirits of God” is a reference to the perfection of the Holy Spirit (pg. 6). Here, the Spirit is pictured as “lamps of fire burning before the throne.” When the furnishings of the tabernacle were being prepared, the lampstand was prepared with “seven lamps” (Exodus 37:23).



...four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. (4:6-8)

In addition to the twenty-four elders, John also witnessed four living creatures (Revelation 4:6-9; 5:6-8, 11, 14; 6:1, 6, 7:11; 8:9; 14:3; 15:7; 19:4). The creatures are described as being like 1) a lion, 2) a calf, 3) the face of a man, and 4) a flying eagle. Each had six wings, and continually declared the praise of God, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!” (Revelation 4:8). These are similar to, but not the same as the description of seraphim by Isaiah (Isaiah 6:1-3) and the cherubim by Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1:4-11; 10:1-22). These could be another class of angel which is not specifically identified for us, or

these creatures described as being “in the midst of the throne” (Revelation 4:6) may be a representation of God’s character in John’s vision. They are “full of eyes in front and in back” (Revelation 4:6, 8), suggesting God’s omniscience. He knows and sees all. The description of the creatures themselves extol several aspects of God’s character.

LION	majesty, authority, power
CALF	tenderness, perfection
MAN	intelligence, reason, conscience
EAGLE	swift, graceful

Groups Of Threes

- From the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices (4:5)
- The living creatures gave God glory and honor and thanks (4:9)
- The twenty-four elders proclaimed glory and honor and power (4:11)

...You are worthy, O Lord... (4:9-11)

God’s attributes perpetually give Him glory and honor (Revelation 4:9). This being the case, He is always worshipped by the twenty-four elders (Revelation 4:10). The proclamation of the elders is:

You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created. (Revelation 4:11)

The motivation for the praise of the twenty-four elders is the very first of God’s works which are known to mankind — the creation. What a display of His glory and honor and power. He is the source of all that exists, and all continues to exist to His honor (Colossians 1:15-18) and because of His care.

— Chapter 4 declared the glory of the Father; now chapter 5 will declare the glory of the Son —

...a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. (5:1-4)

The Father held in His hand “a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals.” (Revelation 5:1). The image is that of a full scroll — there is no room for more to be recorded, not is there more to be recorded than what is there; it is complete.

The question is posed by an angel, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?” (Revelation 5:2) No one was found who could open the scroll, neither in heaven, on the earth, or under the earth. This deficit in



worthiness among all of God's creation brought tears to John's eyes. A contrast is being established between the Lord Jesus and all others. None is worthy, except Him, as we shall see momentarily.

Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah... (5:5-8)

Two Old Testament images are used to speak of the Messiah. He is "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" (cf. Genesis 49:9-10) and "the Root of Jesse" (Isaiah 11:1, 10). The elder who spoke to John said that the Lord had "prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals." (Revelation 5:5). Prevailed is translated from the Greek νικαω [*nik-ah'-o*], which comes from the root νικη [*nee'-kay*] (Nike). It is defined as "to subdue (literally or figuratively) : – conquer, overcome, prevail, get the victory."³ Jesus is able to open the scroll because He has overcome (see Revelation 5:5, YLT). His victory and thus worthiness to open the scroll is extolled in song which John would hear from the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders (Revelation 5:8-9).

John then saw the Lamb who had been slain. His location reveals something about His person. He is not around the thrones, as the elders are, but "in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures" (Revelation 5:6). He is not just in the presence of God, but as was indicated in the introduction to the book, is indeed "the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End ... who is and was and who is to come, the Almighty" (Revelation 1:8).

The Lamb is said to have "seven horns and seven eyes." Horns are used in the Scriptures to represent strength, power and rulership (see Daniel 7:24; 8:3; 20; Habakkuk 3:4; Revelation 13:1; 17:12). The Lamb has seven horns to signify the perfection or completeness of His power and rule. The seven eyes are identified as "the seven Spirits of God". Again, seven would attest to the perfection or completeness of the Lord's knowledge — He, like the Father knows and sees all. As the Holy Spirit (see pg. 6) is associated with the Father (Revelation 4:5), so He is here associated with the Christ.

The praises of the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders is not just for the Father (Revelation 4:8-11), but also for the Son. Seeing the Lamb with the scroll, they "fell down before the lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense" (Revelation 5:8). The bowls of incense are identified as "the prayers of the saints." The harps are no doubt employed as an instrument of praise.

Instrumental Music In Worship?

The use of musical instruments in John's vision does not constitute authority for us to use the same in our worship assemblies. John is conveying in signs things which he saw in the heavenly realm, We have no more right to substitute a harp for the voices of the saints than we do to substitute a bowl of incense for our prayers.

...they sang a new song... (5:9-14)

The victory of the Lamb and His ability to open the scroll prompts a series of praises in heaven. The four living creatures and the twenty-four elders "sang a new song" (Revelation 5:9; cf. Psalm 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1; Isaiah 42:10). Revelation 14:3 tells us that none can learn this song "except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth." We will discuss whom the 144,000 is in greater detail in chapter 7, but it will suffice for now to note that these have been "redeemed from the earth."

Their song follows:

You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; ① for You were slain, ② and have redeemed us to God by Your blood ③ out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, ④ and have made us kings and priests to our God; ⑤ and we shall reign on the earth. ⑥
(Revelation 5:9-10)

Notice that ①, the Lamb is distinguished from all others, for He alone is found worthy to open the scroll in the hand of God. What made Him worthy? We are told that He was slain. ② The perfect Lamb of God willingly gave Himself as a sacrifice for all humanity. In being slain, ③ His blood was shed, the blood whereby all who would come in faith and obedience are reconciled to God. The scope of the redemption

³ Strong's Concordance, via Power BibleCD

④ offered by the Lord is universal; people from “...every tribe and tongue and people and nation...” As was discussed previously (pg. 6), those who are redeemed are made a kingdom of priests, ⑤ who are partakers of His reign. He is reigning now in heaven, and thus they are participants in His kingdom in the here and now upon the earth. ⑥

In addition to this new song, a second proclamation of praise is made by a great host of beings. These thousands upon thousands declared with a loud voice:

Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!
(Revelation 5:12)

Worthy Of Seven Things

The proclamation of the multitude of angels, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders contains seven items which Jesus is worthy of: POWER, RICHES, WISDOM, STRENGTH, HONOR, GLORY, and BLESSING.

Three Occasions Of Praise

- Four living creatures and the twenty-four elders (5:8-10)
- Many angels, living creatures, elders (5:11-12)
- Every creature (5:13)

For a third time, there is a record of praise toward the Lamb of God. This time, from “every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea” — all creation gives glory to the Lamb of God. Recall, in Revelation 4:11, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders attributed “glory and honor and power” to the Lord for His work of creation. Now, all of creation ascribes “blessing and honor and glory and power” to both the Father and the Son (Revelation 5:13).

Revelation 6:1-7:17

“Who Is Able To Stand?”

...‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?’

(Revelation 6:16-17)

Things to notice...

- Seal 1-4 — four horses (6:1-8)
- Seal 5 — souls of the slain (6:9-11)
- Seal 6 — Judgment has come (6:12-17)
- God’s people are sealed (7:1-8)
- Victory of God’s people (7:9-17)

“Come and see.” (6:1-8)

The time had come for the Lamb to open the seals. The first four seals reveal four horses and their respective riders (white, red, black and pale). There are some similarities between John’s vision and that which is recorded in Zechariah 6. There, instead of four horses and riders, we find four chariots with coloured horses, identified as “...four spirits of heaven...” (Zechariah 6:5). These exercise God’s will upon the earth and among the nations.

The first four seals of the scroll reveal the condition of the world. It is grim in contrast to the throne scene of the previous chapters. Of course, where sin is present, troubles can be expected.

Seal # 1 — a white horse

One of the four living creatures invited John to “Come and see” as the Lamb opened the first seal. It revealed a white horse.

And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer. (Revelation 6:2)

We are not told whom the rider is, nor the purpose for which he went forth conquering. However, it is worthy noting that every occurrence of the colour “white” in Revelation involves either the Lord (Revelation 1:14; 14:14; 19:11; 20:11) or those associated with Him (Revelation 2:17; 3:4-5, 18; 4:4; 6:11; 7:9, 13-14; 19:14). This rider may be the Lord (He is pictured on a white horse in Revelation 19:11), or it may simply represent His work of conquering among the nations. Certainly, as King Nebuchadnezzar learned, “the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men, and appoints over it whomever He chooses” (Daniel 5:21; cf. 2:21; 4:25, 32; 5:18). This may be the sense in which this crowned rider conquers, but perhaps the Lord’s spiritual mission of conquering the souls of men with the message of salvation would be a more appropriate application.

Seal # 2 — a red horse

Another of the four living creatures called for John to “Come and see” as the Lamb opened the second seal. It revealed a red horse.

Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword. (Revelation 6:4)

There is no reason to think that any particular individual is represented in this rider, but simply that violence reigns upon the earth. In the days of Noah, it was the violence upon the earth that caused God to then destroy the world with a great flood (Genesis 6:5-6, 11). Violence and unrest are unavoidable consequences of sin in the world. However, Jesus promised His disciples,

Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. ...These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. (John 14:27; 16:33)

Zechariah 6 – the four chariots

The four chariots with coloured horses are identified as “...four spirits of heaven, who go out from their station before the Lord of all the earth” (Zechariah 6:5). They are sent forth to accomplish the Lord’s will (stir repentance, exercise judgment, execute judgment, etc.).

The black and white horses went to the “north country”, an apparent reference to the nations of Assyria and Babylon (Jeremiah 1:13-15; 4:6; 6:1, 22; 10:22; Ezekiel 26:7; Zephaniah 2:13, etc.). These nations had been destroyed by the time of Zechariah, and thus, the chariots which had gone that way are spoken of as having “given rest to My Spirit in the north country” (Zechariah 6:8). They were the object of God’s wrath, for though He had employed them in the punishment of Israel and Judah, they went beyond His intent (Zechariah 1:12-15).

Seal # 3 — a black horse

A third time, John was invited by one of the living creatures to “Come and see”. The Lamb opened the third seal, and it revealed a black horse.

...behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, ‘A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine.’ (Revelation 6:5-6)

Black is associated with darkness, sorrow and distress in the Scriptures. The third seal reveals that manifold troubles exist within the world and are prevalent. In particular, John seems to refer to days of famine, as one was paying “a quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius” (Revelation 6:6). A denarius was equivalent to a day’s wage in the first century (Matthew 20:2). The scales in the hand of this rider perhaps are to remind us that even when circumstances in this life are difficult and seem unjust, with God there is justice.

The Scales Of Justice

It was a common misconception, even among Jesus’ own disciples that prosperity equated favour with God (Matthew 19:23-26). The account of the rich man and Lazarus reveals that this is not the case. In fact, Abraham said to the rich man, “...remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented” (Luke 16:25). Circumstances in this life may not seem just, but God, who judges in eternity is always just.

Solomon wrote:

Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Though a sinner does evil a hundred times, and his days are prolonged, yet I surely know that it will be well with those who fear God, who fear before Him. But it will not be well with the wicked; nor will he prolong his days, which are a shadow, because he does not fear before God. (Ecclesiastes 8:11-13)

Seal # 4 — a pale horse

The fourth living creature exclaimed to the apostle, “Come and see,” the fourth seal was opened. It revealed a pale horse.

When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, “Come and see.” So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with Him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth. (Revelation 6:7-8)

A Contrast: Heaven & Earth

Consider the contrast between the wonderful description and events of heaven as given in Revelation 4-5 (God’s throne, twenty-four elders, four living creatures, God’s Spirit, the Messiah, worship) and the troubles and trials which plague the earth as revealed in these first four seals (wars, injustice, famine, pestilence, death, etc.). What makes for the difference? Quite simply, when sin is present, troubles will persist.

Unlike the previous riders, this one is given a name — Death. There is not a being, angelic or otherwise, known as “Death,” but rather, death is here personified. Hades (the abode of the dead) accompanies death. Death is common to all, but that which is associated with this rider deal with violence (sword), famine (hunger), disease (death), and fury (beasts).

“Come and see.” (6:7-17)

We see the coming judgment from two perspectives, 1) the saints who had been slain for their confession of Christ in the world, and 2) the wicked, who are in terror at the coming judgment. The saints look forward to the impending judgment, for they will be called to share eternity with God; the wicked are in dread of the judgment, for they will be recipients of the wrath of the Lamb.

Seal # 5 — souls of the slain

In addition to being subject to all these troubles which are upon the earth, Christians are also persecuted for faith’s sake. The fifth seal brought into John’s view *“the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held.”* (Revelation 6:9) Some of the Lord’s people in the first century were put to death for confessing Christ. The apostle James died at the hand of Herod (Acts 12). Historical records of antiquity speak of

Martyr – Gr. μαρτυς [mar'-toos]

1 : a person who voluntarily suffers death as the penalty of witnessing to and refusing to renounce a religion **2** : a person who sacrifices something of great value and especially life itself for the sake of principle... (Strong’s Concordance, via Power BibleCD)

Christians dying at the hands of Roman leaders. No doubt, other Christians at other times through the ages have also suffered at the hands of opponents to the gospel of Christ, whether it be governments, religious zealots, family, etc..

