

The Revelation Of Jesus Christ

**A Verse-by-Verse Study of the Book of
REVELATION**

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Outline

Rev. 1:19 – Inspired Outline

Revelation 1:19 (NKJV)

19 “Write the things which you **have seen**, and the things **which are**, and the things which will take place **after this**.

“**have seen**” – Past (Vision of Christ) – Ch. 1

“**which are**” – Present (Church Age) – Ch. 2-3

“**after this**” – Future (Post-Church Age) – Ch. 4-22

- Scene in heaven – Ch. 4-5
- Tribulation – Ch. 6-18

The **SEAL** Judgments – Chapter 6

- 1 – Cold War
- 2 – Open War
- 3 – Famine
- 4 – Death
- 5 – Imprecatory Prayer of Martyrs
- 6 – Disturbances

[Parenthesis – Chapter 7]

7 – (8:1-6)

The **TRUMPET** Judgments – Chapters 8-9

- 1 – Earth Affected
- 2 – Sea Affected
- 3 – Waters Affected
- 4 – Heavens Affected
- 5 – People Affected
- 6 – Death

[Parenthesis – Chapters 10-15]

7 – (11:15-19)

The **Bowl** Judgments – Chapter 16

- 1 – Sores
- 2 – Sea Affected
- 3- Rivers Affected
- 4- Scorching
- 5- Darkness
- 6- Euphrates Dried Up
- 7- Destruction

[Parenthesis – Chapters 17-18]

- Second Coming – Ch. 19
- Kingdom – Ch. 20
- Eternal State – Ch. 21-22

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A special thanks to...

- Robert Alex who served as my editor.

Background:

Daniel is the key prophetic book in the Old Testament. It gives an outline of the Times of the Gentiles from Babylon in 605 B.C. to the Second Coming of Christ and His kingdom. Within this context is 70 weeks (70 units of 7 years = 490 years of special disciplinary dealings) with regard to Israel. Sixty-nine weeks have been fulfilled. One week, that is one seven-year period remains yet to be fulfilled.

The theme of Daniel is that God is Sovereign (cf. Key verse: 2:20). All though the Gentiles might think that they have achieved dominance over Israel on their own, the fact is that God has allowed it. This Gentile dominance will come to a climax under antichrist in the Great Tribulation until finally the power of Israel is shattered and broken (cf. Dan. 12:7). Then in humility and repentant faith, Israel will finally look to Jesus as their Messiah/Deliverer, and He will then come to their rescue at the Second Coming.

Throughout the times of the Gentiles, God is still sovereign. We see this in the lesson learned by Nebuchadnezzar, a lesson that is intended for all people in all times.

Daniel 4:17 (NKJV)

17 'This decision is by the decree of the watchers, And the sentence by the word of the holy ones, In order that the living may know That the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, Gives it to whomever He will, And sets over it the lowest of men.'

Here is the outline of history that Daniel gave us. From the time of Babylon to the end of the times of the Gentiles there would be four major Gentile powers which would exert dominance over Israel. They would be Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece (which produced an O.T. type of antichrist known in history as Antiochus Epiphanies), and lastly Rome. Rome has two phases, one which was in place at the first coming of Christ, and a revived form which will be in place under antichrist at the second coming of Christ.

At the end, there will be a Revived Roman Empire that will emerge in conjunction with ten major leaders in reference to the Mediterranean Basin. This will provide the nucleus for the eventual world-wide empire of the antichrist. Antichrist's power and persecution reaches a climax in the last 3½ years of the Tribulation Period (the last half of the 70th week of Daniel, Dan. 9:27). Jesus Christ, at the end of the Tribulation, will destroy antichrist and his empire, deliver Israel, and set up His kingdom in which converted Israel will be prominent.

Revelation builds on Daniel

Dan. 2 & 7 "The Times of the Gentiles"

605 B.C. _____ 2nd Coming/Kingdom

Dan. 9:24-27- "The Seventy Weeks of Daniel"

445 B.C.	<u>Triumphal Entry</u>	[Church Age Gap]	<u>7 yr Trib</u>	2 nd Coming/Kgd.
69 Weeks			1 Week	
	Rev. 1-3		Rev. 4-18	Rev. 19 Rev. 20-22

Dan. 11 & 12 - Focuses on the last half (3 & 1/2 yrs) of the "70th Week of Daniel".

Inspired outline – Rev. 1:19

Rev. 1 – Past

Rev. 2-3 – Present Church Age

Rev. 4-22 – Future (6-18 details on Tribulation Period)

Author: John the Apostle. He was the last surviving apostle. John was now an old man, exiled on the isle of Patmos because of his faith. The historical context is a widespread time of persecution under the Roman emperor Domitian (81-96 A.D.).

Date Written: Probably about 95 A.D. John probably died a few years later.

Recipients of the letter: The seven churches in Asia (corresponding to modern day Turkey). However, it has application for all churches down through the church age. The church will play a vital role in giving out the truth to the generation that will go into the Tribulation. That precious seed of truth will bear a bountiful harvest.

How do you strengthen people who are persecuted for being Christians [as was the apostle John and his contemporaries]? How do you motivate God-rejecting people to repent and turn to Him? God's answer to both questions is the same: by telling them what is to happen in the future, the very thing He does in the final book of the Bible.... Revelation's picture of the future is more than sufficient to strike terror in the thoughts of any person who has not made his/her peace with God through a personal invitation to Christ for salvation from sin and its punishment. But that picture is also more than sufficient to offer incentive to the faithful believer in Christ to preserve through present trials, awaiting His imminent coming to deliver from those trials to a future unparalleled joy.

-Robert Thomas

Through the years, four basic approaches to interpreting the book of Revelation have been put forth.

Preterist view: Fulfilled: This view essentially holds that the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD, and the persecution in the 1st century, brought fulfillment of the judgment passages. For the most part, this view says the prophetic judgment passages have already been fulfilled in the 1st Century. There are degrees of error regarding those who hold to this view, but they are all in error.

Historicist View: Being Fulfilled: This view holds that the prophecies are being fulfilled throughout church history.

Idealist View: Nothing to fulfill: This view sees Revelation as presenting a series of ideal principles related to the ongoing struggle between good and evil.

Prophecy really has nothing to say about future events. It's all about principles, not prophecy. Basically, Revelation is seen as an allegorical story relating principles about the struggle.

***Futurist View:** Future: This view takes the book for what it literally/normally says, which allows for obvious figures of speech and symbolism, etc. It takes the book for what it plainly says unless the evidence of figurative language is clearly seen. It sees the bulk of the book as yet future, following the church age, hence Futurism. This is the correct view.

The Issue of figurative language

About half of the symbols are explained in the book itself. Lamps, for example, represent assemblies of God's people; stars represent angels; incense odors represent the prayers of saints. Where the symbols are not explained, other parts of the Bible must be searched for clues. It is axiom of hermeneutics that God is His own interpreter. (emphasis mine) - John Phillips

This is key: The Bible interprets the Bible. Unless God tells us, we don't really know the real meaning of Scripture. It is anyone's guess. We only know what we have been told. Divine Revelation is progressive and the book of Revelation builds on the rest of the Bible. Therefore, the way to understand it is to see what it is building on elsewhere in Scripture.

Of the **404 verses in Revelation, 278** of them allude to the OT Scriptures. No other writer in the NT uses the Old Testament more than this.

This book is the work of a Jew saturated with OT prophecy, under the guidance of the word of Jesus and the inspiration of God. It is the climax of prophecy of the Old and New Testaments. **-Wycliffe Bible Commentary**

Genesis and Revelation

- Genesis is the book of beginnings. Revelation is the consummation of all things begun.
- In Genesis, we see the commencement of heaven and earth. In Revelation, we have the consummation.
- In Genesis is the entrance of sin and death. In Revelation, the end of sin and death is in view.
- In Genesis is the dawn of Satan and his activities. In Revelation is his doom.
- In Genesis, the tree of life is relinquished. In Revelation, it is regained.
- In Genesis is the beginning of man's city - Babylon. In Revelation, it is destroyed.
- In Genesis is the beginning of Jerusalem – God's city. In Revelation, the New Jerusalem emerges as the eternal city.
- Genesis opens with a universal view of God creating the heavens and the earth. Revelation concludes with eternity in view with the creation of a new heaven and a new earth.

Often initial clues to proper understanding in Revelation are found in Genesis, and then sprinkled throughout the rest of the Scriptures are the development of these clues. It's like working on a giant **jigsaw puzzle** putting all the pieces of God's revelation together.

Every major theme of prophecy is treated to some extent in this book, with special attention to completion or fulfillment of the prophetic program of God. For this reason the book of Revelation cannot be understood apart from the sixty-five books which precede it, although it is in itself a Bible in miniature. **-John Walvoord**

For this reason, too, Revelation has been called the most difficult book of the Bible to teach and understand. It requires a thorough study of the WHOLE Bible!

The Revelation is the grand and noble conclusion to the Bible. It is the crown jewel of biblical literature and concludes the books of the New Testament and the entire Word of God. **-Ed Hindson**

Revelation 1:1 (NKJV)

1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John,

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, - Note: It is the **Revelation**, not Revelations. Here in a nutshell is the grand theme of the book. It's all from and about Jesus! In fact the whole of Scripture is about Jesus. He is the central character in all of its pages.

OT – Preparation

Gospels – Manifestation

Acts – Propagation

Epistles – Explanation

Revelation – Consummation

Luke 24:27 (NKJV)

27 And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

Revelation is first and foremost a revelation about Jesus Christ (1:1). The book depicts Him as the risen, glorified Son of God ministering among the churches (1:10ff), as “the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth” (1:5), as “the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End” (1:8), as the one “who is and who was and who is to come the Almighty” (1:8), as the First and the Last” (1:11), as the Son of Man (1:13), as the one who was dead, but now is alive forevermore (1:18), as the Son of God (2:18), as the one who is holy and true (3:7), as “the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God” (3:14), as the Lion of the tribe of Judah (5:5), as the Lamb in heaven, with authority to open the title deed to the earth (6:1ff), as the Lamb on the throne (7:17), as the Messiah who will reign forever (11:15), as the Word of God (19:13), as the majestic King of kings and Lord of lords returning in glorious splendor to conquer His foes (19:11), and as “the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star” (22:16). - **John MacArthur**

The Gospels reveal the historical “humiliation” of Christ, but Revelation presents Him in all His coming glory as King of kings and Lord of lords.

The word “Revelation” is the translation of the Greek word “Apocalypse”. It means to show what previously had been concealed. It means to uncover, to lay bare, to unveil, to expose.

The book of Daniel was said to be sealed, but the book of Revelation is OPEN. It reveals that which formerly was hidden. God definitely intends for us to understand what is coming. We may get hung up on some details, but the main points of the book, taken at face value are quite transparent.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ can refer to the fact that He is the “revealer”; or it can refer to the events surrounding the Second Coming. Is it Revelation in the sense of “from” Jesus Christ or in the sense of “about” Jesus Christ?

Both are ultimately true, but the sense here is FROM Jesus Christ. However, the revelation itself certainly includes the realities ABOUT Jesus Christ and His Second Coming as the content of the book clearly reveals.

which God gave Him to show His servants - The ultimate source is God the Father.

Servants: Literally this is “slaves”. He is our Lord/Master, and we are his slaves. This is the literal meaning of this word and is used in general of God’s people throughout Revelation (11 times total). Slaves refer to those who are SUBJECT to Him, those who belong to Him. As such, He is our MASTER. One can be disobedient to a Master, but if you belong to Jesus, you have recognized Him for who He is as Lord and Savior. This is the essence of saving faith. He is our MASTER and we are His slaves. If that is not the case, then you don’t belong to Him. The book of Revelation is for His SLAVES.

In this book, Jesus shows His own what is about to happen. It is put together in such a way that the lost really won’t get it. Those who don’t know the Bible won’t understand it. This involves some digging, some intense study and research, and yet, as I say, the basic points are obvious to even a novice (cf. Gen. 18:17, Amos 3:7).

Immediately, God tells us that the book of Revelation is given to show the slaves (believers) of Jesus Christ what the near prophetic future holds, what is coming, what will unfold.

—things which must shortly take place. Shortly can mean “suddenly” or “soon” depending on the context. Some have argued that the idea is that when these things begin to happen, they will happen with great rapidity, which certainly will be true of the Tribulation period. However, the normal sense here is the idea of SOON. Compare 1:3 “The time is near”.

The presence of en tachei [lit. in speed – translated “shortly take place”] in 1:1 shows that for the first time the events predicted by Daniel and foreseen by Christ stood in readiness to be fulfilled. Therefore, John could speak of them as imminent, but the earlier prophets could not. - **Robert Thomas**:

Prophetically speaking, these things are on the threshold of happening. Note there is no GAP at this point, prophetically speaking. It is important to note we are speaking prophetically, which speaks to the next things on God’s prophetic calendar, not necessarily “soon” as we might in our humanness think in terms of time (cf. 2 Pet. 3:8).

The “things which are” in 1:19 relates to things of this present church age. Immediately following the church age will be the unfolding of the rest of the things mentioned in this book. In that sense, it is SOON! It is imminent or impending.

The “things” seen here include those things that Daniel outlined that relate to the time of the end. These will follow in close succession to the church age addressed in Chapters Two and Three. The one thing we are not told is how long the church age will continue. We do know that immediately following (prophetically speaking) the church age, the events of the Tribulation Period, etc., will unfold. That is the prophetic sense of SOON! No gap is in view. We are in the church age, and these things will follow on the heels of it.

And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John,

Signified – “To show by a sign or a signal”. The message is SIGN-IFIED. It is a book of signs and symbols. Symbolic language is not weakened by time. It paints an enduring picture in ways that are often more powerful than mere words. Also, it often speaks in a vivid way that makes the point live. For example: If the antichrist were merely described as a very bad person, that is one thing, but when the terminology of “beast” is applied to him, what type of an impression does that leave?

Angel: Many times we find an interpreting angel interjecting points to help in the understanding of what is being presented. Some think perhaps Gabriel is the angel spoken of here, but we do not know.

John too, is called a “slave”. He was merely the instrument, the writer, the communicator of what is being revealed.

Revelation 1:2 (NKJV)

2 who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw.

who bore witness to the word of God, -As the human instrument with the credentials and credibility of an apostle, John put all his weight behind this revelation. It is his solemn affirmation that this is the Word of God. It harmonizes all the O.T. prophecies, the teachings of Christ, and the earlier teaching of the apostles. It draws all these strands together to a climactic consummation.

Truly this is the capstone of the Word of God. It is not only on par with the Word of God. It is the Word of God. You have the Apostle John's word on it.

and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, - John heard from Jesus Christ personally. This is the personal testimony of Jesus Christ. This message is God's inspired Word. It is what Jesus Christ has to say. He is making the same essential emphasis from several different angles; namely that this message has the authority of heaven behind it.

to all things that he saw. John vouches for everything in this book. It's all true. Most of what John experienced, he SAW in prophetic vision. It must have been like seeing a picture show before there was either television or motion pictures. John actually saw VISIONS of these things. He SAW them and experienced them. John was not a timid witness. In fact, he was currently exiled on the isle of Patmos because of his bold witness. Upon receiving this revelation, he further boldly asserts and communicates what God has SHOWN Him.

In verses 1 & 2, we see five links related to the communication processes of this Revelation.

God – Jesus – Angel – John – Slaves of Christ

Revelation 1:3 (NKJV)

3 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.

Blessed: means "happy", that is spiritually happy; one who is experiencing the favor of God.

Here we have a divine incentive for reading and hearing. In the days of John the Apostle, there were few copies of God's Word. It was therefore common for one person to read to the whole congregation. This verse reflects and promotes this practice. This is the one book in the Bible that pronounces a special blessing on those reading and hearing it. God is giving a special incentive or encouragement to KNOW the contents of this book. How ironic that it is often one of the more neglected books.

Prophecy: The bulk of the book is prophetic. It tells us what is going to happen in the future.

We should also bear in mind that this is the one book that also gives a special warning at the end (cf. Rev. 22:18-19). So this book has a special blessing for the reader and hearer, but also a special warning for those who would dare tamper with its contents. Read it and take it for what it says, but don't dare change it.

Rev. 1:3 is the first of 7 beatitudes (blessings) in the book (cf. 14:13, 16:15, 19:9, 20:6, 22:7, 14). As would be expected all seven "blessings" are for those who comply with this book's high standards of righteousness. **-Robert Thomas**

and keep those things which are written in it; Bear in mind that reading, hearing, and keeping all go together as a package. The blessing is not just for reading or hearing the message, but in the KEEPING of it.

Keep: To obey, give earnest heed to, observe, take to heart, to be doers of the Word, and not hearers only (cf. Ja. 1:22). This underscores that this book is very practical. Its purpose is essentially to provoke this response: "Wow! If this is what is coming, I better be right with God and live accordingly!"

This key purpose of the book is laid out right from the beginning. God intends for us to apply these things to our lives and those who do so will be blessed. There is much in this book on repentance and holy living.

for the time is near. Prophetically speaking, the period of time that will result in the unfolding of these events is at hand. This is no time to be negligent or to be walking carelessly. The warning is strong. The blest are those who take this revelation to heart and apply the truths of this book to their lives (cf. 22:6, 10). The book begins and ends with the emphasis that “the time is at hand”. It is like God is saying to all in the church age (not only to those who may be living when He comes, but to all down through the church age,) “you are to live ready!” This is the ongoing challenge to all who live in the church age. The unfolding of these things is imminent. They could begin to happen at any time. Live ready! (cf. Heb. 10:25). Taking the REVELATION seriously leads to holy living and is blessed of God. (cf. 1 Jn. 3:2-3, 2 Tim. 4:8).

John’s gospel was written evangelistically – so we might believe.

John’s epistles were written in terms of assurance – so we might be sure.

John’s apocalypse was written so we might be READY!

Revelation 1:4 (NKJV)

4 John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne,

These churches knew the Apostle John personally (cf. 1:9). The seven churches being addressed were in the Roman Province of Asia Minor, which corresponds to modern day **Turkey**.

There actually were more churches than these in Asia, but these seven are selected as being **representative** of the broad spectrum of churches represented throughout the church age. Also, some think that they represent **stages of church history** in the order they are addressed. Thus, the church at Ephesus (which is the first church addressed) represented the first stage in church history; that is the Apostolic age from about 30 to 100 A.D., and so forth. Perhaps both are involved. In terms of an argument for the stages of church history being prophetically depicted, note the church of Philadelphia in Rev. 3:10 is addressed as being kept from the hour of trial that will come upon the whole world. This would seem to speak more broadly than to just one local church. The prophetic nature of the book (cf. 1:3) lends credence to the idea that the selected churches **representatively** have application for all churches down through the church age; and at the same time, may also **prophetically** depict the course of church history.

Seven: Is the predominate number in Revelation occurring **54 times**. Starting in Genesis, where we find God resting on the seventh day, the number seven in Scripture consistently signifies completion, fullness, or perfection.

Grace to you and peace- Grace is God’s unmerited favor. God’s attitude toward His people is one of GRACE. This became a kind of Christian greeting affirming that God’s grace was poured out on His people. Peace has its equivalent in the Hebrew word “Shalom”. It expresses “well being” and that all is well. Grace and peace are always in this order. Out of God’s grace, flows His peace.

Judgment is coming to the world, but grace and peace is ever extended to the churches! What a wonderful reality to find this judgment-filled book introduced with words of comfort and assurance to the people who belong to Jesus Christ.

Moreover, grace and peace win through at last. For at the end of the book the storm clouds roll away, the drums of war are stilled. The earth itself is purged by fire, and there emerges a

new heaven and a new earth, in which dwell righteousness, and where all is grace and peace. - **John Phillips**

from Him who is and who was and who is to come,

This language speaks to the fact that God is eternal. He transcends time. He is the ever existing, never changing God who is over all of history. Many believe that this is a fuller expression of the concept of I AM as found in Exodus 3.

and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, Some have thought this may refer to seven angelic beings. However, most agree that this is probably a reference to the Holy Spirit.

The most decisive consideration against a reference to angels is the impossibility that created beings could be seen as a source of an invocation of grace and peace in 1:4-5. – **Robert Thomas**

Why is the Holy Spirit then referenced as “seven Spirits”? In this book of symbolism, where the number seven is prominent, it would seem to refer to the fullness of the Spirit.

The “seven Spirits” likely represent the sevenfold ministry of the Spirit as depicted in Isa. 11:2. – **Charles Ryrie** (emphasis mine)

The most satisfactory explanation for the title “seven spirits” traces its origin to Zech. 4:1-10. **Zechariah 4:2, 10** speaks of the seven lamps (cf. Rev. 4:5) that are the eyes of the Lord which range throughout the whole earth. ... The prominence of the Holy Spirit’s activity in the world in Zech. 4:2-10 is established by the words “not by might or by power, but by my Spirit says the Lord of hosts” (Zech. 4:6). – **Robert Thomas** (emphasis mine)

Revelation 1:5 (NKJV)

5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood,

Faithful means reliable, dependable, trustworthy.

Witness is the idea of testimony. The word “martyr” comes from the Greek word for witness. Jesus testified to the reality of God and His truth (cf. Jn. 1:18, 18:37). Faithful witnesses in the N.T. were those who were willing to lay down their lives for God and His truth (cf. 2:13).

the firstborn from the dead, Firstborn refers to Christ’s pre-eminent status (cf. Col. 1:18), and also to the fact that Christ was the first one to be raised from the dead with a glorified body (cf. 1 Cor. 15:20).

and the ruler over the kings of the earth. This harkens back to Daniel 4:17, 25, 32, where the emphasis is that the “Most High rules in the kingdom of men”. It reflects Christ’s future reign as King of kings.

Note the parallelism between Christ’s three offices of Prophet, Priest, and King, as found in the three descriptions here.

Prophet: Faithful witness

Priest: Firstborn from the dead (entered into His High Priestly ministry, cf. Hebrews)

King: Ruler over the kings of the earth.

To Him who loved us- This is in the present tense showing that Christ's love is ever a continuous reality for the believer.

and washed us from our sins in His own blood, Some translations render this as Christ having loosed/freed/released us from our sins. One letter in the manuscripts makes the difference, but the essential sense is the same. This harkens back to the Exodus and release from bondage in conjunction with the Passover.

Revelation 1:6 (NKJV)

6 and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

This views believers corporately as being made a kingdom, building on the O.T. language of Ex. 19:6 where God told His people "And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

Peter picks up on this same language in 1 Peter 2:9.

1 Peter 2:9 (NKJV)

9 But 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;

We are now viewed corporately as a Royal family with the destiny that one day we will reign with Jesus Christ. This anticipates our association with Christ in His future reign (cf. 5:10).

Priests serve in the intimate presence of God, giving them special access to Him. All believers are spiritual priests. We all have an intimate relationship with God. All serve in the context of that intimacy, having the privilege of access to God. We all have the privilege of offering up spiritual sacrifices.

- A. Our persons (cf. Rom. 12:1-2).
- B. Our possessions (cf. Phil. 4:18).
- C. Our praises (cf. Heb. 13:15).
- D. Our service (cf. 1 Thess. 1:9).

Kingdom indicates our corporate standing, while Priests signifies ministering individually. We are part of a royal family, but each one has a distinctive role to play in spiritual service.

At this point, John can't refrain from a spontaneous burst of PRAISE!

to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Glory refers to honor, the holding of one in high esteem. Dominion refers to power. This is forever Christ's to have. Amen is a strong affirmation of agreement meaning "so be it!"

John now runs ahead to when this will be reality in all its fullness at the second coming of Jesus Christ, and thereby reiterates the THEME of the book, namely the Revelation of Jesus Christ (cf. 1:1).

Revelation 1:7 (NKJV)

7 Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.

Behold, He is coming with clouds, This is speaking of the Second Coming and not the rapture of the church (cf. Dan. 7:13). Rev. 19:1-11 amplifies this.

and every eye will see Him, It will be visible and it will be public. No one will miss this!

The question is raised how in a global situation with the world's population all over the globe, at any one moment every eye will be able to see Christ's coming to earth.

The answer seems to be found in 19:11-16. The coming of Christ, unlike the rapture, will not be an instantaneous event but will be a gigantic procession of holy angels and saints from heaven to earth. There is no reason why this should not take twenty-four hours with its termination on the Mount of Olives. In that period the earth will revolve, and regardless of what direction Christ comes from, people will be able to see His coming from their position on the earth. – **John Walvoord**

even they who pierced Him. It would seem this is speaking about those who are alive on the earth at the time of the Second Coming. Therefore, those who literally crucified Christ would not seem to be in view, whether Jew or Gentile. Many have taken this as a take-off of Zech. 12:10.

If this is the sense, then the whole world (every eye) will see Jesus coming; but specific mention is made in reference to the Jews which certainly would be in keeping with Zechariah. The Mount of Olives will be His touch-down point. They will definitely get a first-hand view.

However, the CONTEXT emphasizes not just the repentant Jewish remnant as found in Zechariah, but all the families of the earth. It could therefore refer to a repentant remnant represented in all the families of the earth. Others think this is a reference to the lost mass of humanity that have rejected Christ, and as they see Him coming, they wail and mourn because of what is happening (cf. Lk 21:25-27). Therefore, some take this verse in the sense of Matt. 24:30, which has similar language regarding the "tribes of the earth". If this is the case, then "pierced" is to be understood in the sense of rejecting Christ in the spirit of Heb. 6:6, concerning those who "crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame."

And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. The focal point here in this sentence is "all the tribes of the earth", that is, all the families of the earth (cf. every eye will see Him).

The final clause of v. 7 lends itself to two possible interpretations. ... refers to a mourning of repentance [which] matches the meaning of the OT source passage, Zech. 12:10f. ... A second way of explaining the last clause of v. 7 [is that it] refers to a mourning of despair by a sinful world over the judgment of Christ at His return. That Jesus uses the same passage to denote a mourning of despair in Matt. 24:30 strongly favors this approach... The weightiest consideration of all appears to be the worldwide scope of the book.

"Those who dwell on the earth" (3:10; 6:10; 8:13; 11:10 [twice]; 17:2, 8) are the objects of the wrath... Besides this, the people on whom these judgments fall do not respond by repenting... This carries the sense, "All the families of the earth will mourn over Him with remorse because of the severity of punishment inflicted upon them in conjunction with His return. – **Robert Thomas**

At the second coming, the families of the earth in general would seem to be wailing because of the judgment that is coming upon them. We do leave room for those crying tears of repentance as seen in Zech. 12, but the emphasis here seems to be on the lost world mourning their imminent fate.

As we move into verse eight, there is considerable discussion about whether the speaker in verse eight, is God the Son or God the Father. **A case can be made for both.** Certainly there is overlap. For example, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End" is also said of God the Father in Rev. 21:6, but also of Jesus in Rev. 22:13. Both are described in this way. In various

places, the Father is described as “Him who is and who was and who is to come” and the “Almighty”. Frankly, sometimes it is hard to know where one leaves off and the other begins. (cf. 1:1)

Thomas goes on to say that he thinks the evidence “tips the balance ever so slightly” to the side of the Father. Certainly GOD is in view, and what is true of one member of the Trinity is true of the others as well.

Revelation 1:8 (NKJV)

8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,” says the Lord, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

There is lots of discussion as to whether the Father or the Son is in view in this verse. Often there is overlap in the book of Revelation. I would tend to think it tips to the Son speaking because of the immediate CONTEXT. The discussion in context finds Jesus the central figure. It flows to Him and seems to follow well with His coming in verse seven (cf. 1:11, 17-18).

Whichever conclusion is correct, it is clear that a close affinity exists between the Father and the Son in this book. – **Robert Thomas**

Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek Alphabet. It is like saying from A to Z in English. It represents TOTALITY. Everything begins and ends with Him. Nothing lies outside of Him. He is absolutely sovereign.

the Beginning and the End,” In combination with Alpha and Omega, this presents a double emphasis. God created everything and everything has its consummation in Him. He is the Lord of history. History is His Story! Everything begins and ends with Him (cf. Rom. 11:36).

says the Lord, “who is and who was and who is to come, This emphasizes that He is the eternal God. It is an amplified way of saying “I AM”. He always was, He is, He will always be. He just IS! (cf. Ps. 90:2).

the Almighty.” Literally, this is, “the one who has his hand on everything”. He is the all-powerful one, the omnipotent one, the all-sufficient one.

Revelation 1:9 (NKJV)

9 I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

John: is named three times in the first nine verses. John had been a leader in Ephesus for some time and was undoubtedly well known by all these churches.

Brother: John makes no claim to apostolic status here. He simply introduces himself as a brother on the same level as all of them, a fellow member of the family.

Companion: They share in these things together.

Tribulation: This is not referring to THE tribulation period. John, certainly never experienced that, and neither will the church. This is daily tribulation and suffering, the afflictions that are common to the followers of Christ in the church age (cf. Jn. 16:33).

And kingdom: This anticipates the coming kingdom reign of Christ which the church will share in.

And patience: Endurance. It means to go through much difficulty and suffering, and yet, keep on keeping on because of your faith.

Note that tribulation, kingdom, and patience are together as a package. Yes, we share the common hope of the coming kingdom, but also in the present sufferings which involve patient endurance. Sandwiched right in between tribulation and patience is the reality of the kingdom. What an encouragement, and yet, a dose of reality (cf. Acts 14:22).

Patience or endurance in the Scriptures is often shown to be evidence of genuine saving faith, of genuine relationship with Jesus Christ (cf. 3:10, 13:10, 14:12, Lk. 8:11-15).

Patmos: Was located about 50 miles S.W. of Ephesus off the coast of modern day Turkey. It was an island consisting mainly of volcanic hills and rocky ground. The island was about ten miles long and six miles wide at the widest point. The early church fathers recorded that the Roman Emperor Domitian sent John there as a prisoner because of his spiritual leadership in Ephesus. On Patmos, he was forced to work in the mines. Patmos was an isolated place, a prison island from which there was essentially no way of escape. When Domitian died in A.D. 96, Nerva allowed John to return to Ephesus.

For the word of God and testimony of Jesus Christ. John was bold in His stand for Jesus as he proclaimed of the Word of God. As a result, he was persecuted for his faith. That is the very reason he is here on the isle of Patmos.

Revelation 1:10 (NKJV)

10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet,

"In the Spirit" is literally "I became in Spirit". This phrase is found four times in Revelation (1:10, 4:2, 17:3, 21:10). It always refers to a spiritual visionary realm for the sake of granting John special revelations.

Lord's Day: Two ideas have been put forth here.

1. It refers to the future Day of the Lord and as such, John was spiritually transported to this future day with which the bulk of the book is dealing. The problem is that not all of this book is dealing with this. In fact, the first part (in chapters two and three) is dealing with the present church age through and through. He doesn't get to the day of the Lord proper until chapter six.
2. It refers to Sunday.

The grammatical construction does not warrant it to be interpreted as "The day of the Lord"... It means, rather, "the day belonging to the Lord"; the only similar construction in the N.T. is in 1 Cor. 11:20 describing the Lord's Supper. – **Henry Morris**

I would lean to view number two. The church had been meeting for many years (c. 60 years) at this point on the first day of the week in honor of the risen Lord. The majority of commentators hold to this view. However, it is only mentioned here and without any qualifiers, so I wouldn't be dogmatic or legalistic.

I wouldn't want to be legalistic; we live in the age of grace, but I do think that assembling together on the first day of the week is honoring to the Lord. That is the precedent of N.T. Scripture (cf. Acts 20:7, 1 Cor. 16:2). I personally would not feel comfortable with consistently missing church services on Sunday unless I had good reason to do so. Much of the church has historically considered this to be "The Lord's Day" in honor of the fact that Jesus Christ was risen from the dead on the first day of the week (cf. Lk. 24:1, 7, 13, 21). I think this was probably John's way of saying that this happened on Sunday, the day he would normally be assembled in worship with the Church of God at Ephesus.

I know a thousand things to do when Sunday rolls around

**But most of them will interfere with worship I have found.
If I use the day for pleasure I have a conscience in the lurch
For Sunday isn't Sunday unless I go to church. – Unknown Author**

I frankly think we probably should have an uneasy conscience if we are not assembling on Sunday, unless we have a legitimate reason for not being here. It should be the PRIORITY and will be if we see it AS THE LORD'S DAY! However, it is only mentioned here, and not with any qualifiers, so I wouldn't be dogmatic or legalistic.

loud voice, as of a trumpet, - a voice of authority.

Revelation 1:11 (NKJV)

11 saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea."

Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last refers to Jesus Christ as the eternal one. He is the One that starts and concludes all things.

See: In vision form.

Write in a book: That is a scroll. This is the first of 12 commands in Revelation for John to write what he sees.

The seven churches were located in these seven cities which were major postal centers. Beginning with Ephesus, a somewhat circular pattern would take you to each city.

These seven churches are....

1. Representative of the various churches throughout church age.
2. Representative of the various stages of church history.

Suggested Prophetic Outline of the Church Age

Ephesus: (Early/Apostolic Church – Orthodox but unloving - A.D. 33-100)

Smyrna: (Persecuted but pure Church – A.D. 100-312)

Pergamos: (Church married to the world – A.D. 313-590)

Thyatira: (Church in idolatry – A.D. 590-1517)

Sardis: (Dead church with remnant – A.D. 1517-1800)

Philadelphia: (Church with a little strength – A.D. 1800–Rapture)

Laodicea: (Apostate Church – Last Days/Tribulation)

What Christ has to say to these churches is **very significant because it speaks** to us in the church age very pointedly. This is what Christ is saying to US in this present age. "He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

Revelation 1:12 (NKJV)

12 Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands,

Seven golden lampstands: The number seven consistently represents completion. These seven lampstands represent the seven churches, and we believe, they are representative of all churches.

Golden: Valuable

Lampstands were light holders. Their function is to give forth light.

Revelation 1:13 (NKJV)

13 and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.

Right in the middle of these seven lampstands was Jesus. He is intimately associated with these local churches (cf. Acts 9:4, 1 Cor. 14:25).

There was nothing between Him and the individual lampstands, no agency, hierarchy, or organization. Each church was autonomous. – **William MacDonald**

Revelation presents each church accountable to Jesus. Yes, we will all individually give account, but our individual service is in the context of the LOCAL CHURCH. Jesus thinks in terms of CHURCH. The N.T. never presents isolated Christianity that is unplugged, uninvolved, uncommitted, as an option. That is foreign to the spirit of the N.T. Christ is building a body, and for a body to live and thrive, it is dependent upon its members.

Son of Man – This is a Messianic title going back to Dan. 7:13.

Garment: Some suggest that the emphasis here depicts Christ as great high priest or royalty. There may be a combination of things seen here, but the predominate picture here is of Jesus as JUDGE! See this as the robe of a JUDGE.

Revelation 1:14 (NKJV)

14 His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire;

White like wool, as white as snow, portrays wisdom, purity, and eternity (cf. Ancient of Days in Dan. 7:9-13).

His eyes like a flame of fire: portrays them as piercing. His gaze was penetrating. He could see right through a person. He is the all-knowing one from Whom nothing is hidden (cf. Heb. 4:13).

Revelation 1:15 (NKJV)

15 His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters;

His feet were like fine brass: That is highly polished bronze. Brass or bronze consistently represents judgment in Scripture. Many believe this pictures Christ treading out judgment.

His voice as the sound of many waters: It was a powerful force, like the surf crashing on the rock on Patmos, or the sound of Niagara Falls. It was the voice of authority.

Revelation 1:16 (NKJV)

16 He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.

Right hand: Represents strength in relation to control, authority, protection, the place of honor.

The letters to the seven churches emphasize Christ's RULING AUTHORITY over them and their accountability to Him. However, they are certainly in His protective care, in contrast to the sword of judgment, that is directed to the unbelieving world.