These murdered Christians wonder how long until the Lord will avenge their deaths (Revelation 6:10). Those who remain on the earth may wonder the same thing — how long Lord? God will judge between the righteous and wicked in His time. Until then, we must trust that God is accomplishing His will. The slain are told that they must wait, "...until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed" (Revelation 6:11). They are clothed in white — a sign of the purity which they have in them, being the children of God. Though they are slain, their place of abode is paradise in Hades, where they have rest (cf. Luke 16:23, 25).

Seal # 6 — judgment has come

Judgment is revealed with the opening of the sixth seal. The language is the same as other judgments recorded in the Scripture (ie. Isaiah 13:10; Joel 2:10, 31; 3:15; Matthew 24:29; Acts 2:20), but this is not a temporal or local judgment — it is the final judgment. As such, it is evident that the record is not chronological, the final judgment being seen in chapter 6.

Judgment Scenes In Revelation

6:12-17	— "...the great day of His wrath has come..."
11:18	— "...the time of the dead, that they should be judged..."
14:15	— "...the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe."
16:17	— "It is done!"
20:12	— "...the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened."

Everyone, great and small, is pictured as hiding themselves from the Lord. They desired the rocks to fall upon them, rather than face the wrath of the Lamb (Revelation 6:16). "The great day of His wrath has come," we are told. The question posed, and which will be answered in chapter 7 is this: "who is able to stand?" (Revelation 6:17)

"Who is able to stand?" (7:1-17)

Who is able to stand when the Lamb comes in judgment? This entire chapter answers this question.

Sealed – Gr. σφραγιζω [sfrag-id'-zo] to stamp (with a signet or private mark) for security or preservation (literally or figuratively); by implication, to keep secret, to attest: – (set a, set to) seal up, stop. (Strong's Concordance, via Power BibleCD)

The restraint of God (v 1-3)

Though judgment has been proclaimed (chapter 6), we see here the restraint of God. The four angels were given authority to destroy the earth, are held back. Another angel commanded, "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on

their foreheads" (Revelation 7:3). A distinction is made between the righteous and the wicked who are upon the earth — the righteous have God's seal upon their foreheads. Later, we will find that those who are in bondage to Satan also have a mark on their foreheads (Revelation 13:16-17; 14:9, 11; 16:2; 19:20).

Those who were sealed (v 4-8)

The number of those who were sealed is given — 144,000. Keep in mind when we come across numbers in the book of Revelation, they are seldom to be understood as literal, but symbolic. The kingdom of heaven is not reserved for a literal 144,000 people. The number, and the details surrounding the number are figurative.

The tribes listed in Revelation 7 differ from any other list in Scripture. Here, Joseph is included, but his son Ephraim is not. Reuben is listed, but his brother Dan is not. The significance of this list of tribes is not who is included, but who is excluded. Ephraim and Dan were seats of idolatry in Israel, for Jeroboam set up images in them (Dan and Bethel). Those sealed as the servants of God must have no part with idolatry.

One hundred and forty-four thousand

...of all the tribes of the children of Israel... of the tribe of Judah ...of the tribe of Reuben ...of the tribe of Gad ...of the tribe of Asher ...of the tribe of Naphtali ...of the tribe of Manasseh ...of the tribe of Simeon ...of the tribe of Levi ...of the tribe of Issachar ...of the tribe of Zebulun ...of the tribe of Joseph ...of the tribe of Benjamin...

(Revelation 7:4-8)

SYMBOLISM OF THE ONE HUNDRED AND FORTY-FOUR THOUSAND

ATTRIBUTE	SYMBOLISM
144,000 (Revelation 7:4; 14:1)	There are 12 groups of 12,000 (12 x 1,000). The number 1,000 holds the idea of perfect, whole or complete. 12 is significance for both the Old (tribes) and New Testament (apostles). As such, the 144,000 may be used to represent all of God's chosen people, regardless which covenant they live(d) under.
TRIBES OF ISRAEL (Revelation 7:4)	Not just the Israelites are sealed as the servants of God (note, this would exclude the very people to whom the book was addressed, Revelation 1:11). The tribes are a recognizable image of God's people.
MEN (Revelation 14:4)	Revelation 7 does not mention the gender of the 144,000, but Revelation 14 does. It speaks of them as men (they had not defiled themselves with women). Of course, God has faithful servants who are both men and women.
VIRGINS (Revelation 14:4)	Revelation 14 specifically says that the 144,000 were virgins. This is an image of their purity, not an indication that they were celibate.

A great multitude (v 9-17)

Having identified the 144,000 (Revelation 7:4-8), John said, "...I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number..." Some contend that this is a second group, distinct from the 144,000. The first is identified with a finite number, whereas the second group could not be numbered. If the 144,000 were intended to be received as a literal accounting of those who are sealed, then this position might gain some validity. As we have seen, the number is one of four figurative descriptions of the servants of God.

In Revelation 7:4, John stated, "...I heard the number of those who were sealed." Then, he tells the reader, "...I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number..." (Revelation 7:9) This multitude which he saw was the same as those whom he heard about — those who have the seal of God upon them.

We have already noted that the 144,000 are not literally of "the tribes of the children of Israel," and here, John tells us plainly that they are "...of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues..." (Revelation 7:9) The apostle gives additional detail of the appearance of these servants of God. They:

- 1) stand before the throne and the Lamb (ie. they are in the presence of God);
- 2) are clothed with white robes (ie. they have been made pure by the Lord);
- 3) have palm branches in their hands (tokens of joy and victory, see Leviticus 23:40; John 12:13); and
- 4) cry out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

In addition to these faithful servants of God giving praise, John also saw angels, the elders, and the four living creatures worshipping before God. As was the case in chapter 5, seven details about God are exalted as praiseworthy. One of the elders then approached John with a question, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" (Revelation 7:13) Whether John knew or not, he appeals to the elder to reveal the answer. The elder continues, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Seven Praiseworthy Things	
REVELATION 5	REVELATION 7
...power...	...blessing...
...riches...	...glory...
...wisdom...	...wisdom...
...strength...	...thanksgiving...
...honor...	...honor...
...glory...	...power...
...blessing.	...might.

Tribulation – Gr. θλιψις [thlip'-sis]
 ...pressure (literally or figuratively) : – afflicted (-tion), anguish, burdened, persecution, tribulation, trouble.
(Strong's Concordance, via Power BibleCD)

Throughout the New Testament, the disciples of the Lord are told to expect tribulations (John 16:33; Acts 11:19; 14:22; 20:23; Romans 5:3; 12:12; 2 Corinthians 1:4; 4:17; 7:4; etc.). Jesus revealed that some would turn away from following the Lord because of persecutions (Matthew 13:21).

Recall, John had already identified himself as a "brother and companion in tribulation" with those who are in the kingdom of God (Revelation 1:9). In writing to the seven churches of Asia, Jesus knew the tribulation which the saints at Smyrna endured (Revelation 2:9-10). Those pictured in Revelation 7:14 had endured

the tribulations which had been foretold, being persecuted for their faith, and now, in John's vision, stand victorious with the Lord (Revelation 7:15).

As John finishes the response to the inquiry of "who is able to stand?", he addresses in some detail the wonderful blessing of those who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb and have endured whatever affliction comes on account of faith. They are "before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple." (Revelation 7:15; cf. 21:3) The Lord God will dwell among them, and the Lamb will shepherd them, leading them to living fountains of water. John also emphasizes what will not be there — no hunger, no thirst, no sun to strike them or heat, and no tears (Revelation 7:16-17).



“And They Did Not Repent”

But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts. (Revelation 9:20-21)

Things to notice...

- Seal 7 — silence in heaven (8:1-4)
- Trumpet 1 thru 4 — troubles on the earth, in the sea, from the heavens and in the heavens (8:7-12)
- Trumpet 5 — the bottomless pit (9:1-12)
- Trumpet 6 — a destroying army (9:13-19)
- They would not repent (9:20-21)

In the previous chapter, the Lord revealed who will be able to stand when the time of judgment comes. The focus now shifts to the rest. What about those who have not received the seal of God (Revelation 7:3-8), are not arrayed in white (Revelation 7:9, 13), and do not serve before the Lord (Revelation 7:10, 15)?

...there was silence in heaven... (8:1-4)

Seal # 7 — silence in heaven

The Lamb opens the final seal. The previous six brought with them a variety of activities – horses with their riders (seals # 1-4), the plea of slain saints (seal # 5), and a great earthquake, falling stars, a mighty wind, etc. (seal # 6). The opening of the seventh seal brought silence. All the former noises were quieted.

Most know the old adage which speaks of “*the calm before the storm.*” A storm is on the horizon, set to begin at Revelation 8:5. But before the storm, a great pause has come — a building of anticipation, before troubles are unleashed, after the “half an hour” (a short time) is complete.

During the calm, preparations are made. “Seven angels” who are before God are “given seven trumpets” (Revelation 8:2), which will be sounded after the silence has been broken. Yet another angel came before the Lord, bearing “much incense,” which represents the prayers of the saints (Revelation 8:3-4; 5:8). It is common for the prayers of Christians to intensify as circumstances warrant.



We can take great comfort in knowing that amidst all that takes place upon the earth, our prayers are brought before the throne of God — that He hears the voice of His people, knows their concerns, and will respond accordingly (1 John 5:14-15).

So the seven angels ... prepared themselves to sound. (8:5-9:21)

The silence ended abruptly, as the angel who brought the prayers of the saints before the Lord filled the censer “with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth.” As a result, “there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake.” The participation of this particular angel in the beginning of the chaos to come may indicate the importance of prayers in the context (cf. Revelation 6:9-11), and now God’s response to the prayers of His people.

Understanding the use of trumpets elsewhere in the Bible will perhaps help us to grasp their use here. In his commentary on Revelation, Hailey writes about trumpets:

An understanding of the purpose and service of trumpets may be gained from a study of their place in the Old Testament. Moses was instructed to make two silver trumpets of “beaten work” to be used for special occasions: a call to assembly, a pilgrimage, a festival, and war (Numbers 10:1-10). In later years trumpets were used to sound an alarm to warn of approaching danger (Amos 3:6; Hosea 5:8), impending judgment (Joel 2:1),

Abrupt Answers To Prayers

- Elijah’s battle with the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:19-40)
- Elisha’s servant saw the heavenly hosts and his enemies were struck with blindness! (2 Kings 6:17-18)
- Hezekiah’s health was restored and life extended (2 Kings 20:1-6)
- Peter’s release from prison (Acts 12:5-16)
- Paul & Silas in Philippi (Acts 16:25-26).

or to call the people to a holy convocation (Joel 2:15) ¹

The trumpets serve as a series of warnings from the Lord, a variety of unpleasant circumstances and occurrences intended to cause repentance (Revelation 9:20-21). They are comparable in their purpose to the evil which fell upon Israel when they turned away from the Lord (Deuteronomy 28:15-68).

Trumpet # 1 — troubles on the earth

The first angel sounded his trumpet,

“and hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth.” These same elements are used in the Old Testament at times to speak about God’s judgment against the unrighteous (Exodus 9:23-24; Isaiah 28:2; 30:30-33; Ezekiel 38:22). We are told that a third of the trees and grass were burned up – there was a substantial destruction which took place.



Trumpet # 2 — troubles in the sea

The second angel sounded his trumpet, whereby “a great mountain burning with fire” was cast into the sea. Mountains are used in the Old Testament to represent kingdoms. Regarding the church, Isaiah said “...the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains...” (Isaiah 2:2) His kingdom is above all other

kingdoms. Babylon was described by Jeremiah as a “destroying mountain” which itself would be made “a burnt mountain” (Jeremiah 51:25). Shortly thereafter, it is described as being “...desolate among the nations! The sea has come up over Babylon; she is covered with the multitude of its waves” (Jeremiah 51:41-42).

No specific mountain / nation is mentioned in association with the second trumpet, nor is it necessary that a particular nation be identified. Nations have risen and fallen throughout time. In the process of this burning mountain being cast into the sea, devastation resulted, as “...a third of the sea became blood. And a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.”

“A Third”

Throughout the events and circumstances recorded in the first four trumpets, a third of the things under consideration is affected. Though a third is certainly a substantial amount, it is noteworthy that the Lord could have destroyed entirely. Instead, He struck a portion of the whole, rather than the whole itself. Herein, we see God’s longsuffering.

Peter tells us the “...Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9)

Trumpet # 3 — troubles from the heavens

The third angel sounded his trumpet, and “a great star (named Wormwood) fell from heaven, burning like a torch”. It struck a third of the rivers and springs, and the bitterness of the water killed many. Whatever disaster is described, there is a substantial human toll, but keep in mind the purpose of these awful happenings – God wants mankind to repent and turn to Him.



Trumpet # 4 — troubles in the heavens

The fourth angel sounded his trumpet, and a third of “...the sun, ...the moon, and ...the stars...” were struck and darkened. As a result, a third of the day did not shine, and likewise of the night. When the Lord Jesus was

Warning Old Testament Israel

...if you do not obey Me, and do not observe all these commandments...
...I also will do this to you... And after all this, if you do not obey Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins.... Then, if you walk contrary to Me, and are not willing to obey Me, I will bring on you seven times more plagues, according to your sins... And if by these you are not reformed by Me, but walk contrary to Me, then I also will walk contrary to you, and I will punish you yet seven times for your sins.... And after all this, if you do not obey Me, but walk contrary to Me, then I also will walk contrary to you in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins... But if they confess their iniquity... then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and My covenant with Isaac and My covenant with Abraham I will remember... (Leviticus 26:14, 16, 18, 21, 23-24, 27-28, 40, 42)

¹ Hailey, Homer, An Introduction And Commentary On Revelation, p. 217-218.

put to death at Calvary, recall that there was darkness over the face of the land (Luke 23:44-45; cf. Amos 8:9). God's displeasure with the activities of the wicked was visible. In like manner, the events described in this fourth trumpet identify God's anger at the sinfulness of man.