Out of His Mouth went a sharp two edged sword: Two edged swords were invented by the Romans. They were used in hand to hand combat and were weapons very effective in killing people. That basically was the purpose.

This speaks of Christ's judicial authority. All he has to do is speak the word and it is done!

Ten times in Genesis One, we have the phrase "And God said", and it happened. Certainly this is true in relation to judgment as well. He judges according to His Word. He executes judgment on the basis of His Word! (cf. Jn. 12:48, Rev. 19:15).

Footnote: Even in the church, Jesus may judge with deadly results (cf. 2:16 the church at Pergamos, 1 Cor. 11:28-32).

His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. This is not Jesus in a state of humility as when John placed his head on His breast at the last supper (Jn. 13:25). No, this is Christ in His exalted glory!!! This is Christ high and lifted up. His presence is overwhelming. His dazzling splendor and transcendent glory were awesome beyond imagination (cf. Mt. 17:2, Acts 9:3).

People often get sentimental about Jesus and bring Him down to the "buddy" level. That was not John's experience at this point. He didn't reach out to Jesus for a holy hug. He fell at His feet like a DEAD MAN!

Heaven will at once be a great eye opener and a great mouth shutter!

- unknown author

Revelation 1:17 (NKJV)

17 And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last.

This is a beautiful scene. John is totally humbled in His presence as a "dead" man, but then Christ's touch restores his composure. Christ's touch and words bring comfort, peace, and assurance. How wonderful that the One Who is the "First and the Last" graciously says to His own, "Do not be afraid." This is grace!

I am the First and the Last - This speaks of His sovereignty, His eternity. Everything begins and ends with Him. He is creator and consummator of all. This title which is grounded in the O.T. clearly shows that Jesus is the eternal God (cf. Isa. 44:6).

Revelation 1:18 (NKJV)

18 "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.

Jesus is the ever living one. He defines life. He is life (Jn. 11:25, 14:6). To be sure, as the God-Man He was dead, but He rose again, and now lives forevermore.

Keys: Represent authority. They signify control and access.

Hades: This is the unseen realm of the dead. It refers to the spirit world of departed souls. Jesus has the keys over this realm. We need not fear!

Death represents the grave, where the material body goes at the time of death.

The ultimate concern and fear of people is death. This is the ultimate problem. Only Jesus has the solution. Only He has the key to this realm. Only He can unlock this reality. The destiny of every human being is under the authority of Jesus Christ (cf. Jn. 5:28-29).

Revelation 1:19 (NKJV)

19 “Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.

Here we have the “inspired outline” of the book.

Sometimes people hide the key to their house by the back door. Sometimes they hide it by the front door. Many books have the key to understanding toward the back of the book, but here we have the key to Revelation near the front door, at the beginning of the book. This is indeed KEY!

The things which you have seen: The past. Vision of the eternal Christ – Ch. 1

The things which are: The present. Church Age – Ch. 2-3

The things which will take place after this. The future: Ch. 4-22

Rev. 1:19 – Inspired Outline

“**Have seen**” – Past (Vision of Christ) – Ch. 1

“**Are**” – Present (Church Age) – Ch. 2-3

“**After This**” – Future (Post Church Age) – Ch. 4-22

- Scene in heaven – Ch. 4-5
- Tribulation – Ch. 6-18
- Second Coming – Ch. 19
- Kingdom – Ch. 20
- Eternal State – Ch. 21-22

The threefold division is the most natural understanding of the symmetrical grammatical construction of 1:19 and fits the contents of the Apocalypse quite well.

- Robert Thomas

These three divisions are clear and they do not overlap. Each division is complete in itself and distinct from the other two. This is God's own division of the book. Hold fast to it, and you cannot go astray in your quest to understand its meaning. Do not at any time lift events from one division and attempt to place them in another. **–Leman Strauss**

The same terminology, “after this”, is found in Chapter 4:1 which introduces us to events beyond the Church Age.

Revelation 1:20 (NKJV)

20 “The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.

Mystery: That which previously was not known, but is now revealed by God. It is a divine secret that can only be known by revelation.

Seven stars in right hand – mentioned earlier in vs. 16.

Seven golden lampstands – mentioned earlier in vs. 12 and 13.

This symbolism is immediately explained. This is the plan of the book. A new symbolism is immediately explained, and if not, it has already been explained elsewhere in the Bible.

-Jon VanGorder:

The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches (cf. 1:16). There is lots of discussion about the identity of these seven stars.

Angels: Literally means messengers. It can be used of humans (Lk. 9:52, Ja. 2:25), but most often is used of angels proper. One of the arguments that angels are in view here is that everywhere else in Revelation angels are in view. So some have taken it that each church has a distinct guardian or ministering angel assigned to it.

However, there is a problem with that view. These angels are accused of sinful conduct and are rebuked in Chapters 2 and 3. That certainly does not fit with guardian angels.

Most of the rebukes of chapters 2-3 are second person singular, messages that look first at the individual messengers and presumably through them to the churches they represent. Unfallen angels do not sin, neither are they in need of repentance as these messengers along with the churches were (e.g., 2:4-5, 14, 20, 3:1, 1, 2, 3, 15, 17, 19). **-Robert Thomas**

Some type of human leadership role is in view. It is probably those who would be the main messengers in delivering God's Word to His churches. Throughout the N.T., we find a special responsibility is on the shoulders of those who teach and represent God in this way. I believe that the primary pastor-teachers are very probably in view (cf. 2 Tim. 4:1-2).

The function of the seven stars and seven lampstands is to give off light! That is their purpose. They are to be light bearers. Christ who is the light of the world is right in the midst and His light is to be seen in how we live and what we say. That is the whole issue. It is to be reflected in the leaders, the stars, and in all the members of the congregation, that is, the lampstand (cf. Phil. 2:15, 1 Pet. 2:9).

This reality of Christ's presence in the midst of the churches that are to be light bearers, and His position of authority in relation to the leaders, leads right into His evaluation and critique of the churches and how their light is shining.

Before the Apocalypse presents any message of judgment on the unbelieving world, it first calls the church to repentance. Judgment must begin at the house of God. **-Ed Hindson**

The seven letters/messages to the seven churches form a literary unit, each being tied to the vision of Christ in Chapter One.

Each letter...

1. Begins with stating the addressee – the church in view.
2. Mentions and describes the speaker; namely Christ.
3. Notes Christ's KNOWLEDGE of the church.
4. Has Christ's evaluation of the church.
5. Has a commendation or condemnation from Christ.
6. Has the exhortation to listen.
7. Concludes with a promise for overcomers.

There are two churches with no words of condemnation. They are Smyrna, the suffering church; and Philadelphia, the evangelizing church. There are two churches with no words of commendation. They are Sardis, the dead church with a remnant; and Laodicea, the apostate church.

These messages are VERY PRACTICAL (cf. 1:3 “keep”).

This portion of Scripture has been strangely neglected. While many turn to the epistles of Paul and other portions of the N.T. for church truth, often the letters to these seven churches, though coming from Christ Himself and being climactic in character, are completely ignored.

– **The Bible Knowledge Commentary**

Chapters Two and Three relate to the present age. The “things which are” speak to the present CHURCH AGE.

Revelation 2:1 (NKJV)

1 “To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, ‘These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands:

Angel: Probably a reference to the main leader who is the messenger or communicator to the church.

Church of Ephesus

Ephesus was a large city of about **250,000 people**. It is the largest city of the seven churches addressed. Ephesus was a leading **commercial center**. It boasted an amphitheater that would seat **25,000 people**. It was also a **RELIGIOUS center** revolving around the worship of the Greek goddess, Artemis, who was also known as the Roman goddess, Diana. The temple of Diana was one of the **Seven Wonders of the Ancient World**. This temple stood on a platform larger than two football fields. It was supported by 120 marble columns – each 60 feet in height. Inside the temple, stood the statue of the goddess Diana.

This image was believed to be sacred, but really was repulsive. It was a grotesque, squat, blackened, many breasted figure that supposedly fell from heaven. There were thousands of temple priests and priestesses, and many of them worked as temple prostitutes. Immoral activities were considered sacred as Diana was the **goddess of fertility**. A leading industry was the manufacturing of miniature images of this goddess. Also, many criminals congregated there because the temple was recognized as a place of sanctuary. So Ephesus was a town full of **idolatry, immorality, and crime**.

In this context, God had a CHURCH.

Paul visited the city on his second missionary journey around A.D. 52. On his third missionary journey, Paul stayed there for three years (longer than any other place), and had a very fruitful ministry (cf. Acts 19:10-28, 20:31). Also, Timothy, Aquila and Pricilla, Apollos, as well as the Apostle John ministered there extensively. In fact, it is thought that John the Apostle had been serving the church there for **30 years** prior to his exile to the isle of Patmos. The church at Ephesus at the time John was writing Revelation was about **40 years old**.

‘These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands:

This harks back to the vision of Christ in Chapter One. It emphasizes His **Lordship authority** over the key leaders and His **presence** in the midst of the churches. He is closer than they realized. They

evidently had lost sight of Christ's Lordship authority and His unseen presence; and so it is emphasized.

Revelation 2:2 (NKJV)

2 "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars;

I know: Christ says this to every church. There is nothing hidden from Him. He is right there in their midst. He knows what has been going on.

Works: Areas of service.

Labor: Hard work.

Patience: Endurance in difficult times..

Cannot bear those who are evil. They were "intolerant" of sin. They took a stand and would dis-fellowship those living in sin. It would not be tolerated at Ephesus.

Tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and found them liars. They are discerning. John is thought to be the last living apostle. However, others were now claiming this distinguishing position of authority, but the church at Ephesus evaluated them by God's word and finds them to be LIARS (cf. 1 Cor. 5:12, 1 Jn. 4:1, Acts 20:28-31).

Revelation 2:3 (NKJV)

3 "and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary.

Persevered: They have kept on keeping on.

Patience: Endurance.

Labored for My name's sake: They were genuinely doing it for Christ.

Not become weary: They hadn't gotten slack. They haven't quit or given up.

Wow! This is a great church. They are active, busy, doing things. They are discerning, taking strong doctrinal stands. They are doing it all for the cause of Christ, and they just keep on keeping on. What a tremendous Church! Just one problem...

Revelation 2:4 (NKJV)

4 "Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.

Nevertheless: Yet Christ has a problem with them, a SERIOUS problem.

The point here is that a church can be super active in service; be doctrinally sound; be taking stands for Christ; and yet not have His approval. Christ starts with a long list of commendations, but then ABRUPTLY zeros in on this one area defect.

Left: To abandon. It is deliberate, responsible action, "to forsake".

Love: Is this love for Christ or love for people, especially the brethren? There has been much discussion over this, but really you can't ultimately separate the two. This is a package (cf. 1 Jn. 4:20). The great command is to love God supremely, but the way that is reflected is in how you love people, and in particular, your fellow believers. Love is the firstfruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). Love is the greatest activity of all (1 Cor. 13). Love is the distinguishing trait of Christ's followers (Jn. 13:34-35). Love is the acid test on genuine Christianity (cf. 1 Jn. 4:7-8).

Those in the church at Ephesus were going through all the service and doctrinal motions, but something was wrong in the heart. Their motives and motivation was not out of Christian love as it had been early in the life of the church. They had become the "Fighting Fundamentalist Machine"

with lots of programs, activities, and sound doctrine, but where is the LOVE? Thirty-five years earlier it had been there (cf. Eph. 1:15). It happened gradually and subtly. They had drifted into **LOVELESS ORTHODOXY**. The service was there, but it was COLD. The doctrine was there, but it was COLD! No matter what we do or how much we do, if it is not out of LOVE, it is for nothing. Ephesus had become a service- oriented, doctrinally- oriented, but no longer a “people-oriented” church.

Note the context here: This is essentially a **second generation** church at this point. Yes, this next generation stood for the fundamentals of the faith, but LOVE was lacking. This is a problem for churches that have been in existence for a while. **A brand new church is generally very much into people**. They have to be or die. But as they get established, they can easily get into the **routine** of ministry that lacks love. Love for Christ is principally shown in love for others, especially His people. This was lacking at Ephesus. Oh, there was still some love there, but not like at the first.

Revelation 2:5 (NKJV)

5 “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.

It is like they fell off a cliff. They are way down from where they used to be in terms of LOVE. We tend to forget. That is why we are commanded to have the **Lord’s supper** perpetually, to REMEMBER. People have short term memories. We constantly need to be reminded and exhorted.

Repent and do the first works,

Repent means to change your mind or attitude about sin. But notice it is closely **associated and connected** with behavior – “do the first works”.

True repentance is a CHANGE OF MIND, but if genuine, it **results** in a change of behavior. That is the consistent teaching of Scripture. Repentance is involved in salvation (Lk. 13:3), but repentance is also called for in the life of believers who get off track. You can’t lose your salvation, but you can hinder your walk with God, and you can lose out on your reward.

Note: Christ doesn’t say “repent and **feel the first feelings**”. The issue here is the WILL ... with resulting behavior! The issue is a change of mind, that results in action. Love is an active thing. It doesn’t just talk about it. Love and works go together.

The word love in verse four is AGAPE. This is God’s kind of love. This Love involves sacrificial giving. It seeks the other person’s highest good. It looks out for the best, for the welfare of others, and puts others before self (cf. Phil. 2:4-5).

Or else: Christ says “repent or else”. If they don’t repent, there will be serious consequences.

I will come to you quickly: This denotes a swift visit of judgment. It signifies divine intervention that will take them by surprise with devastating results. God is very patient, but when He disciplines, it is often with great swiftness.

Remove your lampstand from its place – unless you repent.

The whole purpose of the churches’ existence is to shine the light of Christ’s truth and love. If a church is not loving, it might as well be shut down! This flaw is so serious that if they don’t repent, Jesus is going to remove them as a church. They will cease to be a church. He will remove their lampstand. Their light will be put out. It is interesting to note that today there is no TESTIMONY for Christ at Ephesus. The light has been put out.

Christ starts with commending them. That is the way of grace. He then rebukes them sharply, and follows with another word of commendation. That, too, is the way of grace. From Christ, we see just the right balance of exhorting and rebuking.

Revelation 2:6 (NKJV)

6 “But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

Christ commends them on this: They HATE what He hates! We need to love what God loves and hate what He hates. Today there are those who say all God is about is LOVE, LOVE, LOVE. Yes, He is a God of love, but He is also a HOLY God who hates sin (cf. Ps. 97:10).

Note: They hated the DEEDS of these people, not the people per se. What were the DEEDS of the Nicolaitans? Frankly, no one knows for sure. These ideas have been put forth...

1. In verses 14-15, they are closely tied to Balaamites involving idolatry and immorality.
2. The term “Nicolaitans” consists of two words: *nikao* = to conquer & *laos* = people; hence the meaning “people conquerors”, referring to a form of hierarchy in the church. Along with this, some would tie verse 6 back to verses 2 & 3 regarding the false prophets in view.
3. Those who indulged in the flesh and were an early Gnostic sect.

Clearly, what they were about was flagrantly evil and Jesus commends the church for their stand against what these people were doing. It has been pointed out that whereas they were weak in love, they were strong on hate. At least they were hating the right things, which is commendable; but also there is danger here.

All too often those who have forgotten how to love specialize in hating error.

- John Phillips

It is Biblical to hate error, but we must not lose the Biblical balance. We must not lose the LOVE in the process. There is a danger here, that in our strong doctrinal stands, we can forget to love. I speak to myself first and foremost! Of course we are to hate error, but we are also to love people. It is easy to talk about “loving the sinner and hating the sin”, but not always so easy to live (cf. 2 Tim. 2:24-25). We must earnestly contend for the faith; we must fight the good fight; but we must always do so with the right spirit (cf. Eph. 6:12). Here is an example where you can fall off either side of the horse. You can be loving, and not doctrinally sound; but you can also be doctrinally sound, and not loving, which was the concern at Ephesus. We need both!

Note: Tough love is often quick to be counted as a lack of love, but God knows the motives. In balance, note that Ephesus is commended for the tough love of not tolerating false teachers.

Revelation 2:7 (NKJV)

7 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.”

Christ concludes His message with a PERSONAL exhortation to individuals within the churches to LISTEN!

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. There is application for all people in all churches here! The language is reminiscent of Christ’s parable of the sower and the soils (Matt. 13, Mk. 4, Lk. 8). It is a way of saying: Get this and apply it. Take it to heart. Listen up!

Overcomes: Triumphs! Has the victory. This is a term that consistently defines true believers (cf. 1 Jn. 5:4-5). Therefore, this is a promise to the genuine believer, suggesting that not all in these churches were real Christians.

It is evident from the singling out of the overcomer in 2:7 that some in the second generation of Ephesian Christians had not experienced genuine salvation...

Robert Thomas – p. 141 Revelation Commentary

Revelation 2:7 makes it clear that individual believers within the church may be true to the Lord, no matter what others may do. In these seven messages, the “overcomers” are not a “spiritual elite” but rather the true believers whose faith has given them victory (1 Jn. 5:4-5).

– **Warren Wiersbe**

In other words, verse 7 is a promise that applies to those individuals whose faith is genuine and it bears out in their lives. By the way, this harmonizes with the emphasis in the sower and soil parable.

Luke 8:8 (NKJV)

8 “But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and **yielded a crop** a hundredfold.” When He had said these things He cried, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”

Although addressing the church at Ephesus, in particular, and making application for all churches everywhere, the challenge is for all those individuals in the context of the church to LISTEN. Make sure you’re saved! One of the evidences of true salvation is LISTENING TO JESUS CHRIST (cf. Lk. 8:21). The promise is to OVERCOMERS! Overcomers in the Book of Revelation are those who have genuine saving faith. They share in Christ’s overcoming victory, by faith.

I will give to eat from the tree of life... This is another way of saying that this person will be granted eternal life. The tree of life is introduced in Gen. 2 and is mentioned in the last chapter of the Bible, Rev. 22.

Paradise: lit. “Garden”. This is paradise restored. It means enjoying intimate fellowship with God and partaking of that tree in the middle of God’s paradise. Thus it signifies eternal life in His presence forever and ever.

Ephesus was orthodox, but lacking in love. The next church addressed is Smyrna. This church is shown to be a persecuted, but pure church. Persecution has a way of purifying the church and Smyrna is an example of that reality.

Revelation 2:8 (NKJV)

8 “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, ‘These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life:

Smyrna: Whereas Ephesus and the other cities addressed here in Revelation eventually died out, the city of Smyrna continues on even to this day. The modern name of this city is Izmir, located in Turkey and has a population of about 200,000 people. It is an old city going back to at least 1000 B.C. Smyrna was located about 35 miles north of Ephesus and was one of the leading cities of the province of Asia. The name Smyrna means “bitter” and is related to the word “myrrh”. Smyrna was named for a perfume that was released by crushing the resin out of leaves or a small thorn bush. The perfume was known to the Greeks as “Smyrna”. Smyrna was used not only for perfume, but also for anointing oil for priests as well as for the anointing of the dead for aromatic purposes. Myrrh is often used figuratively in relation to suffering and persecution. As a child, gold, frankincense and myrrh (Mt. 2:11) were presented to Jesus. These items spoke of deity, royalty, and

suffering humanity. On the cross, Jesus was offered wine to drink mingled with myrrh (Mk. 15:23). Nicodemus and Joseph in preparing Christ body for burial used a mixture of myrrh and aloes (Jn. 19:39-40). However, at Christ's second coming, He will be presented with gold and frankincense, but not myrrh (cf. Isa. 60:6).

Smyrna was an important seaport. It was known for its commercialism, especially for its trade in wines. It was a very beautiful city with a crown-like appearance, with various temples and buildings draped across the skyline on a rounded hill. It had what was called the golden street which began down by the seaside and stretched all the way up to Mount Pagos with an impressive array of pagan temples and buildings along the way. For this reason, it was called "The Crown City", or the "The crown of all Asia". It was also called "The Port of Myrrh". It was a key learning center, especially in the area of medicine and the sciences. It came to be the birth place of Homer (Greek poet of 8th century who wrote Iliad and Odyssey). It had a library and a large stadium.

There are two factors that figure into the reality of persecution here. One was the fact that this city had become a center for the cult of emperor worship. Smyrna had received permission over several other cities to build a temple to the Roman emperor in 23 B.C. Many in the city took pride in their commitment to Rome and to the emperor, even to the point of worship. For this reason, the city was allowed by the Romans to be self-governing. The other factor that enters in here was that this city had a LARGE Jewish population that was hostile to Christianity. Putting it altogether, you have a formula for PERSECUTION. Smyrna represents the persecuted church.

We really don't know for sure how a church came to be planted in Smyrna, but a good guess would be that it happened in conjunction with Paul's ministry in this area on his third missionary journey (cf. Acts 19). Christ's message to Smyrna is the shortest of the messages to the churches. It contains no statement of condemnation or need to repent. Only praise and exhortation are given.

First and the Last: This harks back to the vision in Chapter One (cf. 1:8, 17-18). This title belongs to the Almighty God of Israel as established in the Book of Isaiah (cf. Isa. 44:6). It means that He is the eternal God Who is sovereign over all of history. He is the CREATOR and CONSUMMATOR of all things. It all begins and concludes with Him. (cf. 1:8, 17-18, 21:6, 22:13).

What a great encouragement: Caesars come and go, but Christ remains (cf. Heb. 13:8).

Who was dead: Literally "became a corpse". Yes, He died, and He was dead, but He...

Came to life: Christ didn't stay dead. He came back to life. This is the resurrection.

Jesus died, but He passed through it triumphantly. What a great encouragement this would be to the suffering saints who are facing persecution and possible death. Their Lord, their leader, has been there and conquered it, and they now share in that hope (cf. Heb. 2:18, 4:15-16). What we see here is Christ in His high priestly ministry serving the persecuted Church in a very meaningful way. He can relate. He has been there. He, too, has gone through suffering even to the point of death (cf. Jn. 16:33).

Revelation 2:9 (NKJV)

9 "I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

I know: Christ knows. He says this to every church. For those needing to repent, this can be a threatening reality; but for those under persecution, it is a great COMFORT. He knows what they are going through.

Works: This word is not in the most reliable manuscripts.

Tribulation: Meaning affliction or persecution. God's people are not exempt (cf. Jn. 15:18-20). It is a blessing and a comfort just to realize that Christ knows what we are going through.

Poverty: The word used here means extreme poverty. They basically had nothing in terms of worldly goods. Very possibly the unbelieving community did not want to hire or do business with these "Christians", whom they saw as a blight on their community. They were "black listed". This led to abject POVERTY.

(But you are rich) This is a very important parenthesis! They were poor materially, but RICH spiritually (cf. Mt. 6:19-21, Acts 3:6). Compare the apostate church at Laodicea that was rich materially, but poor spiritually (Rev. 3:17, cf. 1 Tim. 6:19-11).

and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

Once again, Christ says "**I know**". There is a double emphasis on this reality in this verse. In particular, He underscores that He is aware of the blasphemy being spoken against them.

Blasphemy: Means to slander, to speak injuriously, to defame, to give a false report about someone. During the first century, Christians were slandered in various ways: They were accused of 1) cannibalism (The Lord's Supper); 2) lust and immorality (holy kiss); 3) breaking up homes (unbelievers leaving believers); 4) atheism (recognized no other idolatrous gods); 5) political disloyalty (refusal to worship Caesar); 6) arson (blamed for the burning of Rome).

None of these things were true, but the slanderous rumors spread far and wide.

Note the close **connection between poverty and blasphemy**. They very possibly were suffering materially because of all the slander being leveled against them.

Who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

There was a large group of antagonistic Jews present in this city. They claimed to be God's special people and had the blood line tying back to Abraham. However, spiritually they were not really God's people, because they rejected their Messiah; and the believers, (Church) who followed Him (cf. Rom. 2:28-29, 9:6, Gal. 3:29). These Jews are **physical Jews, but not spiritual**, in the sense, they don't really belong to God, but rather to Satan (cf. Jn. 8:44, Rev. 3:9, 1 Thess. 2:14-15).

Note: As a fact of history, much of the most severe persecution against true Christians has come from those who are **RELIGIOUS**, but in error regarding the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The ultimate source behind the "slander" is Satan. Satan means adversary!

Ultimately our battle is with the spiritual forces behind what people are doing to us in term of persecution (Eph. 6:12). Satan is mentioned in reference to **four out of the seven** churches (cf. 2:9, 13, 24, 3:9). It is clear. Satan is very active in relation to the churches. Christ is walking in the midst of the churches, but so is Satan. Spiritual warfare is an ongoing reality (cf. 1 Pet. 5:8-9).

In the churches mentioned here, we find three sources of antagonism against the believers: 1) Hostile Jews, 2) Pagans, 3) Heretics. However, there ultimately is ONE source behind them all, and, that is, SATAN.

Revelation 2:10 (NKJV)

10 "Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about

to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Do not fear: Lit. “Stop being afraid.”

They had already been undergoing persecution (vs. 9), but here Jesus is telling them that more is on the way. Christ hasn't promised His people that we won't have tough times or that we won't be persecuted. In fact, He has told us that **we will be persecuted** if we live godly lives (cf. 2 Tim. 3:12). In the face of coming persecution, Christ exhorts them to not be afraid.

I believe that there is a **SUPERNATURAL power** that accompanies this exhortation. Without God, we cannot know this power and peace, but by having faith and depending on God, we can (cf. Phil. 1:28-29, 4:6-7, Heb. 4:15-16, Heb. 12:1-2, 1 Pet. 4:14).

God gives grace at the point it is needed.

He gives dying grace when we are dying.

He gives living grace when we are living.

He gives calming grace when we are facing suffering.

Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison,

Devil: Means slanderer (cf. Rev. 12:10).

Prison: In Rome, you didn't just sit in prison endlessly. Rome was too smart for that. You were likely waiting to go to trial, or possibly, to be put to death. If you were not put to death, you may have been badly beaten, forced to do hard labor, or exiled, etc. The point is you didn't just sit around endlessly for great lengths of time in a Roman jail. These people at this point would undoubtedly be facing severe physical treatment or death, depending on the sentence. They certainly, were not going to get three weeks in jail, and then get out on good behavior. Punishment would be relatively swift and severe. That is how Rome operated and that is what is in store for some of these dear Christians.

that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days.

God sometimes allows us to be tested...

- 1) To refine us.
- 2) To use us as a testimony for His glory.

This is testing by persecution. The emperor during this time was Domitian (A.D. 81-96)

Under Domitian (A.D. 81-96) emperor worship became compulsory for every Roman citizen on threat of death. Once a year a citizen had to burn incense on the altar to the godhead of Caesar, after which he was issued a certificate. ... all a citizen had to do was burn a pinch of incense and say, “Caesar is Lord. **-Expositors**

This became a real TESTING time! Would the believers in effect renounce Christ as Lord and affirm Caesar; or would they affirm Christ and renounce Caesar as Lord? Who is really Lord? Wow – what a testing!

Tribulation ten days:

No one is totally sure what this means. These ideas have been put forth...

- 1) Understood plainly as ten intensive days of persecution on the horizon for them. Perhaps ten specific days when Emperor worship would be enforced.
- 2) Ten distinct periods of persecutions under Roman emperors prior to Constantine. It was Constantine, who gave an Edict of toleration for the Christians in A.D. 313, which finally brought relief to the church; but it also brought compromise and corruption. That is represented by the church at Pergamos.
- 3) Ten years of intense persecution under Diocletian, who was the most cruel persecutor. He ruled just before Constantine.

Arguments are put forth for these views and others. Most probable is either view two or three, but there is no place for dogmatism here. Some claim that in the Scriptures there is a precedent for ten days simply being a limited, but unspecified period of time (cf. Gen. 24:55, Neh. 5:18, Jer. 42:7, Dan. 1:12, Acts 25:6, Num. 11:19, 14:22, 1 Sam. 1:8, Job. 19:3).

Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Be Faithful: Present tense.

How long? Until death! Neither escape nor ease is promised! A simple exhortation and a simple promise is held out! Don't be fearful! Do be faithful! Many Christians went to their death, rather than renounce their Lord Jesus Christ. They passed the ultimate EXAM and were immediately promoted to GLORY with all the best that heaven has to offer.

Tertullian (A.D. 160-225,) one of the early church fathers coined the phrase: **"The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church"**.

I will give you the crown of life.

This degree of faithfulness is the ultimate proof of loyalty and it comes with a promise of ASSURANCE. You will receive the crown of life. This is a statement of assurance, not a statement of the ground on which you have eternal life. Eternal life is based on the finished work of Christ alone and saving faith in Him. However, if the faith is real, it shows in one's life; and this is the ultimate proof of genuine saving faith.

This is not to be understood as a crown or a reward attending eternal life, but rather that their crown would be eternal life itself. – **John Walvoord**

This does not mean that faithfulness is a means of earning eternal life, but that such perseverance through suffering furnishes tangible assurance that they will receive eternal life through their faith in Christ... - **Robert Thomas**

Revelation 2:11 (NKJV)

11 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death."

Listen up! Take this to heart, all who are in the churches.

Overcomes: Overcomers are believers according to 1 Jn. 5:4-5. However, overcomers demonstrate their faith by being faithful, even unto death! Overcomers have before them this promise of assurance! The promise is that although they may kill you once, that is all they can do. Death will never touch you again. You never will have to worry about the second death, which is eternal death (cf. Rev. 20:14-15, 21:8).

“Born once – die twice. Born twice – die once.” – **D.L. Moody**

If you are born again, then all you have to face is physical death. However, if you are not born again, you will not only have to deal with physical death, but also a second death, an eternal death in the lake of fire.

In Rev. 2:12-17, Christ addresses the church in **Pergamos**. This is the compromising church that is married to the world. It is a church that tolerates worldly unions in their midst. Christ calls this church to repentance, or else threatens to deal severely with them.

Pergamos was located 55 miles north of Smyrna and about 20 miles inland from the Aegean Sea. The cities of Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamos were prominent.

Pergamos had a **library** at one point that grew to have 200,000 volumes which rivaled that of Alexandria. It was the birthplace of **Galen** who was second only to Hippocrates as the most famous physician in ancient times. It was in Pergamos that **parchments** were first developed and manufactured. They were animal skins that could be written on and provided a quality that surpassed primitive forms of paper. This city **dated** its existence back to the 5th century B.C. Today the modern city of **Bergama** sits on the site of the old city of Pergamos. But above all, what Pergamos was known for was **IDOLATRY!**

Ephesus was the great political center.

Smyrna was the great commercial center with its sea port.

Pergamos was the great religious center.

One ancient writer described Pergamos as “given to idolatry more than all Asia”. Pergamos was wealthy and wicked. A 1000-foot high hill directly behind the city was covered with idolatrous temples and altars. The primary deities were Zeus, Athena, Dionysos and Asklepios. The temple to the god of Zeus had an altar that eventually ended up in the Berlin Museum and was often visited by Adolph Hitler. Zeus was considered the god of power. Athena was the god of victory.

Dionysis is the same as Bacchus, the god of wine, the goat-god. He is depicted with horns, but with his upper part as a man and his lower part as a goat, with cloven feet and a tail. In our day that is the modern idea of Satan, but the notion that Satan has horns, cloven feet, and a forked tail did not come from the Bible. Where did it come from? Well, it came from the temple of Dionysius, the god of Bacchus, the god of wine or alcohol. – **J Vernon McGee**

Asklepios was a god **associated with serpents** and was known as the “**god of healing**” which attracted people from all over the world. Worshiping this god involved **feeding snakes** in the temple. The sick spent the night in the darkness of the temple where nonpoisonous snakes roamed freely. If a person was touched by one of these snakes, he was thought to be in contact with god and would be cured. On every hand, the serpent was visible and well-known in this society because of the prominence of this god. The priesthood of this cult supposedly specialized in medical secrets. It was known for its famous **asklepium** which was a **healing and medical center**. Religion, snake handling, and medical arts were combined for the purpose of healing people. It was medicine mixed with superstition and occultism. Even to this very day, the medical profession is associated with the symbol of the serpent which goes back to Pergamos.

However, above all the other idolatry, what it was most noted for was **emperor worship**. It was the first city in Asia to have a temple devoted to worshipping Caesar which was erected in 29 B.C. in

honor of Caesar Augustus. This idolatrous mixture made this city an especially difficult and dangerous place for Christians to live in.

Revelation 2:12 (NKJV)

12 “And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, ‘These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword:

The message is from Christ Who is presented as the One who has the sharp two-edged sword. This imagery ties back to 1:16. It pictures Jesus as the judicial authority of conquest. He is the warrior God who takes out those who oppose Him (cf. Rev. 19:15). Pergamos was a city under Roman rule that had been granted the “right of the sword”, meaning that the authorities of this city could exercise capital punishment at their own discretion. A sharp two edged sword in that context meant death should the authority decide to use it.

Christ reminds them that He is the ultimate authority that has the power of life and death. He is the ULTIMATE ONE with the two edged sword. Life and death are in His power.

Revelation 2:13 (NKJV)

13 “I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

“I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is.

Never forget Christ KNOWS what is going on with every church.

The word “works” is questionable, not being found in some prominent manuscripts.

Where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is.

He knows their environment, the oppressive atmosphere, the wicked context. That is comforting. Whatever your oppressive context, the Lord knows where you dwell and what you are going through. As a key center of idolatry, this is pictured as headquarters for Satanic activity. It is a stronghold for Satanic influence and therefore of persecution for the church. Christ knows their very dangerous and difficult circumstances. They are right in the center of pagan worship in the midst of Satan’s kingdom.

Note: Satan is not in hell at this point. Rather, he wanders about freely like a lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8), and he has certain strong holds related to key areas.

And you hold fast to My name,

In spite of a very difficult place, the church still held fast to the Person of Christ. They had not compromised their loyalty to the person of Christ. Many surmise that this very probably means they had not said, “Caesar is Lord”. They had not said, “Zeus is savior”. Rather they insisted that Jesus alone is Lord and Savior. They were holding fast to the TRUTH of the person of Jesus.

and did not deny My faith

They had personal trust and faith in Jesus. They stood strong in spite of pressure to compromise and persecution. They did not depend on any idol or other supposed higher power. Their faith was in Jesus!

even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

It became really intense, even to the point where one of their members, named Antipas, was killed. Yet, in that context, they still held fast to their faith in Christ.

Antipas: Tradition says Gaius (3 Jn. 1) was the first bishop of Pergamos, and that he was succeeded by Antipas. In reality, we know nothing else of Antipas other than he died because of his stand for Jesus Christ. Antipas means “against all”. This perhaps suggests that this man was willing to stand for the truth of Christ even if no one else would. He stood against all those who oppressed him and didn’t budge.

Faithful Martyr: Martyr is the word “witness” (cf. Acts 1:8). It came to be used of those who died because of their testimony for Jesus Christ. Tradition says he was slowly roasted to death in a bronze kettle during the reign of Domitian. (lived A.D. 51-96; ruled 81-96; severely persecuted Christians 95-96)

Note the double emphasis on “where Satan dwells”. This was a very wicked and oppressive place which manifested itself in persecution and killing of God’s people. Satan took his best shot from without, but the church HELD FAST. But Satan does not give up easily, and often will come with another strategy, if the first one is not successful. In this case, he attacks from within the professing church; and here he found the church to be vulnerable.

Note: Wouldn’t you think that if a church was strong in standing in the face of severe persecution, it would also be strong in standing against compromise from within? This church proves this is not necessarily so. Sometimes it is easier to deal with outside pressures than to deal with people in the church that you know. They are your friends; they claim to be “Christians”, but, in fact, are radically compromising the faith.

At this point, Christ goes from commending them to dealing with SIN in the church. Their stand from outside persecution has been commendable, but within the church, there is unacceptable COMPROMISE and TOLERANCE of sin.

Revelation 2:14 (NKJV)

14 “But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.