THE FIRST WOE! (Revelation 8:13)

An angel proclaimed woes upon the inhabitants of the earth, but not because of the devastation of the four trumpets already sounded. Awful destruction has occurred, affecting both the land and lives! However, the woe is declared "...because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!" There is more to come, and more severe than what has already happened!

Trumpet # 5 — the bottomless pit

At the sounding of the fifth trumpet, an angel is seen, to whom the key to the bottomless pit was given. This cannot be the devil (Luke 10:18), as some may be inclined to believe. Later, whomever this angel come down from heaven is will bind Satan and cast him into the bottomless pit (Revelation 20:1-3).



Smoke proceeded from the bottomless pit when it was opened. So great was the smoke that it darkened the sun and the air. From the smoke came forth locusts. Rather than harming the plants of the earth, as is common to locusts, these were granted to torment but not kill "those men who do not have the seal

of God on their foreheads" (Revelation 9:4) for five months (Revelation 9:5, 10). The power and terror which would come upon the wicked is evident by the description of the locusts (Revelation 9:7-10), and the reaction of men to them (Revelation 9:6).

Exactly what harm is represented in these cannot be derived from the text, but there are countless ways that harm and torment may sting men. The five months (not literal), is a substantial period of time, but has an end. Again, the intent in the trials in the trumpets is to affect repentance among the wicked.

These destroying locusts are said to have as king over them "Abaddon" (Heb. a destroying angel) or Apollyon (Gr. a destroyer). Most commentators explain that this "king" who is "the angel of the bottomless pit" is Satan. This is one and the same as the star (angel) which fell from heaven (Revelation 9:1), who had the key of the bottomless pit. Neither Abaddon nor Apollyon are found elsewhere in the Bible, and nothing in either word would necessitate that it be Satan. It is not as important to know who this is (in fact, this king may not be anyone in particular, but an abstract representation of the power behind the destruction which takes place among men). What is key to make not of is the dangers of sin, and God's firm warning to mankind to repent.

ONE WOE IS PAST! (Revelation 9:12)

The first of the three woes has been captured in this fifth trumpet — the destruction which is unleashed from the bottomless pit upon unrepentant men. Still more is to come, "...two more woes are coming..."

Trumpet # 6 — an army of horsemen

The instruction given to the angel bearing the sixth trumpet comes from the golden altar, which is a place of mercy (1 Kings 1:51; 2:28). However, mercy cannot be extended to those who are unrepentant, and so further punishment for sin is to come. The intensified actions of this sixth trumpet are certainly appropriate, since the period of torment from the previous trumpet was intended to turn their hearts, but did not.

Remember Egypt

The purpose of the trumpets and the havoc which they bring is similar to the plagues of Egypt. The intent was not to destroy the land, but to convert hearts. Pharaoh hardened his heart, and would not heed the Lord, despite the destruction which surrounded him.

The extent of the trumpets and plagues is similar also. Of the ten plagues brought upon Egypt, only the first three were experienced by the Israelites (Exodus 7:21; 8:2, 16). It may be that with these relatively minor plagues God was securing the faith of Israel, so that they might trust in Him. We had concluded that the evil associated with the 2nd through 4th seals comes upon both the faithful and the faithless. However, the turmoil of the trumpets is reserved for the faithless alone.

Four angels were released, who had been “bound at the great river Euphrates.” The Euphrates was in the midst of both the Assyrian and Babylonian empires, from which destruction came upon Israel and Judah respectively. The angels are not literally stationed at the Euphrates; rather the image reveals God as the one who has authorized their work, just as He authorized the Assyrians and Babylonians of Old (Isaiah 7:17; 8:7; Jeremiah 20:4; 25:9) to destroy those who were unfaithful.

These “had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year” (Revelation 9:15). As God planned harsher curses for Israel and Judah in their unfaithfulness, so here we see a devastating blow upon the wicked — a third of mankind would be killed! An army of two hundred million (200,000,000) were with them, fulfilling God’s instruction.

There is no historical event which could match these details. The intent is to convey the vastness of the destruction which is to come; the awful results which are in store for those who continue in sin. In the previous trumpets, there was a great deal of suffering, but now, the finality of the path of sin is displayed. It is the road to death. But, we still see the longsuffering of God, as only a third were killed.

The description of these horses and those who sat upon them is terrifying! The riders had “breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow”, the horses’ heads were “like the heads of lions”, whose strength is in their mouth and in their tails, which are like serpents (Revelation 9:19). From their mouths “came fire, smoke and brimstone” (Revelation 9:17), described as “three plagues” by which the people were killed. Fire, smoke and brimstone are images of judgment (Genesis 19:24; Psalm 11:6; Ezekiel 38:22; Luke 17:29).

They Did Not Repent

All of these occurrences, conveyed through the trumpets were intended to affect repentance among the wicked. However, of those who were not killed, they still did not repent, but continued in their unrighteousness.

The Lord has done what He could to affect their hearts, but if man chooses to walk his own course rather than the Lord’s, He will not force his will. However, there are eternal consequences to come.

TRUMPETS 1 — 6

- troubles on the earth
- troubles in the sea
- troubles from the heavens
- troubles in the heavens
- the bottomless pit with its locusts
- the army of horsemen led from the Euphrates

Revelation 10:1-11:19

“Rise And Measure The Temple Of God”

Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, ‘Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months. (Revelation 11:1-2)

Things to notice...

- A little book for John to eat (10:1-11)
- Measuring the temple (11:1-2)
- The work of the two witnesses (11:3-12)
- Some hearts are turned to God (11:13)
- Trumpet 7 — Judgment (11:15-19)

We’ve seen those who are able to stand in the judgment (Revelation 6:17-7:17), and God’s efforts in the first through sixth trumpets to cause bring those who had not received His seal to repentance (Revelation 8:6-9:21). The seventh trumpet is coming shortly, and with it, the judgement. However, a brief interlude is found first (Revelation 10:1-11:14), in which the work of God’s people who await the judgment is discussed.

A Little Book (10:1-11)

A Mighty Angel And Seven Thunders (v 1-4)

Another angel appears to John, described as a “mighty angel coming down from heaven”. Three elements are mentioned which call to mind God and the Lamb, who no doubt sent the angel. Three things mentioned in the text attest to this angel’s might (see right). His feet being on both land and sea indicates the universality of his mission and message; it involves all the earth.

The angel whom John saw bearing the little book has three elements which remind of us God:
– a rainbow was on his head (cf. Revelation 4:3)
– his face was like the sun (cf. Revelation 1:16)
– his feet like pillars of fire (cf. Revelation 1:15)
Three things which display the angel’s might:
– he bears a book in his hand (Revelation 10:2)
– stands on both land and sea (Revelation 10:2)
– a powerful voice, like a lion (Revelation 10:3)

When the angel cried out, it was as the sound of a lion’s roar. The prophets speak about a roar coming from the Lord to warn the wicked (Jeremiah 25:30), to lead His people (Hosea 11:10), to execute judgment (Joel 3:16). In response to the sound of the angel’s voice, “seven thunders uttered their voices” (Revelation 10:3). God’s perfect judgment is waiting to be executed upon the inhabitants of the earth.

Hearing the voice of the seven thunders, John prepared himself to write (cf. Revelation 1:11, 19). However, a voice was heard from heaven telling John to “seal up the things” which he heard and “do not write them” (Revelation 10:4). The apostle Paul spoke of how “he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter” (2 Corinthians 12:4). There are some things which God has chosen not to reveal to all (Deuteronomy 29:29). The utterance of the seven thunders is among them.

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? (2 PETER 3:9-12)

No More Delay (v 5-7)

John again focusses on the angel standing on the sea and the land. He makes an oath, by the Creator of all things, that “there should be delay no longer” (Revelation 10:6). Again, we see the universality of his message, not only in his posture, but now in his declaration of God as creator of heaven, earth and the sea, and all that is in them. When the seventh trumpet sounds, “the mystery of God would be finished” (Revelation 10:7).

What has been delayed? The previous two chapters record God’s efforts to bring the wicked to repentance (Revelation 9:20-21). He has been longsuffering, He has delayed, but now, “there should be delay no longer.” The time for judgment is at hand. However, the judgment itself is not the mystery which is to be finished, but rather the redemption of those who would come to the Lord (Ephesians 1:-11; 3:1-5, 8-11; Colossians 1:26-27).

The impending judgment had been “declared to His servants the prophets” (Revelation 10:7). God has always warned about judgments to come, whether temporal or eternal. There are numerous warning about the final judgment (Ecclesiastes 11:9; Matthew 12:36-37; 26:31-46; Acts 17:31; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; 2 Peter 2:9; 3:7, etc.).

...AS HE HAS DECLARED TO HIS SERVANTS...

- the flood (Genesis 6:13-18)
- Sodom & Gomorrah (Genesis 18:17-21)
- Egypt (Exodus 4:21-23)
- the Canaanites (Genesis 15:16; Leviticus 18:25)
- Eli's household (1 Samuel 2:27-36)
- the nation Israel (Leviticus 26:14-39)
- eternal judgment (Matthew 25:1-13; etc.)

Take The Little Book (v 8-11)

The mighty angel had a “little book” in his hand (Revelation 10:2). It is not a sealed book, like the scroll in the throne room of heaven (Revelation 5:1). It was open in the angel's hand. The voice which had commanded John to not record what the seven thunders uttered now commands John to take the book from the angel. The angel gave John the little book, commanding that he eat it, and stating, “it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth” (Revelation 10:9).

“..they will know that a prophet has been among them. ...You shall speak My words to them, whether they hear or whether they refuse, for they are rebellious. But you, son of man, hear what I say to you. Do not be rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you.” Now when I looked, there was a hand stretched out to me; and behold, a scroll of a book was in it. Then He spread it before me; and there was writing on the inside and on the outside, and written on it were lamentations and mourning and woe. Moreover He said to me, “Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.” So I opened my mouth, and He caused me to eat that scroll. And He said to me, “Son of man, feed your belly, and fill your stomach with this scroll that I give you.” So I ate, and it was in my mouth like honey in sweetness. ...So the Spirit lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me. (EZEKIEL 2:5, 7-3:3, 14)

This figure of eating a book from the Lord is also found in Jeremiah 15:16 and Ezekiel 2-3. In each case it represents the experience of God's servants (prophets) in bearing the word of God to those who are in opposition, regardless whether they will listen or not. John took the little book, and he found it just as the prophets of old had experienced, and as the angel had said to would be (Revelation 10:10).

This is the experience of all who take up the word of God to share with those who are outside of God's grace. The message of God is a sweet taste to His people, but the rejection of such a wonderful message by those who are opponents of the Lord is enough to turn the stomach.

As this scene closes, John is told that he “must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings.” There is much more to be revealed.

Measuring The Temple (11:1-2)

John was given a measuring rod, and commanded to “measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there” (Revelation 11:1). These three images come from the Old Testament, but are here applied to the Lord's church. The church is described as the temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:21; 1 Peter 2:5). In the Old Testament, the temple (place of worship) and the worshippers were distinct from one another, but now, the worshippers themselves are the temple.

This act of measuring is found in Zechariah 2:1-5, where it was stated concerning the protection of Jerusalem that “the LORD ‘will be a wall of fire all around her, and I will be the glory in her midst.’” God is the protection for His people.

A fourth element is added to the scene, “the court which is outside the temple,” but it is not measured with the rest, “for it has been given to the Gentiles” (Revelation 11:2). If that which is measured are the faithful of God who have the seal of God upon them, who worship the Father in Spirit and in truth, then those who are here described as Gentiles, who “tread the holy city underfoot” would be those who are not faithful. Paul described such individuals as “those who do not know God, and ...those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thessalonians 1:8).

FORTY-TWO MONTHS

The Gentiles “will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months” (Revelation 11:2). The same “time frame” is also captured in the “one thousand two hundred and sixty days” (Revelation 11:3) or “three days and a half” (Revelation 11:9, 11). All these speak of an imperfect or incomplete time, in contrast with that which is perfect or complete (seven).

1,260 days = 42 months = 3 ½ years

What is the “holy city” which the Gentiles tread underfoot? Jerusalem has been called the “holy city” (Nehemiah 11:1; Isaiah 52:1; Matthew 4:5), but it is not Jerusalem which is mentioned here. It is quite possible that physical Jerusalem had already been destroyed by the time the Revelation was written. Even if the city was still standing, the primary audience of the Revelation are seven churches in Asia. The fate of Jerusalem, once the seat of power in Judaism, would be of little consequence to them.

This “holy city” is otherwise described as “the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem..., ...the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven...” (Hebrews 12:22-23; cf. Revelation 21:2). This is yet another image used to represent God’s people.

The Two Witnesses (11:3-13)

Two witnesses are given power to prophesy for “one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth” (Revelation 11:3). It is no coincidence that the time allotted for their work is the same duration as the treading of the holy city underfoot by the Gentiles. These occur concurrently.

Two Olive Trees And Two Lampstands

The two witnesses are described as being “two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before God” (Revelation 11:4). The image of a lampstand has already been used to represent God’s people (Revelation 1:12-13, 20). A common source of oil in antiquity, which was used to light a lamp, would be an olive tree. Both the fuel for the lamp and the lamp itself are used to picture the two witnesses.

OLIVE TREES AND LAMPSTAND

Zechariah 4:2-6, 11-14 has a similar image to what is here in Revelation 11. There, the lampstand is identified as “the word of the LORD” (v 6), and the olive trees are said to be “two anointed ones” (v 14).

Fire From Their Mouth

The Lord has endowed these prophets with protection, namely that “fire proceeds from their mouths and devours their enemies” (Revelation 11:5). Jeremiah was comforted by God’s protection with these words: “Because you speak this word, behold, I will make My words in your mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them” (Jeremiah 5:14). God’s word is powerful, and is a source of confidence for His people, even amidst trials.

POWERS OF THE PROPHETS

– Elijah, through fervent prayer shut up heaven so that it did not rain (1 Kings 17:1ff; James 5:17-18). Moses, while in Egypt was granted power by God to turn water to blood among other plagues (Exodus 7:19ff).

Other Powers

Further, the two prophets are said to have “power to shut heaven ...so no rain falls ...power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues...” (Revelation 11:6). God has blessed His people throughout time with answers to prayer and evidence which supports their claims on His behalf. Even in the book of Revelation, we’ve seen God heeding the prayer of His people (Revelation 5:8; 8:3-5).

So, who are these prophets? It has been suggested that they might represent the apostles and prophets, or the Spirit of God and the apostles, or the Old and New Testaments. Though each of these may have some merit, the most likely explanation is that which is found in the same image in Zechariah’s prophecy. Thus, the two prophets (identified as the two olive trees and the two lampstands) represents God’s people speaking God’s word. Why are they pictured as two, instead of one or three, or a thousand, etc.? Solomon reveals the strength of “two” (Ecclesiastes 4:9-11), and the law required “two” to authenticate testimony (Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15; 2 Corinthians 13:1). Also, recall that Jesus sent His disciples out “two by two” as they went preaching (Mark 6:7; Luke 10:1).

Their Testimony Is Finished

When they are done with their testimony; when they have accomplished what God had sent them to do, an enemy will kill them. The beast which overcomes and kills them is not identified, except that it comes out of the bottomless pit to make war against them.

Three locations are mentioned of where their dead bodies were left to lie in the street; "...the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified" (Revelation 11:8). God's people have been put to death in many places; these (Sodom, Egypt, and Jerusalem) are representative of any city where the people of God are oppressed and killed.

When the people see these dead servants of God, who are said to have "tormented those who dwell on the earth" (Revelation 11:10), there is rejoicing over their death. The wicked rejoice and make merry when God's people are silenced. Consider the riotous celebration of the religious leaders at the death of Christ (Luke 23:48). Jesus affirmed to His disciples,

If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me. (John 15:18-21)

O God, the nations have come into Your inheritance; Your holy temple they have defiled; they have laid Jerusalem in heaps. The dead bodies of Your servants they have given as food for the birds of the heavens, the flesh of Your saints to the beasts of the earth. (Psalm 79:1-2)

So despised are the two prophets in the sight of the people of the earth, that they would "not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves" (Revelation 11:9). But their dead bodies will only be left in the streets for a time; it is not permanent (it is described as 3 ½ days).

There are times when it will seem that God's people have been silenced or thwarted; that the wicked have won. Trial and trouble will come; but remember those who were at Smyrna were told "the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days" (Revelation 2:10). Though they might be cast down, God would cause them to be victorious, giving them "the crown of life."

The Prophets Are Raised!

After the three and a half days, though the enemies of God had believed they were victorious, God makes it apparent that they did not. John records, "...the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them" (Revelation 11:11). The two prophets were received into heaven in the sight of their enemies. God gives life to His people and gives them the victory! It may be that this does not represent a physical resurrection, but the spiritual victory of the saints of God.

The cause of God's people is validated through the resurrection, ascension and reign of Christ. Jesus had promised that "He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live" (John 11:25).

A judgment was brought upon the city (described as "a great earthquake"), and a tenth of the city fell. Again, God's longsuffering and restraint is evident, for it would have been just to destroy the entire city. Though seven thousand (indicating the source of the judgment, both 7 and 1,000 representing that which is perfect and complete) were killed in this judgment, some were caused to give glory to God (Revelation 11:13). We had seen in Revelation 9:20-21, the wicked had not repented in response to the various plagues which God had brought upon them. Do we now see some repenting in the midst of this great earthquake, or are these calling upon God for but a moment? It is not specified in the text.

IN THE STREET OF THE GREAT CITY

- Sodom was the place where righteous Lot "...was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked" (2 Peter 2:7)
- Moses was sent to free the Israelites because of "...the oppression of My people who are in Egypt." (Exodus 3:7-8)
- The Lord Jesus was oppressed by the scribes & Pharisees and eventually put to death in Jerusalem.

THE SECOND WOE IS PAST! (Revelation 11:14)

The second of the three woes has been captured in the judgment of those who rejoiced over the death of the prophets. Yet one more woe is to come.

Trumpet # 7 — the time of judgment has come!

Recall, when the seventh seal was opened, there was silence in heaven (Revelation 8:1-2) and the seven trumpets were introduced. Manifold troubles were about to be unleashed because of the wickedness of mankind. However, now as the seventh trumpet is sounded, there was a great sound in heaven, loud voices declared:

The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!
(Revelation 11:15)

Out of what appeared to be a victory for Satan the Lord displays His complete triumph. He reigns and rules over all. Revelation 10:7 said that "...in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets." The redemption of mankind is finished. The time of judgment has come; the Lord and His saints are victorious.

The description here of the world's kingdoms having become the Lord's is not about the beginning of His kingdom when it would be set above all other kingdoms (Daniel 2:44), but about the end of this life; the judgment, of which the Lord said, "...every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God" (Romans 14:11; cf. Isaiah 45:23; Philippians 2:10-11).

We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was and who is to come, because You have taken Your great power and reigned. The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great. And should destroy those who destroy the earth. **(Revelation 11:17-18)**

Once more, John sees the throne room of heaven, and the twenty-four elders worshipping before God. As the loud voices in heaven declared the victory of God and His people, so do the twenty-four elders. They acknowledge that God, by His great power has reigned. And now, He executes His right to judge, both those who had failed to repent (Revelation 8-9) but did evil (Revelation 11:2, 9), and those who served Him faithfully, who now would receive a reward (Romans 2:4-11).

The Temple Of God In Heaven

The chapter closes with "the temple of God" open in heaven. This is not the temple of God upon the earth (which was measured in Revelation 11:1-2), but those who worshipped in that temple now rewarded and glorified in heaven. The temple is open to receive God's people, but for the unrighteous judgement awaits ("...lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail", Revelation 11:19).

Revelation 12:1-13:18

“And War Broke Out In Heaven”

So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. (Revelation 12:9)

Things to notice...

- A powerful enemy (12:3-4)
- Victory for God's people (12:5-11)
- Persecuted, but protected (12:12-17)
- Two beasts serving the dragon (13)

Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. (Ephesians 6:11-13)

A new series of signs are now given to John, picturing a spiritual war which takes place both in heaven and upon the earth. Herein, the enemy of God's people is revealed, and details about his devices. God's people must prepare themselves, "...lest Satan should take advantage of us..." We must not be "...ignorant of his devices." (2 Corinthians 2:11) We have a powerful and influential enemy, but God, whom we serve, is more powerful and in Christ, we shall have victory.

A Child Is Born (12:1-6)

A Woman Bearing The Child (12:1-2)

John sees the image of a woman, glorious in appearance (v 1). She is representative of the remnant of Israel ("on her head a garland of twelve stars"). She was ready to give birth, crying out with labour pains. The faithful in Israel anticipated the coming of the Messiah; they were ready for deliverance. Isaiah had prophesied of the coming, glory and authority of this Child (Isaiah 7:14; 9:6-7).

A Great, Fiery Red Dragon (12:3-4)

It's never a good thing when a dragon shows up in the nursery! Satan is pictured as a dragon (see 12:9), an extremely formidable foe. He is said to have seven heads, indicating great intelligence (the head being the center of thought and reason). He has ten horns. Recall, a horn is representative of power. And, he has seven crowns on his heads, conveying his authority. The numbers used to speak of him reveal that his intelligence, power and authority are complete or whole. Verse 4 is a display of his power, as he "...drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth" with his tail. These stars may represent his angels (see 12:7), or may simply serve to show us his destructive nature and lack of concern for the earth and those who are upon it. He seeks to destroy us eternally.

Satan knew about the Child to be born, and sought to destroy Him as soon as He was born. Shortly after Jesus' birth, an attempt was made on the life of Jesus. So extensive was this plot, that Herod "...put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under..." (Matthew 2:16) The Child would come to destroy the power of Satan, and free those who had been held in bondage by him (Hebrews 2:14-15).

THE PEOPLE ANTICIPATED THE COMING MESSIAH

- Having seen Jesus, the shepherds "...made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child." (Luke 2:17)
- Simeon was "...waiting for the Consolation of Israel..." (Luke 2:25)
- Anna "...did not depart from the temple, but served God with fasting and prayers night and day." (Luke 2:37)
- Anna "...spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem." (Luke 2:38)
- Joseph of Arimathea "...was himself waiting for the kingdom of God..." (Mark 15:43)
- Andrew proclaimed to his brother Simon, "We have found the Messiah!" (John 1:41)
- Philip told Nathanael, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." (John 1:45)
- Nathanael himself declared, "You are the King of Israel!" (John 1:49)
- A great crowd cried out, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD! The King of Israel!" as Jesus entered Jerusalem (John 12:13)

The Child And The Woman (12:5-6)

The woman bore a male Child, and it was given to Him "...to rule all nations with a rod of iron." Psalm 2 speaks of the Messiah, to whom God said,

Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel. (Psalm 2:8-9)

The Christ was given a place of authority, seated at the right hand of the throne of God (Acts 2:33-34; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22). Having conquered sin and death, Jesus has gone into heaven to reign. David wrote,

*The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool."
The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies!
(Psalm 110:1-2)*

The male Child (the Lord) went into heaven, the woman (the remnant of God's people) went to a prepared place in the wilderness for 1260 days (the same period of time the holy city is trampled by the Gentiles, and that the witnesses prophesied). Though the dragon is pictured as powerful, he has no power over the Christ nor God's people. In the wilderness, the woman is fed by someone ("they"). Who is this feeding the woman? It could be angels tending to her (Hebrews 1:14), it could be the leaders of the local church (Acts 20:28; Hebrews 13:7). However, the context may indicate that it is the Christ and God who feed the woman (Revelation 12:5). Of course, these others are used to accomplish this task.

INTO THE WILDERNESS

- Moses fled to the wilderness from the presence of Pharaoh.
- Israel was led through the wilderness from Egyptian bondage.
- David found safety from Saul in the wilderness.
- Elijah fled to the wilderness from Ahab & Jezebel.
- As a young Child, Jesus was taken to the wilderness of Egypt to escape the hand of Herod.
- Paul went to Arabia, away from those who would kill him, and to be taught by the Lord.

MICHAEL

- meaning, "who is like God?"
- In Daniel 10:13, 21 he is identified as a "one of the chief princes," and in Daniel 12:1 as the "great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people."
- Jude 1:9 speaks of "Michael the archangel" who contended with the devil about the body of Moses.

War Broke Out In Heaven (12:7-12)

The Devil Is Cast Out (12:7-9)

There was not a literal war which broke out in heaven, but this vision is employed to demonstrate the defeat of Satan. As powerful as the dragon appeared, God has defeated him (pictured here through the forces of Michael and his angels). The battle of good and evil has continued from the beginning, but it climaxed with the victory of Jesus Christ (Revelation 12:5, 10). Now, no place was found for the devil to be in heaven, that he might accuse God's people before Him. The result of Satan being cast out are identified in verses 10-12.

Salvation, Strength, & The Kingdom (12:10-12)

The devil once accused God's people in the presence of the Lord (Job 1:9; 2:5; Zechariah 3:1), but now, with the exaltation of the Child and the nourishing of the woman in the wilderness, his power has been reduced. The "accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down." Through the coming of the Child, now salvation from sin (wherein Satan seeks to bind us) is available. Now, because Jesus has overcome, strength is available to His people (John 16:33; 1 John 5:4), and the strength of Satan is muzzled. We are now the kingdom of God. Peter wrote:

...you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. (1 Peter 2:9-10)

Three things are identified as the means whereby the people of God have overcome. First, by the blood of the Lamb. This is the divine provision given for the redemption of mankind (Hebrews 9:13-15, 23-24, 26-28).