The problem Christ has with them is that they are indifferent to, and tolerant of, flagrant sin in the body. They are not taking a stand against compromise and sin from within. How often we are told today that to be LOVING means you just tolerate whatever sin comes into the body. We are told that if we really loved people, we would not judge them; meaning we shouldn’t discern and shouldn’t take a stand. We are told we should just skate along to get along, and frankly this is what MANY in the church are doing. Christ says, “I have a few things against you”. In spite of standing up to outward persecution, you are tolerating false doctrine that leads to immorality and idolatry by those in the church.

Have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam.

Christ’s problem is with those who are THERE. Certain people need to be put out of the church. We can not just be indifferent and lovingly “tolerant” of flagrant sin in the body. We must take a stand or Christ has a problem with us.

To understand the doctrine of Balaam we have to go back to the OT to the time of Moses (cf. Num. 22-25, 31). There we find a king by the name of Balak who was king over the Moabites. They were terrified of Israel and the advancement they were making, so he sent for this so called Gentile prophet (from Midian, south of Moab, by Dead Sea). This “prophet”, named Balaam, was asked to come and curse Israel. Lots of money was promised to Balaam and although he knew he shouldn’t go because he wanted the money, he went. Once he got there, God would not allow him to CURSE Israel, even though that was what Balaam wanted to do. In the end, he in effect gave this counsel to Balak: “These people can’t be cursed but if you allow your women to entice the Jewish men they will intermarry and lead them into idolatry and then God will judge them. The end result will be what you want – a people devastated.” (cf. Num. 25:1-4, 9)

The Bible speaks of ...

The way of Balaam – covetousness and greed – ministry for profit. (2 Pt. 2:15).

The error of Balaam – pursuing his own agenda instead of yielding to God’s will (Jude 11).

The doctrine of Balaam – corrupt the people through intermarriage and immorality which leads to idolatry resulting in their downfall (Rev. 2:14).

Balaam’s doctrine (teaching) broke down the principle of **biblical separation**, resulting in immorality and idolatry for God’s people.

In Pergamos, the culture was so filled with idolatry and immorality that unless you had a CLEAN BREAK with the culture, you would likely fall into it. Evidently, these people, in the church, holding to the doctrine of Balaam refused to break and separate from Pagan Feasts and all that it involved. They wanted to be Christians and yet indulge the flesh in cultural licentiousness. A key part of community events was the constant ongoing idolatrous feasts. These feasts were not just a matter of eating, but also involved the worshiping of false gods and often licentious and sexual immorality. Eating the meat, whether offered to idols or not, was not the real issue (cf. 1 Cor. 8, 10). The problem was participating in an event that involved idolatrous worship and licentious sexual immorality. Entering into and being a part of a worship festival such as this was in fact to involve yourself in idolatry and demon worship (cf. 1 Cor. 10:20).

In Pergamum, personal involvement in idolatrous feasts was the major issue. It had come to be viewed as morally indifferent by the Balaamite advocates... to participate in the feast was tantamount to the actual offering of sacrifices to these idols...It was the mixed company at these feasts that led to the other sin of fornication. Feasting on sacrificial meat and licentious conduct are the usual accompaniments of idol worship in both the OT and the NT. Yet some in Pergamum who professed to be Christians had yielded to cultural pressure, and the church had not pronounced against them. **-Robert Thomas**

By way of application, believers today must refuse to participate in some religious services that are in fact IDOLATROUS. Sometimes it may be appropriate to be there as a “spectator” (cf. funeral, wedding, etc.), but actual participation in worship that is flagrantly idolatrous is always wrong. God’s people are to have nothing whatsoever to do with either idolatry or immorality and often they go together. When the church doesn’t take a stand regarding intermarriage or immorality, it inevitably results in idolatry of one kind or another. Any form of worship with those who hold to another gospel or pagan beliefs is a form of practicing the doctrine of Balaam. When the church tolerates intermarriage with unbelievers or immorality with the world, the church is then tolerating a form of the doctrine of Balaam. Actually, any form toleration of those involved in either immorality or idolatry involves the sort of compromise Christ is talking about here. It involves tolerating Balaam’s doctrine.

Remember Balaam’s plot was to corrupt the people through unbiblical unions (intermarriage, immorality) which entangles them in false religion. Many professing Christians have either become involved sexually or married someone holding to false doctrines, which results in their testimony

being destroyed and great damage being done to the church. This doctrine of Balaam is still quite effective.

Sexual sin is a very powerful tool to draw people away from the Lord and their separated calling (cf. Acts 15:20, 1 Cor. 5:9-11, 2 Cor. 6:14-18, 1 Thess. 4:3, Heb. 13:4). Not only does Jesus demand that we live sexually pure lives, but He demands that we **not tolerate immorality and idolatry in the church**. We must take a stand here.

Revelation 2:15 (NKJV)

15 “Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

In like manner, they are also TOLERATING those in their midst who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans (cf. 2:6).

We are not sure what this was. Some suggest it was a type of **elitism** that emphasized a hierarchy of clergy, a separation of a clergy class from the laity. The word literally means “**to rule the people**”. Others think what was in view was some form of **licentiousness**, but we really don’t know for sure what it was. Whatever was in view, it was closely linked to Balaamism.

The church at Pergamos represents a church that becomes married to the world. It is a church that tolerates immorality and idolatry. It goes along with it without taking a stand.

This is reflective of the stage of church history from Constantine to the first Pope.

The story of Constantine:

After the death of Diocletian, there was a rivalry between Constantine and Maxentius to see who would rule the Roman Empire. Tradition says the night before the battle that would decide the issue, Constantine saw a vision in the sky in the shape of a cross bearing the inscription “in this sign conquer”. That night Constantine vowed to become a Christian and join the church if he won the battle.

Indeed he won the battle and declared himself a Christian. In fact he went on to declare Christianity the official state religion.

There was wholesale baptisms of thousands of soldiers. Constantine presided over church councils and was the recognized head of the church. The church overnight went from being persecuted to being politically correct. The Church was now married to the world. There is no real evidence that Constantine was ever truly born again and this MARRIAGE resulted in the corruption of the church that resulted in the development of the ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH. The “Roman Church” has been a mixture of politics and Christianity from the beginning. It represents what happens when the doctrine of Balaam is allowed to have its way in the church. It corrupts and devastates the church by way of unbiblical UNIONS.

As a result the church soon lost its hope of the early return of Christ, and biblical simplicity was replaced by a complicated church organization which substituted human creeds and worship of Mary, the mother of our Lord, for true biblical doctrine. The church committed the same sin of which Israel was guilty in the OT, namely, the worship of idols and union with the heathen world. – **John Walvoord**

I am not dogmatic, but I do think that the seven churches probably represent seven successive stages in church history. One reason is because the defining traits of each church certainly has a very clear parallel with what has happened in history. The early church, as represented by Ephesus, was doctrinally sound. This was followed by a time of great persecution represented by Smyrna; and this was followed by a time when the church was married to the world under Constantine, which is represented by the church at Pergamos.

Revelation 2:16 (NKJV)

16 ‘Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.

Repent or else: Repentance is a change of mind that leads to a change in action. In this case, the change of mind involves deciding they are not going to tolerate immorality, intermarriage, or idolatry in the church. They better get them out of the church (Matt. 18 – church discipline). Really church discipline, properly administered, is a very gracious and loving thing. It provides steps before God directly intervenes. When God directly steps in to discipline, things can get messy. God mercifully gives a series of steps that are to be followed, giving space before He disciplines directly (cf. 1 Cor. 11:30-31).

Christ is threatening to come to them in the sense of judgment. He is calling them to REPENT or they can expect IMMINENT divine intervention with deadly consequences. God gives space to repent, but there comes a point when He moves swiftly and harshly.

Fight against them: Jesus is going to battle the heretics and compromisers in the church. Who do you think is going to win? In view is a special visit of judgment that will result in a purging.

Sword of My mouth: Evidently this is the Word of God. Swift judgment will fall in accordance with His Word.

We do not know for sure what happened, but there must have been dramatic action because today we don’t even know for sure who the Nicolaitans were and what was the exact nature of their sin. They were either put out or put down so quickly that history did not get a chance to have an ongoing record of their perversions.

Revelation 2:17 (NKJV)

17 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.” ’

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

The idea is to listen attentively and then obey! The exhortation is to ALL BELIEVERS in all churches throughout the church age. All are to make APPLICATION to their situation.

Note: This phrase links the concept of individual believers and churches. The message is to the churches, but has application for those individuals in those churches. The N.T. knows nothing of independent believers who are not associated with a local church. Frankly, if people desire no fellowship and want nothing to do with God’s family, one has to wonder if they are part of the family. The Bible speaks so clearly to this issue.

To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.” ’

Overcomes: Is victorious, conqueror. This is the term that is consistently used by John to refer to true believers who demonstrate that reality in their lives. They are overcomers, because they have true life-changing faith (cf. 1 Jn. 5:4).

Manna – A Hebrew word meaning “What is it?” It was the bread from heaven that God supernaturally fed the Children of Israel with for 40 years in the wilderness. It speaks of provision, nourishment. Perhaps it speaks of present spiritual food and the supernatural sustaining that is

provided by Christ which the world knows nothing about (cf. Ps. 91:1). Or more probably this looks **forward** to the reward Christ will give once the journey is completed by faithful pilgrims. They will enter into blissful fellowship that includes dining with Christ. They will eat at His table and share in delectable delights that are currently HIDDEN (cf. Ps. 16:11).

White stone: Some have suggested that this may be a DIAMOND or something similar. It is like the WEDDING RING for His beloved wife. We are the Bride of Christ.

The most satisfactory understanding of the white stone derives significance from the free bread and free admission to entertainments that people of the Roman empire received from time to time. [White stones were used as tickets.] Such a white stone with one's name on it was the basis for admission to special events. It was also a well established custom to reward victors at the games with such a token enabling them to gain admission to a special feast. The hidden manna, the other part of the reward in v. 17 suggests a reference to the Messianic feast. The white stone is then a personalized tessera [token], which would serve as his token of admission to this great feast. – **Robert Thomas**

A new name written: It is unique, personal, intimate. It reflects ones standing in Christ in accordance with faithfulness. It is the believer's special reward that speaks of a very PERSONAL relationship with Jesus. For the faithful who listen and apply what Christ says, there will be special feasting with Him and special intimate rewards that endure for all eternity.

The church at Thyatira is the fourth church addressed. This church corresponds to the church of the Middle Ages in which we see the further development of the Roman Catholic Church. **Idolatry** is what largely defined the church during this period.

Revelation 2:18 (NKJV)

18 “And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, ‘These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass:

Thyatira was located about 40 miles S.E. of Pergamus. It was the **smallest city** addressed, and yet received the **longest letter**. The city of Thyatira had been in existence for several hundred years, going back to Alexander the Great, 300 years before Christ. It became a place where large numbers of military personnel were stationed. However, it was located in a valley and therefore was vulnerable to attack. For that reason, it was destroyed and rebuilt numerous times. It was an area rich in **agriculture**, but was most known for its **manufacturing and commerce** related to the **dye and wool** industries. It was famous for its purple dye. Also, trade guilds or what we might refer today **as trade unions**, were a primary part of that society. The city was not a key religious center, although Apollo was worshiped as the guardian of the city in combination with emperor worship. Caesar was considered an incarnation of Apollo. Besides Apollo, each guild evidently had its own patron deity with its own festivals.

The first convert in Europe (in Philippi) named **Lydia** was from Thyatira (Acts 16:14-15). We don't know how a church came to be planted in Thyatira, but Lydia may well have been instrumental in taking the gospel back to her home town.

The first thing stated to this church by way of introduction is that this message is from **THE SON OF GOD**. The Gospel of John has as its theme the DEITY of Christ (Jn. 20:30-31). This is central in N.T. teaching, but the church at Thyatira had lost proper sight of WHO Christ is. The essence of this is IDOLATRY! This is the only place in Revelation where this title (Son of God) is used of Christ. Again keep in mind that many believe this church epitomizes what came to be the Roman Catholic Church of the Middle Ages, which is also called the **dark ages – 590 AD to 1517 AD.**

Our Lord introduced Himself to this church as “the Son of God”. There is a reason for this. Conditions in the church of Thyatira were prophetic of the next period in church history... from about A.D. 600 to A.D. 1500 the world saw the rapid rise of Romanism. To this church which was prophetic of that long dark period, known as “The Dark Ages,” when the Papacy wielded her power malevolently, (spiteful – malicious) Christ declares Himself to be the Son of God. – **Leman Strauss**

As the Son of God He rebukes the church that would degrade Him and keep Him the son of a human mother while exalting her above Him as the ‘mother of God’ and ‘the queen of heaven’. Our Lord knows exactly when and where to insist upon His divine prerogative as the Son of God. .. The rise of Romanism made Jesus popular as “the son of Mary” a position that robs Him of His essential deity and thereby degrades Him. -**Ford C. Ottman**

How appropriate that Jesus introduces Himself to this church as the Son of God, which emphasizes his DEITY; that He is God.

Eyes like a flame of fire: Tying back to the introduction in Chapter 1:14-15, this speaks to the fact that Christ is omniscient. With penetrating discernment, He sees right through everyone (cf. Jer. 17:10, Heb. 4:13, Rev. 9:12).

Feet like fine brass: Fine = gleaming, brilliant in appearance, well polished. Bronze is often a symbol of judgment. Here it evidently refers to Christ treading out judgment in accordance with His piercing evaluation of the church (cf. Rev. 19:15). Judgment begins first at the household of God (cf. 1 Peter 4:17).

Revelation 2:19 (NKJV)

19 “I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first.

I know: This is stated seven times; once in relation to EACH church.

Works – what they are doing = love, service, faith, patience (endurance).

The last are more than the first. There is progress. They are improving.

Christ highly commends the true believers in this group, which, in the overall context, apparently refers to the minority, the remnant. In this context, He knew they needed some encouragement.

It is interesting to contrast what Christ said to Ephesus with what He here says to Thyatira. Ephesus would not tolerate evil, but was lacking in love. Thyatira was growing in love, but tolerating evil. Even to this day, many churches are out of balance one way or the other. On the one hand, there are the fighting fundamentalists who are doctrinally sound, but lack love. On the other hand, there are those who are very loving liberals; who don’t take stands for truth like they should. Biblical balance of love and truth is KEY! We must speak the truth in love. The essence of mature faithfulness holds to both TRUTH and LOVE.

Unloving orthodoxy and loving compromise are both hateful to God.

– **Warren Wiersbe**

This church (the remnant of true believers) is greatly commended, and yet, there is a VITAL problem in the church. Isn’t it amazing that you can have so much GOOD happening in a church and still have MAJOR problems with which to contend? Five out of the seven churches have vital issues in

which call for REPENTANCE. Nothing has changed. Churches today are still filled with imperfect people, and we wrestle with the same issues that are brought out in reference to the churches of the first century. That is why it is so important that we listen to what Christ says.

Revelation 2:20 (NKJV)

20 “Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.

The translation “I have this against you” is more accurate. There is essentially ONE thing that Christ has against this church, and it is wrapped up in the name Jezebel.

Allow = tolerate. They have allowed this woman to influence and mislead the people of God. This loving church was so gracious that they were not taking stands to keep out error like they should have done (cf. 1 Tim. 2:12-14). The church had an INTERNAL problem. They were tolerating apostasy and heretical teachings.

Jezebel was probably a real woman, but this was likely not her real name. Rather it is likely a descriptive name that defines her activity in accordance with the pattern of Jezebel in the OT. The name Jezebel was indicative of this woman’s character. Jezebel was the daughter of a pagan king who married King Ahab in the O.T. (cf. 1 Kings 16, -21; 2 Kings 9). Ahab was a wicked king in his own right, but this woman **INFLUENCED** him greatly to excel in extreme wickedness (1 Kgs 21:25). Jezebel was one of the wickedest people in the OT. To call a woman **a Jezebel would be like calling a man a Judas.**

The primary issue in context was IDOLATRY. Jezebel of the OT influenced the people in the idolatrous worship of Baal. She influenced people to be double minded so that they supposedly worshiped God and also worshiped Baal (cf. 1 Kgs 18:21). The issue was that the people thought they could worship God and worship Baal at the same time. They were very open to just adding on to their religion. They thought they could do both, and Jezebel was a great influence in this way. The very first commandment says, “You shall have no other gods before Me.” (Ex. 20:3).

Who calls herself a prophetess: This woman claimed to have a message from God. Prophets and prophetesses in the N.T. were those who received direct revelation from God. Hence, she claimed to have an inspired message. She claimed to have special revelation which carried the authority of God. Note however that she merely calls herself a prophetess. In actuality, she is a false prophetess. She is self-proclaimed, but not God-ordained.

To teach and seduce: She was in a teaching role, in which she ought not to have been, had the church maintained the proper role of women. In the church, women are not allowed to teach or have authority over men (cf. 1 Tim. 2:12-14).

Seduce: Means to mislead in a cunning way. This woman was undoubtedly smooth and enticing. She had an intriguing and winsome way about her.

My servants: Literally, my slaves. She is so slick that she is indeed misleading those who really do belong to Christ. His people are being led astray. They are buying into her teaching and her influence, and in the most despicable sorts of ways.

To commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.

Note the similar language to what was happening in Ephesus (2:6), and in Pergamos (2:14-15), which has led some to believe that it was much like the error of the Nicolaitans.

She taught believers how to compromise with the Roman religion and the practices of the guilds, so that Christians would not lose their jobs or their lives.

– **Warren Wiersbe**

Edward Myers points out that the trade guilds were religious in nature. One could not make a living without being a member. Each one was dedicated to a particular deity. Feasts to these guild gods were lavish parties that everyone was expected to attend. These included three basic elements: 1) a cup of wine, poured out in worship of the god; 2) a fellowship meal, which included excessive drinking; and 3) a sexual orgy following the meal. Christians were placed in the terrible situation of participation or rejection – which meant losing their jobs.

– **Ed Hindson**

The bottom line seems to be that she was teaching that Christians could participate in these idolatrous and immoral festivals that related to their jobs. Possibly some of them thought, “We can go along with this and just be kind of fringy when it comes to the far out revelry”, while perhaps others thought they had liberty to fully indulge in these events. Whatever their rationale, they were there and participating, and in so doing, they became party to both IDOLATRY AND IMMORALITY. However, Jezebel was explaining it all away and claiming that this activity was acceptable.

Revelation 2:21 (NKJV)

21 “And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent.

Note this had been going on for some time. God is gracious, He gives space for repentance (cf. 2 Pet. 3:9). Normally He gives lots of space, but eventually JUDGMENT DAY does come. Jezebel refused to repent. Perhaps God had used various people with strong conviction to confront her. We are not told the specifics, but indeed God had given her some time to repent; and she refused.

Repent: Means to change your mind, to change your attitude about sin and about God. Repentance in the Bible always results in a change of behavior.

Does “repent and believe the gospel” imply that the sinner must do two things to be saved, and not only one? The exhortation is really only one requirement. The instruction “Leave London and go to Los Angeles,” sounds like a two-fold request, but it really is only one; it is impossible to go to Los Angeles without leaving London.” **-J. Edwin Orr**

Revelation 2:22 (NKJV)

22 “Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.

In effect, God says, “If she insists on the bed of sin, then I will hurl her into a sick bed.” A death bed is probably in view, a sickness that results in death. Those who commit adultery with her will suffer great tribulation. Those who follow her in this sin will suffer the consequences of extreme suffering and tribulation.

Unless they repent of their deeds. God is still granting opportunity for those mislead, if they will only repent. If they repent, God will not bring about the threatened “great tribulation”. However, it is too late for Jezebel. She is going to be cast into a sickbed.

Revelation 2:23 (NKJV)

23 “I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.

Her children: Probably this has in view her followers who refuse to repent.

All the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. This letter went to all seven churches and they all read about this. When the followers of Jezebel start dying, it will really be impressed upon them that Jesus KNOWS all that is going on with His people including all that goes on in the minds and hearts of His people. He KNOWS all about our innermost beings (cf. Prov. 4:23). There is a sin unto death. God does warn His people and call them to repentance, but if they refuse, He may well kill them (cf. 1 Cor. 11:30-31, 1 Jn. 5:16).

And I will give to each one of you according to your works.

Note: the connection between minds, hearts, and works. What goes on in the heart, works its way out in the life. This is a package. Note also that Jesus is going to deal with each and **everyone of them individually** according to how they have responded to the Jezebel scandal. In the end, everyone will be dealt with personally in accordance with what they have done.

The name Thyatira means “continual sacrifice” which fits perfectly the emphasis of the church in the Dark Ages.

...if these churches picture eras of church history, Thyatira—both because of its name and the activity of Jezebel—depicts the Middle ages and the ascendancy of the Roman Catholic Church. – **Charles Ryrie**

Revelation 2:24 (NKJV)

24 “Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden.

The rest in Thyatira: This suggests that this applies to the REMNANT that have not followed Jezebel. Evidently there was a group in the church that had remained faithful.

As many as do not have this doctrine: This evidently refers to those that did not ascribe to the idea that it was alright to partake in idolatrous and immoral feasts.

Who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say: There are various ideas as to the sense of this...

- 1) Sarcasm: They claim that what they espouse is of God, but they sarcastically refer to this teaching as “the depths of Satan.”
- 2) Those involved following Jezebel thought they could experience the depths of Satan and it would not affect them spiritually. Perhaps they bragged about the level to which they could go and yet be Christian. They probably ridiculed those “weak” Christians who didn’t have such enlightenment. They may have prided themselves on secret, esoteric knowledge that they, the initiates, had via the prophecies of Jezebel.
- 3) Or perhaps, they believed that in order to really defeat Satan, you had to experience deeply what he was all about, and as such, they claimed to be spiritual giants.

We see these people were associated with the church, and yet, in fact, had delved deeply into the things of Satan. Really, the things they were involved in were idolatry and the occult (cf. 1 Cor. 2:10).

I will put on you no other burden.

This is the language of the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15:18-21, 28-29 which also related to idolatry and immorality. They undoubtedly had known great pressures and persecution from both outside the

church from pagans, and from those within the church, who followed Jezebel. This was all because of their stand not to participate in the idolatrous and immoral festivals. They took a strong stand of BIBLICAL SEPARATION. At this point, Jesus is not going to put any other PRESSURE upon them.

Revelation 2:25 (NKJV)

25 “But hold fast what you have till I come.

Jesus, at this point, doesn't demand that they turn things around. He didn't even tell them to leave, because, in that context, there was probably no where else to go. Rather He encourages those individuals in that apostate context to personally HOLD FAST till He comes.

The Roman Catholic Church boasts of “*semper idem*” meaning “always the same”. They may change the cosmetics of things substantially, but the core doctrines of the church do not change. They may add to what is already there and assimilate all kinds of other religious teaching, but the core teachings do not change. From the beginning, Roman Catholicism has been a conglomeration, a combination of Christianity and false religion. When is the last time you heard of a Roman Catholic Church turning around and embracing the true gospel? It doesn't happen. Individuals within get saved regularly, and some may even stay in for whatever reason, but the system, in fact, does not change. It has been so for 1500 years.

There are some CONTEXTS where there is no turning around an entrenched apostate system, and yet, there are a remnant of true believers in the group. There may be no other option for fellowship. What should you do? Well, Jesus says to these believers in that CONTEXT – JUST KEEP ON HOLDING FAST to your convictions in that context.

Application: If there is a church in an area where that is the only thing happening, and that church is pretty much dead with just a few believers, what should those believers do? Should they stay home and do “home church”? There are situations where I think Jesus would have the believer stay put and HOLD FAST. That is essentially what He asked of them here at Thyatira. If one has the option to go somewhere else, where they can grow; then they should go there, but that is not always a option.

Note: In the Dark Ages, there really was no where else to go. The church essentially was the Roman Catholic Church. And yet down through those centuries, there was always a REMNANT of true believers in that mix. Also, note that the Thyatira-like-church will be in place at the coming of Christ. Christ says “Hold fast ... till I come”, which certainly extends beyond the first century local church in Thyatira.

Revelation 2:26 (NKJV)

26 “And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—

Overcomes: A term that describes true believers (cf. 1 Jn. 5:4-5).

The designation is ... a description of what is normal and what is expected of true followers of the Lord. Hence, the promise to follow is for all genuine believers in Thyatira who stand representatively for all Christians. – **Robert Thomas**

Works until the end:

The proof of authentic trust in Jesus is steadfastness of belief and continuance in the will of God till Christ returns or death comes. – **Expositors**

Perseverance of the saints is evidence of true saving faith (cf. Col. 1:23).

To him will I give power over the nations —

This is the language of Psalm 2. Christ promises a position of authority in conjunction with His kingdom rule.

Revelation 2:27 (NKJV)

27 ‘He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels’— as I also have received from My Father;

‘He shall rule them with a rod of iron; This denotes strong authority that will be exercised and to which the world will submit.

Dashed to pieces: Christ will shatter any and all resistance. This authority ultimately is rooted in the Father Who has given it to Christ, Who will in turn share it with His people in the kingdom, as they rule with Him (cf. 2 Tim. 2:12).

What an encouragement to believers who battle with apostasy and apostates. Hang in there, the kingdom is coming. The time will come when you will reign with Christ.

Revelation 2:28 (NKJV)

28 “and I will give him the morning star.

The morning star is the **BRIGHT STAR** that appears at the blackest time of the night just before day break. The Bible does not teach revival will come to the church as we get near the end. Rather, it teaches that those will be days of growing apostasy when many professing Christians will not endure sound doctrine (cf. 2 Tim. 3:1, 4:1-5). In that dark context, **SUDDENLY** will burst the light of the morning star which is said to be Christ Himself in Rev. 22:16. There are other views, but with a clear statement like this in the book, I prefer the view that this refers to Christ Himself. Christ will present Himself to the true believers at the Rapture!

A wealthy Roman had a slave whom he dearly loved and trusted, even more than his own son. When he died, it was shown in his will that he had stipulated that he was leaving all he possessed to his slave, Marcellus. He also stipulated that his son could **choose one thing only** from his estate. The sharp-witted son’s reply: “I’ll take Marcellus”!

You see when we have the PERSON of Jesus, we have everything else (cf. Rom. 8:16-17).

The Church awaits the Bright and Morning Star.
Israel awaits The Sun of Righteousness (Mal. 4:2)

Revelation 2:29 (NKJV)

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

Pay special attention! Listen up! We are called to Biblical separation from all immoral and idolatrous practices. We cannot participate in any way and be pleasing to Jesus. If we are compromising, we must repent or face serious consequences. In the midst of apostasy Jesus says, “Hold fast till I come and then you will reign with Me!”

Revelation 3:1 (NKJV)

1 “And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, ‘These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: “I know your works, that you have a name that you are

alive, but you are dead.

Sardis was an old city, going back to at least 1200 years before Christ. It was built at the foot of a mountain with a natural fortress of steep rocky cliffs ranging from 800 to 1500 feet on three sides. These cliffs were virtually unscaleable. Therefore, this city was a tremendous fortress. It had been attacked MANY times, but only twice was it overcome; once in 549 B.C. by Cyrus of Persia, and again in 195 B.C. by Antiochus the Great. Both times it happened because of **negligence**. There was a secret trail on the back side of the city by which the cliff could be scaled. An enemy soldier saw a guard walking on this trail and followed. They were thereby able to get into the city and open the front gates which allowed the enemy soldiers to conquer the city. This happened two times because of negligence. Essentially the city did not properly guard these cliffs because they were considered impregnable. They thought no one could get in that way, but they did, because they were **NOT WATCHFUL!**

The town was also known for a great temple to its patron goddess Artemis (the goddess of fertility), which eventually came to have a Christian Church built right across from it. It was known for a number of mystery cults (secret religious societies related to various pagan gods). About two miles outside of town were hot springs, which the locals considered to be visible manifestations of the god from below. This god supposedly had the power to restore life. They also had an elaborate cemetery that could be seen from seven miles away, which also tied into the worship of Artemis, that involved belief in death and rebirth. They also practiced emperor worship, etc.

The city was very wealthy in earlier years. It had been a great commercial and industrial city being located at the junction of five roads. It had been the ancient capital of Lydia. In the sixth century B.C., under fabled king **Croesus** ("Kresus" – called Midas by the Greeks), it was known as one of the GREATEST cities in the world. Croesus was exceedingly wealthy. Still today, the saying, "rich as Croesus" is used. Sardis was known to be the first place to mint silver and gold coins. It was well to do, but also decadent. The famed author Aesop (cf. Aesop's fables) was from here. The city was also known for industries related to woolen garments, dye, and jewelry. At the time of John's writing, the glory days of this city were in the past, but they still gloried in the reputation of yesteryear. Today only a little town remains, that is called Sart.

He who has the seven Sprits of God and the seven stars:

These introductory words tie in with the vision of Christ in Chapter 1:4, 16, 20. Christ's introduction to each church relates to an **emphasis** He wants to make in connection with the character of the Church. Here, immediately, He emphasizes "the seven Spirits of God" which we believe is a designation for the Holy Spirit going back to Zech. 4:1-10. The procession of the Spirit is from Christ (Jn. 15:26). The Spirit gives life to the Church and this Church was DEAD. Therefore, Christ emphasizes His relationship to the Spirit, which underscores the importance of His ministry. Our representative in heaven is Christ. His representative in us (the church) is the Holy Spirit, unless of course, we are spiritually DEAD. The answer to the deadness in the professing church is the life-giving Spirit. The Spirit is the life-giver. The Biblical definition of death is when the body is without the spirit (cf. Ja. 2:26). When a church is DEAD, it is separated from the life of the Spirit, either absolutely or functionally (cf. Zech. 4:6).

Seven stars are found to be in Christ's right hand in 1:16,20. This emphasizes Christ authority and control over those who are leaders in the church. Leaders are uniquely accountable (cf. James 3:1).

I know your works: Christ says "I know" to each of the churches. He knows what they are doing and what they are all about. In this case, what He knows is not good. In fact, He has nothing good to say to the church at large; only that there is a faithful remnant. The censure of this church is surpassed only by that of Laodicea, the completely apostate church.

You have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. In effect, this church has “Ichabod” (the glory has departed) written all over it. Christ tells them they are a DEAD Church. What could be worse than that?

However, this church has a REPUTATION – A NAME for being a live church. Isn’t that amazing? They have a reputation for being a really alive church, but in reality Christ says they are DEAD. This is a lifeless church, but they are going through all the outward motions. After the rapture some churches will carry on like nothing happened. It is possible for churches to do “church” without the life of the Spirit. It is possible for them to have a semblance of life, to claim to be spiritually healthy and yet be essentially DEAD. That is scary. This is a church that had a reputation. This would have been a church that would have been highly recommended. Christ says He knows their reputation for being a church that is alive, and He also knows that the church is DEAD!

This church was full of NOMINAL Christians who knew the Lord in name only. They were going through the motions, but with no real SPIRITUAL POWER. There was no supernatural activity from the empowering of the Spirit. The church was full of mere PROFESSORS who weren’t really possessors.

This church is not addressed in terms of heresy in the church. Neither do we see any persecution in relation to this church. This church is just complacent! It was not watchful! It was just doing its “churchy” thing, all the while being stained and compromised by the culture around it.

This church corresponds to Mainline Protestantism that developed out of the Reformation.

Protestantism today, as a whole, has a name that it lives, but it is dead. Many Protestant Churches today are just going through the form. They are building all the time, and people are coming, especially on Sunday mornings... This is a frightful condemnation and is a picture of Protestantism today. – **J. Vernon McGee**

In keeping with the prophetic foreshadowing of the church age as seen in the other churches, some have held that the church at Sardis is a picture of the church in the time of the Protestant Reformation when a great mass of Christendom was dead even though it had a name that it lived. During those years only a small believing portion took their stand for true biblical revelation and trusted in Christ as Savior. The characteristics of the church in Sardis remarkably parallel those of the church in the period of the Protestant Reformation. This fact seems to confirm the judgment that the message delivered to this first century church was prophetic of the future of the church at large during this period. – **John Walvoord**

Revelation 3:2 (NKJV)

2 “Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God.

Be watchful: Which is to say, “wake up”, “be alert”, “shake yourself out of complacency”. Many believe this language is building on the history of the city which fell twice because they failed to be WATCHFUL! In some ways the history of the church seems to parallel that of the city. They had seen the glory days and are now still living on the reputation of yesteryear. The city had fallen because they failed to be watchful and now application is being made to the church.

There were some things that remained, but they were weak and needed to be strengthened. This was a DEAD church, and where it wasn’t dead, it was on LIFE SUPPORT! Even the little bit they had going for them was about to die off. This church needed REVIVAL!

Not found your works perfect before God.

Perfect: complete, fulfilled. They had a great start but didn’t finish what God had purposed for them. They are sprinters in a marathon race. They got off to a great start, but sputtered out.

Before God: Before people, they look pretty good and impressive. They had a great reputation. However, before God they are dead, sleepy, weak, ready to die, and incomplete in their works.

Compare the Reformation. Some wonderful things were started there. Sola Scriptura (Scripture Alone) was the cry of the Reformation. That was outstanding! But in various areas, the reformers didn't go far enough and it resulted in deadness as Protestantism developed. Various areas of doctrine could be mentioned, such as prophecy and a proper theology of Israel and the Church; but in particular, I want to mention three areas in which Protestantism was INCOMPLETE.

1. **The Sacraments:** Although the reformers (there were exceptions) rejected five out of the seven sacraments, yet Calvin and Luther continued to hold on to baptism and communion as sacraments (as a means of grace) and this became a deadening thing in the church.
2. **Infant Baptism:** This was a carry over from the Catholic Church. Wherever there is infant baptism, there is baptismal regeneration thinking right behind it.

I personally believe that this error has probably resulted in more people going to hell in the ranks of professing Christendom than any other error that has been tolerated in the professing church. This is HUGE!

3. **The separation of Church and state.**

I do appreciate many of the things the Reformers stood for, but in my opinion these three issues were grossly incomplete and were especially critical in the development of a DEAD Protestant Church, which continues on to this very day.

Revelation 3:3 (NKJV)

3 “Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.

Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. This is a call to recall, to review the basics, to get back to the apostles' doctrine – the fundamentals of the faith related to their heritage. They had lost sight of the BASICS. They had forgotten Christianity 101 related to the elementary truths of receiving Christ. The Church tends to FORGET. We need periodic review!

The main thing is that the main thing always remain the main thing!

Christ is telling them to get back to the gospel basics and to hold on to them!

Hold fast: Obey, keep, observe.

Repent: Means to have a change of mind resulting in a spiritual about-face. The church needed to repent of dead formalism, ritualism, in just going through the motions. They needed a real FAITH relationship, a Spirit-empowered union with God, and a resulting walk of FAITH. Earlier the church had evidently been characterized by those who WELCOMED the Word of God in humble submission. But they as a congregation had drifted (cf. 1 Thess. 2:13, Gal. 5:7, Col. 2:6).

Therefore if you will not watch, Here is the crux of the issue! (cf. v. 2). A church that is coasting on its old reputation is not spiritually alive or spiritually alert. They are spiritually sluggish and sleepy.

You watch by remembering the Word.

You watch by holding fast the Word.

You watch by correcting wrong thinking and bringing it into harmony with the Word of God.

I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.

Christ threatens them with a SUDDEN and UNEXPECTED intervention of judgment.

Some have thought that this may be a reference to the coming of Christ which finds the **Sardis type church** not repentant, and therefore under the judgment of God. If so, the last four churches mentioned have a reference to the coming of Christ. Certainly there is application for the local church of Sardis, but then there is also application for all the essentially dead churches down throughout the church age. Only the repentant are ready. One day all those lost souls in lifeless churches will SUDDENLY AND UNEXPECTEDLY find themselves under the judgment of God as the Rapture comes and they find themselves thrust into the Day of the Lord judgment (cf. 1 Thess. 5:2).