No more can Satan accuse us before the Father, for those who are saved in Christ Jesus have cleansed their “conscience from dead works to serve the living God.” Second, by the word of their testimony. Paul encouraged Timothy to “Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you” (1 Timothy 4:16). We have the wonderful duty of working for the Lord in the spreading of the good news in the world (2 Timothy 2:2; Matthew 28:19-20). And third, through self-sacrifice. Jesus said to His disciples,

*If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.
For whoever desires to lose his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.*

(Matthew 16:24)

Cast out of heaven, the devil is no longer able to accuse the brethren before the Father. Thus, there is joy in heaven and for those who dwell there. Who experiences this joy? Certainly the Father, and the Christ, and the ministering spirits who are sent forth to minister to the saints (Hebrews 1:14). Those who have passed from this world, faithful to the Lord are now in comfort, no longer tormented (Luke 16:19-31). And even we, who still dwell upon the earth may be partakers of that joy, if we will learn to “walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7). In Christ Jesus, God has “...raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places...” (Ephesians 2:6). We have access to “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3), and thus victory over the tempter, if we will remain faithful to the Lord.

Of course we do live upon this earth, and will suffer persecutions, but we are able to do so in hope and as those who have overcome. We have been warned about our enemy; we have been told of his fierce wrath, and that through Christ, we are victorious over him. This knowledge should mold our perspective of the trials we endure in this life (Romans 8:18; 2 Corinthians 4:17-18; 1 Peter 1:6-7; 4:13).

GREAT WRATH

We have seen wrath attributed to the Christ (Revelation 6:16-17) and the Father (Revelation 11:18), and now to Satan (Revelation 12:12). Notice however, the motive and exercise of their wrath is different. The wrath of God is judicial, rendering to the wicked according to their deeds. The wrath of Satan is hatred, bringing persecution and destruction to mankind “because he knows that he has a short time.”

ON EAGLES' WINGS

You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. (Exodus 19:4)

But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint. (Isaiah 40:31)

A Persecuted But Protected Remnant (12:13-17)

Unable to destroy the Child, who now reigns in heaven, the dragon turns his attention to the woman, the remnant of God's people. Jesus warned His disciples, “If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you” (John 15:20). But, even while Satan seeks to attack God's people here, the Lord provides protection. The woman was given “two wings of a great eagle,” enabling her to fly away from Satan's attacks to the wilderness, where she is nourished by the Lord. This place of protection and nourishment is available to her “for a time and times and half a time,” which is the 1260 days previously mentioned (Revelation 12:6).

It is not a particular physical location under consideration, but the relationship with and protection from the Lord for His people. Jesus prayed to the Father concerning His disciples,

I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

(John 17:14-16)

Even after the woman came to the safety of the wilderness, the serpent still attempted to destroy her, spewing water from his mouth, causing a flood. Again, God provides for His people, as the earth is pictured opening its mouth and swallowing up the flood of the dragon. Of course, these images are not literal in any sense, but represent the protection of God for His people. Consider the Scriptures and the power which is available to us in them to find refuge from the flood of temptations the devil may send upon us (1 Corinthians 10:13). With His word, we are able to escape and bear Satan's attacks.

The dragon is relentless in his pursuit of the woman and her offspring. Even when Satan was tempting the Lord, we are told that after he “had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time” (Luke 4:13). Satan is always seeking an opportune time to tempt the people of God. He will seek to destroy us time and again, and will perpetually do so in every generation, until the end.

A Beast Rising Up Out Of The Sea (13:1-10)

The Description Of The Beast (13:1-4)

The beginning of the description is exactly the same as the dragon himself, “...seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns...” The beast is openly blasphemous; He has “...on his heads a blasphemous name.” Is this perhaps intended to mock the people of God, who have the seal of God on their foreheads (Revelation 7:3; 14:1; 22:4).

The details about the beast reveal an intimidating enemy. Images of speed (a leopard), power (a bear), and fierceness (a lion) are used. He is given the power, throne and authority of the dragon (Satan).

This beast is not invincible; he is not a deity — he is mortal. One of the heads “had been mortally wounded,” but was healed. We have no details about the mortal wound, nor about the healing of it. However, we are told the effect it had upon the people of the world — they “marveled and followed the beast” and “they worshiped the dragon...” The beast receives praise from the world, as they proclaim his undefeatable, and the dragon is worshiped by them.

With All Unrighteous Deception

The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10)

He Opened His Mouth (13:5-6)

Not only is there a blasphemous name upon his heads, but he also was given a mouth of blasphemy. He speaks “great things and blasphemies.” Great things, to impress the world, to draw them to himself; and blasphemies, to speak against the name of God and turn the people away from Him. He would do this for forty-two months, the same period of time that the Gentiles “will tread the holy city underfoot” (Revelation 11:2), the two witnesses “will prophesy” (Revelation 11:3), and the woman is fed in the wilderness (Revelation 12:6, 14).

Who Is The Beast From The Sea?

The beast is mortal (13:3), authoritative (13:4), and is contrary to God and His people (13:5-7). The beast stands in opposition to God’s people, wherever and whenever they are.

Daniel saw an image of four beasts, the fourth with ten horns on its head, and “a mouth which spoke pompous words.” (Daniel 7:7-8, 17, 19-25). The context of Daniel 7 would indicate that this is a reference to the Roman Empire. Indeed, Satan used the Romans to oppose the church and deceive the people. However, let us not limit the scope of the image in John’s vision to the Roman Empire and the first century.

In every age, Satan has employed political forces to accomplish his will and oppose God’s people. True Christianity is illegal in China. A Muslim in the Middle East is subject to death if they obey the gospel. Even in Canada, Christians who make a stand on moral issues (ie. homosexuality) may be subject to prosecution and penalty.

Indeed, any political or social power which Satan can use to stand against the cause of God may be capsulized in the image of the beast which arose from the sea (ie. evolutionary theory, Marxism, etc.). Such ideas, when given life by political support, become a powerful opponent to the Lord and His people.

Authority Was Given Him (13:7-8)

This beast was used “to make war against the saints and to overcome them.” This mission was given to the beast by the dragon (who had failed, Revelation 12:13-16). As the saints of God are throughout the whole world, then the influence and power of the beast also stretches the globe.

There are only two possible relationships one may have to the beast — a worshipper (and thus not be written in the Book of Life), or the persecuted (the saints who are overcome by him).

If Anyone Has An Ear, Let Him Hear (13:9-10)

This phrase appears in each of the letters to the seven churches (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22) and at times throughout Jesus’ earthly ministry (Matthew 11:15; 13:9, 43). It is a call for attention.

Our attention is brought to a message of encouragement for the people of God. There is victory for those who are persecuted. He who takes the children of God captive will themselves go into captivity; he who

kills the saints will himself come to death and judgment. The apostle writes, "Here is the patience and the faith of the saints."

Another Beast Coming Up Out Of The Earth (13:11-18)

The Description Of The Beast (13:11)

The description of this beast is different from the dragon and the first beast. In fact, looking at him, one might think he was somehow associated with the Lord. "...He had two horns like a lamb..." His appearance is a deception; his role is to deceive.

One must consider, not how he looks, but how he speaks. He looks like a lamb, but speaks like a dragon (cf. Matthew 7:15).

His Power And Persuasion (13:12-17)

The first beast was pictured to have great authority. This second beast "...exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence..." He works in conjunction with the first beast, and direct men to "...worship the first beast..." (Revelation 13:12).

Who Is The Beast From The Earth?

The first beast was identified as political or social authorities which set themselves against the Lord and His people. This second beast supports the first, serving as a rallying force to garner support for the first beast. It represents false religion, in whatever manner it presents itself.

The Roman Empire exercised control over the populace through exaltation of the emperor, even necessitating worship. Hitler used nationalism to unite the people around his evil agenda. Muhammad created Islam to rally a following and to oppress those who opposed him.

Perhaps the most crafty deception, and that which is at work today is denominationalism. It has masked the truth of God, turning people's attention to the lie of ecumenicalism instead. People are deceived into believing that they are serving and worshipping the God of heaven; yet Satan is the one being glorified.

His Ministers Also Transform Themselves

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works. (2 Corinthians 11:13-15)

He is granted the ability to work great signs, whereby "...he deceives those who dwell on the earth..." (Revelation 13:13-14) His works copy and mock the works of God:

- great signs / fire from heaven (13:13)
- establish a process of worship (13:15)
- a mark on the worshippers (13:16)

Persecution, even death awaits those who do not worship the image of the beast. Daniel's friends faced this under Nebuchadnezzar, and Daniel under the rule of Darius. Historical accounts in Eusebius and other early writers speak

of Polycarp (and no doubt others) who was compelled to blaspheme Christ and to give honour to the emperor in the custom of the Romans. He would not, and as a result was put to death for his refusal. Those who will "...not worship the image of the beast..." are killed.

Here Is Wisdom (Revelation 13:18)

Similar to the proclamation made in verse 10, listen... take note... hear this! John reveals something about the beast whereby the children of God might receive hope and courage.

We are not being asked to become numerical contortionists or to discover some mysterious numeric code which will identify the beast. Hear what John says — "...it is the number of a man..." That is, the beast is not divine; it is of human origin. The Caesars, the Hitlers, the Muhammads of the world are not perfect, they are not divine, and they will not have the victory. They are identified with 6s, not 7s. Both beasts are mortal, and thus both beasts shall have an end, and the children of God will be victorious in the end.

Revelation 14:1-14:20

“True And Righteous Are Your Judgments”

And I heard another from the altar saying, “Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments.”

(Revelation 16:7)

Things to notice...

- Singing a new song (14:1-5)
- Message from three angels (14:6-11)
- Victory for God’s people (14:12-13)
- The earth is reaped (14:14-20)

Notice the contrast between chapter 13 and our present text. In the former, the authority and power of the beasts who serve the dragon were displayed. In fact, we were told that they were granted “...to make war with the saints and to overcome them” (Revelation 13:7). But now, the scene turns back to the heavenly realm, and to the Lamb of God who gives victory to His people.

These Were Redeemed From Among Men (14:1-5)

Recall, the beasts mocked God and His people, having a mark (name, number) on the foreheads of those who would serve the beast (Revelation 13:16-17). Such is the counterfeit. Now, the true is presented in the presence of the Lamb on Mount Zion. The 144,000 were first shown in Revelation 7:3-4 in response to the question, “who is able to stand?” (Revelation 6:17) What was previously described as a “seal” on the foreheads of the righteous is here identified as “His Father’s name.” We have our Father’s name upon us, we are His possession and blessed with His protection (as demonstrated in chapters 12 & 13).

John describes, not only what he saw, but also what he heard. There was “...a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters...” (Revelation 14:2). This is how Jesus’ voice was described earlier in the book (Revelation 1:15). Praises to God were heard in the form of “harpists playing their harps.” The same image was given in Revelation 5:8. Again, in accordance with the throne room scene of chapter 5, those who are before the throne sang “a new song” (Revelation 14:3; cf. 5:9).

They sang as it were a new song...

This song cannot be sung by just anyone. John says “...no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth.” Those who are not redeemed cannot sing of God’s salvation — only God’s people alone.

John reveals some traits specific to those whom he saw standing with the Lamb of God. They are described as “virgins,” that is, they are spiritually pure. They follow the Lamb wherever He goes. The picture is like sheep who follow a shepherd (see John 10).

John describes them as “...being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb” (Revelation 14:4). The word “firstfruit” can certainly refer to a beginning portion, the rest of which is added later (Romans 8:23; 16:5; 1 Corinthians 15:20, 23; 16:15). However, such an application here would negate the image of the 144,000 being the total sum of God’s people, both Old and New Testament. Firstfruit would seem to be used here in the same manner it was used with regard to the Old Testament sacrifices. The firstfruit belonged to God (Nehemiah 10:35). This is in contrast with the remainder of the harvest, which was not devoted to God. The firstfruit describes God’s people, those who are devoted to God; set apart to be saints. What an image of hope for those who presently suffer at the hand of the two beasts upon the earth, for they shall be with the Lord, no longer to endure the sufferings of this life (Romans 8:18; 2 Corinthians 4:17-18) and free in eternity from sin (Revelation 14:5).

Three Angels With Three Messages (14:6-13)

After seeing those who are described as the “firstfruits to God and to the Lamb,” John witnesses three angels, each bearing a message for the inhabitants of the earth.

The First Angel (14:6-7)

The first angel bears a message of hope, namely the Gospel. The angel himself does not come preaching the gospel, for the message is to be conveyed through earthen vessels (2 Corinthians 4:7). But, the message comes from heaven and is to be distributed "...to every nation, tribe, tongue and people." The proclamation has three portions:

- 1) "Fear God and give glory to Him." Do not fear the dragon or his beasts; do not look upon what they have done and give glory to them.
- 2) "...the hour of His judgment has come..." Judgment is coming. Jesus says that we do not know the day nor the hour (Matthew 24:36, 42, 44, 50). Thus, we must be ready now.
- 3) "Worship Him who made heaven and earth..." Chapter 13 revealed that the beast caused wonder among the people, and they gave him glory and worshipped him. The LORD God has made the heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water. As much as the beast is able to deceive by duplicating and mocking some of what God has done, let him give that a try!

The Second Angel (14:8)

The second angel bears a message of defeat. This is the first mention of Babylon by name in Revelation, though it will certainly not be the last (Revelation 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21). She has already been referred to as "the great city which is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified" (Revelation 11:8). Though it may seem that wickedness prevails and God's people are overcome (as was pictured in chapter 11 and 13), it is Babylon herself who has fallen. God's people have just been portrayed as standing victorious in the heavenly city in the early part of chapter 14.