Revelation 3:4 (NKJV)

4 “You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.

A few: That is a minority, a remnant.

Sometimes God’s people are ashamed of what a small group they, as the truly committed, are. People tend to be impressed with numbers. People almost speak apologetically of “our little church”. But more often than not the truth is found in “the few and the faithful” (cf. Lk. 12:32).

Even in Sardis: This was a pagan place of lethargy and complacency that had greatly affected the church. It so saturated the whole of society, that it was hard to believe that any one could escape its influence and grasp; and YET “even in Sardis”, there was a REMNANT. God always has a remnant!!!!

Not defiled their garments: Defiled means smeared, polluted, stained. This remnant had not defiled their purity by negligence and compromise with the pagan culture around them. Dead people just don’t do anything. They don’t offend anyone. They don’t take stands. They don’t go anywhere or finish anything for God. They just sit there and corrupt. Inactivity and just going through the motions are in and of themselves defiling.

Walk with me in white, for they are worthy. In view is fellowship with the Lord in glory. White is the color of heaven and denotes purity. They are found worthy by GRACE, which is reflected in purity of lifestyle. Holiness shows the reality of a genuine life-changing faith.

By way of application, I think the REMNANT here applies especially to segments of the Anabaptists. They were the RADICAL REFORMERS. They were the ones that rejected all the sacraments and recognized salvation as purely a matter of the HEART ALONE. They were the ones that rejected infant baptism and insisted on believers’ baptism. They were the ones that insisted on separation of church and state. They were sorely persecuted by the other Reformers – so much so that their leaders never really had time or space to write down their theology in structured form. To me, these primarily are the FEW NAMES in the Sardis era of church history who are found WORTHY!

As this shakes out in history, the Protestant Churches of the Reformation (Lutheran and Reformed churches – those churches that tie back to Calvin and Luther and practice infant baptism, the sacraments, etc.) are found to be basically DEAD. The descendants of the Anabaptist would be the Baptist churches, the Bible Churches, the Brethren Churches, the E-Free Churches, etc. Even to this very day, if you want to randomly start looking for a good solid Bible-teaching church, you don’t go to PROTESTANT CHUCHES that practice infant baptism. They are essentially all dead.

Note also that a sharp contrast between the church at Sardis and the church at Philadelphia involves the issue of evangelism. At Sardis, we see no outreach. Instead we see a dead church that is not watchful. In contrast, at Philadelphia, we see a church that has an open door and a little strength. It is the church doing evangelism. The difference between a dead church and live church involves EVANGELISM.

Revelation 3:5 (NKJV)

5 “He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

Overcomes is a term used consistently of true believers in each letter (cf. 1 Jn. 5:4-5).

An overcomer is one who is triumphant, a victor by grace through faith.

clothed in white garments: denoting glory and purity.

not blot out his name from the Book of life There are various views as to what this means, but apparently God has a book that has everyone’s name listed in it. All are potential candidates for salvation. Jesus died for everyone! Those that die without faith will be blotted out. Those that come to faith have the promise that their names will not be blotted out (cf. Rev. 20:15, Lk. 10:20).

In the day that John was writing, cities had the names of their citizens registered. Citizens could for various things have their names blotted out, that is, have their citizenship renounced. Christ is saying that overcomers are ASSURED that their names are permanently in the Book of Life. This is a statement of security, of assurance. This is a promise, not a threat.

I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

Confess means to acknowledge. It is a strong word that was used in a legal context as in a “confession before the courts”. Jesus is going to confess before the court of heaven that overcomers are His. The issue on judgment day will have nothing to do with your name being on the church roll. The issue is whether or not your name is in the Lamb’s book of life. Lots of people have their name on a church registry, but will have their name BLOTTED OUT from the book of life. God’s books are the only ones that ultimately count!

Revelation 3:6 (NKJV)

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

All individuals are to take to heart what the SPIRIT is saying to the churches. The Spirit is speaking. It is one of His primary ministries. He speaks through the Word of God. The spiritually alive HEAR what the Spirit says! All churches and individuals should take inventory regarding LIFE and ask...

Are we just playing church or is their real life from the Spirit here?

Do we just have a “Christian reputation” or is the ministry of the Spirit real in our midst?

Are the leaders submitted to the authority and Lordship of Christ?

Are we watchful in holding to the Gospel of grace and the fundamentals of the faith?

Are we fulfilling the Word in terms of holding to and practicing the whole counsel of God?

Are we watchful in terms of holiness and evangelism?

Multitudes of people have **Churchianity but not Christianity**! Sardis is a DEAD CHURCH with a LIVING remnant! Many Churches today fit this description and it is sad that many in that context **don’t even realize it**. There may be lots of activity, lots of people, a reputation; but the church really is quite dead. Their stand for holiness, for the Gospel, for evangelism is very incomplete. They need to repent and get back to the Bible – back to the basics of the faith. And yet even in that context of

DEADNESS, God often has a remnant who live an uncompromised life of faith. One day we will **find out** who is really DEAD and who really is ALIVE in the Spirit. It will all come out in heaven as recorded there and then acknowledged by Christ before all in heaven.

The church is the people! It is no more dead or alive than the people within! God help us to be a people born of the Spirit, filled with the Spirit, walking in the Spirit, empowered by the Spirit. God help us to be WATCHFUL to that end!

Revelation 3:7 (NKJV)

7 “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, ‘These things says He who is holy, He who is true, “He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens”’:

Philadelphia: “brotherly love”. The city was established in about 150 B.C. by a Pergamenian king who dearly loved his brother; hence the name Philadelphia, the city of brotherly love. Today there is still a small city there, but it is called Alasehir. A main highway that connected the east and the west ran through the city. Furthermore, the royal post road of the first century which centered in Rome and connected the main points of the empire, passed through Philadelphia and so the city was called “The Gateway to the East”.

Related to the city were great vine growing districts. The city was known for many false gods and various temples and was therefore called “Little Athens” but foremost was the worship of Dionysus, the god of wine. The city was also known for its games and festivals. Philadelphia was founded with the intent that it become a “mission” city with the goal of disseminating the Greek culture and language to other parts of the kingdom.

The city was on a fault line and historically was known for earthquakes and volcanic activity in the area. In 17 AD a terrible earthquake essentially destroyed the city and ten other cities in the area. Philadelphia was then rebuilt, but many people were afraid to move back into the city and instead lived just outside the city where the land was rich agriculturally. At the slightest sign of a tremor, people would flee the city. The city was small and evidently the church was quite small. However, a remnant persisted through the centuries and several of the commentaries brought out that even now a very small remnant of professing Christians is still present.

‘These things says He who is holy, He who is true,

Christ’s personal introduction to each church ties back to the vision in Chapter One with special corresponding emphasis in relation to what Christ wants to emphasize to that particular church. Here the connection is not as clear, but there is a corresponding tie in that Christ has the KEY. Compare Rev. 1:18 where He has the keys of Hades and of death.

Holy: Set apart – wholly other. This is a designation that is used for God and as such it is a statement of Christ’s deity (cf. Heb. 7:26).

True: Genuine, authentic, reliable, faithful.

Holy and True often go together, emphasizing God’s Righteous character and corresponding action (cf. Rev. 6:10). Jesus is our HOLY GOD who is always TRUE to His character and His Word. This is tantamount to being a statement of DEITY.

“He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens”:

This is a quote from Isa. 22:22. In the Isaiah context, a man by the name of Shebna had been serving under King Hezekiah as the national treasurer. He had been very unfaithful and so God says

he is going to be replaced with a man by the name of Eliakim. Eliakim would now be in charge of the royal treasury. It signified a position of authority and control over the government. Eliakim had the key to all the treasures of the king emphasizing access and control.

Key of David emphasizes MESSIANIC authority in keeping with the Davidic covenant as found in 2 Sam. 7:12-17, which involved an eternal house, [posterity]; an eternal throne, and an eternal kingdom. Jesus Christ holds the key and controls access to the house of David which ultimately refers to the Messianic Kingdom. Jesus alone has the power to either admit or exclude people from His kingdom. **It is Jesus who holds key to all of the kingdom treasures.** Jesus is the one with the KEY, the KEY OF DAVID!

Jesus OPENS and SHUTS. This emphasizes His sovereign power and authority. All three of these introductory phases emphasize Jesus as the Divine Sovereign who rules over all, controls all, and none can resist His will!

Revelation 3:8 (NKJV)

8 “I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.

I know: Christ says this to each church. Thus it is repeated seven times and is very important.

Set before you an open door: It is Christ who takes the divine initiative. He is the one who must open doors (cf. Acts 16:6-10 ... forbidden to preach in Asia or Bithynia – Paul’s vision regarding going into Macedonia).

“If you can’t pray open a door – don’t try and pry it open”!

There are two primary ideas on what the meaning of an open door entails...

1. **Admission** to the kingdom in accordance with the key of David theme in verse seven.
2. **Opportunity** for service in accordance with their “works”, and in accordance with the common usage in the N.T. (cf. Acts 14:27, 1 Cor. 16:9, 2 Cor. 12:12, Col. 4:3)

I would not be dogmatic, but I would tend to see it in relationship to **OPPORTNUTNITY** for service. This is a very widely held view. The **most immediate context** is speaking in relation to their works. The open door in view pertains to their works. As such this church is an evangelistic church, a missions-minded church.

This would fit well with the main idea that the churches are lampstands (cf. 1:20), to be holding forth the light of Christ. It also harmonizes well with the Great Commission emphasis which also emphasizes Christ’s sovereign authority and the command to evangelize (cf. Mt. 28:18-19, Acts 1:8). I take it this church was being faithful to its calling to be a light for Christ, to be His witnesses, and Christ had granted an open door to them in regard to this.

We have seen that often the message to a church ties with the history of the city in terms of emphasis. In this case, the city of Philadelphia was founded as a “mission city” in a secular sense. It was intended that the city propagate the Greek culture and language to the surrounding area. Likewise the church at Philadelphia is seen to be a missionary church in that it is granted an open door. **It is the church of the open door.**

There is also much discussion in terms of how this open door relates to “you have a little strength”.

1. Little strength in terms **of numbers**. They are weak in terms of influence, but God is using them anyway. He has given them an open door. This is possible, but the text doesn't really say anything about NUMBERS of people (cf. 1 Cor. 1:26-29, 2 Cor. 12:9).
2. Little strength indicates they could be stronger, but they do have some strength and because of this, God has granted an open door. As such this reflects the tension between God's sovereignty and the fact He **uses faithful instruments** (cf. Lk. 19:17-26, 2 Tim. 2:1, 21).

Principle: Be faithful with the "little" and God will grant even more opportunity, even more open doors. The statement "have a little strength" is found in a context of **emphasizing the positive**.

I would take it that the OPEN DOOR is interconnected to three things.

- 1) having a little strength,
- 2) have kept my word,
- 3) and have not denied my name.

Have kept my Word: They have been faithful to the Gospel of Christ and to the apostles' doctrine.

Have not denied my name: They have been loyal to the PERSON of Christ, to the reality that He is both God and Man.

In context (vs. 9 – synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews) it seems that unbelieving Jews who probably rejected the Deity of Christ are on the scene. Furthermore, "not denied my name", suggests pressure had been applied to these Christians to deny the person of Christ, but they had not done so. Hence, we see the emphasis in the introduction on the DEITY of Christ as the Divine Sovereign. This church was holding fast to the reality that Jesus is GOD! I take it this church was standing firm, it had a little strength, but could have been more aggressive in terms of outreach. The strength of a church is directly tied to its stand on the Word and loyalty to Christ.

This church displays characteristics of the modern missionary era of church history.

- Charles Ryrie

The church of Philadelphia is often taken as a symbol of the great evangelical awakening in the 18th and early 19th centuries, the recovery of the truth concerning the church and Christ's coming, and the worldwide missionary outreach.

– William MacDonald

If indeed a stage of church history is in view (which does seem to fit), then it would seem to relate to the evangelical awakening and missionary movements that came out of dead Protestantism. In the 1700's, revivals started to take place, and in the 1800's missionary endeavors began to take place in earnest that largely related to what we would call Evangelicalism. There is a little strength there, and this church has an open door. This phase of church history will see the rapture. Philadelphia represents the church that will be kept from the Tribulation Period. The era we currently find ourselves in is the Philadelphia era. It is the church with a missions' emphasis that sees the rapture. This is what characterizes the period of church history in which we live. The church is far from perfect: Remember it has "a little strength", not a lot. This will be the state of the evangelical church until the rapture.

The phrase, "**not denied My name**", seems to transition into verse nine, which goes on to shed more light on those who were pressuring the Christians to deny Christ. In this case, it was rebellious unbelieving Jews.

Revelation 3:9 (NKJV)

9 “Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.

Synagogue: A meeting place to worship, study, or participate in communal activities. These people were really the congregation of Satan, but they evidently considered themselves to be the people of God. They claimed to be Jews, that is the covenant people of God who had a special relationship with God, but at the same time they rejected Jesus as the Divine Messiah. They rejected His person, that is His name, and persecuted the true believers (cf. Rom. 2:28-29). They probably were claiming that the kingdom belonged to them as “Jews” because they were especially loved by God. As such, the emphasis on Christ having the KEY of David in verse seven, as well as the remainder of this verse, has special significance.

Make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.

This seems to point to the oppressing unbelievers’ humiliation on judgment day.

I take it the worship in view is of Christ (worship belongs to God alone, cf. Rev. 19:10), but with these believers in His presence, who are the obvious recipients of His love (cf. Phil. 2:10-11), being there also.

Though there was apparently opposition to the church on the part of certain Jews who were unbelievers the promise is that they will have to acknowledge their faults either in time or eternity and recognize the love of God for the church of Philadelphia.

– John Walvoord

Revelation 3:10 (NKJV)

10 “Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

“Because you have kept My command to persevere,

It is interesting to note the reason that Christ gives for keeping these folks out of the Tribulation. He doesn’t merely say, “because you have believed”. The Bible speaks of a faith that saves and of a faith that doesn’t. Lots of people claim to believe or claim to be Christians, but it isn’t real in their hearts!

Note the promise here is in relation to those who PERSEVERE! We are saved by faith alone in Christ alone, but it must be the right kind of faith. It must be from the HEART (Rom. 10:9-10). And if it is real from the HEART, then we will persevere in our faith. True saving faith perseveres! That doesn’t mean we never stumble or fall into sin. We do (cf. Ja. 3:2). Even so, TRUE BELIEVERS will never completely abandon the faith (cf. Lk. 8:15, 1 Cor. 15:1-2, Col. 1:21-23, Heb. 3:14).

Persevere: To endure patiently, to bear up under pressure, to be faithful in spite of hardship. This is evidence of genuineness!

At the day of doom men shall be judged according to their fruits. It will not be said then did you believe? But were you doers or talkers only? – **John Bunyan** in Pilgrims Progress

We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves does not remain alone!

The real test of faith is whether it continues. If not, it was never real! Some people read this verse to say “whether you persevere or not, be assured you are ready for the rapture”. But that is not what Jesus says!

I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

This is not speaking of a local trial, but of a worldwide testing. Literally “the whole inhabited earth” is in view. This is ultimately speaking of the Tribulation period, what is called the 70th week of Daniel in Dan. 9:24-27, or the time of Jacob’s trouble in Jer. 30:7. Some have argued this is saying that the believers will be preserved THROUGH it, not from it, but note how this is refuted.

The passage states that they would be kept from the hour, not simply the events of the hour. The use of the preposition here [Ek – from] coupled with “the hour” should make it clear that the deliverance is from the period, not deliverance through the period. If it were intended to teach that they would be kept though the time of trouble, it would be proper to use another preposition (Gr. Dia), meaning “through”.

– John Walvoord

This is the most specific guarantee from our Lord Himself that Christian believers will not go into that seven-year Tribulation period He is about to unveil (Rev. 6-18).

- Tim LaHaye

To test those who dwell on the earth.

The phrase “those who dwell on the earth” or its equivalent, is found ten times in Revelation and is always a technical term for unbelievers, (cf. Rev. 3:10, 6:10, 8:13, 11:10, 13:8, 14, 17:8). The word dwell does not merely mean to dwell, but “to settle down” which is contrary to the pilgrim nature of the believer (cf. Phil. 3:18-20, 1 Peter 2:11, Heb. 11:13-16). This world is not the believer’s home. We are just passing through. The believer’s citizenship is in heaven! In contrast, the unbeliever is called an “earth dweller”.

The trials of this period are designed to test the wicked, either to lead them to repentance or to punish them for failure to repent (cf. 9:20, 11:13, 16:11)

– Robert Thomas

The next major event on God’s prophetic calendar is the pre-tribulation rapture. This is how we will be kept from the hour of testing that will come on the world.

Revelation 3:11 (NKJV)

11 “Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.

Quickly: Without warning or suddenly! It is imminent! Be ready! Live ready! Prophetically speaking, it is soon.

Hold fast what you have,

What did they have?

Vs. 8 have set before you an open door [missions, opportunity responsibility]

Vs. 8 have a little strength

Vs. 8 have kept My word

Vs. 8 have not denied My name

Vs. 10 have kept My command to persevere

The exhortation is to continue to be faithful witnesses, faithful to the Word of God, and to Christ. Don't let go of this! Don't compromise!

That no one may take your crown. The crown spoken of here is the "Victor's wreath", the winner's crown! "The readers would have been very familiar with this concept because of games held in the city! People can be "crown robbers". They can lead you in to error and unfaithfulness. In this context, it is especially addressing unbelieving Jews who were pressuring the believers to deny or compromise the truth of Christ the Messiah. The issue here is eternal rewards and not salvation. You cannot lose your salvation. Once saved always saved! You either have a FULL PARDON or you will suffer the PENALTY of death. There is no in between. The issue here is REWARD vs. REGRET. You can lose your crown, you can have rewards coming because of faithful service; and then get lax and lose them (cf. Gal. 6:9, 2 Jn. 8).

Salvation is a free gift, but rewards are on the basis of quality of workmanship!

Are we faithful to the Word?

Are we loyal to the person of Christ?

Will we keep on keeping on or will we lose heart?

There is no promised crown for backsliders!!! (cf. Rev. 22:12)

Revelation 3:12 (NKJV)

12 "He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.

He who overcomes,

Overcomers is consistently used as a term designating true believers. If references them as victors!

I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more.

The temple of God denotes the presence of God where He uniquely resides. This speaks of stability and prominence. Philadelphia had many temples, and the pillars were the most stable and prominent features. In the frequent earthquakes that they had, the buildings would often crumble and fall while the pillars remained standing. This speaks of stability. Believers will never be shaken in the presence of God. They will go out no more. Never again will they need to run in fear as they did when leaving the city of Philadelphia when they felt tremors. There is a PERMANENCE emphasized in relation to God's presence (cf. Heb. 12:27-28).

And I will write on him the name of My God

This denotes ownership and identification of honor. They may be thrown out of the synagogue. They may have their citizenship revoked in Philadelphia, but one day God will write on them His own name. Often the pillars of the temple had prominent names written on them to honor certain people. God will bring honor to Himself by writing His name on His trophies of grace.

and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God.

They will be permanently identified with the glorious city of God, the new Jerusalem.

And I will write on him My new name.

This is either a new name given to them by Christ, or a new name in keeping with a deeper revealing of Christ Himself (cf. Rev. 19:12). Either way it signifies INTIMACY.

Overcomers will...

1. Be securely identified with the intimate presence of God.
2. Be identified with the name of God – denoting ownership.
3. Be identified with the place of God – the New Jerusalem.
4. Be identified with a new name - a new identify that knows Jesus in all His fullness.

Revelation 3:13 (NKJV)

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

Again, the refrain is made that the reader better listen to what the Spirit is saying! The message is to the churches, but is to be applied by all individuals down through history!

We now come to the seventh church, the church at Laodicea. There are many views regarding the details of this section. I will give you my view, but at various points, I would not be dogmatic. For example, this is the LUKEWARM church. Are “lukewarm Christians” really Christians at all? Some scholars say “no” and some say “yes”. I would take it that the severe language in view such as when Christ says He will vomit them out of His mouth in 3:16 argues that this is essentially an APOSTATE church, and that they are, for the most part, not saved. However, there is still the possibility for REPENTANCE on the part of individuals as seen in 3:19. Again, there are good men with differing views, but I take the view that Laodicea essentially represents an APOSTATE church where Christ is standing OUTSIDE the church trying to get those inside the church to RESPOND to Him in saving faith.

Laodicea receives the sharpest REBUKE of all the churches and no commendation! It is the church of compromise, a spiritually bankrupt church.

Revelation 3:14 (NKJV)

14 “And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, ‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God:

Laodicea: This city was located about 40 miles S.E. of Philadelphia.

The name Laodicea is derived from combining *laos*, “People” with *dikao*, “I rule”. It conveys the sense “the rule of the people, i.e., a democracy. – **Robert Thomas**

The probable founder of the city was Antiochus II (261-246 B.C.), a Selucid king (after Alexander the Great) who named the city after his wife Laodice. There were several key factors that defined the city.

1. It was a banking center and extremely wealthy. It had theaters, a huge stadium, lavish public baths, and great markets. As an example of their wealth was when the city was destroyed by an earthquake in A.D. 60. The city refused aid from Rome to rebuild because it had enough funds of its own to do so.
2. It was a manufacturing center for clothing, especially glossy black wool.
3. It had a medical school that specialized in eye salve.

4. It was the crossroads of two **primary trade routes** between Rome and the Orient.
5. The city was a center for emperor worship as well as for the worship of Asclepius (god of healing) and Zeus who was considered the chief of gods.
6. It had **poor water**. Neighboring Heirapolis had hot spring mineral waters and neighboring Colosse had cold mountain water. However, Laodicea's water was channeled from Heirapolis five to six miles away and by the time it got there, it was lukewarm and didn't taste well. Reportedly, visitors would begin to take a drink and then spit it out.

We do not know when or how the church was planted, but Paul in Col. 2:1 speaks of his great conflict for Christians in both Colossae and neighboring Laodicea. Although there is no record of Paul ever having been in Laodicea, he did send greetings to them in Col. 4:15; and some think that the "epistle from Laodicea" mentioned in Col. 4:16 is possibly the Book of Ephesians, which was probably a circular letter.

The city of Laodicea was a very prosperous and prestigious city and enjoyed a high quality of life. Life was good there. It seems that the church had adapted to this climate, to the point, it had become INDIFFERENT. It was comfortable and didn't make any waves. There is no record of persecution or any conflict in the church, evidently because this church just didn't take any stands. Their motto could have been "Go along, to get along". "TOLERATION" defined them. Today the city lies in ruins.

'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God:

Christ's introduction to each church ties back to the vision in Chapter One and makes a defined emphasis in relation to what that particular church needs to hear. In contrast to this superficial compromising church, the one who is addressing them is genuine and authentic.

Amen: Lit. "So be it". It refers to Truth, the final word, that which is fixed and unchangeable. As such, He is the guarantor and executor of God's purposes. Jesus Christ is the AMEN to all the promises and purposes of God (cf. 2 Cor. 1:20). Jesus is the final WORD to the purposes of God. He is the CERTAINTY of God! In contrast to this wishy-washy church, Christ is the AMEN! This is what they needed to hear first and foremost.

Faithful and True Witness: Unlike the unreliable testimony of Laodicea, He is trustworthy. He is the absolute reliable witness to divine truth.

The Beginning of the creation of God: The sense of this is the initiator, or originator, of all creation. He is the **SOURCE** of creation, not the result of it (cf. Jn. 1:3, Col. 1:16). It emphasizes His supremacy, affirming His priority over all creation. He is the unchangeable standard by which all is measured. This suggests that a problem in this church was a weak view of Christ's Deity, as we also find being addressed in relation to neighboring Colossae in the book of Colossians.

Right out of the blocks, the emphasis to Laodicea is that Jesus is the DIVINE ABSOLUTE. They so needed to hear this message because they had no spine, they took no stands, and nothing really seemed to matter to them. They could go this way or that way. They were LUKEWARM, but Jesus was the concrete absolute truth, the totally faithful and true witness, the Divine Source of all creation.

Revelation 3:15 (NKJV)

15 "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot.

I know your works: Christ knows what they are all about. He says this to each church. What we do, tells on who we are! Doing and being go together.

Neither cold nor hot: They would have understood the concept very clearly because they lived in Laodicea, the city known for lukewarm water. Cold and hot are used here as contrasting spiritual temperatures. Cold on one end of the spectrum would indicate hostility and opposition, while on the other hand HOT emphasizes healthy spiritual fervor. The word “hot” is the Greek word “zestos” from which we get the word “zeal”. It means “boiling hot”.

Taken this way, the message is **SHOCKING**. The most offensive thing to Christ is not one who is completely COLD to Him, but rather the PRETENDER, the HYPOCRITE, who in name is a Christian, but in reality, stands for nothing. Taken at face value, LUKEWARM CHRISTIANITY is the MOST OFFENSIVE thing to Christ. It is less offensive to honestly reject Him, than to be a NOMINAL Christian. The worst thing is a LUKEWARM “Christian,” because in fact, they aren’t Christian at all. They are simply pretenders. Nothing is more disgusting to Christ than those who claim His name, but in fact are phony! That makes Christ sick!!!

Those who received the strongest words of condemnation while Christ was here on this earth were not the tax collectors, harlots, and other worldlings. Those who received Christ’s most severe words of rebuke were the most RELIGIOUS people in the land, the Pharisees.

In Matthew 23, Jesus pronounces seven woes upon the Pharisees; “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!” I submit to you that nothing is more offensive to God than HYPOCRITICAL commitment to Him. It is absolutely repulsive (cf. Mt. 23:14).

Revelation 3:16 (NKJV)

16 “So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.

Lukewarm: This is the defining word for this church! Lukewarm: indifferent, complacent, self-satisfied, compromisers, tolerant, conforming to this world in a culturally “Christian” kind of way. These are “room temperature” Christians! They just assume the cultural temperature around them, and yet, they claim to be Christian. They would never claim to be in opposition to Christ, yet they don’t stand for Him either.

Lukewarm is a description of church people who have professed Christ hypocritically but do not have in their hearts the reality of what they pretend to be in their actions.

- Robert Thomas

Lukewarmness, then, does not refer to the laxity of Christians but the condition of not really knowing Christ as Savior and Lord.... **Expositors**

Vomit you: They make Christ SICK, they made Him want to puke. It was nauseating to Him. What is about to be vomited is actually THEM! He is going to eject them from His system. They never really belonged to Him, but claimed an attachment.

Christ’s forceful expression is one of disgust. He will utterly repudiate those whose attachment to Him is purely nominal and superficial. – **John Stott**

The language is so strong here that I take it that they must indeed be unbelievers. To His own, Christ has promised He will never leave nor forsake them (cf. Jn. 6:37, Heb. 13:5-6). But that is not what He says to these people. Indeed, He is about to vomit them out! Eschatologically speaking, I think Laodicea represents the APOSTATE church of the last days that ends up being the bride of the antichrist. It is part of the great whore of Rev. 17. It consists of those in the last days who have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof. (cf. 2 Tim. 3:5). There have always been various types of churches; Ephesus-type churches, Smyrna-type churches, etc. In addition, I take it that very possibly the seven churches represent seven successive periods in church history in which, what

characterizes that church, dominates the character of the corresponding time period, as we have seen.

God completes His work in cycles of seven. The Laodicean letter, which is the last in our Lord's series of seven, brings to a close His prophetic foreview of the Churches earthly history. - **Leman Strauss**

However, the last four churches (Thyatria – representing Romanism; Sardis – representing Protestantism; Philadelphia – representing Evangelicalism; and Laodicea – representing Apostasy), while giving way to a succeeding emphasis in church history, still continue on as a major reality until the second coming. All four of these have a strong eschatological emphasis in their individual letters. In other words, the period of Romanism gave way to Protestantism, which in turn gave way to Evangelicalism, which in turn gives way to Apostasy. However, all four of these are still in existence as major aspects of the professing church at the coming of Christ.

Rapture - Tribulation Period

Philadelphia - Persevere – Raptured

Laodicea – Apostate-----→

Note: The Philadelphia church is raptured, and kept from the hour of trial (Rev. 3:10), while the Laodicean church is spewed out, (Rev. 3:16) I take it, into the Tribulation.

Revelation 3:17 (NKJV)

17 “Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—

The church at Laodicea is boastful, self-sufficient, and ignorant! They speak of self (I am) instead of Christ. The town was wealthy and probably so was the church as evidenced in this prideful statement. It could also be that they thought they were spiritually rich in the sense that God's blessing was on them, as evidenced in the fact that He had made them rich.

Need of nothing: They thought they had everything! It is sad when you have so much, you come to where you lose sight of the need for DEPENDENCE upon God. This is where they were. They had plenty of money, fine clothes, and status; and thought they were doing GREAT! The fact is they were IGNORANT of their true spiritual condition.

Lesson: Never evaluate your spiritual condition on the basis of material prosperity. The prosperity gospel propagators would do well to study this passage. Here is a people who are PROSPERING. It would have been easy to preach a prosperity gospel in Laodicea!

Do not know: How sad it is that they did not know their true spiritual condition.

The five adjectives that describe this church in v. 17 make it quite evident that, corporately speaking, they did not have a relationship with Christ as Savior. This probably cannot be pressed to mean that there were no genuine Christians there. ... By and large, the church had come under the dominance of pretending Christians. – **Robert Thomas**

Wretched: troubled, afflicted, terrible state

Miserable: pitiable, sorry shape

Poor: destitute, extreme poverty, beggar status

Blind: can't see spiritual realities

Naked: idea of shame, don't have the garment of salvation

These five adjectives speak to their extreme spiritual NEED, even though they were ignorant of any need whatsoever. Christ now speaks to them in a language that materialistic people would understand, the language of the merchant, corresponding to the pride of the city. Christ counsels them with regard to the spiritual counterparts of the three major industries represented amongst them.

Revelation 3:18 (NKJV)

18 “I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.

Counsel: Note that even at this point Christ doesn't harshly command them, but even now seeks to woo them through counsel.

Buy: Seems to be used in a sarcastic way, in the same spirit as Isaiah. 55:1.

Each item he counsels them to buy is a different way to figuratively refer to salvation, which one can only receive from Christ.

Gold refined in the fire: The reference is to precious spiritual treasure and riches. There is irony here because this city prided itself on having lots of riches.

White garments: Garments are often used in reference to “righteousness”, which is a picture of covering for sin. Christ gives a robe of righteousness to those who are His own. There may be a contrast between the black garments in which the merchants specialized, and the WHITE garment of righteousness, which Christ alone could supply.

Anoint your eyes with eye salve: They prided themselves on the eye salve industry, but what they needed was spiritual sight, which only Christ can give. These descriptions strongly argue that they lacked salvation, and needed to HUMBLE THEMSELVES and come to Christ, to meet their spiritual needs (cf. Mt. 5:3).

Revelation 3:19 (NKJV)

19 “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.

The language at this point would seem to fit better in regard to believers, and for that reason, some have thought that Christ now turns from the lost in the church, to the saved remnant. This is possible, but there is no hint that He is now addressing a different group.

No special relationship of paternity can be read into the choice of this word, though such does exist in Prov. 3:12 and Heb. 12:6. Here is a case where Christ extends special treatment to a church in spite of its lukewarm condition. ... The existence of a faithful remnant in Laodicea should not be denied, but if referred to in this message, members of the remnant would have been singled out more clearly than by terminology such as in v. 19 (cf. 3:4). – **Robert Thomas**

...the terminology and context (v.18) suggest that these Laodiceans were for the most part mere professing Christians who lacked authentic conversion to Christ...

- Expositors

Love: lit. “*phileo*” meaning “to have affectionate for” (cf. Mk. 10:21).

Rebuke: a verbal rebuke with the goal of bringing people to acknowledge their fault.

Chasten: action designed to correct.

Therefore: Shows that Christ's love is not reciprocal. He desires for them to REPENT, that is to have a change of mind, a change of attitude, a change of outlook, which results in exchanging mere NOMINAL Christianity for a vibrant spiritual life.

Let My strong criticisms of you open your eyes at once to the need of repentance and also to the fact that it is really love on My part that prompts Me to reprove and chastise you. A realization of My loving concern, as well as your own desperate condition, should bring a resolute change of purpose and kindle within you a warm fervor of devotion that will dispense with lukewarmness. – **Robert Thomas**

Those that fully experience Christ's love will RESPOND to this severe correction. It is motivated by love and the proper RESPONSE is one of REPENTANCE!

Our Lord's last word to the church was not the Great Commission, but a plea for repentance.
- **Vance Havner**

In regards to this APOSTATE Church, Christ is actually standing outside the church that claims to know Him. The organization as a whole is not listening to Christ and does not have a relationship with Him.

History affords little ground for optimism that an organization that has departed from Christ will return. But our Lord does appeal to the individual... - **Leman Strauss**

I think this is the point here: Corporately, apostate churches essentially don't turn around. They have kicked Christ out of the Church and are self-sufficient, doing things their way. However, in that same context Christ still continues to appeal to the INDIVIDUAL! I think that is what 3:20 is all about!

Revelation 3:20 (NKJV)

20 "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

Some believe the imagery here is based on Song of Solomon 5:2 where the bridegroom knocks, seeking to be admitted by the bride.

A common view (not the only one) has been that the door is the **HUMAN HEART**. This makes good sense to me since He is appealing to the individual and wanting to "come into him". The custom of the time was to knock at the door of someone's house and at the same time to speak out identifying yourself (cf. Acts 12:13-14). OPENING the door was a response of WELCOMING THEM IN! This response of the heart is in keeping with the command for repentance in verse 19. The voice is the message of Christ and the knocking is the convicting work of the Holy Spirit. Too many people "hear" Jesus outside the door to their hearts, but they refuse to OPEN the door and let Him come into their life. However, if Jesus doesn't come in, all lukewarm pretenders will be spewn out! (cf. 1 Thess. 2:13) It is not enough just to "hear". There must be a saving faith response, that opens the heart's door and yields to Christ as Savior and Lord. (Rom. 10:9-10, 2 Cor. 6:1-2, Rev. 22:17).

This is the climactic decision of a lost person in turning to Christ for salvation.
- **Robert Thomas**

Christ does not force Himself upon people. He will not break and enter in some irresistible manner. That is not the picture here. He stands waiting, while extending a gracious invitation!

He stands at the door and knocks. He will not crash the door. Regardless of what some extremists say on this matter of election, the Lord Jesus has moved heaven and hell to get to the door of your heart, but when He gets there, He will stop and knock. You will have to open the door to let Him in. - **J. Vernon McGee**

There is a famous picture of Christ standing outside the bolted door of a human heart, patiently knocking and calling for admittance. When it was first on display, a critic said to the painter, "You have painted a MASTERPIECE, but you have made one serious mistake. You painted the door without a handle." The artist replied, "That is no mistake, the handle is on the inside."

Dine with him and he with Me: This is the language of fellowship. Eating and sharing intimately go together in the Bible. The result of OPENING the door is that Christ will enter in and you will have sweet fellowship with Him. It is what a personal relationship with Jesus is all about (cf. 1 Jn. 1:3).

Revelation 3:21 (NKJV)

21 "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

Overcomers: Winners, Those who triumph, Victors. This is a term used consistently of true believers by John. They have true faith and it demonstrates itself in a changed life, and by grace, perseveres (cf. 1 Jn. 5:4-5).

I will grant to sit with Me on My throne I believe this is the throne of David which relates to the KINGDOM reign of Jesus Christ. (cf. Mt. 25:31). Overcomers/believers will share in this rule. We are going to reign with Christ.

as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

Christ **overcame** looks back to His conquering of death, which He accomplished on our behalf. Upon completion of this, He sat down with His Father in Heaven (cf. Heb. 10:12-13).