The Third Angel (14:9-11)

The third angel bears a message of judgment. The defeat and judgment which is associated with it is not some theoretical theological condemnation of wickedness which has no consequence for the individual. All those who have associated themselves with the beast "shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God..." (Revelation 14:9). In choosing to fear, glorify and worship the beast, one makes himself an enemy of God. The severity of judgment is described in explicit detail.

- 1) The wrath of God (Revelation 15:10a) "...is poured out full strength..." Those who have refused the Lord and sided with the dragon and his beasts choose the penalty of these for themselves. Thus,
- 2) "He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone..." Destruction is in store for the dragon, his beasts, and all who stand in opposition to God. This torment is not for a time and then done, but "...the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever..." Just in case we didn't understand that, "...they have no rest day or night..." The penalty of the wicked is for eternity!

The Patience of the Saints (14:12-13)

The messages given through these three angels brings hope and assurance to the people of God. They have heeded the gospel associated with the first angel, and are the messengers whereby it is now conveyed to the world. Though they now endure trial and tribulation at the hand of the wicked, they have the hope of victory as spoken by the second angel. God will avenge His people, exercising His wrath upon those who followed the beast. The saints who had been slain for their faith awaited this (Revelation 6:9-11). Persevere, for God will work things out.

John is instructed to write, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." Death, for the child of God does not bring with it doubt and fear. Paul once wrote,

...we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed,

The Beatitudes of Revelation

1:3	Those who read, hear and keep the things written in this book.
14:13	Those who die in the Lord, that they may have rest from their labours.
16:15	Those who are watching for the Lord and keep their garments clean.
19:9	Those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.
20:6	Those who have a part in the first resurrection.
22:7	Those who keep the words of this book.
22:14	Those who do His commandments.

but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. (2 Corinthians 5:1)

Those who die in the Lord have “rest from their labors, and their works follow them.” There is no more work to do once we have passed from this life. We must work the works of God now, for “...the night is coming when no one can work” (John 9:4). The Hebrew writer assures us, “...God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name...” (Hebrews 6:10). When we have passed from this life, we will have rest and God will remember our works; but now is the time for us to work.

And The Earth Was Reaped (14:14-20)

Having heard the message of these three angels, and the patience and comfort of God for His people, John now sees the Lord Jesus coming on a white cloud. He is described as “...One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle” (Revelation 14:14). When Jesus ascended from the earth, it was in a cloud (Acts 1:9). His disciples were told that His return would be in like manner (Acts 1:11). He comes in victory, as revealed by the golden crown on His head, and to reap or harvest the earth (as per the sickle). The judgment is again being pictured for us.

The Lord was instructed by an angel coming from the temple to thrust His sickle and reap, for the time of harvest had come (Revelation 14:15). Since we are told that none of the angels, not even the Son know the time of judgment (Mark 13:32), it would seem appropriate to conclude that this angel had come from the Father bearing this message. In the verses which follow, two more angels appear in the vision, one with a sharp sickle and the other having power over fire. When Jesus spoke about His return (Matthew 25:31; Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26), He mentioned coming on the clouds and having His holy angels with Him.

A gruesome picture is given to express the wrath of God brought upon the unrighteous. They were trampled in the “great winepress of the wrath of God.”

Revelation 15:1-16:21

“The Seven Last Plagues”

The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.
(Revelation 15:8)

Things to notice...

- The saved on the sea of glass (15:2-4)
- Seven bowls, displaying God's power, authority and victory (16:1-21)

Yet another sign in heaven is shown to John. He introduces the seven angels who will bring “the seven last plagues,” which will be the completion of God's wrath upon the unrighteous. However, the “great and marvelous” sign is not just the plagues, but the victory of God's people.

Standing On The Sea Of Glass (15:2-4)

John sees the people of God standing upon what looked like a sea of glass (cf. Revelation 4:6). The sea is mingled with fire – perhaps conveying the purifying of those who call upon the name of God. As with most of the times that the redeemed are pictured in victory, these are worshipping the Lord, here, with “harps of God.”

Those Who Have The Victory...

- over the beast
- over his image
- over his mark
- over his number

We have read already of the new song of the elect which no one but they can sing (Revelation 5:9; 14:3). The words of the song given here are different from that which was given in Revelation 5:9-10, but the message of the song is the same – we serve a great God; His works are marvelous; and He is worthy to be praised.

Here, the song is identified as “the song of Moses ...and the song of the Lamb.” This is yet another image used to convey the total sum of God's people, which includes those from both the Old Testament (Moses, the servant of God) and the New Testament (the Lamb).

Out Of The Temple Came The Seven Angels (15:5-8)

John tells us that “the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened” (Revelation 15:5). God's people will enter in, but not “till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed” (Revelation 15:8). The plagues came from heaven – straight from God.

We've seen seven seals (Revelation 6:1-8:1), which displayed the effect which sin has upon the earth. We've seen the seven trumpets (Revelation 8:2-9:21; 11:15-19), wherein God's efforts to convict the unrighteous of their sin and the eventual judgment were revealed. Now, seven bowls are employed to express the “last plagues” from the wrath of God upon the sinful world.

The temple in heaven “was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one was able to enter” (Revelation 15:8). This was the case at the conclusion of the building of the tabernacle (Exodus 40:34) and also when Solomon's temple was finished (2 Chronicles 5:14).

Go And Pour Out The Bowls Of Wrath (Revelation 16:1-21)

The command was given to the seven angels, “Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth” (Revelation 16:1). And so this final phase of plagues begins, as God takes vengeance upon those who set themselves against Him, the Lamb, and the saints.

Bowl One (Revelation 16:2)

The first angel poured out his bowl upon the earth, and there was “a foul and loathsome sore” upon all who had received the mark of the beast and worshipped his image. They had afflicted the people of God, now they were afflicted.

Bowl Two (Revelation 16:3)

The second angel poured out his bowl upon the sea, and it turned to blood, killing every living creature in the sea. Those who follow the beast had shed the blood of the saints.

Bowl Three (Revelation 16:4-7)

The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs, and they were turned to blood. The angel declared the righteousness of God in exercising His judgment against the inhabitants of the earth, "...for they have shed the blood of saints and prophets." In response, they were given "blood to drink." This is a fulfillment of the statement which was made in Revelation 13:10.

Bowl Four (Revelation 16:8-9)

The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and he had power "to scorch men with great heat." Some of the saints were burned (Hebrews 11:33-38). Rather than repent of their wickedness, the enemies of God continues to blasphemed the name of God.

Bowl Five (Revelation 16:10-11)

The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast. The power and kingdom of God is so much greater than the power and kingdom of the beast. The beast cannot affect the throne of God, but God is able to destroy the throne of the beast.

The kingdom was cast into utter darkness, and the subjects of the beast, who were afflicted with the foul and loathsome sore (Revelation 16:2) "gnawed their tongues because of the pain" (Revelation 16:10), Rather than repent, they blasphemed God "because of their pains and their sores" (Revelation 16:11).

Bowl Six (Revelation 16:12-16)

The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the Euphrates, drying up its waters. That prepared the way for the kings from the east. Recall, God used Assyria and Babylon, nations through which the Euphrates ran, to bring destruction upon Israel and Judah. The figure of the Euphrates was used previously (Revelation 9:14) to simply indicate that God was the source of the judgment which came upon the unrighteous.

Though God's power is displayed and the dragon and the beast are shown to be inferior, they still act against God, sending unclean spirits forth from the mouth of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. These unclean spirits perform signs, rallying to the dragon the kings of the earth, indeed, the whole world; that the might stand with the dragon in battle against the Lord God.

God's elect are cautioned to remain faithful — do not be deceived by the signs and trickery of the dragon, the beast, the false prophets and their unclean spirits. Be faithful, the time is coming. No one knows the precise time, but be sure to be ready for His coming.

And so, with the dragon having made his preparations and gathered his followers, and the Lord having announced His coming and struck against the kingdom of darkness and those who are in it — Armageddon has come! The nature of the battle is captured as the seventh bowl is poured out.

Bowl Seven (Revelation 16:17-21)

The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and the battle of Armageddon was done (Revelation 16:17)! The battle no sooner began than it was done. Satan is no match for God. The entire point of the battle is that God exercised His wrath against the dragon and his followers.

The fierceness of God's wrath is pictured through commonly used language of judgment – noises, thunderings, lightnings, and a great earthquake. But it is said, "...such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth." The time of the end is here, and the wrath of God is great upon His enemies. Babylon was split into pieces, the cities of the nations fell, every island fled away, the mountains were not found, and hail fell from heaven. Even amidst all this, men blasphemed God.

Revelation 17:1-18:24

“Babylon The Great Is Fallen”

And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, 'Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! (Revelation 18:2)

Things to notice...

- The great harlot revealed (17:1-6)
- The power of the harlot (17:7-18)
- Fall of Babylon the great (18:1-8)
- Reaction to Babylon's fall (18:9-24)

The seven angels in chapter 16 poured out the bowls of God's wrath upon the kingdom of the beast and those who follow him, and revealed the victory of the Lord (and His people) over the dragon. Now, the judgment against Babylon is discussed in greater detail.

The Great Harlot (17:1-6)

One of the angels who had poured out a bowl of wrath now invites John to see the judgment of the great harlot. She is described as being the one "...with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication" (Revelation 17:2). To show John this great harlot and her judgement, he was taken "into the wilderness" (Revelation 17:3). This is not the same wilderness previously mentioned, where God protects His people (Revelation 12:6, 14); this is a barren wilderness – a place characterized by the sin of the harlot.

The image of a harlot is used multiple times in the Scriptures to picture the wicked. Isaiah marvels that Israel had "...become a harlot; it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers" (Isaiah 1:21). Likewise, the prophet Jeremiah would rebuke God's people for having turned away from Him, and "playing the harlot" (Jeremiah 2:20; 3:1, 6, 8). Ezekiel also would levy this charge against those who had turned away from the Lord (Ezekiel 16:15-16, 28, 31, 35, 41). Both Tyre (Isaiah 23:15-16) and Nineveh (Nahum 3:4-7) are identified as harlots as well. It is term that conjures thoughts of promiscuity and faithlessness. Such is a fit description of all who are unfaithful to the Lord.

Further detail is given about this woman. She sits upon a scarlet beast; a beast which is given to blasphemy. The beast is described as having seven heads and ten horns. This is the same description which was given for the dragon (Revelation 12:3) and the beast which rose up from the sea (Revelation 13:1). The harlot is "arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls" (Revelation 17:4). Her wealth, contrary to the wealth of God's people (Matthew 6:19-21) is characterized by abominations and fornication.

Lest we fail to acknowledged how wicked she is, and be drawn in by her enticing, her forehead reveals that she is "Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth" (Revelation 17:5). Among her abominable deeds, she became "drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus" (Revelation 17:6). She, like the dragon and the two beasts, and those who are associated with them, is charged with having killed the people of God.

When I saw her, I marveled with great amazement (Revelation 17:7-18)

The angel proceeds to tell John about the harlot and the beast upon which she sat. John marveled at the sight, perhaps indicating that it shocked him, and that he did not fully understand what was shown to him. So, the angel revealed "the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her" (Revelation 17:7).

The beast ... was, and is not... (Revelation 17:7-8)

We're told that the beast "was, and is not" (Revelation 17:7), which contrasts with the Lord "who is and who was and who is to come" (Revelation 1:8; 4:8). The beast is mortal; the beast has an end. It is said to "ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition" (Revelation 17:8). Though the beast is portrayed in such a defeated manner, those "whose names are not written in the Book of Life ... when they see the beast..." will marvel at it.

The seven heads and ten horns (Revelation 17:9-14)

In further explaining the appearance of the beast, the angel identifies the seven heads as seven mountains (often used to convey kingdoms, Isaiah 2:1-4; Micah 4:1-3), and seven kings. The number is not literal, but a figure to represent the completeness or perfection of the image. We are told that “Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time” (Revelation 17:10). The glory of these kings and kingdoms is not lasting. It will fade away, and is described as almost having expired.

Some have linked these mountains with those which Rome is set upon, the woman with Rome itself, and the kings as emperors in Rome. The mountain image is not literal (images in Revelation are figures, not literal), and there were not merely seven emperors in Rome. The image is simply indicative of world or social powers which have sided with the dragon and beast.

That the seven kings are not to be taken literally, but convey the idea of completeness is evident when John writes that the beast “...is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition” (Revelation 17:11). The heads of the beast represent a variety of authorities, and the beast itself is representative of these authorities himself.

Not only do the seven heads represent kings, but so do the ten horns. It is revealed that these ten “...have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast” (Revelation 17:12). Again, it would be contrary to the nature of the book itself to understand this to refer to ten literal kings. As with the seven kings represented in the heads, now these ten represented in the horns are a complete number, not a literal ten kings.

The authority and power of the beast will continue on, but no particular king is a continuing or lasting force for the dragon. As widespread as his reach is, the beast's power is short. There are many nations, powers and authorities who are united in the fact that they “will give their power and authority to the beast” (Revelation 17:13). As such, they make war against the Lord and His people, but “...the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful” (Revelation 17:14). None of the kings of the earth can overcome the Lord; He is victorious.

The waters upon which she sits (Revelation 17:15-18)

The harlot was pictured as sitting upon many waters (Revelation 17:1). These are described as “peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues” (Revelation 17:15). Her influence is far reaching, even over the majority of the population.