Revelation 3:22 (NKJV)

22 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." ' ' "

Once again, appeal is made to all individuals to make application of what is being said. Also, application is here for all the churches, not just this local church. LISTEN! The Spirit is speaking! We need to respond appropriately to what He is saying to us. In essence, Christ is the Divine Judge Who evaluates the churches and exhorts them to live in light of WHO He is, considering the great evaluation day, which is, the judgment day for believers.

Note: The word "church" or "churches" has been mentioned 19 times in the first three chapters. The word church is not found again until 22:16. Seven times in Chapter Two and Three, we have repeated ... "hear what the Spirit says to the churches", but in **13:9** it simply says "If anyone has an ear, let him hear." That is a significant argument, from silence, for the view that the true Church is not found represented in the Tribulation period.

Revelation 2-3 represents the PRESENT Church Age. As we move into Chapter Four, we find the church raptured to heaven. Chapters 4-5 present the scene in heaven as a background to what is about to take place on earth. From this scene in heaven emanate forth the judgments we find in Rev. 6-18. Chapters 4-5 are a UNIT that provides the introduction and background to the remainder of the book. It is the prologue to the Tribulation period. What do you expect to see when you get to heaven? Chapters 4-5 present what you can expect to see at the RAPTURE! This presents the

throne room! Here we come into God's intimate presence, into the throne headquarters of the universe, which governs all.

We are in the realm of the unfamiliar. It is like being in a strange country where language, customs, and architecture are sufficiently like our own to be recognized, yet sufficiently exotic and strange to make us feel somewhat ill at ease. – **John Phillips**

Revelation 4:1 (NKJV)

1 After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this."

After these things I looked,

This denotes a time sequence following the church age, as just discussed at length in Chapters 2-3.

The words church or churches are not found mentioned again until Chapter 22 where Christ makes a "post script" statement to the church. It therefore follows that Chapters 2-3 represent not only local churches, but the Church Age, in general, which has now chronologically come to a close.

This vision took place "after these things" that is, after the events related to the churches (cf. 4:1 with 1:19). Apparently, we are to understand that the events of chapters 4-22 take place after Christ's dealings with the church. This suggests that the church is removed from the earth before the time of judgment (the Tribulation) begins. – **Paul Benware**

Confusion in the interpretation of Revelation stems almost entirely from the failure to observe this divine outline [1:19]. The opening of chapter 4 with the phrase "after this" referring to the churches, should make clear that from chapter 4 on the Book of Revelation is dealing with future events. One of the important conclusions in prophecy is the concept that the church composed of the saved of the present age will be in heaven while the events of the Tribulation and of the end time take place. This is exactly what is described in Revelation 4-5. – **John Walvoord**

and behold, a door standing open in heaven.

Behold: This signifies a call to attention. It consistently indicates special divine intervention.

"A door in heaven is opened to enable the prophet to enter its portals and see what transpires in heaven, that he may understand what takes place on earth." He then says, "This is the key to interpreting the Revelation. It provides us with a heavenly perspective on human events." -**Edward Hinson quoting G.R. Beasley-Murray**

The scene is now HEAVEN!

And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me,

This is the voice of Christ

that John heard in Rev. 1:10. It was loud and commanding like a trumpet. Compare the language related to the rapture in 1 Thess. 4:16 ("the trumpet of God"), and in 1 Cor. 15:52 ("the last trump").

saying, "Come up here,

Upon hearing “Come”, immediately he was there. That’s how the rapture will be, too! It will happen in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye (cf. 1 Cor. 15:52).

and I will show you things which must take place after this.”

This is the same language we find in the outline of Rev. 1:19. The things in view from here on out in the book relate to the things which will happen following the church age. Is the rapture symbolized in this verse? Some have thought so, but it doesn’t explicitly state this. However, it **certainly fits**.

Many Bible students believe that John’s entrance into heaven is a picture of the church being taken to be with the Lord at this time. – **William MacDonald**

The words “come up here” indicate John’s personal transferal from earth to heaven. They do not specifically teach the Rapture of the church, although in the pre-tribulational understanding of prophecy the Rapture would occur at this point in the book.

– **Charles Ryrie**

Again: Note the church is not mentioned at all in the portion book related to the Tribulation, indicating that indeed at this point (between Chapters 3 and 4), it has been taken to heaven. John was a member of the church and as such is representative of the church.

Revelation 4:2 (NKJV)

2 Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.

Immediately I was in the Spirit; “in the Spirit” evidently refers to a state of trance in the spirit realm conducive to receiving this revelation.

and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.

The first thing John sees is A THRONE and One sitting on the throne. The throne scene dominates this chapter. It is the centerpiece! It is the key word! It is referenced 11 times. Throne symbolizes sovereignty, power, authority, judgment! The throne is the source from which all that happens on earth flows. The One Who sits on the throne is clearly God, but no member of the Godhead is singled out at this point.

Revelation 4:3 (NKJV)

3 And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald.

And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance;

“**Like**” This illustrates that God can’t really be adequately described.

A jasper stone: A clear gem, the color of light, probably DIAMOND-like in appearance!

Sardis: Bright fiery red, or bright blood red.

and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald.

Rainbow: A reminder of God's faithfulness to His promises in a context of judgment!

Emerald: light, bright green.

This is the glory of God – brilliant, full of splendor.

Revelation 4:4 (NKJV)

4 Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.

Who are these "elders"?

1. A special class of angels that rule under God.

Angels would not seem to be in view, because in 5:9, these elders sing Christ has "redeemed us". Angels are not redeemed. Angels are never referred to as "elders", nor do angels have the promise of crowns or occupy thrones. Furthermore, in 7:11, the elders are distinguished from angels.

2. Representatives of God's people: 12 representing the 12 tribes of Israel and hence representing the saints of Israel. 12 representing the 12 apostles and hence representing the saints in the church age (cf. Rev. 21:10-14 – 12 foundation stones of the 12 apostles and 12 gates of the 12 tribes of Israel.)

3. The elders represent the Church which is now in heaven (I would think either view 2 or 3 would be possible, but I prefer view 3).

- a. Being on thrones seems to signify joint rule in some capacity which is what Christ promised overcomers in the church (cf. 2:26-27, 3:21).
- b. Overcomers are promised garments of white in 3:5.
- c. Overcomers are promised a crown in 2:10. The crown mentioned there is not the crown of a ruler (Gk. *Diadem*), but rather the crown of a victor (Gk. *Stephanos*). This is the crown of the overcomer.
- d. At this point the nation of Israel is not yet saved. Their resurrection glory will come at the end of the Tribulation (cf. Dan. 12:2).
- e. Tribulations saints are not yet saved (cf. 7:9-10).
- f. Only one group will be complete and glorified at this point. That will be the church. They are the ones that sing the song of redemption (cf. 5:8-10).

The term "elder" in the Bible commonly indicates representatives who are leaders of a nation, tribe, city, family; and in the N.T. it means the spiritual leaders in the church. I take it that here the context best argues for representatives of the church being in view. As such they represent the overcomers – the true believers of the church age, who have already been before the judgment seat of Christ, rewarded appropriately, and now, as joint heirs with Christ, are seated and ready to reign with Christ.

Revelation 4:5 (NKJV)

5 And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. These are sights and sounds signifying holy judgment proceeding from the throne. They represent power emanating from the throne related to coming judgments found in remainder of the book. Thunder plays a big part in indicating God's displeasure in relation to prominent judgments (cf. 8:5, 11:19, 16:18).

Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

The seven lamps of fire represent the Spirit of God; the Holy Spirit in all His fullness. The number seven in the Bible consistently represents completeness or fullness (cf. Zech. 4:10, 1:4, 3:1, 5:6).

Fire: Represents judgment or purging. God is a consuming fire (Deut 4:24, Heb. 12:29).

Revelation 4:6 (NKJV)

6 Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back.

Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. This sea was transparent in appearance. It was mirror-like, perhaps signifying that all is lucid before the omniscient God. It was a glistening sea. What a sight! Some suggest this signifies calm, peace, and tranquility, in contrast to a troubled world symbolized by a troubled sea (cf. Dan. 7:2). And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes, both in front and in back.

Revelation 4:7 (NKJV)

7 The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle.

Who are these four living creatures?

1. They signify the various attributes of God.
2. They reflect Christ as presented in the Gospels.
 - a. Lion – Matthew – King
 - b. Calf or Ox – Mark – Servant
 - c. Man – Luke - Humanity – Son of Man
 - d. Eagle – John – Son of God
3. Angels – the highest rank of angels. (This is the view I prefer)

They bear close resemblance to many of the features related to the **Cherubim** as found in Ezek. 1 and 10, etc, and also to the **Seraphim** in Isa. 6. Cherubim were the highest rank of angels associated with the imminent **presence** of God. They were constructed as overshadowing the ark of the covenant. Satan was an anointed Cherub that covered, prior to his fall. Apparently they provide a protective covering for the glory of God (cf. Ezek. 28:14). It is interesting that the likeness of Cherubim were embroidered on the veil of the tabernacle and were constructed so as to be overshadowing the mercy seat (Ex. 25:18, 26:1).

Four is the number of universality, denoting every direction. They are full of eyes signifying they keep watch, probably in a guarding or protecting capacity, and perhaps in reference to governing. They relate to four principal divisions of God's created order on the earth. The climax of this scene in Chapter Four is to praise God in reference to His creation! Angels do have an important, but largely unknown, role related to the governing of the world (cf. Dan. 10).

A merging of these four aspects result in the following identification of the four living beings of the Apocalypse: they are of an exalted angelic order engaged in worship, who bear a special relationship to those angelic beings described in Ezekiel and Isaiah and whose special function in the context of the Apocalypse is the administering of divine justice in the realm of animate creation. – **Robert Thomas**

Revelation 4:8 (NKJV)

8 The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And

they do not rest day or night, saying: “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!”

They are expressing incessant and continual praise to God.

Holy, Holy, Holy: This is not only a double emphasis, but a superlative triple emphasis (cf. Isa. 6:3). They declare the superlative holiness of God, His Lordship, and His eternity!

Robert Coleman lists 14 songs in the Book of Revelation as found in the worship of heaven.

1. The Anthem of the Triune God – 4:8
2. The Hymn of creation – 4:11
3. The New Song of Redemption – 5:9-10
4. The Angels’ Chorale – Rev. 5:12
5. The Crescendo of the Universe – Rev. 5:13-14
6. The Martyr’s Canticle – 6:10
7. The Song of Salvation – 7:10
8. The Antiphonal Amen – 7:12
9. The Kingdom Carol – 11:15
10. The Psalm of Judgment – 11:17-18
11. The Shout of Overcomers – 12:10-12
12. The song of Moses and the Lamb -15:3-4
13. The Hallelujah Chorus – 19:1-4
14. The Symphony of the Marriage Feast – 19:6-7

Revelation 4:9 (NKJV)

9 Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever,

This is worship; ascribing to God holiness, power, eternity, glory, honor, and thanks!

This is the activity of HEAVEN! Worship on earth is the dress rehearsal. True believers are in fact true worshipers (cf. Jn. 4:23-24). They do not always worship; not as consistently as they should; but in fact, all true believers are true worshipers. The first act of true worship a person ever does is SAVING FAITH!

Jesus was born of a virgin, suffered under Pontius Pilate, died on the cross, and rose from the grave to make worshippers out of rebels! – **A. W. Tozer**

I am going to say something to you which will sound strange. It even sounds strange to me as I say it, because we are not used to hearing it within our Christian fellowships. We are saved to worship God. All that Christ has done for us in the past and all that He is doing now leads to this one end. -**A. W. Tozer**

Revelation 4:10 (NKJV)

10 the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying:

It’s like these four living creatures are the worship leaders. Then the 24 elders (who I believe are representative of the church)...

Fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him

Worship: means to bow down before a superior.

Note: The repetitive emphasis on the eternality of God.

Vs. 8 Who was and is and is to come

Vs. 9 who lives forever and ever.

Vs. 10 who lives forever and ever

Cast their crowns before the throne: This action is signifying that they really aren't worthy, and that they don't deserve this. All the glory for any accomplishments belong to God alone. It's all of grace! No one when they get to heaven will say to Jesus, "We did it"!

Revelation 4:11 (NKJV)

11 "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."

You are worthy, O Lord,

The term worthy is the basis of our English word worship – to ascribe "worth-ship" or honor to someone greater than ourselves. The term worthy (Greek *axios*) was used in biblical times to attribute praise when the emperor marched in triumphal procession. For Christians to ascribe this term to God was their way of saying that He and He alone deserved their worship. -

Edward Hindson

Lord: means "Master". It refers to His Sovereign Authority (cf. Phil. 2:9-11).

To receive glory and honor and power;

What can we give to God? Worship! God is seeking for true worshippers.

Glory: means "to speak highly of".

Honor: means to attribute value and reverence to God. VIP par-excellent.

Power: To rule and reign. Refers to His kingdom authority and dominion. "God rules".

For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created."

God is the source of all things.

By your will: According to God's sovereign determination. It was His decree to do this. Everything owes its existence to God!

It is absurd for the evolutionist to complain that it's unthinkable for an admittedly unthinkable God to make everything out of nothing and then pretend that it is more thinkable that nothing should turn itself into anything. - **G.K. Chesterton**

The focus of HEAVEN IS THE THRONE and the One who sits on it!

The activity of HEAVEN is worship!

The emphasis in Chapter 4 is on **Worship in relation to His Lordship**. As we move into Chapter 5 we find the emphasis is on **Worship in relation to redemption**. Worship as Lord and Savior predominates the worship of heaven as seen in the UNIT of Chapters 4 and 5.

Revelation 5:1 (NKJV)

1 And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals.

Right hand of Him: God the Father undoubtedly is in view.

Throne: Is prominent in chapter 4.

Scroll: Is central in chapter 5 (cf. v. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9).

Scrolls in John's day were rolled pieces of papyrus (paper like material), or vellum (prepared animal skins), that could be unrolled section by section. Often they denoted official documents such as a title deed and were sealed insuring privacy and security.

Written on the inside and on the back: Emphasizing fullness of contents. Evidently this scroll contained the contents that are revealed in the rest of the book. As each seal is broken more revelation comes forth moving to the climactic time of Christ taking possession of the earth.

Sealed with seven seals: Very important documents would be sealed seven times. Nothing could be added or changed.

Many believe this picks up where Daniel left off (cf. Dan. 12:4, 9). In effect this is the "Title Deed" of the earth! The title-deed of the earth was forfeited by man when he fell through sin in Genesis 3. By His redeeming death, Christ, the God-Man, has been granted the authority to reclaim the earth (cf. Ps. 2:8).

Revelation 5:2 (NKJV)

2 Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?"

Strong angel – loud voice: Pictured as though echoing throughout the universe!

"Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?" This denotes quality of being – having the credentials and qualifications to bring God's redemptive purposes to completion. It asks, "Who is qualified to purge the earth and bring in the kingdom?"

Worthy: This is the other key word in chapter 5 (cf. v. 2, 4, 9, 12).

Revelation 5:3 (NKJV)

3 And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it.

NO ONE:

In Heaven....

On the earth

Under the earth – "Hades", the realm of the departed dead (the spirit realm).

No one in the WHOLE UNIVERSE is found qualified to open or to even look on the scroll! No one meets the qualifications or has the right to take possession of the title deed of the earth, that is, to

open it up and bring to pass the judgments contained therein eventuating in the purging and redemption of the earth.

Revelation 5:4 (NKJV)

4 So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it.

Wept much: John was broken over this news. It signified that no one was able to bring to fulfillment the events contained within the scroll and thereby take the earth back for mankind. This would mean...

No justice for the saints.

No future kingdom.

No fulfillment of the purposes of God in terms of His redemptive purposes for the earth.

Revelation 5:5 (NKJV)

5 But one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.”

Lion of the tribe of Judah: This is a Messianic title traced back to Gen. 49:8-12. Christ's ancestry goes back to the Tribe of Judah from which the scepter was promised to come.

Lion: is the king of beasts; stately and powerful in appearance! This is the only place in Revelation that Christ is referred to in this way in contrast to the many times He is referred to as the “Lamb”.

Root of David: This ties Him back to the seed of David and the Davidic Covenant (cf. 2 Sam. 7:16-17).

Prevailed: triumphed, conquered, overcome, emerged victorious.

As such He is qualified to disclose the contents of the scroll and to carry out the divine counsels contained therein. He is able to REVEAL and to IMPLEMENT these things.

Revelation 5:6 (NKJV)

6 And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

The throne: This is the place of sovereign authority over the universe.

The four living creatures: The highest ranking angels.

The elders: Representing redeemed worshipers, probably representing the church.

In this context stood a Lamb as though it had been slain.

The Lamb stood. It wasn't dead, implying the resurrection. However, “as though it had been slain” implies He still bears the marks of the crucifixion. After His resurrection He showed to Thomas the wound in His side and imprint in His hands (cf. Jn. 20:20-27). Evidently Christ will bear these marks throughout all eternity. They are eternal reminders of what He went through for our REDEMPTION (cf. Zech. 12:10, 13:6). The term “Lamb” here identifies the glorified Christ of Revelation with the Christ of sacrifice at His first coming. This imagery ties back to the Exodus and the Passover Lamb. It fits with John 1:29 and John the Baptist's introduction of Him “As the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (cf. Mt. 26:2, 1 Cor. 5:7).

There is a tremendous emphasis on this reality in Revelation. Jesus is referred to as “Lamb” only twice in the O.T. (cf. Isa. 53:7, Jer. 11:19); only twice in the Gospels (cf. Jn. 1:29, 36); only once in the book of Acts (cf. Acts 8:32); and only once in the epistles (cf. 1 Pet. 1:19). However, in the book of Revelation, He is referred to as Lamb 28 times. Someone has said that right there in the MIDST of the throne are the only MAN-MADE things that will enter into heaven; namely the wounds of Christ!

But this is no ordinary “lamb”!

Seven horns: Horns in Scripture denote strength and the number seven indicates fullness or completeness. This speaks of His **OMNIPOTENCE!**

Seven eyes: Denotes He is all seeing and all knowing. It speaks of His **OMNISCIENCE** in conjunction with the ministry of the Spirit.

This symbolic representation of the Holy Spirit arises from the relationship of the third Person of the Trinity to the second Person. The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son just as He does from the Father (Jn. 15:26). He is Christ’s agent for keeping in touch with the affairs of the world... - **Robert Thomas**

Revelation 5:7 (NKJV)

7 Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.

This marks a dramatic monumental moment! This is the time for which all of heaven has been waiting! It marks the unfolding of all that is about to happen culminating in the kingdom. It marks reclaiming the title deed of the earth (cf. Dan. 7:13-14). This climactic moment demands a RESPONSE! And so worship breaks out in heaven!

Revelation 5:8 (NKJV)

8 Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

Harp: This is the most common instrument associated with worship in the O.T., although there is a wide variety of instruments as seen in Ps. 150. The harp is associated with joy and gladness in worship.

and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

In the OT, incense was continually offered up in front of the Holy of Holies. This signified prayer ascending up to God as a sweet fragrance that was delightful and pleasing to Him. God delights in the prayers of His people and works in conjunction with those prayers.

Specifically, these prayers represent all that the redeemed have ever prayed concerning ultimate and final redemption. This becomes a major theme throughout the book. – **John MacArthur**

Revelation 5:9 (NKJV)

9 And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

A new song indicates a new phase of redemptive history! It is a new song related to the new covenant, related to the ushering in of a new era. It's a new song, but it relays the old, old story! This is the song of the REDEEMED. Singing is the appropriate worship response for the redeemed (cf. Ex. 15:1-2).

saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

There is a textual problem here. Some manuscripts read "You have redeemed us to God", while others read, "You have redeemed men for God". The basic idea is the same, but if "us" is correct, it would eliminate angels from directly participating in this song, because angels are not redeemed. The Gospel (good news) is not what we do for God, but rather what Jesus did for us (cf. 1 Cor. 15:3-4, Acts 20:28). There will be representatives from every tribe, tongue, people and nation in this worship service. There is no discrepancy. Jesus died for all people, and heaven celebrates this reality. What unity there will be in heaven. All will be centered in the truth of REDEEMPTIVE WORSHIP of the Lamb!

Revelation 5:10 (NKJV)

10 And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth."

This is all the doing of Jesus. He has made us kings and priests. We are not self-made people.

Kings: This refers to the believers' royal calling. We are children of the King and will reign with Him as kings.

Priests: Denotes the special privilege of access into God's presence for the purposes of praise, worship, and service.

Reign: To rule. It's time to celebrate and rejoice in what Jesus has done for us and what this will mean for us in the kingdom! As believers, we will serve in a special priestly role and have a special reigning role.

Revelation 5:11 (NKJV)

11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands,

The angels are now brought into this worship service in addition to the living creatures and the elders. The group collectively is innumerable. There are untold thousands upon thousands gathered around the THRONE!

Revelation 5:12 (NKJV)

12 saying 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!"

saying with a loud voice:

They are not whispering in hushed tones. This is a lively, vibrant worship service.

"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain

In the Revelation, THE LAMB is the center around which all else is clustered, the foundation on which everything lasting is built, the nail on which all hangs, the object to which all points,

and the spring from which all blessing proceeds. THE LAMB is the light, the glory, the life, the Lord of Heaven and earth, from whose face all defilement must flee away, and in whose presence fullness of joy is known. Hence, we cannot go far in the study of Revelation, without seeing THE LAMB, like direction-posts along the road, to remind us that He who did by Himself purge our sins is now highly exalted, and that to Him every knee must bow, and every tongue confess. -H.H. Snell

To receive:

Some think this speaks of Christ's intrinsic qualities that are now being recognized in worship. Others think it refers to what all creation is to render to Him in worship. Perhaps it is a combination of the two!

Power: Sovereign Authority. The right to rule over all!

and riches: All that we have is at His disposal. All our resources are from Him and belong to Him and now will be rightly rendered to Him.

and wisdom: All thoughts, plans, and mental excellence will now be for Him.

And strength: All physical strength that He gives will be for Him.

and honor: All respect, esteem, and value of character goes to Him.

and glory: All the credit; all the exaltation goes to Him.

and blessing!" All praise and thanksgiving belong to Him.

These things all tie in with the title deed of the earth and that which He receives in conjunction with His kingdom reign!

Revelation 5:13 (NKJV)

13 And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!"

The worship is pictured in ever widening circles until the whole of creation is involved.

Vs. 8 the four living creatures and the 24 elders fell down

Vs. 9 the redeemed of every tribe, tongue, people, and nation...

Vs. 11 joining in are countless thousands of angels...

Vs. 13 every creature in the universe is pictured as joining in...

The entirety of intelligent life is represented! No specific time reference is mentioned, but evidently in view is a future time anticipated when praises that start with the inner circle of worship around the throne will extend outwards until they fill the universe (cf. Phil. 2:9-11).

I would think the ultimate fulfillment of this will be in conjunction with the Great White Throne judgment, etc. At that great future day, no one will be able to withhold from God what is rightfully His due, that is worship! This climaxes the description of the throne room in chapters 4-5 and is in keeping with the climactic Psalm praises in Ps. 145-150.

Worship is equally ascribed to both Him who sits on the throne (The Father), and to the Lamb (Jesus). This clearly shows us that Jesus is equal with the Father, and that He is fully God, as only God is worthy of worship (cf. Rev. 19:10).

Forever and ever! Worship of God in this fashion goes on FOREVER!

We were created to Worship God! -Ch. 4

We were redeemed to Worship God! - Ch. 5

Revelation 5:14 (NKJV)

14 Then the four living creatures said, “Amen!” And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.

The exalted order of angelic beings, the worship leaders of heaven, said AMEN! It's as if they couldn't remain silent!

Amen! – Strong affirmation – “So be it”

Twenty-four elders: I believe these represent the church. They to are compelled to worship.

What a picture! The chapters on the throne room (Rev. 4-5) end with all of heaven on its face before the Father and the Son as PRAISE resounds throughout heaven and WORSHIP exudes from every being!

The Lamb has taken the scroll, which is the title deed to the earth, which He now holds in His nail-scarred hands. He is about to disclose the contents written about in the scroll and to activate them. This will set in motion the events that will culminate in the consummation of God's redemptive program, resulting in the Worship of God forever and ever!

In the throne room, all of heaven is on their face in worship as the earth is about to enter into the day of the Lord. The great day of the wrath of the Lamb is about to unfold! The scene now shifts to God's judgments that are to come upon the whole earth.

For two breathtaking, soul-inspiring chapters, we have been in heaven. The scroll has changed hands, and the right to judge and rule the world has been placed upon Jesus. Now we must come down from the mount and out of the ivory palaces. Down here, on the rebel planet earth, the tempo is increasing, passions are rising. Evil men and seducers are waxing worse and worse. Disobedience to parents has grown up into brawling maturity, defying all authority. Men have become inventors of evil things, and their fearful inventions have become Frankenstein monsters, threatening to destroy the globe. The time has come for God to intervene in human affairs, so judgment is given to the Son. The seals on the scroll are to be broken. – **John Phillips**

The next great event on God's prophetic calendar is the Rapture of the Church. Following that, God's judgments are going to fall upon the world for seven years. That is what we have in Revelation 6-18.

It is difficult for non-Christians to understand that a God of love would allow the Tribulation. But God wants to draw as many people as possible to Him before Jesus returns to set up His Millennial kingdom, and He will use the Tribulation to get their attention. In grace and love, He will give more supernatural signs and leadings of His Spirit than at any time in the history

of the world, proving that He is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9 KJV).

--CHARTING THE END TIMES by Tim LaHaye and Thomas Ice, p. 58

God’s judgment on the world happens in stages as pictured in the opening of the seven seals. Each seal opened unleashes a new round of judgments. The seventh seal unleashes a whole new series of judgments, namely the seven trumpet judgments and out of the seventh trumpet judgments come the final seven bowl judgments. These judgments come with increasing frequency and intensity, culminating in the Battle of Armageddon judgments and the second coming.

Rev. 6-18- Order of Judgments

The **SEAL** Judgments – Ch. 6

- 1 – Cold War
- 2 – Open War
- 3 – Famine
- 4 – Death
- 5 – Imprecatory Prayer of Martyrs
- 6 – Disturbances

[Parenthesis – Chapter 7]

7 – (8:1-6)

The **TRUMPET** Judgments – Ch. 8-9

- 1 – Earth affected
- 2 – Sea affected
- 3 – Waters affected
- 4 – Heavens affected
- 5 – People affected
- 6 – Death

[Parenthesis – Chapters 10-15]

7 – (11:15-19)

The **Bowl** Judgments – Ch. 16

- 1 – Sores
- 2 – Sea Affected
- 3- Rivers Affected
- 4- Scorching
- 5- Darkness
- 6- Euphrates Dried Up
- 7- Destruction

[Parenthesis – Chapters 17-18]

Repetition View: Some see the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments as a repeating of the same thing, only from a little different angle. They are therefore seen as essentially a repetition of the very same judgments.

***Consecutive View:** This view sees the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments following each other in chronological sequence. However, there may be some overlap and the timing between them becomes more rapid fire near the end of the Tribulation. This is my view.

The other chapters in this section (besides 6, 8-9, and 16) relate events most important to our understanding of the Tribulation, but not necessarily in chronological order. Some commentators call them parentheses... These chapters contain fill in materials that are vital to the complete picture, but they are not necessarily arranged chronologically.

... The chapters in this section are not unlike a conversation on the telephone between two persons. They start telling the story in order (chap 6), but soon there is an interruption to fill in some information (chp. 7). Then the order of events is resumed (chps. 8-9) only to return to some more fill-in (chps. 10-15). There is a return to the progressive order of events (chp. 16) and finally more detail (chps 17-19). Sometimes the "fill-in" material runs ahead of the story; at other times it backs up to add or emphasize pertinent information. – **Charles Ryrie**

... Revelation unfolds as a pattern. First it gives us the big picture. Then it fills in the details. We get the wide-angle view, followed by individual snapshots.

- **Edward Hindson**

Revelation 6:1 (NKJV)

1 Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, "Come and see."

Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals;

Some have taken the position that the church will be on the earth during the first part of the Tribulation, but then raptured prior to the WRATH of God part of it. The problem is that this whole thing happens at the hand of the Divine Lamb. It is the LAMB who breaks the seals thereby unleashing ALL these judgments on the earth (cf. 6:16-17).

The Lamb both REVEALS and ACTIVATES these realities.

and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder,

A thunderous voice will get your attention. Here it indicates the approaching storm of JUDGMENT!

"Come and see."

Come and see in some manuscripts is simply "come". Many conservative commentators think this is the proper understanding.

This in effect is a SUMMONS to the first horseman of the apocalypse as seen in verse two.

In Rev. 6:1-8, we now have a unit of four seals loosed with the unifying element of four horsemen which are called the four horsemen of the apocalypse.

These four horseman introduce judgments that relate very closely in description to Matt. 24:7-14, which we believe relates to the first¹ half of the Tribulation Period.

Robert Thomas notes that Jesus divided this time of judgment into two periods: "birth pangs" (Matt. 24:8), and the "great Tribulation" (Matt. 24:21). He writes, "The former part closely parallels the first four seals in particular."

The Lord Jesus spoke of these [what seems to be related to the 1st four seal judgments] Tribulation judgments as "birth pangs" (Matt. 24:8). This suggests that as the Tribulation progresses, the judgments become more severe and the intervals of time between the judgments become shorter. - **Paul Benware**

Revelation 6:2 (NKJV)

2 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.

Here we have the real beginning of the Tribulation Period introduced with this horseman. There are four as we have already noted. The imagery is similar to Zech. 1:7-11, 6:1-8.

In Zechariah, the horses are sent to patrol the earth, but in Revelation, their release brings great disaster to the earth. As is often the case (cf. Job 39:19-25; Ps. 76:5-6; Prov. 21:31), horses are connected with war and conquest, and horsemen are associated with an omen of the end. – **Robert Thomas**

Who is this on the white horse?

- A. Some have thought this was **Christ** because in Ch. 19 we see Christ coming on a white horse. However, the only real similarity is the white horse. All the other details differ. This horseman is connected to the other three, relating to judgments coming on the earth, whereas Christ works by Himself and brings it all to a close. This horseman seems to bring about a temporary peace, whereas Christ will bring about a lasting peace.
- B. Some have thought this represents **antichrist** and this view has merit, but there is a better view.
- C. The best view seems to be that each horse and rider presents a **personification** of a movement or a force. Each horse and rider represents a new wave of judgments. Note the personification of “Death” in verse 8. Consistency would seem to indicate that these are personifications of movements related to the various judgments that are coming on the earth. These individual waves of judgment seem to blend and transition into each other.

However, that stated, within the PERSONIFICATION of the first horse and rider, we believe that the antichrist plays a significant role.

White horse: Often the Roman military leaders would ride on white horses in conjunction with military victories.

Bow: Note he has a bow, but no arrows. This seems to signify a “bloodless” victory. He stands poised to battle if he has to, but at this point, power is gained through diplomacy, intrigue, deception, and a platform of peace. It seems to be a “cold” war posture!

Crown: This is the victor’s (*stephanos*) crown, not the royal crown worn by Christ.

Note however, that the motives here are to go out and conquer. The goal will be to conquer more and more from this starting point. Remember, that according to Dan. 11:38, antichrist’s god is WAR (munitions). He worships military might. He has an insatiable appetite to conquer the world, but initially presents himself as a man of peace! He has an agenda!

The animal [white horse] represents an unparalleled time of world-peace – a false peace that is to be short-lived. – **John MacArthur**

The bow indicates that war is threatened, but never actually occurs because victory is accomplished through peaceful means. Worldwide peace is the condition at the end of the first seal period, because one of the results of the second seal is to take that peace away (cf. 6:4). – **Robert Thomas**

As the Tribulation scene opens, the world is celebrating peace!!!

1 Thessalonians 5:3 (NKJV)

3 For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.

This also fits with the seven-year covenant that antichrist will sign with Israel, as found in Dan. 9:26-27. The white horse and rider portray a climate of peace on the earth in conjunction with antichrist. But this will quickly be shown to be a pseudo-peace. It is a delusion that is followed by a rapid reality check with the opening of the second seal. In effect, the first horse and rider symbolize CONQUEST via a pseudo peace!

Revelation 6:3-4 (NKJV)

3 When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come and see."

4 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.

This second horse is bright red, blood red, indicating slaughter and bloodshed. The peace of verse two is shattered!

And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth,

This indicates that for a time, there was PEACE on the earth, but suddenly chaos is breaking out all over the world. The world becomes one large killing field.

and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword.

Mayhem, war, and murder break out among nations and classes of people.

Great sword: This symbolically indicates that massive amounts of people will die from killing each other. It will be a time of chaos and murder! The restraining work of the Spirit will have been removed. Love grows cold and raw. Depravity is now openly on display.

The first seal presented a "Cold" war scenario. The second seal presents an OPEN war scenario, with a world characterized by KILLING! It will be a savage world with only the most brutal moving to the top (cf. Dan. 7:23). The second horse and rider personify WAR!

Revelation 6:5 (NKJV)

5 When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come and see." So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand.

The black horse personifies mourning and lamentation.

Pair of scales in his hand: This indicates scarcity in which food will be weighed out carefully. Food will be in short supply, which is quite common on the heels of a major war.

Revelation 6:6 (NKJV)

6 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."

Wheat was the main food in the ancient world. A quart represents a measure of about one liter and a denarius was the typical day's wages in the time of John the Apostle (cf. Matt. 20:2). The conditions

will be such that a day's wages will be required for a day's worth of food for a normal person. Famine conditions will require a full day's wages for a minimum ration of food.

Three quarts of barley will be secured for a day's wages. Barley was of inferior food value and used mostly to feed animals. These present basic survival level conditions with regard to FOOD! Food will be scarce and expensive.

Do not harm the oil and the wine.

It indicates... the inequity that will prevail. The poor will have it extremely hard while the wealthy will experience no interruption to their luxurious lifestyle. ...the privileged lifestyle of the rich remains completely intact. – **Robert Thomas**

The third horse and rider personify FAMINE.

Revelation 6:7-8 (NKJV)

7 When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come and see."

8 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.

Pale: Greenish, yellow, or ashen color. In view is the color of a corpse.

The ashen (Greek, *cloros*, from which we derive chlorine) horse symbolizes the gaunt, colorless look of death. -**Edward Hindson**

And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him.

Death refers to physical death. – Emphasis is on the physical/material part of man.

Hades is the realm of departed spirits. – Emphasis is on the spiritual/immaterial part of man.

Death and Hades is a package for the unbeliever. When they die physically, their soul immediately goes to this place of torment in the center of the earth (cf. Lk. 16) to await the resurrection of the lost and their appearance at the great white throne judgment.

If Hades is not mounted, he is on foot and apparently acts as death's hearse, standing ready to engulf and detain Death's victims. Because the two are inseparable... - **Robert Thomas**

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.

Sword: Indicating violence, war, and killings of one kind or another.

Hunger: This again signifies famine – evidently the amplified and accumulative results of the previous judgments. We move from widespread survival level in verse six to widespread hunger and famine resulting in death in verse eight.

Death: This can also be understood as "pestilence" and is so translated in the NASB. Most believe this is the meaning here. This would relate to fatal diseases and various health plagues.

Modern man has crowned all his other insanities by adding pestilence to his arsenals. We have enough bacteria stockpiled today to infect people with scores of diseases, and we have

chemical agents that can destroy entire populations with terrifying ease. Such weapons can be ground into fine powders and sprayed into favorable winds; many can be introduced into a nation's water supply. Some can be dropped into enemy territory in infected rodents, ticks, and lice. – **John Phillips**

Who knows what lies behind the pestilences of the fourth seal? Perhaps things like germ warfare, biological and chemical weapons of mass destruction. Whatever is involved, a stupendous amount of people die!

Beasts of the earth:

The beast are closely linked with pestilence, and that might be a clue. The most destructive creature on earth, so far as mankind is concerned is not the lion or the bear, but the RAT. The rat is clever, adaptable and destructive. If ninety-five percent of the rat population is exterminated in a given area, the rat population will replace itself within a year. It has killed more people than all the wars of history, and it makes its home wherever man is found. Rats carry as many as thirty-five different diseases. Their fleas carry bubonic plague which killed a third of the population in Europe in the 14th century. Their fleas also carry typhus which in 4 centuries has killed and estimated 200 million people. Beasts in this passage are linked not only with pestilence but with famine. Rats menace human food supplies, which they both devour and contaminate, especially in the more underdeveloped countries that can least afford to suffer loss. - **John Phillips**

These four severe judgments in combination are here unleashed on the whole earth!

A fourth of the earth: A fourth of the world's population will die as a result of these judgments that come out of the fourth seal.

The fourth horse and rider personify DEATH.

If we understand the chronology properly this brings us to about the middle of the Tribulation. Things are bad, but the worst is still to come! Those birth pangs are starting to come HARD and they will start to come FAST really soon.

The first four seals are opened in Revelation 6:1-8. These first four seals form a unit. They all are introduced with a colored horse and corresponding rider personifying various movements of judgment. These are the four horsemen of the apocalypse. Many believe that these first four seal judgments relate to the first half of the seven-year Tribulation, because they correspond quite closely to the description in Matt. 24:7-14, which also is thought to address the first half of the Tribulation.

Comparing Matt. 24:7-14 and Rev. 6:1-8

Mt. 24:6 **"the end is not yet"** [the end refers to the Trib. culminating in the Second Coming]

Mt. 24:7 "nation...against nation" cf. Rev. 6:3-4 = 2nd Seal - War

"famines" cf. Rev. 6:5-6 = 3rd Seal - Famine

"pestilences" cf. Rev. 6:7-8 = 4th Seal - Pestilence

Mt. 24:8 **"All these are the beginning of sorrows."**

Mt. 24:15 **"abomination of desolation"** [Middle of Tribulation Period, cf. Dan. 9:27]

Mt. 24:21 “then there will be **great Tribulation**” [Last half of Tribulation Period]

Revelation 6:9 (NKJV)

9 When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held.

Evidently these martyrs are part of that great company who die in the first half of the Tribulation Period, in conjunction with the first four seal judgments. Compare the lost who go to Hades when they die, in Rev. 6:8.

Under the Altar: The scene is in heaven. The temple in heaven had a corresponding replica on earth in the O.T. There are various views as to what is involved.

1. Some hold that this is the Altar where, based on Heb. 9, Christ literally is thought to have applied His blood after the resurrection.
2. In the OT, the blood of sacrificial animals was poured beside the Altar. (cf. Lev. 4:7, 18, 25, 30, Heb. 9:2-9). According to this view, the imagery here speaks of these martyrs as having been “sacrificed” for the cause of Christ (cf. Phil. 2:17, 2 Tim. 4:6).
3. The altar here corresponds to the altar of incense in the OT which was positioned just outside the Holy of Holies and signified prayer ascending up before God (Ex. 30:1, 40:5, Heb. 9:4).

In context, I take it that the major significance of the fifth seal relates to “prayer” being offered up by the martyrs, and therefore this probably relates to the altar of incense.

The nature of the 5th seal judgment is gleaned from the cry of the martyrs in 6:10. Their prayers for God’s vengeance against the earth dwellers are heard and certain vindication against their slayers is more fully assured. - **Robert Thomas**

Realize that the fourth seal judgment alone saw one-fourth of the world’s population die. Some estimate that as much as one-half of the world’s population will die in the first half of the Tribulation alone. Many of those who die will have been converted in the early days of the Tribulation. Evidently the impact of the raptured believers’ testimony will be great! There is no question why these people died. They were martyrs proper. They died simply because of their allegiance to the Word of God and for their testimony. Testimony means “witness”. They were killed because of their Christian witness (cf. Mt. 24:9-10).

Revelation 6:10 (NKJV)

10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”

How long? Often on earth we pray “how long”, but note at this point this takes place in heaven. Notice that they are fully conscious and rational.

Lord: “Despotes” This emphasizes God as Sovereign Master. He is in control and has authority over all. He always does what is in accordance with holiness and truth. They are asking the Lord to move in judgment on that basis. Their question is how long before He avenges them and gives their killers what they deserve. They are not asking for a little more time, but rather wanting God to JUDGE in a “timely” manner.

Judge and avenge our blood: They are waiting for God to vindicate and pay back these people for how they martyred them in such a cruel and wicked way (cf. 7:16). Divine retribution is in view. This prayer is not driven by sinful vengeance, but in accordance with God’s justice (cf. Rom. 12:19). It is

proper to expect that God will “avenge” at some point those who refuse to repent (cf. Lk. 18:7, 2 Thess. 1:7-9).

Some have struggled with this kind of prayer, especially since it takes place in heaven. It doesn't seem to be in keeping with Christ's prayer from the cross to forgive His enemies or the prayer of Stephen, the first martyr of the church, who asked God not to lay this sin to his killers' charge (cf. Lk. 23:34, Acts. 7:60). However, there is a place for praying this way in this context regarding these hardened murderers of God's people. Prayer for grace is appropriate in the age of grace, but now the day of judgment has come. This is in keeping with the imprecatory prayers of the OT which imply the people in view are beyond repentance (cf. Ps. 74:10-11, Rev. 19:1-2). God is more patient than His people, even those in heaven!

The old preacher said, “*PAY DAY, SOME DAY!*” It will come, and it will come in response to the prayers of God's people, especially the martyrs.

Note, their killers are still alive on the earth. “Those who dwell on the earth” is a technical phrase (used ten times in Rev.), referring to those who are unbelievers. They want no home but earth. They are earth-dwellers living for now and the things of this earth. They are completely “earthly” in their orientation. In contrast, God's people are pilgrims and strangers here who are just passing through! This world is not our home. Don't forget you are citizen of heaven. Live in light of heaven and eternity. That is your priority!

Revelation 6:11 (NKJV)

11 Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.

White robe: Speaks of righteousness, blessedness.

Some have said this suggests that they have a temporary (intermediate) body until they get their glorified body at the end of the Tribulation (cf. 20:4). However, that is an assumption. There is no reason they could not be given the robes which will be worn later. 2 Cor. 5:1-5 is clear that prior to resurrection, the soul/spirit is said to be “unclothed”, but the desire is to be further clothed with a glorified body. I think this may factor in to their question of “how long”. Their being given a white robe is then indicative of their glorified body which will come in just a little while.

Rest a little while longer: The answer to this prayer request is “wait”. There are others that must yet die as martyrs! God knows the exact number of these who are called “fellow servants and their brethren”. It will all unfold in the proper timing of God's plan. These things are not happening by “accident,” but in accordance with God's sovereign plan. He is “Lord” (v. 10).

God's reply provides a glimpse into the complicated problems of why evil is allowed to reign. God simply allows it for His own purposes, which are best understood from the viewpoint of His total plan, though difficult to understand from our limited viewpoint. – **Charles Ryrie**

Revelation 6:12 (NKJV)

12 I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood.

The sixth seal is broken open and “all hell breaks loose on earth”, so to speak. There is chaos and havoc on the earth and in the heavens.

great earthquake; There have always been wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes; and there has always been death. But in the Tribulation, these things will take place on an unprecedented

scale. It is claimed that in the last 4000 years, 13 million lives have been lost in earthquakes. However, this earthquake marks the first GLOBAL earthquake since the time of the flood. The Greek word for earthquake (*sismos*) literally means shaking. I mean there is going to be “a whole lotta shaking going on”. This is more properly called an EARTHSHOCK!

The placement of these events just before the beginning of the last half of the prophetic week of Daniel is most likely. ...Revelation 16:18 speaks of another earthquake at the very end (i.e., under the 7th bowl) that is unparalleled in human history. As severe as the 6th seal earthquake is, no such statement accompanies its description. – **Robert Thomas**

The Great Tribulation (the 2nd half of the Trib.) opens and closes with these upheavals in the universe. – **J. Vernon McGee**

and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood.

It is thought that this GLOBAL earthquake will cause all kinds of tremendous volcanic activity that will spew large amounts of dust, ash, and debris into the earth's atmosphere giving the appearance of the sun being black and the moon having a blood-like hue.

Note the words “**as**” and “**like**”. What a terrifying and eerie experience for those on the earth!

Revelation 6:13 (NKJV)

13 And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind.

This evidently reflects an unprecedented meteor shower, or better yet, a meteor storm! Winter figs that grow without the protection of leaves are easily blown off the tree. A strong wind hitting such a tree would cause all the remaining figs to come falling down all at once. That is the picture.

Revelation 6:14 (NKJV)

14 Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place.

This is no “the sky is falling” fable. The sky is literally ripped apart! It is like the sky is rolled up and then like someone lets it go. It is like a sprung window blind that suddenly becomes undone.

The 4th disturbance from above will affect the whole expanse of heaven as man sees it. Heaven will appear to split and roll back in two opposite directions: [Thomas gives the Greek and then this interpretation] (“and heaven was separated into parts as a scroll being rolled up”). The divided portions will shrivel, curl up like paper, and form a roll on either hand. ... The impression of all these heavenly phenomena is that the universe is coming apart.

– **Robert Thomas**

Apparently heaven will be opened for a moment so that people on earth can have a glimpse of that awesome scene with God on His throne. – **Charles Ryrie**

This gives credence to the idea that in some way they have gotten a glimpse of the “face” of God and they are terrified out of their minds (cf. v. 16).

Every mountain and island was moved out of its place.

The continental and oceanic plates of the earth will begin to slip and shift and whole continents will be realigned. The whole earth will be in convulsions (cf. Nah. 1:5-6, Lk. 21:25-26).

Revelation 6:15 (NKJV)

15 And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains,

God really has the attention of the world at this point! This is literally “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God!” (cf. Jonathan Edwards famous sermon) The response of the world is to try and hide (cf. Adam and Eve in the garden – Gen. 3).

This involves all classes of people. There is no distinction.

Kings: Leaders of the nations.

Great men: Dignitaries, those in positions of influence, power, and prestige.

Rich men: Wealthy.

Commanders: Generals of the armed forces.

Mighty men: Physically strong men.

Every slave: The lowest class.

Every free man: Those who have “freedom”.

No matter the status in life, all on earth are now facing the same thing. They run for the caves and look for places to hide in the mountains. They are horrified and in total panic (cf. Isa. 2:10-11). They will try to run, but they can’t hide! There is no escape. This judgment is worldwide in scope.

It was not rational to hide in the very mountains that were being shaken by earthquake (vv. 12, 14), but rationality was no longer an option. This was the only place they could think of. –
Robert Thomas

We tend to think of the majestic mountains as secure, steady, and stable! But not now!

Revelation 6:16 (NKJV)

16 and said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!

I don’t imagine there could be a greater contrast than the prayer/praise meeting in heaven as seen in chapters 4-5, and these people praying to the mountains and rocks in their hardened rebellion. But in both cases the LORDSHIP of God is in view! This is THE DAY OF THE LORD!

Note at this point, they are so steeled in their rebellion, they don’t even consider the option of repentance! They are so terrified by the “face” of God, whatever that all entails, that they would rather die than deal with God. Of course, they are “dead wrong,” because death won’t be an escape from accountability to God. Rather it will put them in a permanent FIXED state of separation from God (cf. Heb. 9:27).

They are so given over to despair that they are suicidal. They just want to end it all. Rebellious unbelief thinks in this vein. We see here that a glimpse of God is horrifying beyond what can be conceived!

Note the paradox here in the phrase “the wrath of the Lamb”. When is the last time you saw a sign “beware of the lamb”? When is the last time you saw an ANGRY lamb? The term Lamb is used copiously in the book of Revelation. It ties the first coming of Jesus, when He was rejected and killed, to what is now happening in the Tribulation Period. It is showing that even though He was the sacrificial lamb, there is another divine side. This is showing just how serious it is for anyone to

reject the salvation offered through the sacrificial death of Christ (cf. Jn. 1:29, Heb. 10:29). Rejection of the LAMB has critical consequences! That is the point!

Revelation 6:17 (NKJV)

17 “For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

The great day of His wrath: This phrase may encompass all the seal judgments and signify that they have finally gotten the point. This is the great day of judgment that the prophets and preachers of God have since time immemorial been warning the world about. Amazingly they know quite a bit of theology and realize what is really happening. The message has gotten out, and yet they are in rejection.

This phrase may also signify that they have now entered into the last half of the Tribulation which was called by Christ “The Great Tribulation” (cf. Matt. 24:21).

In this present age, the wrath of God is revealed against people in the sense that at some point He just lets them go (gives them over to destructive lusts) in their rebellion and allows the consequences that naturally accrue in that rebellion (cf. Rom. 1:18-32). The “Church Age” is the day of grace and the exception is God’s direct intervention in wrath. God is not settling accounts right now. It is not the period of wrath, but rather the time of invitation (cf. 2 Cor. 6:2, Rev. 22:17). However, in this day of wrath, God’s intervention will be direct. It is the GREAT DAY OF HIS WRATH.

Who is able to stand? Who can survive this? Who can come through this?

Answer: None can stand in rebellion against God and His wrath! Only those who humble themselves and turn to Him in saving faith, only those who in humble faith embrace the Sovereign Lamb will be found standing when the dust of judgment day settles. Compare Chapter 7, which shows who is able to stand (cf. 7:9, 14, Ps. 2:10-12). There is no negotiation with God. He demands repentance! (cf. Rev. 16:9, Acts 17:30-31). He demands repentance and humble faith in the Lamb! This is the only way to stand! You either stand by GRACE through faith or you will fall under the wrath of God (cf. Jn. 3:36).

To summarize: In Chapter 6 we saw the loosing of six seals. The first four seals evidently relate to the first half of the Tribulation (cf. Matt. 24:7-14). The fifth and sixth seals seem to relate very close to the middle of the Tribulation and in essence are introductory to the second half of the Tribulation. The fifth seal presents the martyrs praying for vengeance regarding those on the earth. Immediately following is the sixth seal judgment, which results in the heavens and the earth convulsing. The unbelievers are terrified and try to hide in mountains and caves from God’s wrath. They cry out in verse 17, “Who is able to stand?”

This question provides a very apt segue into Chapter 7, which answers that question.

The answer is that no one in rebellion can survive this. However, those who come to faith in Christ will in the end be found standing. Those found standing on the earth are those who have the “seal” of God, and those who die found standing in heaven before the throne are those who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb.

Order of Judgments

The **SEAL** judgments – Chapter 6

- 1 – Cold War (Rev. 6:1-2)
- 2 – Open War (Rev. 6:3-4)
- 3 – Famine (Rev. 6:5-6)
- 4 – Death (Rev. 6:7-8)
- 5 – Imprecatory Prayer of Martyrs (Rev. 6:9-11)
- 6 – Disturbances (Rev. 6:12-17)

[Parenthesis – Chapter 7]

Chapter 7 presents an interlude or pause between the sixth and seventh seals. Chronologically we think this is somewhere around the middle of the Tribulation. An interlude also comes between the sixth and seventh trumpets, but not between the sixth and seventh bowls. At the end, there is just rapid fire judgment with no interlude, climaxing in the second coming of Christ.

Revelation 7:1 (NKJV)

1 After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree.

The angels in view are agents of divine judgment. Angels, outside of Rev 2-3 (where they very possibly represent human messengers), are mentioned 67 times in Revelation. They have a lot to do with unleashing God's judgments on the world.

Four Corners: They correspond to the four points of the compass, the four directions of the globe (North, South, East, & West). The scope of these judgments are world wide in nature.

The winds here represent judgments that are about to come upon the world in the form of the "Trumpet judgments".

Just when the destruction of all seems sure, we find four angels holding back the winds of judgment, giving pause until a remnant of God's people, Israel, are sealed. The earth, sea, and trees are in view, which will be greatly impacted by the coming trumpet judgments. This is the lull before the storm.

Revelation 7:2 (NKJV)

2 Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea,

East: This is the direction of Israel. The sealing of a remnant from the 12 tribes is in view. God's redemptive program has always centered in this part of the world. Israel received the Scriptures. Christ was born in Israel as a Jew. Now once again at the end of the age, the Jews factor largely into God's program.

Clearly the angels are in charge of forces that relate to "harm" on the earth and sea.

Revelation 7:3 (NKJV)

3 saying, "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads."

The whole universe seems to be coming apart in Chapter Six under the sixth seal. The heavens and the earth are in convulsions and then suddenly these angels bring about restraint.

The reason given is that delay is in place until the servants of God can be sealed.

We certainly see the Sovereignty of God here. Things are happening and progressing only in accordance with the plan of God and in accordance with the actions of His angelic agents.

Seal... Foreheads: Whether this is visible or not, we are not told. Some have suggested the seal will be visible, thus being a corresponding contrast to those who take the mark of the beast. We can't be sure. Evidently it will be virtually impossible to be a "secret Christian" at this point. You will have to declare yourself one way or the other. The option set before the world will be choose antichrist or choose Christ. Seal has the idea of ownership, and in this context, protection (cf. Rev. 9:4). This seal will protect them from the judgments of God in the context of their serving God.

However, it need not necessitate that unbelievers will not be able to afflict them at any point in the Tribulation (cf. 13:7, 20:4)

It is only noted that these will have special protection from the wrath of God while they witness. After their witness is concluded, martyrdom may well be their fate, as subsequent discussion of Rev. 12:13 and 14:1-5 will reflect. – **Robert Thomas**

Servants: is literally “slaves” of God. In some way, these who are sealed SERVE God.

The context of the multitude in heaven suggests that they are evangelists taking the Gospel to the ends of the earth in accordance with Matt. 24:14.

While we are not told explicitly in Scripture that the 144,000 Jews are God’s special witnesses, and that the Gentile host is saved through their ministry, this appears to be a logical deduction; otherwise, why are they associated in this chapter? The parallel with Matthew 24:14 also indicates that the 144,000 will witness for the Lord during the Tribulation.
– **Warren Wiersbe**

Matthew 24:14 (NKJV)

14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

Israel will now be the witness nation that God has all along intended her to be. Remember at this point, the church is in heaven and now Israel is central to all that God is doing on the earth. It makes sense that God’s people, Israel, will NOW be a major factor in getting out the Gospel during the Tribulation Period.

Revelation 7:4-8 (NKJV)

4 And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed:

5 of the tribe of Judah twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand were sealed;

6 of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand were sealed;

7 of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand were sealed;

8 of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand were sealed.

Clearly this is a JEWISH REMNANT! The list is of 12 tribes, but it makes some adjustments regarding the “normal” listing.

The inclusion of Levi is different. Levi was often not included because this priestly tribe did not receive a land allotment. Also, Joseph is named instead of Ephraim. Normally Manasseh and Ephraim are both mentioned together, but not here. The tribe of Dan is omitted here altogether. However, in the kingdom, we note from Ezekiel 48:1,32, that Dan will have a part.

How are we to understand this? There are lots of ideas, but no one knows why for sure this particular listing of the 12 tribes is given. The most popular suggestion on why Dan and Ephraim are omitted is because of their flagrant history of rebellion and idolatry. They were rebel leaders in this way.

In about 18 lists of the sons of Jacob or Israel in the OT, different tribes are omitted at different times, but the number of them is always 12. – **Robert Thomas**

The mention of the 12 tribes refutes the idea that they have ever been lost as some cultists have claimed, or that the lost tribes have been perpetuated through the English-speaking people of the world.

Though the identity of the tribe members is lost to mankind, it is still known to God who will be in charge of the sealing when it takes place. – **Robert Thomas**

In the destruction of the Temple (A.D. 70,) the Jewish people lost the records of their tribal identity. Since that time many of them make this claim or that claim, but really can't prove what tribe they belong to. However, in the sovereignty of God, the tribes continue on and God knows exactly who belongs to what tribe. It is one of the providential "miracles" of God, that in spite of being scattered through out the world for 2000 years, yet Israel retains her ethnic identity in tact. In fact all the Tribes yet retain their identity before God. That is unique amongst the peoples of the world!

At no other time in world history, so far as it is known, has a people been destroyed, and then come back after a lapse of time and reestablished itself. It is utterly out of the question to seek a parallel for the recurrence of Israel's restoration after 2500 years of former history.

-William Foxwell Albright

This is not the entirety of the faithful remnant of Israel, but a group of them charged with a special responsibility of witnessing for Christ during the world's darkest hour...

- Robert Thomas

Apparently these are SEALED for the special ministry of evangelism and they will be very effective in getting out the Gospel.

Revelation 7:9 (NKJV)

9 After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands,

After these things: That is after the sealing of the 144,000, and by implication, after their fruitful ministry!

The 144,000 witnesses will be so effective during that chaotic time that an innumerable host of people will be saved. **-Tim LaHaye**

I take it this is happening early in the second half of the Tribulation, when masses of people will be saved and martyred, because of it.

The Tribulation will be a time of terrible wickedness and rebellion, but it will also be a time when there is a great harvest of souls. Possibly, more people will be saved during this short time frame than have ever been saved up to that point. God is passionate about saving people and He will seemingly do almost anything to bring them to that point. As it turns out, the Tribulation is God's ultimate way of bringing masses of people to Himself, that would perhaps respond in no other way (cf. Hab. 3:2).

Note the sheer volume of people involved: "A great multitude which no one could number." There are too many people for anyone to count. This large group relates to the "fellow servants" who were

yet to be killed as seen in 6:11. Now they are adding greatly to that group of martyrs who are now in heaven.

All nations: Greek *ethnos* = ethnic groups. A multitude living in same context.

Tribes: Greek *phule* = family groups. Those sharing a common ancestry.

Peoples: Greek *laos* = people groups – race.

Tongues: Greek *glossa* = language groups.

People from every conceivable group of people groupings are mentioned. A large remnant of both Jews and Gentiles from every nation, family group, people group, language group are represented.

Standing before the throne and before the Lamb: This answers to 6:17. They are not allowed to “stand” on earth, but are found standing in heaven because of conversion.

White robes: Speaks of righteousness and cleansing. They have been cleansed from sin.

Palm branches: Signified victory and were used in festive occasions to celebrate (cf. Jn. 12:13).

Revelation 7:10 (NKJV)

10 and crying out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

Crying out: Present tense. They keep on crying out. No one in heaven is celebrating what they have done to save themselves. No, heaven is continually praising God for salvation, because it’s all HIS DOING.

Loud Voice: The worship in heaven is with conviction, enthusiasm, and volume.

They are rejoicing in salvation and crediting God and the Lamb with it. They have been delivered from sin and from the horror of the Tribulation and they are giving all the glory and credit to God. They are celebrating what God and the Lamb have done for them! This strong expression reflects the deep GRATITUDE of this vast crowd and a determination to give God the glory for what has been accomplished on their behalf. It’s all about SALVATION! It’s all about God on the throne! It’s all about the Lamb!

Revelation 7:11-12 (NKJV)

11 All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God,

12 saying: “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honor and power and might, Be to our God forever and ever. Amen.”

The angels in heaven join in this worship service to God (cf. Lk. 15:10). These angels are entering into the celebration of God’s SALVATION of this vast throng.

All the angels: None are left out.

Elders: Representing the church (my view).

Four Living Creatures: A special angelic rank of worship leaders in heaven.

All are on their faces before God!

Amen: They resoundingly affirm what the great multitude has declared about Salvation! This is the theme of their worship.

Blessing: “to speak well of”

Glory: honor derived from a good reputation.

Wisdom: divine knowledge and application of His salvation plan.

Thanksgiving: Gratitude – appreciation.

Honor: Esteem – to think highly of.

Power: Ability to act, to bring about salvation.

Might: Quality of having strength.

This seven-fold panorama of praise is attributed to God in relation to His SALVATION!

Revelation 7:13 (NKJV)

13 Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, “Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?”

One of the elders: A representative of the Church asks two leading questions. 1) Who? 2) Where?

Revelation 7:14 (NKJV)

14 And I said to him, “Sir, you know.” So he said to me, “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.

This vast throng comes out of the great tribulation. I would see them as probably being saved in the second half of the Tribulation in reference to the ministry of the 144,000. Christ referenced the second half of the Tribulation period as the time of “great tribulation” (cf. Matt. 24:15 with Matt. 24:21).

washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb: This symbolically portrays that they have been cleansed from sin by the sacrifice of Christ (cf. Lev. 17:11, Jn. 1:29, Rom. 5:9, Heb. 9:22, Rev. 1:5, 19:13). The theme of a blood sacrifice is interwoven all through the Bible from Gen. 3:15 through Revelation. We often refer to this as THE SCARLET THREAD OF REDEMPTION.

Lamb: In the Bible, represents an innocent sacrificial substitute.

Christ was the only one without sin who voluntarily laid down His life as a blood sacrifice for sinners. He died in our place, making the payment for our sin (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21). The way one appropriates Christ’s payment for sin is by faith (cf. Rom. 3:25, 5:1). Note the contrast between those who attempt to HIDE from the Lamb in rebellion (6:16-17); and these who have been cleansed by the blood of the Lamb (7:9, 10, 14). There is no middle ground. Either we humble ourselves and come to Him in simple faith for cleansing, or we run from Him and will face His wrath.

Either we have the cleansing blood of the Lamb applied or we have the wrath of the Lamb applied. But everyone in the end has to deal with the Lamb – God’s perfect sacrifice for sin.

Revelation 7:15 (NKJV)

15 “Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them.

Therefore: This is the reason for this great host being there; namely the blood of the Lamb. No wonder they are shouting about God’s salvation in celebratory praise to Him.

Serve: They are not just standing around being bored. No, they will serve, perhaps in areas of worship, as the context stresses. They serve to glorify God in this way.

Temple: Referring to the whole of heaven at this point. The word for temple denotes “inner sanctuary” instead of outer courts. It correlates to the holy of holies in the earthly temple. It emphasizes the intimate presence of God.

Dwell among: “To tabernacle or tent”. They will come under the eternal canopy of God’s shelter, protection, and presence.

Revelation 7:16 (NKJV)

16 “They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat;

This suggests that in fleeing from antichrist and the Christ-haters of the world, many of these will live as vagabonds, forced out into the raw elements, before dying or being killed.

Revelation 7:17 (NKJV)

17 “for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

William MacDonald suggests a seven-fold state of perfection awaits these faithful martyrs.

Perfect nearness: They are before the throne.

Perfect service: They serve Him day and night in His temple.

Perfect fellowship: He who sits on the throne will dwell among them.

Perfect satisfaction: They shall neither hunger nor thirst anymore.

Perfect security: The sun shall not strike them, nor any heat.

Perfect guidance: The Lamb who is the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters.

Perfect joy: God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

This seven-fold perfection in the presence of God is in contrast to all affliction they went through in the Great Tribulation. God promises glorious things to those who will reject the antichrist and embrace Jesus Christ in the Tribulation. It will be worth it all!

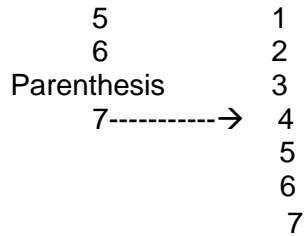
Ancient harvesters used an instrument called a “Tribulum” to beat the grain to separate the wheat from the chaff. Tribulum is the word from which we get the word Tribulation. It illustrates perfectly what God will be doing in the Tribulation. God is going to beat the world with His judgments, but out of that period will come a great harvest of souls, while the chaff of unbelievers will be blown away forever. Tribulation will separate the two. We see the chaff of the unbelievers in Chapter 6 and we see the grain of saved souls in Chapter 7 (cf. Jn. 3:36, 1 Jn. 5:12).

Now we come to the seventh seal, which when opened, ushers in the seven trumpet judgments.

The seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments are essentially thought to develop telescopically and chronologically. Out of the seal judgments come the trumpet judgments, and then out of the trumpet judgments come the bowl judgments. It is a single series of judgments in three movements.

Judgments in Revelation 6-16

Seal		
First half of Trib.	(1	
First half of Trib.	(2	
First half of Trib.	(3	
First half of Trib.	(4	Trumpet
	5	1
	6	2
Parenthesis		3
7-----→	4	Bowl



Chapter 7 was an interlude regarding the Tribulation martyrs. Chapter 7 did not advance the chronological movement of the judgments. 6:12 saw the opening of the sixth seal, but then there is a PAUSE in Chapter 7, until God's servants can be sealed. Then judgment will resume. Now we have come to that point in Chapter 8 with the breaking of the seventh seal, which ushers in the trumpet judgments and finally the bowl judgments.

Revelation 8:1 (NKJV)

1 When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

He: Christ

Silence: This emphasizes HIGH DRAMA. There is a holy "hush" of expectation. This is the "lull before the storm." What is about to happen is so astonishing that it calls for the reverent response of SILENCE! (cf. Hab. 2:20, Zeph. 1:7, Zech. 2:13). It's like when all is QUIET in the courtroom just before the JUDGE is about to pronounce judgment.

Revelation 8:2 (NKJV)

2 And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets.

Trumpets in Jewish history were usually made of a ram's horn and were called SHOFAR TRUMPETS. They had a wide variety of uses including sounding alarms of danger, a call to war, announcing the beginning of special occasions, ceremonial processions, or assembling the people. As a signal for war, the trumpet finds a natural association with JUDGMENT! Here the trumpets signal judgment!

Revelation 8:3 (NKJV)

3 Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

Some have taken the angel in view here to refer to Christ, but after the incarnation, Christ never again appears as THE ANGEL OF THE LORD as He did in the O.T. Therefore, I would say that this is an angel proper.

Golden censer... Altar: Revelation builds on the earlier Scriptures. Here the picture relates to the Tabernacle and Temple in the O.T. which was patterned after that which is in heaven (cf. Heb. 9:24).

Censer: This was a pan (called a "fire pan") in which hot coals were taken from the Brazen Altar in the Temple courtyard and then transferred into the HOLY PLACE, where they were placed on the altar of incense. Incense would then be poured upon them. The result was a sweet fragrance ascending before the Holy of Holies. This was done twice daily, once in the morning and once in the evening (cf. Ex.27:3, 30:7-9). It was a picture of prayer continually ascending up before God (cf. Ps. 141:2).

The altar in heaven is mentioned seven times in Revelation (6:9, 8:3, [twice] 5, 9:13, 14:18, 16:7). The altar represents the place of PRAYER! God works through prayer! God is about to bring the ultimate climactic judgments on the world, but it happens in conjunction with prayer!

The interaction between the sovereignty of God and the prayers of His people is part of the ultimate mystery of existence. – **Robert Thomas**

Note the connection between the altar (the place of prayer) and the THRONE. They go together. The THRONE represents the God of all power who moves and acts, but it is often on the basis of PRAYER that He does so.

Revelation 8:4 (NKJV)

4 And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand.

After prayer ascends, judgment descends! The “how long” question of 6:10 is now answered. God is now answering their prayers in accordance with His perfect timing.

Revelation 8:5 (NKJV)

5 Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake.

The same censer (pan) that is connected to the prayers of God's people is also associated with the fiery judgment that is now poured out on the earth.

Noises, thunderings, lightnings, earthquake: The great storm of judgment is at hand!

Revelation 8:6 (NKJV)

6 So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

The trumpets here represent a call to war or a call to judgment (cf. Num. 10:1-10, Joel 2:1). The remainder of the chapter presents the first four Trumpet Judgments. As the first four seals formed a unit, so do the first four Trumpets. These four Trumpet Judgments relate to judgment in the REALM OF NATURE. The last three relate to judgment in relation to the realm of the DEMONIC.

It is noted that there are many similarities between the Exodus judgments on Egypt (Ex. 7-12) and the Trumpet and Bowl judgments. The purpose of the plagues in Exodus was to demonstrate the powerlessness of the false Egyptian gods in contrast to the power of the one true God, the Almighty God of Israel. Many of these false gods related to the forces of nature. In the plagues, God was showing that He alone controlled nature. He is the sovereign God who controls all. A repeated phrase in Exodus is, “By this you shall know that I am the LORD” (Ex. 7:17, etc.).

One of the MAJOR ways God shows His Lordship is in the arena of NATURE! God alone controls the forces of nature (cf. Ps. 29). Now in Revelation, it is the DAY OF THE LORD and his LORDSHIP is on display in these Trumpet judgments in the realm of NATURE!

Revelation 8:7 (NKJV)

7 The first angel sounded: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.

There is a lot of emphasis on “blood” in this section. Either God supernaturally mingles blood with the judgment or it is indicating that in this mix many people/animals will be “bloodied”.

Third of the trees were burned up: This is an unprecedented fire!

All green grass was burned up: This seems to be in conflict with 9:4 where the locusts are commanded not to hurt the grass. There are two possibilities...

1. There is enough lapse of time between the first and fifth trumpets for the grass to have re-grown.
2. The burning of all grass is that which is green at the time of the plagues during that particular season, but would not affect that which is lying dormant.

The picture here is of MAJOR lightening storms that affect a considerable part of the globe. The storms of Judgment are blowing hard now.

Revelation 8:8 (NKJV)

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

Note it doesn't say this is a mountain, but rather "something like" a great mountain. Various suggestions are offered as to what this is: 1) a meteor or asteroid, 2) volcanic activity, 3) a nuclear bomb. Whatever it is, it is a huge FIREBALL of something! It will apparently cause major title waves that kill a massive amount of sea life.

The bloody waters could come either from God supernaturally changing the water into blood or from the blood of dead animals. –**Charles Ryrie**

Revelation 8:9 (NKJV)

9 And a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

This will be horrific beyond comprehension (cf. Lk. 21:26).

Revelation 8:10 (NKJV)

10 Then the third angel sounded: And a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water.

We read in verse 8 that one third of the seas were affected. Now, in verse 10, we are told that one third of the rivers were affected.

A great star: Apparently this is a literal star, meteor, or comet. However, some think a nuclear explosion may be in view.

Good drinking water is going to be in very short supply.

Revelation 8:11 (NKJV)

11 The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the water, because it was made bitter.

Wormwood means "bitter".

Many species of wormwood grow in Palestine.... All species have a strong, bitter taste, leading to the use of the plant as a symbol of bitterness, sorrow, and calamity.

– **Charles Ryrie**

Wormwood is a bitter desert plant mentioned only here in the NT. It is mentioned 7 times in the OT where it represents sorrow and bitter judgment (Deut. 29:18, Prov. 5:4, Jer. 9:15, 23:15, Lam. 3:15, 19, Amos 5:7). – **The Bible Knowledge Commentary**

Whatever is involved, the waters are made poisonously bitter and many people die.

Revelation 8:12 (NKJV)

12 Then the fourth angel sounded: And a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night.

Darkness is often a symbol of judgment (cf. Amos 5:18).

Of the fifteen items affected by the plagues of the first four trumpets, one-third receives injury or destruction in twelve instances (8:7, 10, 11 being the exceptions). God uses the world of nature to punish mankind. – **Robert Thomas**

Note: While the trumpet judgments here relate to 1/3 of the earth, the bowl judgments will be even more broad in scope, relating more to the entire world! But note here that the Trumpet judgments are a unit and consider how serious this is!

1. Rain of fire/hail/blood – 1/3 trees – all green grass destroyed
2. Mountainous fireball – 1/3 of oceans polluted
3. Falling star – 1/3 of fresh waters polluted
4. 1/3 of luminaries (sun, moon, stars) darkened

All of these things essentially relate to the realm of NATURE, which God alone controls.

In the Age of Grace, God gives witness of His Sovereign Lordship in the realm of nature by graciously giving us timely rains and harvests, etc. (cf. Acts 14:17). However, during this period of the Day of the Lord judgment, God will demonstrate His Lordship in the realm of Nature in terms of catastrophe! When destruction on this level takes place, things will become terrifyingly desperate! But even worse things are coming!