As much as the ten horns (kings) are part of the scarlet beast upon which carries her (Revelation 17:7), we are told that they “hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire” (Revelation 17:16). They share unity in the beast (Revelation 17:12-13), and are associated with the harlot, and yet chaos and destruction are inherent in the relationship. Where evil and sin prevail, we can expect to see destruction and self-consuming activity. Such is the case with the harlot and these kings.

John reveals that God has a hand in this chaos and destruction taking place. He is not the cause of their wickedness, and does not approve of the harlot and those who follow her ways, but He has “put it into their

hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled” (Revelation 17:17). There are several examples where God has used the wicked efforts of evil individuals to accomplish His own will and purpose (consider Herod, Pilate, Judas, Pharaoh, Assyria, Babylon, etc.).

The woman is used as a means of enticement, she is the poster child of Satan's plea to the world. The intent is to capture the attention of people, to wow them with her attributes. She is the advertisement used by the beast to draw people in, so that they might be captured by the dragon. Think of how the far away city swallowed up the lost son in Luke 15. That is what this harlot is used to accomplish.

As the chapter closes, the woman is defined by a previous image presented. She “is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth” (Revelation 17:18). She is equated with Babylon (Revelation 16:19).

Babylon the great is fallen (Revelation 18:1-5)

Yet another angel comes to help John to see these wonderful visions. This angel descended from heaven, displaying the greatness of God in his authority and lumination. His message against Babylon was plain:

Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! (Revelation 18:2)

It would appear that Babylon was not so great! Though she portrayed herself great before the sight of men, she is fallen and destroyed. She has become a ghost town, a memory; a dwelling for nothing more than evil spirits and demons.

Her rise to “success” was through sensuality; the people enjoyed her and profited from her. The kings of the earth, the merchants were glad to share in her evil deeds, but now they shall share in her destruction. The children of God are cautioned to stay away from her; they cannot partake in that part of society. Those who share in her wickedness will also share in her plagues.

Her plagues will come in one day (Revelation 18:6–8)

Justice demands that her wickedness be repaid. The angel calls for God to

Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her. (Revelation 18:6)

Works of wickedness will not go unpunished. Those who engage in evil will have it revisited upon them. Though she once gloried in her luxury and conducted herself in selfishness, now she is measured out torment and sorrow. She has deluded herself, “I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow” (Revelation 18:7). Satan would have all believe that their wickedness is luxurious and reason for glory; those who have the disease of sin believe the delusions the devil places before them and reject reality.

Destruction will be swift – even within a day. Interestingly, ancient Babylon fell in a night, being ruled by an arrogant king. Their haughtiness resulted in their defeat. Any power which exalts itself against the Lord will find swift destruction (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Rome, Nazi Germany, etc.).

Reaction to Babylon’s destruction (Revelation 18:9-24)

The kings of the earth (Revelation 18:9-10)

The kings of the earth enjoyed laying with the harlot Babylon. They lived luxuriously with her. Association with her brought about economic benefits, but that will be destroyed. A strong economy is no guarantee of permanence, especially when it is based in wickedness. Economy is not the true measure of a nation.

The kings are pictured as standing away from her and looking upon her disaster with wonder and anxiety. She was so great, and yet she is destroyed in an hour. What shall come of them?

The merchants of the earth (Revelation 18:11-16)

Not only had political powers made their bed with the harlot Babylon, but merchants also. They weep and mourn, “for no one buys their merchandise anymore” (Revelation 18:11). Sin is big business; consider how many businesses are based upon evil in the world today.

The shipmasters and sailors (Revelation 18:17-19)

The sailors, who found her to be a source of pleasure and economic abundance stood at a distance, mourning her loss. They cried out, “What is like this great city?” (Revelation 18:18) And yet, they admit a verse later that destruction came upon her in an hour.

The vengeance of God (Revelation 18:20-24)

The angel speaks again, “Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!” (Revelation 18:20) God has accomplished what He said He would do. Babylon, who warred against and overcame His people now has fallen at the hand of God. Babylon and all that is her’s will be destroyed; her deeds have come back upon her in the end.

Revelation 19:1-20:10

“The Lord God Omnipotent Reigns”

And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, ‘Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!’ (Revelation 19:6)

Things to notice...

- The Supper of the Lamb (19:6-10)
- The power of Christ (19:11-16)
- Another supper, judgment (19:17-21)
- A thousand years (20:1-10)

As we enter Revelation 19, the victory of the Lamb and His people is proclaimed. The multitudes, the twenty-four elders, and the four living creatures are jubilant, as they exclaim four times, “Alleluia!” They are victorious through the Lamb, and the enemies of God are judged.

Victory And Praise (19:1-5)

A “...loud voice of a great multitude in heaven...” (Revelation 19:1, 6), which had the “...sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings...” proclaimed “Alleluia!” Four items are here attributed to God – salvation, glory, honor and power.

Alleluia — Gr. αλληλουια
of Hebrew origin (imperative of לָלַח [halal] and יָהּ [yahh]); praise ye Jah!, an adoring exclamation: – alleluiah.

The events of the previous chapters has precipitated this outpouring of praise, for the Lord has “...judged the great harlot ... and avenged on her the blood of His servants...” (Revelation 19:2). We had noted already, this judgment against the wicked who had slain the saints had been anticipated by the servants of God (Revelation 6:10; 18:20). He has avenged their blood; He has destroyed her who destroyed. And so once more, the multitude proclaim, “Alleluia! Her smoke rises up forever and ever!” (Revelation 19:3)

The twenty-four elders (representative of all God’s people) and the four living creatures (representative of God’s character) voice their agreement with this great proclamation, “Amen! Alleluia!” (Revelation 19:4) And then a single voice is heard, coming from the throne; a call for praise (Revelation 19:5):

Praise or God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!

The Marriage Supper Of The Lamb (Revelation 19:6-10)

As the declaration of the marriage supper of the Lamb is about to be announced, one more collective voice of praise comes from the great multitude, as they acknowledge that “...the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!” (Revelation 19:6)

The Lamb is ready for the feast, and His wife (the church) has made herself ready (Revelation 19:7). She is clothed herself in “fine linen,” here described as “the righteous acts of the saints.” (Revelation 19:8). The angel who was with John then commanded that he write, “Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!” Indeed, this is a truth! If we are only invited to a single feast, this is the one we want to be invited to, for it shall last into eternity!

WORSHIP GOD!

This is the first of two times in the Revelation that John would fall to the feet of an angel to worship (Revelation 19:10; 22:8-9). No angel or man (Acts 10:25-26; 14:14-15) is to be worshipped. Such are merely messengers. God alone is worthy of worship (Matthew 4:10).

John was so caught up in the excitement of what was taking place, that he fell to his feet before the angel who was here guiding him. The angel cautions John,

See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.
(Revelation 19:10)

KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS (Revelation 19:11-16)

The time was now ready for the Lord Jesus to come. Heaven opened, and a white horse came forth. "...He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war." (Revelation 19:11). John continues to describe His appearance as powerful and victorious. He had eyes "like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns." (Revelation 19:12) A name is written, though John cannot tell us what it is – no one knows it but the Lord Himself.

As John continues with the appearance, we see one who has been prepared for and participated in war. His robe had been dipped in blood (Revelation 19:13), whether His own or that of His enemies, we are not told. With Him are "the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean" (Revelation 19:14). A sharp sword goes forth from His mouth, with which to strike the nations; and "He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron." (Revelation 19:15; cf. Psalm 2)

In addition to the names "Faithful and True," "the Word of God," and the name which no one but He knows, another name is attributed to Him, "KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS." (Revelation 19:16) He is the King over all the kings of the earth, and He is the Lord over all the Lords of the earth. This, like many of the names attributed to Christ, demonstrates His sovereignty.

Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against His Anointed ... Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.' ... Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him. (Psalm 2:1-2, 8-9, 12)

The Supper Of The Great God (Revelation 19:17-21)

An angel called out to the birds of the air, inviting them to come to supper. What was on the menu? "...The flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great." (Revelation 19:18, 21; cf. Ezekiel 39:17) All those listed are subject to the wrath of God and will be destroyed.

Again, we see the beast and those who side with the beast gathered for war against the Lord and His army (Revelation 19:19). And again, as was the case with the battle of Armageddon recorded in Revelation 16:16-17, the battle ends very quickly – "...the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet... These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone." (Revelation 19:20) Those who sided with the beast are destroyed also.

The Thousand Year Reign (Revelation 20:1-6)

The fifth angel who sounded a trumpet was given the key to the bottomless pit (Revelation 9:1). Whether this is the same angel or not, we do not know. But, an angel with the key to the pit comes, bearing with him a chain to bind the devil, and to cast him into the bottomless pit for a thousand years (Revelation 20:1-3).

A THOUSAND YEARS

- 20:2 Satan is bound for a thousand years
- 20:3 Satan is shut up in the bottomless pit, unable to deceive the nations for a thousand years
- 20:4 Those who did not receive the mark of the beast reign with Christ a thousand years
- 20:5 The thousand year reign is called the first resurrection.
- 20:6 All who have a part in the first resurrection are called priests of God and reign with the Christ for a thousand years.
- 20:7 Once the thousand years are concluded, Satan is loosed from his prison.

There are six references to the thousand years in this text. The details of each are briefly mentioned to the left. A few things we should note about this thousand years:

1. It is not a literal period of time. Throughout our study in Revelation, we have acknowledged the symbolic nature of the figures, including numbers which appear. The number 1,000 refers to a perfect or complete length of time.
2. The devil is imprisoned in the bottomless pit throughout the entire thousand years; Christ and His people reign at the exact same time.
3. When the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released and then destroyed in the lake of fire.

Christ reigns in this thousand year period. This thousand years is not some future period, following Christ's return. The rest of the Bible reveals that He is reigning now. In Mark 9:1, Jesus told His disciples that "...there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power." Peter, in Acts 2:30-33 affirmed that God "...would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne..." and that "...this Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses" and that He has now been "...exalted to the right hand of God..." Quoting from Psalm 110:1, Peter reveals that these events fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy which said, "The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'" He was not sitting there, waiting to reign, for Psalm 110:2 reads, "The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies." Colossians 1:13 says that God has "...delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love..." Peter acknowledges that we are "...a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people..." (1 Peter 2:9; cf. Revelation 20:6).

In this image, John saw a set of thrones. This image bears a resemblance to that which was revealed in Daniel's prophecy (Daniel 7:9, 22, 27) regarding the establishment of the Lord's kingdom, and the thrones which were set up. John identifies the characteristics of those who partake in His kingdom:

- "...The souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus..."
- Those who had been beheaded for their witness "...for the word of God..."
- Those "...who had not worshiped the beast or his image..."
- Those who "...had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands."

Those who are pictured here as reigning with Him are the deceased, the ones who had died for their faith. They, who are dead in Christ (but spiritually alive in Him), along with we, who remain and fit the last two descriptions, are part of the kingdom of the Lord and reign in Him. Recall, Revelation 5:10 indicated that we who are alive have been made "...kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth." All of God's people, alive or dead, upon the earth or in the grave, reign with the Lord.

The rest of the dead, we are told (ie. those who did not die serving the Lord, but as enemies of the Lord) did not live again until the thousand years were finished (ie. they did not experience the measure of life which was experienced by those who are in the Lord – see Luke 16). These, the unrighteous dead, did not receive the "first resurrection," that is spiritual life in Christ Jesus. Those who have experienced this "first resurrection" are not overcome by the second death, they have been granted eternal life!

Satan Is Released (Revelation 20:7-10)

At the end of the thousand years, the devil is released from prison for a time. How long? Long enough to be judged (as we seen in chapters 16 and 18). He goes out to deceive the nations, gathering the nations for battle against the Lord (he does not give up!), Though he surrounded the camp of the saints, fire came from heaven and devoured them.

The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

(Revelation 20:10)

Revelation 20:11-22:5

“Behold, I Make All Things New”

And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.

(Revelation 18:2)

Things to notice...

- Books were opened (20:11-15)
- Description of the new heavens and new earth (21:1-22:5)

With the beast, the false prophet and the devil having been cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10), and thus being eternally defeated; the time has come for the judgment of mankind. We've seen the judgment on previous occasions throughout the book of Revelation, but none have been with the same marvelous detail as this account.

The Judgement Scene (20:11-15)

A great white throne came into John's view. Upon it was the Lord, as He came in judgment (Acts 10:42; 17:31; Romans 2:16; 14:10). We've seen two very different responses to the Lord's coming in judgment throughout our study. The righteous stand in anticipation of His coming, for He will take them home (Revelation 6:9-11; 11:16-18; 14:12-16), but the wicked run in fear, for they will be condemned on account of their evil works (Revelation 6:12-17; 11:12-13; 14:9-11, 18-20). As the judgment scene unfolds here in Revelation 20, John saw the wicked who tried to flee away, but "there was found no place for them" (Revelation 20:11).

Paul told the Corinthians that "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:10). All are pictured here, "...the dead, small and great, standing before God..." (Revelation 20:12; cf. 20:13). When we come before the Lord in judgment, it will not be a popularity contest; whether we go to heaven or hell will not be determined with any partiality. In the image shown to John, "books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life" (Revelation 20:12). Friend, God has a record of our lives in these books. All will be "judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books" (Revelation 20:12). John concludes, "anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:15).