Revelation 8:13 (NKJV)

13 And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, “Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!”

Angel in the older manuscripts is “**Eagle**”. Some think that possibly the fourth living creature in 4:7, who is described as having the appearance of that which was like “a flying eagle”, may be in view.

Here we have the first usage of “woe” in the book.

Woe: A prophetic pronouncement of doom. It relates to the sufferings of judgment. The remaining three trumpets are in effect called “Woes”. These last three trumpet judgments will be far worse even than the previous four.

To the inhabitants of the earth: God’s people are not the objects of the trumpet judgments. Instead these trumpet judgments are being vented toward a world that is still hostile to the Lordship of God. This phrase “inhabitants of the earth” and others like it are technical terms referring to those who are unbelievers.

The phrase “inhabitants of the earth” (or them that dwell on the earth) is found 12 times in Rev. (3:10, 6:10; 8:13; 11:10 [twice] 12:12, 13:8, 12, 14, 14:6; 17:2; 8. It means much more than “people who live on the earth” for that is where all living people reside. Instead, it refers to a

kind of people: those who live for the earth and the things of earth. These are just the opposite of people who have their citizenship in heaven (Phil. 3:18-21). John describe this worldly sort well in his first epistle (1 Jn. 2:15-17), and later in this prophecy he again makes it clear that “earth dwellers” are not born again (Rev. 13:8). – **Warren Wiersbe**

The purpose of these judgments is to lead people to REPENTANCE! (cf. Rev. 9:20-21)
People today often speak in terms of “Mother Nature”. What they don’t realize is that it is FATHER GOD who controls Nature!

It is said that every time Alexander the Great besieged an enemy city, he placed a burning torch in the ground before the gate of the city. This meant that everyone who came out as long as the torch was burning obtained mercy and lived. But when the torch went out, everyone who remained in the city was subject to being killed. By way of application, “the torch of God’s light” is still shining. We are still in the age of grace, but for how long? The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night! Be warned! Be ready!

Now we come to the fifth Trumpet judgment or the first Woe judgment; whichever you prefer to call it. Whereas, the first four trumpet judgments essentially related to the realm of NATURE, the remaining trumpet judgments put an emphasis on the realm of the DEMONIC!

Revelation 9:1 (NKJV)

1 Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit.

Star: This is not a star like the sun, moon, and stars, because this “star” has intelligence. Good sound scholars have differing views here. I take it that most likely this “star” is a good angel corresponding to what we find in Rev. 20:1. Note the sphere with which the bottomless pit is associated is EARTH (cf. Num. 16:33).

Key: Represents authority, in this case to unlock and unleash. Jesus has the keys of Hades and of death (1:18). Everything that is taking place is happening under the Sovereign authority of God.

“**the bottomless pit**” is literally “shaft of the abyss”. More accurately bottomless should be translated “shaft” and pit is “abyss”.

The abyss... is pictured here as a hollow place in the heart of the earth, communicating with the upper air by means of a shaft or well (Gk. *Phrear*), the cover of which is locked. - **New International Commentary**

It behooves us not to be dogmatic... but there is the thought that a shaft leads from the surface of the earth to the heart of the earth. - **J. Vernon McGee**

The word “abyss” is found seven times in the book of Revelation. It is found three times in this chapter where it means the abode of demons (cf. 11:1-2, 11). In Rev. 11:7 and 17:8, it signifies where the antichrist goes at the time of his temporary death. In Rev. 20:1, 3, it denotes where Satan will be bound for the 1000-year reign of Christ. Outside of Revelation, it is found only two other times in the N.T.; once in Luke 8:31 where it is shown to be the abode of demons, and once in Rom. 10:7 where Christ is shown to have descended into the abyss, into the realm of the spirit world at the time of His death.

Therefore, normally this specifically refers to the underworld which is a prison house of demons (cf. Lk. 8:31, 2 Pet. 2:4, Jude 6), but occasionally it can refer more generally to the realm of departed spirits (Rom. 10:7).

Jesus in Lk. 16:19-31 showed distinctions between different parts of the underworld. The ultimate destiny of the devil and his angels, the lake of fire, differs from this abyss... [which] is the preliminary place of incarceration for fallen angels from which some of them are about to be released under this trumpet. – **Robert Thomas**

It is in reference to this domain, that the “star” is given a key to open.

Revelation 9:2 (NKJV)

2 And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit.

When this pit is opened, huge billows of SMOKE roll out. It is so dense that the sun and air are darkened. This gives a little preview of what the atmosphere of hell will be like. A little bit of hell is being unleashed on the earth (cf. Mt. 13:49-50).

The escaping smoke seems to indicate that there are, indeed, literal fires in Hades. Some have conjectured that somewhere on earth there is a great shaft (Num. 16:33) through which are carried the souls of the unsaved dead and from which demons and the accompanying smoke will issue. - **Henry Morris**

Jesus spoke of hell as a “furnace of fire”.

Revelation 9:3 (NKJV)

3 Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.

Out of the smoke came locusts which we believe are actually demons (cf. v. 11). Here we have locust-like demons pouring out of the Abyss and invading the earth.

Scorpions have power to painfully “sting”.

The scorpion belongs to the largest and most malignant of all insect tribes. Its general appearance is like a lobster, but much more hideous. Its sting is located near the end of its tail is not always fatal, but can be. It ranks with the snake in its hostility toward human beings (cf. Lk. 10:19, 11:12). - **Robert Thomas**

Revelation 9:4 (NKJV)

4 They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

Like regular locusts, they are voracious in their appetite. However, they are sovereignly restrained from harming the grass of the earth, [which evidently has re-grown since 8:7] or any green thing, or any tree, or those who have the seal of God on their foreheads. This seal certainly pertains to the 144,000 (cf. 7:4-8) who were sealed, but many believe it may also pertain to all believers who may have some sort of seal at this point (cf. Job 1-2).

However, the unsaved will be like prey given over to these locust-like demons, who, in effect, will feed on them.

Although this judgment is literally hell on earth, the overruling power of God is interwoven throughout this passage. – **Charles Ryrie**

Revelation 9:5 (NKJV)

5 And they were not given authority to kill them, but to torment them for five months. Their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man.

These locust-like demons won't be allowed to kill people, but are allowed to torment them for five months. Five months (from May to September) is the normal life span of a locust.

These demon locusts inflict a sting that produces the most intolerable anguish. The sting of a natural scorpion is not generally fatal, but it produces the most intense pain that any creature can inflict on the human body. – **John Phillips**

Revelation 9:6 (NKJV)

6 In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them.

In their torment, people will long for death. They will want to die and yet not be allowed to die. Evidently, during this five-month period of torment, God sovereignly prevents their death as they are forced to endure this agonizing torment with no relief for five months. Note they desire to die, but there no emphasis on them being REPENTANT which is what God desires (cf. 9:20-21).

Vss. 1-6 = The impact of the locusts

Vss. 7-12 = The characteristics of the locusts

Revelation 9:7 (NKJV)

7 The shape of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle. On their heads were crowns of something like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men.

Note the predominance of the word "like". It's hard to describe these demons with precision.

The likeness of a locust to a horse, especially to a horse equipped with armor, is so striking that the insect is named in German *Heupferd* hay-horse, and in Italian *cavaleta* little horse.

– **J. Vernon McGee**

Although the description resembles locusts, these locusts are apparently much larger than normal. In effect, they are supernatural locust-like demons.

Faces were like the faces of men: Evidently speaks to the fact that they have intelligence.

Revelation 9:8 (NKJV)

8 They had hair like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth.

Women's hair: Evidently descriptive of LONG hair.

Teeth were like lions': They had teeth that were able to inflict terrible wounds which would normally be fatal. The size of lions' teeth indicate that these creatures are evidently quite large, perhaps comparable to the size of a real horse.

Revelation 9:9 (NKJV)

9 And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots with many horses running into battle.

Breastplates speak of protection concerning the vital organs. This seems to indicate they are seemingly invincible.

Sound of their wings like the sound of chariots with many horses: This was the most fearsome sound of warfare in the ancient world.

Revelation 9:10 (NKJV)

10 They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails. Their power was to hurt men five months.

What scary creatures these are. In appearance, they are a combination of horse, man, locust, lion, and scorpion. They represent a combination of human intelligence and beastly ferociousness.

There are more occurrences of the words “as” and “like” here than in any other chapter in the Bible. This shows how difficult it was for John to describe the scene he saw in the vision.

– Charles Ryrie

Revelation 9:11 (NKJV)

11 And they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon.

Both *Abaddon* and *Apollyon* essentially mean “destroyer”.

Whether this is Satan or a high ranking demon who serves as one of his cohorts, the point is basically the same. This is the leader of a host of demons that are bent on destruction.

I find it fascinating that these demons who so hate God have no consideration for humans who are also in rebellion to God. They torment (v. 5) and hurt (v. 10) unsaved human beings to the point they wish for death. Wouldn't you think they would say, “Oh, you are on the side of evil so we won't do this to you”? But no, they absolutely don't care. I think this speaks to the ugly nature of sin, which really doesn't care about others. In fact, it takes pleasure in the hurt of others.

Revelation 9:12 (NKJV)

12 One woe is past. Behold, still two more woes are coming after these things.

Two more “woes” remain containing even more severe suffering and pain.

Revelation 9:13 (NKJV)

13 Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,

This golden altar corresponds to the altar of incense placed right in front of the Holy of Holies. The incense offered up represented prayer ascending up before God.

In 6:9 we find the souls of the martyrs under this altar where they are prayerfully waiting on God to avenge them. Then in 8:3 in connection with the Trumpet judgments being introduced, we find the prayers of the saints being offered up in conjunction with this golden altar. Out of that evolves the WOE judgments.

Apparently the voice heard here ties back to the angel in 8:3 who was involved in the transmission of these prayers. Again the thought is that what is happening has a prayer connection associated with the altar. The prayers of the saints had called for vengeance and now God is releasing it in these WOES.

Revelation 9:14 (NKJV)

14 saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, “Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.”

Release the four angels: These FOUR are probably evil angels, that is, demons. Holy angels are NEVER said to be bound, but evil angels are. This again shows us that all that is happening is under God's sovereign control.

Bound at the great river Euphrates: They are bound in a specific place. We are not told why, but this location is known as the "cradle of civilization", going clear back to the garden of Eden (cf. Gen. 2:14).

...the prominence of this area in Scripture cannot be overlooked. The Garden of Eden was somewhere in this section. The sin of man began here. The first murder was committed here. The first war was fought here. Here was where the Flood began and spread over the earth. Here is where the Tower of Babel was erected. To this area were brought the Israelites of the Babylonian Captivity. Babylon was the fountainhead of idolatry. And here is the final surge of sin on the earth during the Great Tribulation. – **J. Vernon McGee**

Revelation 9:15 (NKJV)

15 So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind.

Again note the SOVEREIGNTY of God in what is happening. These FOUR angels had been held back and "prepared" for just this time in the history of the world. Now the exact time has come (cf. Acts 17:30-31).

The expression "an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year" designates not the duration of their activity but the fact that this judgment comes exactly at the hour of God's appointment. On the basis that the article [the] is used only before the word hour in the Greek construction it should be translated "the hour, and day, and month, and year... - **John Walvoord**

These Woe judgments in particular target the unbelievers ("earth dwellers" cf. 8:13).

In 6:8, we saw that in relation to the fourth seal, one-fourth of the world's population will die. Now we find a third of mankind is killed. Putting that together makes half of the total started with. And that is not figuring in the multitude of others that have died in the other judgments, of which there have been many to this point in the Tribulation. In other words, well over half of the world's population will be dead by the end of the sixth Trumpet Judgment.

Revelation 9:16 (NKJV)

16 Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them.

No matter how you look at it, this is a LARGE army! Now the question is what is this army? Is it demons, humans, or demonically influenced humans? I don't know that we can say for sure! Whoever and whatever is involved, they are very effective in killing off one third of the world's remaining population.

Revelation 9:17 (NKJV)

17 And thus I saw the horses in the vision: those who sat on them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow; and the heads of the horses were like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone.

The appearance of these beings does seem to be horrifyingly demonic!

The mention of horses in the Bible is usually in connection with warfare. The horses John saw in his vision are no exception. – **Robert Thomas**

Revelation 9:18 (NKJV)

18 By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed—by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which came out of their mouths.

The three together [fire, smoke, brimstone] will be responsible for the largest death-toll in human history up to that point. – **Robert Thomas**

The expression “a third part” has been used now a total of 13 times in connection with the trumpets. – **John Phillips**

Revelation 9:19 (NKJV)

19 For their power is in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm.

They have fire, smoke, and brimstone coming out of their mouths, and they have tails with serpent heads able to strike and do harm. They have got it going on both ends! They can shoot from the mouth or the tail!

Revelation 9:20 (NKJV)

20 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.

These people had five months of torment where they couldn't die, which would give them plenty of time to think about it (cf. Rev. 9:5-6). This is followed up by a period when masses of people (1/3 of the world's population) will be dying like flies. But these people are so hardened, they still refuse to repent.

Not repent: Repent means to change your mind about sin and about God. It is an attitude of the heart that demonstrates itself in the life.

They absolutely failed to change their conduct, their creed, or their attitudes toward God... [Repentance] in Revelation denotes a change of mind in rejection of something that is anti-God... - **Robert Thomas**

Work of their hands: This is a reference to idolatry. An idol is anything that is worshipped instead of God. Remember that these people ten times in Revelation are called “earth dwellers”. They live for the STUFF of this earth! Note COMMERCIAL Babylon in Rev. 18.

Note that IDOL worship is essentially synonymous with DEMON worship. They are a package. The fact is that behind IDOLS is the reality of demons. This is one reason mankind has always been so attracted to DUMB idols. There is a real spiritual power behind them (cf. 1 Cor. 10:19-20).

It is interesting that of the five sins of defiance that are mentioned, the first one, and the one dealt with most extensively, is IDOLATRY! This is the major issue out of which the other sins flow. This is a breaking of the first table (the first four commandments that are God-oriented) of the Law. The very FIRST commandment is “You shall have no other gods before Me.” (Ex. 20:3).

Lordship and repentance go together. In the reality of repentance is the acknowledgement of the Lordship of Christ. To really believe in Christ as Lord involves the element of repentance. That is why sometimes the Bible just speaks in terms of REPENTANCE and sometimes just in terms of BELIEVE. But the fact is that where you have one, you have the other. The real issue is the

NATURE of saving faith. There is a kind of faith that doesn't save. In other words, it is devoid of repentance. There is a bogus faith that has never really changed its mind about sin or Christ!

Revelation 9:21 (NKJV)

21 And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

Again we have the emphasis that they "did not repent". This is the issue. They will not repent (cf. 16:9, 11). The point is clear that God wants these people to come to repentance. That is always the issue! (cf. 2 Pet. 3:9)

We see now that they not only have a total disregard for the first table of the Law (toward God,) but also in respect to the second table of the Law, that relates to how we should treat other people.

1) Idolatry (v. 20), 2) Murders, 3) Sorceries, 4) Sexual immorality, 5) Thefts.

Sorceries: The Greek word here is "*pharmakeion*", from which we get our English word "pharmacy". Often we call this the "drug store".

Drugs in the ancient world were used to dull the senses and induce a state suitable for religious experiences such as séances, witchcraft, incantations, and cavorting with mediums... - **John MacArthur**

Really, what we are talking about is altered states of consciousness related to occult experiences. It seems that through drug use and altered stated of consciousness, there are barriers that are broken down and people open themselves up to the realm of the demonic in a way they otherwise would not. Drugs and demon orientation often go together!

You would think that these WOE judgments would slow them down and maybe bring them to REPENTANCE in terms of how they have been living. But NO! They keep right on going even when 1/3 of the population dies from the plagues going on around them. This speaks to the DEPRAVITY OF MAN! You can't scare him into changing! Only God can change people, but they must come to repentance, and for some, it doesn't matter what happens. They become so hardened, they will not repent, no matter what.

We see at this point a mass of people who WORSHIP (they have RELIGION), but it is tied to the demonic realm. However, it has NO POWER to change them for good! It has no power to transform their lives. It has no power that results in holy living (cf. 2 Tim. 3:5).

Fallen man is not simply an imperfect creature who needs improvement: he is a rebel who must lay down his arms.- **C.S. Lewis**

As we come to Chapter 10, we have a parenthesis between the sixth and the seventh Trumpets as found in 10:1 - 11:14. This parenthesis emphasizes the sovereignty of God, and therefore, is a source of encouragement to believers.

The purpose of the interlude in each of the seven cycles is largely dramatic. With the completion of the 6th in each series we hold our breath in anticipation of the end. But this dramatic writer does not allow the end to come with such rapidity. Each time he makes us wait before we the see the 7th of the series... - **Bruce Metzger**

These parenthesis or interlude sections provide more background to the surrounding judgments, but do not chronologically advance the events of the Tribulation.

Chapter 10 essentially has two parts. 10:1-7 announces that there will be no more delay and 10:8-11 reveals that John has more bitter/sweet revelation concerning what is involved in bringing in the kingdom of God. Chapter 11:1-14 emphasizes the measurement of the temple and the ministry of the two witnesses.

Revelation 10:1 (NKJV)

1 I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. And a rainbow was on his head, his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire.

Who is this mighty angel? Good men are divided here. Some believe this is the Lord Jesus Christ because of the similarity in description with the vision of Christ in Chapter One (cf. 1:13-16). However, it is probably a mighty angel that comes as God's representative.

- 1) Angels are always angels in the book of Revelation.
- 2) Never after the incarnation is Christ presented as "The angel of the Lord".
- 3) It is said to be "another" mighty angel. The Greek word "*allon*" means another of the same kind. This would indicate a created angel similar to the one that is mentioned in 5:2. Christ was not created and is not similar to any other angel, but rather is far superior in every way.
- 4) The angel swears by God, something we would not expect Christ to do (10:6).

Angels are vitally involved in the execution of God's judgments on the world. They are His mighty representatives that carry out His bidding. God is always behind what is happening, but He often uses angels in the process. Angels are mentioned 66 times in the book of Revelation.

Clothed with a cloud: Clouds often relate to God's presence and are often referenced in relation to judgment in the N.T. (9 of 20 usages). Often God is robed with clouds. It is the attire of Deity, so to speak.

A rainbow was on his head: The rainbow is a perpetual reminder of God's promises, His faithfulness, His mercy. Even in this judgment context, there is "mercy"; and God's people can count on Him to keep His promises.

his face was like the sun: Radiant, reflecting the glory and holiness of God; an expression of the unveiled glory of God.

Feet like pillars of fire: Pillars speak of strength and fire speaks of judgment! God is in the process of putting all His enemies under His feet (cf. Heb. 10:13).

Revelation 10:2 (NKJV)

2 He had a little book open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land,

This little book is probably different from the scroll in Chapter Five. There are many differences including the word LITTLE used to describe this book. I take it this **little book** probably represents further climatic judgment developments as seen in the remainder of the book. We shall look at this further in verse seven. Context would indicate that the contents of this book relate to sovereign dominion over the sea and the land. What is in view is Christ taking over the world as King and this is symbolically being communicated by one of His mighty angels. Worldwide dominion is being prophetically depicted.

This is a MIGHTY angel. He is huge! He sets his right foot on the sea and his left on the earth (cf. Deut. 11:24, Josh. 1:3). In the old days when one king conquered another, the conquering king would put his foot on the neck of the defeated foe which emphasized total conquest (cf. Heb. 10:13).

This seems to present an image of conquest and to relate the angel and his ministry to God's purpose of taking possession of the entire world (land and sea), which will be worked out in the tribulation period. – **Charles Ryrie**

The book has been building to this very point (cf. 11:15).

Revelation 10:3 (NKJV)

3 and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roars. When he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices.

In view is the roar of a lion as when he pounces on his prey. It is the roar of overpowering dominance (cf. Amos 3:4). Accompanying this roar are the voices of seven thunders.

Revelation 10:4 (NKJV)

4 Now when the seven thunders uttered their voices, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them."

Thunders are usually harbingers of coming storms (as in 8:5); these were apparently connected with some of the judgments involved in God's gaining possession of the earth. – **Charles Ryrie**

Many think the phrase "seven thunders" may relate back to Psalm 29. So much of Revelation builds on and brings to completion truth that was introduced earlier in the Scriptures. In Psalm 29, we find "the voice of the Lord" in connection with thunder seven times. We could call this "THE THUNDER PSALM." God speaks through thunder.

This Psalm describes retroactively the events of the Noahic Flood. ...This great cataclysm marked the first time in history that the rebels on earth had ever heard thunder, for before that "the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth (Gen. 2:5). The seven thunders voiced at the Flood had been voices of judgment and the inference here in Revelation is the same. Yet, the Lord told John not to record what they said, implying that there would still be time for human repentance before the final destruction would come. – **Henry Morris**

When the Lord "thundered" at the time of the flood, it was too late. That thunder BOOMED OUT doom! This would seem to be the idea here, too. Evidently when the seven thunders finally speak it will be TOO LATE for repentance. But not yet...for that is still sealed.

Cf. Rev. 16:9, 11. (Repentance is still the desired response)

Cf. Rev. 22:10-11 (A time when things are fixed)

This is the one place we find in the book of Revelation that something is still said to be sealed – sealed yet at that point. Perhaps the sense is that there is still a window of opportunity for repentance. John is told not to write at this juncture because these things are still to be sealed at this point. Note that while God has revealed much there are still some divine secrets which God has not revealed.

Revelation 10:5-6 (NKJV)

**5 The angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to heaven
6 and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there**

should be delay no longer,

The raising up of his hand to heaven would seem to indicate that the angel is acknowledging a higher power or authority; namely God. This is another reason to think that the angel in view is not Christ.

This is one of the major points in the book. Up to this point things have been somewhat drawn out, but now at the sounding of the seventh Trumpet, there is non-stop, high impact, rapid fire judgments that are going to bombard the earth. There is no parenthesis in the BOWL judgments that come out of the seventh Trumpet. Apparently up to this point there was some lag between judgments as God was still giving some space for REPENTNANCE (cf. 9:20-21, 2 Pet. 3:9). However, it would appear at this point the patience of God is about exhausted, and now the earth is going to experience the full fury of His wrath (Isa. 24:6). There will be no more delay! The martyrs' question in 6:10 of "how long" is now answered.

Clearly there is some type of progression in the seals, trumpets, and bowls that nears its conclusion as the seventh trumpet is about to sound (v.7). - **Expositors**

Matthew 24:21 (NKJV)

21 For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.

Revelation 10:7 (NKJV)

7 but 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 mystery of God would be finished, that is, fulfilled or completed. Mystery in the NT is always a divine secret! What is this secret that is now to find fulfillment? The context would seem to answer that it is the climactic judgments that will NOW USHER in the kingdom of God. Note it speaks of this mystery in reference to what God has already declared to His servants, the prophets. The timing of God in bringing in the kingdom has always been a mystery (cf. Acts 1:6-7), but now it is to be finished, that is, fulfilled, or completed.

Revelation 11:15 (NKJV)

15 Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"

The mystery of God consists of the heretofore unrevealed details unfolded in the chapters from here to the end, chapters that tell of the institution of God's kingdom on earth and eventually the new heavens and new earth. – **Robert Thomas**

Chapters 10-15 are largely filling in more background detail, but when we get to Chapter 16, the BOWL judgments which come out of the seventh Trumpet come hard and fast without pause or interruption, until it is all over! Out of this seventh trumpet emerges the grand finale of judgments, resulting in the setting up of the kingdom of our Lord!

Revelation 10:8 (NKJV)

8 Then the voice which I heard from heaven spoke to me again and said, "Go, take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the earth."

The voice is probably that of God the Father or of Jesus.

Revelation 10:9 (NKJV)

9 So I went to the angel and said to him, "Give me the little book." And he said to me, "Take and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as sweet as honey in your

mouth.”

Note, it does not seem appropriate that John would order Jesus to give him the little book. However, under divine direction, it would be very appropriate for him to speak this way to an angel. Again we note the evidence that this angel is not Jesus.

Revelation 10:10 (NKJV)

10 Then I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter.

This command to John to eat the book has a parallel in Ezekiel (Ezek. 2:9-3:4) and also in Jeremiah (Jer. 15:16-18). – **John Walvoord**

The idea here is assimilate the message. He is to take it in and digest it so that in turn he can share it with the people. Today we might speak of “devouring a book”.

Note this is going to be a sweet-bitter experience, or we might say sweet and sour. To John, this message would be sweet; so much so, that he says at the end of the book, “even so come Lord Jesus”. But before he gets to that point, John will have revealed to him the most extreme judgments in the history of the world that will ever come upon the earth. Before the kingdom comes, Israel will suffer greatly (cf. Jer. 30:7). As he digests these realities, it will be bitter in his stomach. The ultimate outcome is sweet, but the process is bitter.

Frankly, as you study these things there is a MIXED reaction for the saint who loves God and has a concern for souls. You rejoice at the triumph of Jesus over the sinful world, but at the same time agonize over the horrific judgments that the world will go through in that process. Jeremiah spoke of severe judgment, but only through tears. He is called the weeping prophet (cf. Ezek. 33:11, Phil. 3:18). The message will both gladden and sadden. It is SWEET in that there will be NO MORE DELAY! The triumph of Jesus coming and His glorious reign is now at hand. It is BITTER in that the wrathful judgments of God, culminating in Armageddon, will usher it in. It is true that the world is going to hell in a hand basket, but that should bother us. If we have really digested the reality of coming judgment, it will leave us bitter in our stomach. We rejoice in the hope that is ours, but are sickened for what awaits the world.

Revelation 10:11 (NKJV)

11 And he said to me, “You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings.”

These concluding things must be digested and then divulged. This is what we have revealed in the remainder of the book, that culminates in the kingdom of our Lord.

It involves the WHOLE WORLD as seen in many peoples, nations, tongues and kings.

An important interpretive key to Revelation is found in this section in 10:11 where John is told that he “must prophesy again.” Up to this point the book has been proceeding along in chronological sequence. This is an interruption of that order as additional information is given. - **Paul Benware**

In other words, this indicates that there has been an interruption in the chronological flow of prophetic things, so that additional detail and background could be shared. But he must prophesy again relaying the chronological movement forward to the end. And this he will do in Rev. 16.

Every old time circus had a “barker” who promoted side shows. He would call out “Hurry Hurry, Hurry” and the people would rush to see the show. At times in my mind, I hear the

voice of God calling “Hurry, Hurry, Hurry! For those I love die so fast.” God’s call is not to a passing side show but to the main event for time and eternity.

- **George Sweeting**

Judgment Day is coming! NOW IS THE ACCEPTED TIME! NOW IS THE DAY OF SAVLATION! (2 Cor. 6:2) There will come a time when there is no more delay. We look forward to that day, but with mixed emotions. In the meantime, the warnings of Scripture are saying, “Come!” Come to Jesus!

Revelation 22:17 (NKJV)

17 And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.

An Overview of Revelation

Ch. 1 – Vision of Christ

Ch. 2-3 - Church Age

Ch. 4-5 - Throne Room in Heaven

Ch. 6-18 - Tribulation Period

Ch.19 - Second Coming of Christ

Ch. 20 - Kingdom

Ch. 21-22 - Eternal State

In Rev. 4-5, Christ takes the seven-sealed title deed of the earth. As He begins to unloose the seals, various judgments are unleashed on the earth, signifying a process in taking back the earth. Out of the seventh seal comes seven Trumpet judgments. The last three Trumpet judgments are so severe that they are called “Woes”. Out of the seventh Trumpet judgment will come the climactic BOWL judgments, that bring to conclusion the judgments of God on the earth, and usher in the Kingdom.

The judgments are like a “telescope” that unfolds. There is one series of judgments all of which unfold out of the SEALS. However there are three movements in this series; namely the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments. The goal in all these judgments is that people might come to REPENTANCE and give glory to God.

Between the 6th and 7th seal judgments there is a parenthesis, giving more background surrounding the various judgments. Again, between the 6th and 7th Trumpet judgments, there is another parenthesis giving more background detail without advancing the events of the Tribulation chronologically. Chapters 10-15 are that parenthesis.

Order of Judgments

The **SEAL** Judgments – Ch. 6

[Parenthesis – Ch. 7]

The **TRUMPET** Judgments – Ch. 8-9

[Parenthesis – Ch. 10-15]

The **Bowl** Judgments – Ch. 16

[Parenthesis – Ch. 17-18]

In Chapter 10 we saw that as the 7th Trumpet blows, we are getting right down to the end of the Tribulation, where the dominion of Christ over the world will come into full view (cf. 10:6-7).

We also saw that as John is called to give further prophecy related to this “wrap up” of the Tribulation, it would be a bitter/sweet experience for him. It would be sweet in the sense of seeing the Triumph of Christ and what this means for the saints. But it would also be bitter in seeing the crushing judgments the world will have to go through in the process, especially in relation to Israel and the saints. John’s message at this point regarding the remaining judgments is that they will be UNIVERSAL in nature. The Bowl judgments largely have the whole world in view.

Overview of Chapter 10.

1. Dominion is in view in connection with 7th Trumpet (v. 2, 5, 8).
2. The 7th Trumpet signals no more delay – the mystery is now finished (v. 6-7).
3. Further revelation related to the end would be sweet/bitter (v. 9-10).

Chapter 11:1-14 emphasizes the measurement of the temple and the ministry of the two witnesses. This section of 11:1-14 is considered by many to be among the most difficult sections in Revelation to understand. Even amongst dispensational conservatives, there are differences of thought regarding various details. So while I will give you my view, it is not a place to be dogmatic on all the details.

Revelation 11:1 (NKJV)

1 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.

Reed: a papyrus reed. They were lightweight and often used as instruments of measurement. In effect, this was a measuring stick.

The temple: Solomon built Israel’s first temple in about 950 B.C. In 586 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon destroyed it. After the Babylonian Captivity, a second temple was completed in 515 B.C. This temple was later remodeled and expanded by Herod the Great in 20 B.C. Herod’s temple was then destroyed in A.D.70 by the Romans. In A.D. 691, the Muslims built the Dome of the Rock Mosque on the very site of the Temple Mount. For nearly 2000 years, the Jews have longed for yet still another rebuilt temple.

This has been a topic of discussion for years. How in the world will the Dome of the Rock be removed and the Jews erect a Temple without all hell breaking loose? Jerusalem is considered the third most holy site to Muslims, right after Mecca and Medina. The Temple Mount is the place where supposedly Muhammad ascended into heaven. There is no way they will simply give this place up. We don’t know HOW, but we do believe that eventually the Jews will rebuild their temple on this site. In fact, it must be rebuilt for the events of the Tribulation to take place.

Daniel 9:27 (NKJV)

27 Then he [antichrist] shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; [one seven-year period of time] But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. [Temple and Altar must be in place] And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, Even

until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate.”

2 Thessalonians 2:4 (NKJV)

4 [antichrist] who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

Therefore, it is obvious that for these Tribulation prophecies to be fulfilled, a Temple at some point must be constructed, and it will be. It will be in operation during the first half of the Tribulation period. It is fascinating to realize that there are Jews in Israel right now who are planning on building the temple. They too are clueless as to how this is going to happen! All they have access to right now is the WAILING WALL, a part of the western wall of the old temple site. Nonetheless, they are preparing to build in the near future.

John is instructed to MEASURE the temple, the altar and the worshippers. There are two main ideas as to what this may signify.

1. Measuring for judgment. An evaluation which finds the worship activities lacking (cf. Ezek. 40-41, Zech. 2:1-3).
2. Measuring signifies protection, preservation, and possession. This is the view, I prefer.

In this same context, we find the ministry of the two witnesses who for three and one-half years will be completely protected in their sphere of ministry. Likewise, I would take it that this reality will apply to the Temple proper. Antichrist will make a seven-year covenant with Israel and many believe this agreement will involve Antichrist making a provision of protection for the temple (cf. Dan. 9:27). Clearly the emphasis here is Jewish as God is now completing His special program and dealings with Israel. The first half of the seven-year Tribulation Period finds the Jews worshipping freely in their rebuilt temple until Antichrist puts a halt to it midway through the Tribulation.

Revelation 11:2 (NKJV)

2 “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.

I take it that although Israel will have special temple liberties during this time, the OUTER court area surrounding the temple will not enjoy these same privileges. They are still in the times of the Gentiles, and as such, the Gentiles will still dominate Jerusalem until Christ comes (cf. Lk. 21:24). Evidently under Antichrist, an arrangement will be reached where the Jews have freedom to worship in a rebuilt temple. This they will do for the first half of the Tribulation. However, the remainder of the city is still evidently under Gentile domination, and in fact, during the last half of the Tribulation (42 months,) it will be “tread under foot” in climactic fashion. When Antichrist breaks his covenant with the Jews, then the Jews in Jerusalem will receive brutal treatment at the hands of the Gentiles (cf. Mt. 24:15-16).

Thus the functioning worship of the temple described in 11:1-2 occurs during the first part of the Tribulation, whereas the treading down of the city by the Gentiles (11:2) follows during the last 42 months. – **Charles Ryrie**

Revelation 11:3 (NKJV)

3 “And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.”

Evidently, John now comes back again to the first half of the Tribulation and introduces these two God-empowered witnesses who will (in my view) probably minister during the first half of the Tribulation. However, some scholars think their ministry takes place in the last half of the Tribulation.

There is some disagreement over whether this refers to the first or the last half of the Tribulation. The text does not specify. It seems to me that it refers to the first half, since it is the coming of the Beast (the Antichrist) onto the scene with great power that terminates their witness (v. 7). [This happens at midpoint of the Tribulation]

– Charles Ryrie

Two witnesses: In the OT, as well as the NT, the pattern is that everything is established in the mouth of at least two witnesses. God is communicating to the world His truth on this basis.

There are two prominent ideas of who these unnamed witnesses might be.

1. Moses and Elijah: The miracles the two witnesses perform are so similar to those performed by Moses and Elijah that many believe they are the two witnesses. They both appeared with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration (cf. Mt. 17:1-13).
2. Elijah and Enoch: These are the two OT saints that didn't die (cf. Heb. 9:27).

The fact is we just don't know who they will be because we are not told. It seems evident they will certainly come in the power and spirit of Elijah and Moses, if indeed they are not these individuals in person.

Prophecy: Involved FORETELLING the future, but it also often involved FORTH-TELLING, in the sense of calling the people to REPENTANCE. The prophets were raised up by God to preach repentance. This was even signified in the clothing they wore.

Sackcloth: Coarse, dark cloth woven from goat or camel hair. It was worn as a sign of mourning, signifying brokenness over sin and a calling for repentance.

I take it that these two individuals are in keeping with the OT prophets, who called for repentance as even seen in their dress!

Revelation 11:4 (NKJV)

4 These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth.

The language here is based on Zech. 4:2, 3, 11-14. In Zechariah's time, the two witnesses were Joshua, the high priest, and Zerubbabel, who was a key leader. The olive oil in Zechariah's image provided fuel for the two lampstands representing the two witnesses. The oil is illustrative of the Holy Spirit. Their ministry did not rise from human ability, but from God's power (cf. Zech. 4:6). So these two witnesses in Rev. 11 will be Spirit-empowered in miraculous ways. Note their close relationship to God. They are His ambassadors, His representatives, doing His will.

Revelation 11:5 (NKJV)

5 And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner.

Now this is what you call two fiery prophets! All who try to hurt them will go up in smoke!

Fire proceeds from their mouth: Judgment emanates from their mouths, the very place from which their message of repentance comes. Those rejecting, in a way that calls for the witnesses' harm, will be destroyed by these fire-breathers. At this point, these guys are indestructible. No one can harm them!