How do we get our names written in the Book of Life? It is contingent upon what is recorded in the other books. If we have served the Lord in faithful obedience, we are recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life. Paul wrote about his "fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life" (Philippians 4:3). The Christians at Sardis were told that if one overcame (turned from sin and walked in righteousness), the Lord would "not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father..." (Revelation 3:5). Those who are not written in the Book of Life had sided with the beast (Revelation 13:8; 17:8).

Having been emptied of those who were kept for judgment (Revelation 20:13), Death and Hades were no longer needed, and are thus cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14). Also, any who were not found in the Book of Life were cast into the lake of fire. This lake of fire is identified as "the second death." We were told in Revelation 20:5-6 that the second death has no power over those who have partaken in the first resurrection (spiritual life in Christ Jesus). All will take part in the second resurrection (John 5:28-29), some (those who experienced the first resurrection) being raised to life (eternal), and some being raised to condemnation.

Cast Into The Lake Of Fire

- 19:20 – the beast and false prophet were cast into the lake of fire
- 20:10 – the devil was cast into the lake of fire
- 20:14 – Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire
- 20:15 – any not found in the Book of Life are cast into the lake of fire
- 21:8 – all the unrighteous are cast into the lake of fire

A New Heaven And A New Earth (21:1-7)

Having just witnessed the final judgment, it is now given to John to see beyond the judgment. That the image extends beyond this life and realm is evident, as “the first heaven and the first earth had passed away” (Revelation 21:1; cf. 2 Peter 3:10-13). Previously, when John saw these images of the heavenly realm in the presence of God, there was a sea of glass (Revelation 4:6; 15:2) upon which God’s people were standing. Now, there is “no more sea” (Revelation 21:1). We had indicated previously that the sea may represent the means of cleansing which allowed one to approach before the throne of God (cf. 1 Kings 7:23-26; 2 Chronicles 4:2-5). However, now that the judgment is passed, these are in the presence of God without the sea.

John sees “the holy city, New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven. The city is described as “a bride adorned for her husband” (Revelation 21:2). This is the city of which the Hebrew writer said was prepared for Abraham and his offspring (Hebrews 11:10, 13-16). This is “Mount Zion ... the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem ... the general assembly and church of the firstborn...” (Hebrews 12:22-23), but no longer upon the earth, but in the heavenly realm.

There has always been a place of which it could be said that God’s presence was there among His people. After Israel departed from Egypt and wandered about the wilderness, Moses established a tabernacle where God dwelt among His people. In the days of Solomon, a temple was built, the place of God among the Israelites in the promised land. When the Lord established His church, the presence of God among His people graduated from the physical edifices of the Old Covenant to God dwelling among His people spiritually (Matthew 18:20; 28:20). What is described here in verse 3, “...the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them...” is none of the above, but the eternal dwelling of God with His people.

Consider the blessings which come to those who dwell with the Lord in eternity:

And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away. (Revelation 21:4)

All these things have passed away — they are not part of the eternal kingdom of God’s people. They belong to a realm infiltrated by sin. Eternity, being free of sin, is free from all the sorrows, tears, and pains which accompany it. Rather, all things are made new, as the LORD declares. The surety of this is secure, for “...these words are true and faithful.” (Revelation 21:5)

Thus, the declaration is made, “It is done!” There is nothing more to take place. The redemption of man is complete; the kingdom of the Lord is in His presence and will be for eternity. Time and space have come to an end and eternity has begun. The One who made this declaration identifies Himself as “...the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End” (Revelation 21:6). Whether this is the Father or the Son, the text does not specify. But, a promise is made which had been made by the Lord during His earthly ministry, “I will give the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts” (Revelation 21:6; cf. Matthew 5:6) Those who overcome (all who are written in the book of Life), “shall inherit all things,” and enjoy the relationship of being a child of God for eternity.

The Second Death (21:8)

We have seen what will come of the beast and the false prophet (Revelation 19:20), the devil (Revelation 20:10), and of Death and Hades (Revelation 20:14). We have also been told the end of those whose names are written in the book of Life (Revelation 21:1-7), and those who are not written in the book of Life (Revelation 20:15). Here, at Revelation 21:8, some details are given about those whose names are not written in the book of Life.

Humans have a tendency to rate sin. The Catholics have even gone so far as to have two official titles in which sin may be classified – mortal and venial. There is no classification of sins with the Lord – sin is sin. Some of those listed as having their part in the lake of fire do not surprise folks – abominable; murderers, sexually immoral; but others may be a shock to some people, especially “...the cowardly... and all liars...” Any sin, whatever it is, however big or small in our eyes, unrepented of, will be sufficient to bring us to the second death.

The Holy City (Revelation 21:9-27)

The Walled City (21:9-14)

Formerly, John had been taken into the wilderness to see the harlot (Revelation 17:3). Now, one of the angels who had poured out the bowls of wrath takes John “in the Spirit” to see the Lamb’s wife, the heavenly Jerusalem. The city shone with the presence of God, His glory being apparent (Revelation 21:11). The stones mentioned here were also mentioned in Revelation 4:2, as John was shown the throne room of God; however, the sardius stone is not mentioned here, for judgment has passed.

The city had “a great and high wall with twelve gates... and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel” (Revelation 21:12). Walled cities are secure cities. The New Jerusalem is the most secure city, for there is no enemy which remains. Of the twelve tribes of Israel, we are not given a listing of the twelve tribes. Of course, the intent is to picture God’s people of the Old Covenant.

As John continues to view the city of God, he sees “twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (Revelation 21:14). The gates were representative of the people of God from the Old Covenant; the foundations representative of the people of God from the New Covenant. Thus, the complete picture, as we have seen in other images, is the complete number of God’s people.

The Measurements of the City (21:15-17)

John had been given a measuring rod with which to measure the temple of God (the church) as it was upon the earth (Revelation 11:1-2). Now, the angel with whom he views the eternal tabernacle of God in the heavens, measured “the city, its gates, and its wall” (Revelation 21:15). The city length, breadth and height of the city are equal [indicating it’s perfection] (Revelation 21:16).

The wall was measured, “one hundred and forty-four cubits” (Revelation 21:17). This number has been used previously (Revelation 7:4; 14:1) to describe the total sum of God’s people. The measurement (cubit) is according to “the measure of a man” (ie. it is a man’s measurement), but it was measured by an angel.

The Construction of the Wall and the Gates (21:18-21)

All kinds of precious and glistening gems are identified as being part of the wall and gates. Imagine seeing a city that has such an appearance!! And then, keep in mind that John’s ability to describe what heaven will be like is limited by the finite nature of human language and comprehension.

Things Which Are Not In The City (21:22-27)

As John looked at the city of God, he noted that there was no temple in it. In former times, the tabernacle and temple were places of worship, where man could come into the presence of God – but sin kept man from having true and perpetual fellowship with God. Now, all those things which stood in the way before are gone. Thus, “the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple” (Revelation 21:22).

The city also had no sun or moon – the glory of God and the Lamb are the source of light for the eternal city of God (Revelation 21:23). Those who are saved shall walk in the light of the Lamb – basking in the glory of being in the presence of God. All glory, even that which had formerly belong to the kings of the earth, will now be directed to God, who is the source of all authority and power.

The gates of the city will never be shut, they are open all day (and there is no night). All glory and honour are brought into the presence of God and belongs to Him. However, nothing that defiles, nothing that is abominable or which is a lie can enter in (all such things have passed away). Only those who are written in the Lambs book of Life can come into the city of God.

Further Description of the City (Revelation 22:1-5)

John saw a river of water of life coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb. Water is acknowledged throughout the Scriptures as refreshing and life giving. This river is the ultimate source of life – life eternal for the children of God. The river ran throughout the city, and the tree of life was there. Man had not had

access to the tree of life since it was in the garden of Eden, prior to sin entering the world. There it is, in the midst of the heavenly Jerusalem, bearing forth its fruit. The picture of twelve fruits, and each tree bearing its fruit each month reveals the perpetual access to this life giving tree.

The leaves of the tree of life are spoken of as being for the healing of the nations. Not physically and literally, since the nations have all ceased to exist. However, the residents of this eternal city have come from the nations, perhaps many of which were harsh and where disease was prevalent and health was a challenge. In the heavenly Jerusalem, there will be no health concerns – all will have been healed perfectly.

The curse of sin and all that is associated with it is gone — we are blessed to be in the presence of God and the Lamb and to serve before then throughout eternity.

Some have desired to see God (Moses, Exodus 33:11-23; Philip, John 14:8), but could not fully. Some have been terrified at the idea of seeing God, for fear of death (Gideon, Judges 6:22; Manoah, Judges 13:22). We shall see His face (Revelation 22:4) and shall reign with Him forever (Revelation 22:5)!

Revelation 22:6-22:21

“Behold, I Am Coming Quickly”

Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book. (Revelation 22:7)

Things to notice...

- The Lord is coming (22:7, 12, 20)
- Jesus identifies Himself (22:13-16)
- A warning (22:18-19)

We now come to the conclusion of the book of Revelation. In the past few chapters, John has recorded for us great images of the glory of heaven and the victory of God's people. Now, the surety of these things is affirmed.

These Words Are Faithful And True (22:6-9)

The angel with John reveals the surety of what has been revealed, and of the statement which is about to be declared. Recall, at the beginning of the book, it was firmly stated that the things written “...must shortly take place” (Revelation 1:1) and that “...the time is near” (Revelation 1:3). These words identify the angel's mission — “...to show His servants the things which must shortly take place” (Revelation 22:6).

We are not told whether the Lord Himself spoke the words recorded in verse 7, or if the angel spoke them on behalf of the Lord. Whichever it is, there is comfort for the one “who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book” (Revelation 22:7). That He is coming quickly is strongly emphasized, being mentioned here in verse 7, as well as verse 12 and verse 20. The context of the last two chapters might lead one to believe this statement is about the final judgment. Perhaps in the divine measure (2 Peter 3:8; Psalm 90:4), but some 1900 years have passed since John received the Revelation. Of course, all of the Scripture is written in expectation of His coming (1 Corinthians 1:7; Philippians 3:20; Colossians 3:1-4; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; Titus 2:13, etc.), which even the Lord Himself did not know the time of (Mark 13:32).

However, it may be that the coming spoken of here refers back to the things spoken of throughout the book, that which was to “shortly take place” (Revelation 22:6; 1:1, 3). We had noted in Revelation 1:7 that His coming there may a reference to temporal judgment of the enemies of God's people rather than the eternal judgment.

John's reaction to what he saw and heard was to fall down “to worship before the feet of the angel” (Revelation 22:8). This is the second time John did this (Revelation 19:10). As before, John was rebuked by the angel, “See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant... Worship God” (Revelation 22:9).

Do Not Seal The Words Of The Prophecy (22:10-13)

Again, the relevance of the things in this book for John's contemporaries is emphasized. Daniel was commanded to “seal up the vision” (Daniel 8:26) and again, to “shut up the words, and seal the book” (Daniel 12:4). He was told, “...the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end” (Daniel 12:9). The things revealed to Daniel referred “to many days in the future” (Daniel 8:26). However, John was told not to seal up the book. These things were to be written and distributed to the seven churches of Asia, “for the time is at hand” (Revelation 22:10).

John heard that the unjust, the filthy, the righteous, and the holy should remain as they are (Revelation 22:11). The inference is not that our conduct does not matter, but that each one must determine what he shall do, and in the end will reap the rewards for what he has done (Revelation 22:12). If one seeks a course of injustice or filthiness, there should be no surprise when judgment comes that they are condemned. Chose what course you will walk, but know that it will receive a just reward. Again, the Lord's declaration, “I am coming quickly,” does not appear to be a reference to the final judgment, but to the unfolding of the events spoken of throughout the Revelation. That we might verify the source of these warnings and promises, we are told, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.” (Revelation 22:13).

Blessed Are Those Who Do His Commandments (Revelation 22:14-21)

If we will be obedient, will be those who walk in righteousness and holiness, then the eternal reward which He will give is “the right to the tree of life” and entrance “through the gates into the city” (Revelation 22:14). This is in contrast to those who are outside, having no access to the tree or to the city. They, as was revealed in Revelation 21, will be thrown into the lake of fire.

Now, it is not the angel who speaks, but the Lord Himself. “I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches” (Revelation 22:16). He is “...the Alpha and the Omega...” of verse 13. More is revealed about Him here. He is “...the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star” (Revelation 22:16). He is the fulfilment of promises (in prophecy) of the past (ie. Zechariah 6:12-13) and the bright dawning of a new day for His people to look forward to.

He has said that He is coming (Revelation 22:7, 12). In response to that, three appeals are made for Him to come. First, “...the Spirit and the bride say ‘Come!’” Second, the one who hears is encouraged to say “Come!” (Revelation 22:17). And then John also, bids, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus!” (Revelation 22:20).

But not only is an appeal made for the Lord to come, as He has promised, but also for any who thirsts to come to the Lord, so that they might “...take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17).

The book closes with a warning. Some take the warning to be for the book of Revelation alone, some for the entirety of Scripture. Though the specific application of it is for Revelation, the general principle is for all of Scripture. We have no right to take add anything to the word of God, and if we do so, then God will add to us the plagues described throughout the book which come upon those who would not repent. Neither do we have the right to take away from anything that God has revealed. If we do so, God will take away our part in the blessings which He has in store for the faithful.

The final word, just as the first in the book has us focused on the Lord Jesus. The book opened as “The Revelation of Jesus Christ...” (Revelation 1:1), and now closes with, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.” (Revelation 22:21).