Revelation 11:6 (NKJV)

6 These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire.

They have incredible miraculous power at their disposal. Who could question it?

- 1) Fire-breathing – kills enemies that try to harm.
- 2) Drought.
- 3) Turn waters to blood.
- 4) Plagues (diseases, etc).

As often as they desire: It would really be wise to stay on the good side of these guys!

Revelation 11:7 (NKJV)

7 When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them.

Finish their testimony: They are IMMORTAL until their job is done. Neither the devil, antichrist, nor anyone else can do anything to STOP them, until their ministry is complete.

Testimony: They will testify to the truth of the God of Israel; to the truth of the prophetic Scriptures; and to the truth of the true Messiah. Their miraculous ministry will be totally convincing to anyone open to the truth.

Beast: This is the first time (the first of 36 times), the antichrist is referred to in this way in the book of Revelation. Beast indicates a beast of prey, a beast with a ravenous appetite. It signifies unreasoning violence that acts according to a cruel nature. The antichrist is a “beast” of a man.

Ascends out of the bottomless pit (the abyss). This is a term that is used in a general sense to refer to the realm of departed spirits or to the realm of the damned (cf. 9:1-10). I take it that at about the middle of the Tribulation, antichrist is killed and goes to the abyss; but then in a very unique situation, God allows him to be resurrected. This is a totally unique event which I believe ties with 2 Thess. 2:10 (cf. Rev. 13:3, 5, 17:8).

2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 (NKJV)

9 The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, **with all power, signs, and lying wonders,**

10 and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

11 And for this reason **God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie,**

12 that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Revelation 11:8 (NKJV)

8 And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

The world will have such contempt for these two witnesses, that when they are killed, they won't even give them a decent burial or even cover their bodies. This was considered the highest form of indignity and degradation for a Jew. It was unlawful according to the Law of Moses to leave a body exposed overnight (cf. Deut. 21:22-23).

The city where they are killed is clearly Jerusalem, because that is where Christ was crucified. However, it is so morally rotten at this point, that spiritually, it is called...

Sodom – a place of moral corruption and perversion.

Egypt – a place of idolatry and bondage.

Revelation 11:9 (NKJV)

9 Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves.

The world will look on these two dead witnesses and not permit them to be buried. All over the world, people are gloating over the fact that they finally “got them”.

Previous generations could not imagine how this could literally happen. Today, we know exactly how it could happen, live satellite television transmission. We can see televised pictures instantly all over the planet because of satellite communications. It happens every night on the national news! That fact alone ought to get our attention about how close we are to the end. - **Ed Hindson**

Revelation 11:10 (NKJV)

10 And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.

Who dwell on the earth is emphasized two times in this verse. This phrase, or a similar one, is used at least ten times in the book of Revelation as a technical term referring to those who are lost; to those who are earth-lovers instead of God-lovers. This earth is everything to them. They have no pilgrim character. They live for now, this life, and the things of this earth. They are earth-dwellers in contrast to being God-lovers (cf. Joel 2:12-17, 1Cor. 7:29-31, Col. 3:2, 1 Jn. 2:15-17). The prophets tried to orient the people towards God in terms of REPENTANCE. Yet these people remained earth-dwellers in their orientation. The death of the witnesses sets off a global celebration! This is the only time in Revelation we find people on earth “rejoicing” during the Tribulation! They are so elated that they improvise a sort of holiday. These two witnesses were HOUSEHOLD names. The whole world knows of them and hates them (cf. Lk. 6:26, Acts 7:51-52, 2 Cor. 2:16, 1 Jn. 3:13).

Because they tormented: This is from the world’s perspective. However, from God’s viewpoint, they were a “testimony” (cf. v. 7).

A righteous prophet is always a torment to a wicked generation. – **John Walvoord**

The only prophets people love are dead ones. - **BKC**

Revelation 11:11 (NKJV)

11 Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them.

You talk about CRASHING a party! These worldlings go from gleeful party celebration to paralyzing fear in an instant! Can’t you just see those, covering this live on TV, shaking and not knowing what to say or do?!

Great fear: They are panic stricken! This is panic attack mode! This is overwhelming fear!

Revelation 11:12 (NKJV)

12 And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here.” And they

ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them.

This resurrection even will be gradual allowing their enemies to see them (cf. Acts 1:9-11).

Cloud: Perhaps God's Shekinah glory. Can you imagine the hysteria? They will be replaying this footage over and over. What could anyone say? How could anyone deny the reality of their ministry? What tremendous overwhelming vindication?

Revelation 11:13 (NKJV)

13 In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven.

Same hour: The timing here is unmistakable. The providential workings of God are undeniable.

great earthquake: If they aren't killed, you would think this would get their attention. One tenth of Jerusalem falls in the same hour the two witnesses are resurrected. 7000 people are killed in the city. The survivors are afraid and give glory to the God of heaven, Who is up there where the two witnesses went. For the moment, they seem to get it.

Commentators are divided as to whether this constitutes true repentance or not. Some argue this is a response born out of fear, but like Pharaoh "faith", it quickly passes. Others contrast this with 16:9 where people refuse to give God glory and argue this would seem to be tantamount to genuine repentance. We don't really know because we are not given any additional information. However, I wouldn't be a bit surprised if this results in the conversion of many Jews who become that faithful remnant that heads for hills when antichrist will shortly declare himself to be God in the temple. If indeed this does represent true repentance it is the first time we see people repenting as a result of a natural disaster in Revelation. Evidently, the powerful witness of these two in Jerusalem does reap some fruit at this point. Certainly there is an outward response that would indicate repentance.

Revelation 11:14 (NKJV)

14 The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly.

The contents of the third woe will not come until 16:1 after a briefing on the different subplots of God's providence. – Robert Thomas

In 11:15-19, the climactic seventh Trumpet blows, which unleashes the seven final bowl judgments, which bring everything to conclusion. However, after stating the conclusion; John then proceeds to give more parenthetical background detail, before moving forward with the chronological climax of the bowl judgments in 16:13. God's pattern is to speak in GRACE first. If people won't REPENT, then He speaks in judgment (cf. Gen. 6:3 -120 years). Today the Spirit is convicting the world. Jesus stands at the door of each person's heart and knocks. It is a wooing ministry of Grace. But one day, the Day of the Lord will come and then God's getting the attention of the world will be much more direct, miraculous, and overt. Instead of knocking on the door, it will be like knocking the door down and saying, "Now what are you going to do with Me?"

The Tribulation will be a time with all kinds of SUPERNATURAL manifestations, both Satanic and from God. Yet, most people won't believe anyway (cf. Lk. 16:31). The Tribulation becomes evidence of this. After three and one-half years of a totally miraculous ministry, the world HATES the two witnesses!

The goal in all these judgments is to bring people to repentance, or to put it another way, to bring them to where they give GLORY TO GOD. People were created for God's glory (cf. Rev. 4:11, 14:6-

7). Giving God glory means to exalt Him for Who He is. He is the creator. He alone is the Higher Power! He alone is Sovereign! He alone is Judge! He is Lord! (cf. Phil. 2:9-11).

The typical pattern of the Apocalypse is to give us the big picture followed by snapshots. First the panorama, then the close ups. I believe that is what we have in 11:15-19. – **Ed Hindson**

As we come to 11:15, we find this connects back to 9:21 in terms of chronological advancement. Chapter 9 ended with the sixth trumpet and now in 11:15 we have the seventh Trumpet presented. In between was a parenthesis, again, with more background detail. Simply put, 11:15-19 gives us the bottom line of where it is all going and then more details are added to that summary treatment, in the remainder of the book.

Revelation 11:15 (NKJV)

15 Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!”

In 8:1, at the opening of the seventh seal there was a “holy hush” in heaven for half an hour in somber anticipation of what was coming. Now at the sounding of the seventh Trumpet there is a symphony of LOUD voices in heaven. They recognize that this is the CLIMACTIC time they have been waiting for which will usher in the kingdom.

The emphasis on the “heavenly scene” helps us see that what is about to happen on earth is ultimately tied to what is going on in heaven. Heaven is always one step ahead of what is happening on earth. The throne room of heaven is the control center of the universe and that is reflected in heaven’s response at this point.

A major theme throughout the Bible and in Revelation is the coming kingdom of our Lord when His rule will be direct and supreme (cf. Dan. 7:14, Mt. 6:10, Lk. 1:32-33). Now the time has come! A LOUD response from heaven like this is only appropriate. What is ANNOUNCED in heaven is soon to unfold and become reality on earth. It is so SURE it is spoken of as having already happened, although the actuality of it awaits the completion of the bowl judgments in chapter 16. In theology this is sometimes called the “PROHETIC PERFECT”. It is so absolutely certain that prophetically it is spoken of as already being true.

The better manuscripts read “The kingdom (singular) of this world”. The sense is basically the same. However, under antichrist, Satan will unify the world under ONE umbrella. It will be a re-visitation of the tower of Babel back in the OT. It will definitely be a unified KINGDOM under Satan’s man, antichrist. This is the BABYLONIAN empire of Rev. 17-18. Presently the kingdoms of this world are under Satan’s dominion, but still under God’s ultimate sovereign control (cf. Matt. 4:8-9). Satan is called the “Prince of this world” (cf. Jn. 12:31, 14:30, 16:11), and the god of this age (2 Cor. 4:4). When Christ takes over the world, it will be a singular KINGDOM unified in rebellion that He triumphs over. Christ’s kingdom will be eternal in duration. It starts in the form of the Millennial kingdom as seen in Rev. 20, but then merges into the eternal state as found in Rev. 21-22. These two aspects of the kingdom are dealt with generally and comprehensively in this verse.

These five verses 15-19 are among the most dramatic verses in the entire Bible. They are so powerful that George Frederic Handel took the words of verse 15 “and He will reign forever and ever” as the closing chorus of his great oratorio, The Messiah. - **Ed Hindson**

Revelation 11:16 (NKJV)

16 And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God,

Who are these “elders”?

1. A special class of angels that rule under God.
2. Representatives of God’s people: 12 representing the 12 tribes of Israel and hence representing the saints of Israel. 12 representing the 12 apostles and hence representing the saints in the church age (cf. Rev. 21:10-14 where are found the 12 foundation stones of the 12 apostles, and 12 gates of the 12 tribes of Israel.)
3. Representatives of the Church who are at this point in heaven. (In my view, either view 2 or 3 is a possibility, but I prefer view 3.)

Angels would not seem to be in view because in 5:9 these elders sing Christ has “redeemed us” [but there is disagreement about this text as it could read “them”]. Angels are not redeemed. Angels are never referred to as “elders”, nor do angels have the promise of crowns or occupy thrones. Furthermore, in 7:11 the elders are distinguished from angels. These elders are often found close to the throne in a WORSHIPPING capacity! They are on thrones probably indicating that they have received their reward. They are anticipating their capacity of being joint-heirs with Christ, who will share in His rule.

On their faces: The posture of worship in heaven!

Revelation 11:17 (NKJV)

17 saying: “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.

They worship God by giving THANKS! Much of real worship is expressing gratitude to God for what He has done.

Lord God Almighty: Puts the emphasis on His Sovereign power and eternity.

Who is to come is not found in the older manuscripts [cf. NASB]. Note at this point, He is presented as having already come!

Taken Your great power and reigned: He has asserted Himself, with the result being His direct rule being implemented. None can resist His power. He is the sovereign God to whom all must bow. The response of heaven in contrast to that on earth could not be more stark. In heaven they are rejoicing. On earth there is rage. In heaven there is jubilation. On earth there is judgment. In heaven there is worship. On earth there is rebellion.

Revelation 11:18 (NKJV)

18 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.”

Christ summarily dismantles the world by bringing judgment after judgment down upon them; and now is poised to bring down the final blow in the form of the bowl judgments, which ushers forth from the 7th trumpet. It is in this context, that the nations of the world are angry. Chronologically, this is the period very near the end of the Tribulation. The attitude of the world is seen in Psalm 2, which is very closely tied to this text. The climax of this attitude of rebellion is also seen in 16:9, 11 and Rev. 19:19.

Note not only are the nations angry, but God is also angry.

There is a play on words in the Greek...the same word being used for “angry” as for “wrath” referring to the righteous judgment of God. The wrath of men is impotent; the wrath of God is omnipotent. The wrath of men is wicked; the wrath of God is holy.

– **John Walvoord**

If you have two angry parties and they have it out, which one is going to win? Well, the stronger of the two. Note in Psalm 2, God laughs at them. In verse 17, we noted the awesome power of the Almighty! Up to this point in history God has characteristically shown gracious restraint. He has been patient with the folly of man, but NOW HIS WRATH HAS COME. This is the climactic Armageddon which to quote Jonathan Edwards is “Sinners in the hands of an angry God!” Man can rant and rave all he wants to in defiant rage, but there is nothing he can do in the face of God’s wrath. God is simply OVERPOWERING! (cf. Rev. 6:17) We have a very comprehensive statement here. Following the time of wrath, will come the JUDGMENT for the dead involving rewarding the saints and damnation for the “aints”.

The elders in their song make no attempt to separate the different phases of judgment as they are separated in the closing chapters of Revelation. They simply sing of that future judgment as though it were one event, much on the order of other Scriptures that do not distinguish future judgments from each other (cf. Mk. 4:29, Jn. 5:25, 28-29, Acts 17:31; 24:21). – **Robert Thomas**

At this point John simply makes a GENERAL statement regarding judgment that will follow the pouring out of God’s wrath (cf. Heb. 9:27).

Reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name:

Prophets: Refers to those who faithfully called people to repentance, and gave forth “thus saith the Lord” revelation and were severely persecuted for it (cf. Mt. 5:10-12). The office of prophet and being persecuted were essentially synonymous. It is therefore fitting that they are named first in terms of rewards. We have no “prophets” at this point in the church age, other than false prophets. By way of application however we do have people that are faithfully standing for God and His truth and are likewise mistreated. In this way, they enter into the experience of the prophets of old and likewise will be rewarded (cf. 2 Tim. 3:12).

Saints: Lit. “set apart ones”. All believers in the NT are called saints. They are not a special class. All of God’s people are positionally HOLY because they have all been cleansed by the blood of Christ. The challenge for believers is to now live their lives consistent with their position.

Those who fear your name is probably just a further description of what characterizes the prophets and the saints who KNOW the Lord. They are those who REVERENCE God in contrast to the angry masses who are in enraged in rebellion (cf. 11:13).

In the present verse, [there are] ... two categories, “your slaves the prophets” on the one hand and on the other “the saints, even to those who fear your name. – **Robert Thomas**

Small and great: On Judgment day, one’s station in life will be irrelevant. Everyone will be there. There will be no exemption or pass for the so called “great” of the world. They will stand before God and give an account just like everyone else.

Destroy those who destroy the earth: Note the contrast: God will reward His people the prophets and the saints, but He will destroy the unbelievers who are said to destroy the earth.

This is interesting because these people as a class are also called “earth dwellers”. This same category of people are now said to be those who destroy the earth. In reality they abuse and use the earth for selfish purposes. They care nothing about God or even future generations. They live for now and self (cf. materialism...18:3, 7, 11-14). The first mandate God gave to man was to “have dominion over and subdue” the earth (Gen. 1:26-28). In effect this was a stewardship from God (cf. Ps. 24:1). What really caused God’s beautiful earth to be corrupted? It was the consequences of sin. At this point in the Tribulation, the earth has seen unbelievable destruction? Whose fault is it? God’s? No, it is the result of man’s sinful rebellious ways, that reaches a climax under antichrist, which calls for this type of holy judgment! As such God sees them as responsible for what has happened to His earth! All this horrible destruction is the consequences of sin! The fault lies squarely on the rebel worldlings (cf. Rom. 8:19-21).

The expression must be broad enough to include all agencies of evil... It better agrees with the context of Revelation to identify the destroyers as Babylon, the beast, the false prophet, and Satan. Those who destroy must include Babylon because of the allusion to Jer. 51:25 and similar identification of Babylon in 19:2. Furthermore, it is the destruction of these entities that precedes the final establishment of the kingdom (19:17-21, 20:10). – **Robert Thomas**

Revelation 11:19 (NKJV)

19 Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.

This verse is a transition verse. Some think it belongs with this section in chapter 11, while others think it belongs with chapter 12.

Verse 19 is a transition verse having a close connection with what precedes and with what follows....[however] a greater structural break comes with the appearance of the great sign in 12:1. Also, the occurrence of the storm theophany as in v. 19b usually marks the end rather than the beginning of a new vision. It is better to view v. 19 as the response to the hymn of vv. 17-18. – **Robert Thomas**

There are seven openings in Revelation

- 1) 4:1 -a door is opened in heaven
- 2) 6:1-8:1 - the seals are opened
- 3) 9:2 - the abyss is opened
- 4) 11:19 - the temple of God is opened
- 5) 15:5 - the tabernacle of testimony is opened (Holy of Holies)
- 6) 19:11 - Heaven is opened
- 7) 20:12 - the books of judgment are opened

The Greek word here translated temple refers to the innermost sanctuary, the Holy of Holies where the ark was located. In the New Jerusalem, there will be no temple (21:22), but at this point in the Revelation story there is. In the Holy of Holies was the ark of the covenant, which was a gold-plated chest in which were 1) the 10 commandments, 2) Aaron’s rod that budded, and 3) a pot of manna. On top of the chest was the mercy seat on which the High Priest annually sprinkled blood on the Day of Atonement. There were two cherubim (angelic) figures hovering over it. It is presumed that when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the temple in 586 B.C. that the ark was destroyed at that time. Others think it was buried deep below the Temple Mount when the Jews saw trouble coming. We really don’t know. The second temple had no ark in it.

The language of this verse is distinctly “Jewish” in orientation. The temple was an OT phenomenon as was the ark of the covenant which was in the temple. The tabernacle and then the temple in the OT were patterned after the one in heaven. The ark to Israel represented a number of things including the fact that they were in covenant relationship with God, the holiness of God, the faithfulness of God; and the mercy seat on the ark [which was a chest] represented forgiveness for the believers as blood was sprinkled on it. However, the MAIN thing in the minds of the Jews regarding the temple and the ark of His covenant was that it represented THE PRESENCE OF GOD, which gave them victory!

This is the picture: The ark symbolized the presence of God going before His people. At least 11 times in Chapter 3 of Joshua, reference is made to the Ark. It leads them across the Jordan. Then in chapter 6 as they marched around Jericho the ark was right in the MIDST of God’s people. It consistently represented the presence of Israel’s holy God in their midst (cf. Num. 10:33-36). The presence of God was most intimately represented in the O.T. by the Holy of Holies in which was the ark of the covenant. This ark is now opened as if to say God’s presence is now going to come to the rescue of His people Israel, who so identified with these realities in the OT.

This chapter opened with a temple on earth. For a time Israel is granted special privileges related to the temple. But in the middle of the Tribulation antichrist will totally defile this temple (cf. Dan. 9:27). Now the temple is opened in heaven and the ark of the covenant is seen. This could mean only one thing to the Jew who knew the OT Scriptures! “My deliverer is coming!” As in the days of old where the ark was carried out in front of His people as they were going to battle, and none of their enemies could stand against them, no matter how out numbered they were; so it is here. God’s PRESENCE insures victory (cf. Jer. 30:7).

Accompanying this sight are lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail. In Revelation, these consistently symbolize judgment which is about to break forth in all its fury (cf. 8:5, 16:18). This is the time when God is going to arise and RUMBLE with the earth. He is going to come to the aid of His repentant people Israel and deliver them just when all hope seems gone. Here comes the PRESENCE of God on behalf of His people, Israel.

Joel 3:16 (NKJV)

16 The Lord also will roar from Zion, And utter His voice from Jerusalem; The heavens and earth will shake; But the Lord will be a shelter for His people, And the strength of the children of Israel.

Ultimately God has a bone to pick with the world over their sin, and in particular, over how they have mistreated Israel (cf. Joel 3:2).

After the summary presentation of the 7th trumpet comes a rather long parenthesis section (ch. 12-15) right before the climactic bowl judgments in chapter 16. Chapter 12 really presents some of the CORE issues that are behind all that we find happening in the book of Revelation. It relates to the age old battle between God and Satan with Israel right in the middle. That is what is being depicted and it is coming to a CLIMAX. It unveils the activity of Satan and his angels in regards to Israel.

The seventh trumpet has opened the way for a revelation of the seven bowl judgments, but for that revelation to be meaningful, a sketch of the hidden forces behind this great climax of history and of the personages that play a part in that climax is necessary. – **Robert Thomas**

Right in the middle of the book of Revelation is a “scorecard.” It lists the seven symbolic players in the great end-times drama. The identify of these figures is crucial to the interpretation of the whole book. The “woman” who brings forth the “male child” is especially significant. ... For example, if the woman symbolizes Israel, then the drama takes on a decidedly Jewish flavor. If however, the woman symbolizes the Church, then “the rest of her offspring” must be Church saints who are suffering persecution during the Great Tribulation.

This one identify alone distinguishes between a pretribulational or posttribulational view of the book. – **Ed Hindson**

The seven end time “players”.

1. The woman – Israel (Rev. 12:1-2, 6, 13-16).
2. Dragon – Satan (12:3-4, 9, 12-13).
3. Male Child – Christ (12:2, 5).
4. Michael – Archangel (12:7-12).
5. Rest of her offspring – Seed of the woman = saved people (12:17).
6. Beast of the sea – Antichrist (13:1-10).
7. Beast of the earth – False Prophet (13:11-18).

In this section we see the reality of an unholy trinity that is the counterpart to God. The devil corresponds to God the Father; the antichrist corresponds to Christ; and the false prophet corresponds to the Holy Spirit.

In chapter 12 there are three main characters: The woman, the child, and the dragon. This could also be called “The Great Chapter”.

A great sign – v. 1

A great red dragon – v. 3

Great wrath – v. 12

Two wings of a great eagle – v. 14

Revelation 12:1 (NKJV)

1 Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars.

Sign means symbol.

Woman: This is Israel. This is suggested by the transitional verse in 11:19 which was Jewish in nature. What is happening at this point focuses around Israel. After the church is gone at the Rapture, Israel will once again become prominent in the plan of God. The great issues in this chapter, symbolically depicted, are the great issues of history that swirl around Israel and which come to a climax at the second coming of Christ.

When we let the author define symbols for us, their meanings become obvious. They all have their roots in the OT. These are not a series of bizarre symbols taken from pagan mythology as some have suggested. Rather, these are basic biblical themes that are clear in Scripture. John the apostle was steeped in OT knowledge and tradition and that was the basis of his symbolic language. – **Ed Hindson**

There have been various view as to who this woman is.

- 1) The Roman Catholic Church says it is the virgin Mary. But they have a problem because they say she did so without pain (cf. Rev. 12:2).
- 2) Mary Baker Eddy of Christian Science fame claimed that the woman represented her and the man child was Christian Science.
- 3) Some claim it is the Church.

- 4) But the proper view is that the woman in view is Israel as is born out in the remainder of the chapter (cf. v. 6).

The identity of this woman is the most critical issue in properly interpreting the Apocalypse. The woman symbolizes the nation and people of Israel. – **Ed Hindson**

The imagery of the sun, moon, and 12 stars is imagery taken from the story of Joseph's dream in Gen. 37:9-11.

The sun, moon and stars depict the glory and dominion which has been promised to [Israel] in the coming kingdom, just as they pictured Joseph's ultimate rule over his father, mother, and brothers (Gen. 37:9-11). – **William MacDonald**

The crown of 12 stars evidently symbolizes the 12 tribes that make up the nation of Israel. The sun and the moon perhaps relate to her future glory in the kingdom in keeping with the Abrahamic Covenant (cf. Isa. 60:1-3, 20, etc.). Going clear back to Gen. 12:1-3, Israel has been the nation of promise. She has a GLORIOUS FUTURE, but getting to that point involves some really rough spots.

Now John is going to give a selective panoramic overview of the conflict of the ages regarding Israel that culminates in the second coming. Much of the history of Israel is telescoped in this section, hitting the high points related to the battle of the ages. This means there are great gaps in the story, but if you connect the dots, you will see his thematic point.

Revelation 12:2 (NKJV)

2 Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth.

This refers to the long period of difficult struggle that Israel went through in moving toward the point where finally the Messiah came forth from her.

Down through the centuries as Israel is waiting for Messiah to come, they suffered greatly. The figure of Israel in travail as a woman is prominent in the OT (cf. Is. 26:17-18; Jer. 4:31, 13:21, Mic. 4:10, 5:3).

Next to the survival of the Jews, the most baffling historical phenomenon is the hatred which he has repeatedly encountered among the nations of the earth. This hostility to the Jews, which goes under the name of anti-Semitism, is as old as Jewish existence. - **A.W. Kac**

Satan has always tried to prevent the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies. You see what God has promised Israel, can only be fulfilled in relation to her promised Messiah. It all hinges on Messiah (cf. Lk. 1:31-33). Satan knows this and does all he can to try and destroy both Israel and her Messiah. As John will show, Satan's efforts in this regard are especially intense in relation to the first coming, and then also the second coming of Messiah. However, he will fail on both counts.

Revelation 12:3 (NKJV)

3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads.

Dragon: This represents Satan. We know this because verse 9 says so. The word dragon occurs 13 times in Revelation (11 times in Ch. 12) and once in Chapters 16 and 20.

A great, fiery red dragon: Fiery has the idea of ferocious and cruel. Red indicates a flamed color denoting bloodthirsty, murderous, destructive ways (cf. Jn. 8:44).

Seven diadems: These are 7 crowns indicating ruling authority or power.

The issue in context is Satan's passion to rule and to destroy Israel.

Satan has been allowed to have influence over the world. He is the prince of this world, the god of this age, but the special prize is Israel. Israel belongs to God in a special sense, and it is from Israel that the Messiah comes Who ultimately destroys the Devil. Therefore, the devil has always sought to destroy Israel thereby hoping to render God's plan ineffective. He has sought to do this in conjunction with the major world powers that have emerged down through history since Israel has existed as a nation. It is thought that the 7 heads represent the 7 great world powers of history.

The 7 major world powers related to Israel.

1. Egypt (Israel in the womb – so to speak)
2. Assyria – N. Kingdom
3. Babylon – S. Kingdom
4. Medo/Persia
5. Greece
6. Roman (1st coming of Christ)
7. Roman Empire Revived – final form under antichrist (2nd coming of Christ)

The last form of the Roman empire under antichrist will consist of a ten-nation confederacy under the antichrist, which is evidently represented in the ten horns. Horns in the Bible represent power (cf. Dan. 7:7, 20, 24, Rev. 13:1, 17:9-10). Satan has always been actively energizing the world powers against Israel. Satan works through people. He works through rulers and nations (cf. Ps. 2:10-12).

Revelation 12:4 (NKJV)

4 His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born.

Now John stretches all the way back to the dawn of creation, when Satan fell from heaven, when he tried to usurp the position of God.

A Third of the stars: Evidently this refers to the fallen angels who followed Satan in his rebellion. They were cast out of heaven with Satan at that time (cf. Isa. 14:12, Ezek. 28:11).

The stars must refer to angels who fell with Satan in history past. The similarity of this verse to Dan. 8:10, where the "host of heaven" is an apparent reference to angels, shows this. Already in Rev. a star has pictured an angel (9:1). That factor along with the reference to Satan's angels in 12:8-9 adds credence to this explanation.

– Robert Thomas

Now the story moves ahead to Christ's birth.

Devour: We believe this relates to Herod's attempt to kill Christ after He was born as recorded in Matt. 2. Herod's attempt to kill the newborn King was inspired by Satan. Satan is behind the Roman ruler, influencing him in this.

Revelation 12:5 (NKJV)

5 She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.

We see here the ultimate destiny of the male Child. Obviously this is Christ and His destiny is to RULE all nations with a rod of iron (cf. Ps. 2:9). When Christ came the 1st time, He was presented as

the King of Israel; but they rejected Him, resulting in His crucifixion. However, this did not thwart the plan of God because He arose from the dead and then ascended to heaven. This is what is in view in the Child being CAUGHT UP to God and His throne.

Mention is made of His birth and then His ascension bypassing His entire life and death. The reason for this is because the point of the passage is Satan's intention to destroy the Christ failed. This is seen in the foiled attempt of Herod to murder Him, and again to stop Him at the crucifixion. Ascension is proof of Satan's failure and Christ's victory.

John now skips ahead to a future time when Satan will again intensely try to destroy Israel in the Tribulation period.

Note that the entire church age is bypassed because the point of this discussion is showing Satan's attempt down through the ages to destroy Israel and the Christ. The subject matter is inherently related to Israel who produced the Christ Child.

Revelation 12:6 (NKJV)

6 Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

This corresponds to when antichrist will break his 7-year covenant with Israel in the middle of the Tribulation and forbid them to worship at the temple (Dan. 9:27). At that point, antichrist will go into the temple and declare himself to be god (2 Thess. 2). That will be the signal to converted Jews to flee to the wilderness (cf. Mt. 24:15-16). God has a special place prepared for them in which He will miraculously provide for them and protect them (cf. Ex 16 and God's provision of manna in the wilderness). Many believe this is the mountainous city of Petra in Edom.

God will protect Israel from Satan by hiding her in the wilderness, perhaps in the region of Moab, Ammon, and Edom, east of Palestine. Interestingly, those countries will be specifically spared from Antichrist attack against the Holy Land (cf. Dan. 11:41). – **John MacArthur**
It will be for 1260 days which is 3 and ½ years. This relates to the last half of the Tribulation period, otherwise known as the Great Tribulation. Apparently at the mid-point of the Tribulation, in this same context, we have war breaking out in heaven.

Revelation 12:7 (NKJV)

7 And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought,

Daniel 10 shows that what is happening on earth, corresponds to spiritual realities that are happening in heaven, in terms of spiritual warfare. We see in Dan. 10, that clashes in the heavenly realm between holy angels and evil angels, is nothing new. However, at this point all out WAR in the most intense fashion breaks out in heaven. Michael is the only angel named Archangel. He is thought to be the lead angel in regards to protecting God's people, Israel (cf. Dan. 10:13, 21, 12:1, Jude 9). His angelic counterpart on the evil side is Satan who is head of the demons.

What we have pictured here is the head holy angel and those with him, in combat with Satan and his demons. This angelic WARFARE takes place in the heavens.

The Bible speaks of three heavens.

1. The atmospheric heaven where the birds fly.
2. The heavens where the planets are located.
3. The dwelling place of God is the third heaven.

There is mystery here, but apparently Satan and his demons have strong holds set up in the 2nd heaven as their base of operations. In Dan. 10, they are pictured as trying to prevent answer to prayer. They attempt to stand between God's people and God, trying to interrupt our prayers and God's answers through angels (cf. Eph. 2:2, 6:12). Job 1-2 shows that apparently Satan even has limited access to the third heaven at this point.

War in heaven! No wonder that at the end of the Apocalypse God makes both a new heaven and a new earth, for Satan has defiled both realms. – **John Phillips**

Revelation 12:8 (NKJV)

8 but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer.

The devil and his angels don't win this battle. They are defeated and kicked out of heaven completely at this point.

Revelation 12:9 (NKJV)

9 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.

Satan and the demons are now confined to the earth. No longer do they have access to the heavens at all. There are more terms for Satan here than in any other single passage in the Bible.

Serpent of old: Emphasizing his crafty character.

Devil: slanderer, defames, accuses falsely.

Satan: Adversary.

Deceiver of the whole world

Deception is a really serious thing. People are like sheep, easily led, and Satan is a the master deceiver. How serious to realize that masses of people perceive spiritual reality to be one way, only to find out they have been completely mislead and deceived. Satan deceives people about God and His Word (cf. Gen. 3). He deceives them about Jesus Christ and the way of salvation.

He deceives them about Israel, etc. And in this context, he is going to deceive the world concerning the false christ, the antichrist whom the world will come to believe in as God (cf. Rev. 13, John 5:43).

Revelation 12:10 (NKJV)

10 Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.

At this point there is a loud voice in heaven celebrating the very soon anticipated coming kingdom of our God. God's deliverance, power, and kingdom are about to be brought into full view in connection with His Christ, the anointed one, the Messiah. Heaven can taste what is on the horizon. One more major conquest, in the progression towards coming kingdom, has been accomplished.

Accuser of our brethren: Satan has been working hard in the heavens trying to build a case against God's people. Note he accused them before God day and night, which is to say constantly. Perhaps when this is happening, we sense the pangs of this in the form of spiritual warfare (cf. Rom. 8:31-39, Eph. 6:12, Heb. 7:25, 1 Jn. 2:1). The devil is shut up! He is silenced! There will be no more accusing of God's people and HEAVEN GOES LOUD! But a statement is also given on how the victory over Satan was secured.

Revelation 12:11 (NKJV)

11 "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and

they did not love their lives to the death.

There are three things mentioned in how God's people have victory over Satan. The context here is the Tribulation Period, but there is application here for all times.

Through FAITH, these people found cleansing in the blood of Christ (cf. Rom. 5:1, 8-9).

The accusations of Satan are nullified by the blood of the Lamb which renders the believer pure and makes possible his spiritual victory. – **John Walvoord**

Those that truly avail themselves of the blood of Christ have “the word of their testimony”. Any person who is unwilling to confess Christ, probably has not placed real faith in Him (cf. Lk. 12:8-9, Rom. 10:9-10). We not saved by confession, but if we are saved the expectation is that we will confess Christ. We will acknowledge Him. In the NT, this was done in baptism. They believed and then they confessed Him (Identified with Him) in baptism. This was an outward confession that now they believed in Him and belonged to Him. There is no record of “unbaptized” believers in the NT! Furthermore, they did not love their lives to the death. That is they did not count their own lives more valuable or precious than Jesus. Jesus was their Lord! He was deemed more important than their own life. We see here the nature of true saving faith. They are resting in the blood of Christ; they openly confess Christ; and they are willing to die for Him (cf. Rev. 2:10, 17:14, 21:7-8).

The redemption of Christ is the prime cause of the saint's victory; their testimony confirms its efficacy in their lives. – **New Bible Commentary**

Revelation 12:12 (NKJV)

12 “Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.”

Therefore ties back to 12:10 and the casting down of the accuser of the brethren.

Satan's confinement to the earth is an occasion for JOY in heaven. Indeed, it is the appropriate response that is called for. It is time for those in heaven to CELEBRATE. Satan is down and on the way out! No more will he have any access into the heavens and the liberty to directly and constantly accuse the brethren before God (cf. 12:10).

There is a stark contrast between what is happening in the heavens and what is happening on earth.

Woe – denotes misery, affliction, trouble.

Earth and the sea: This is what man originally had “dominion” over, but lost it to Satan. It is the realm which Christ is in the process of taking back (cf. 10:2, 5, 8).

Devil – slanderer (cf. the accuser of the brethren).

Has come down to you. The devil has a thing against God's people in particular. He no longer can rail against those in heaven, so he now goes to deal with those who are still on the earth (cf. 1 Pet. 5:8). Up to this point the devil has had lots of room to roam, but it seems he had spent a good deal of his time in the heavens trying to make his case against believers. Now like a caged lion he is confined to the realm of the earth and sea, and he goes after God's people with great wrath.

Come down: This signifies a major demotion in status, position, and privilege. He has come down! And he is not happy about it. In fact, he is filled with GREAT WRATH!

because he knows that he has a short time: He knows, because of what the Scripture says; and he obviously believes the Scripture. It is like Satan knows his doom, but desperately tries to fight against this reality anyway. He has no other options! Satan knows his ultimate fate of destruction, and therefore tries to wreak havoc on everyone else, too especially God's people who side with God (cf. Jn. 10:10). In context, we know the time frame here is essentially 3 and ½ years as seen in verses 6 and 14. The devil at this point knows he basically has 3 and ½ years to do his thing, and so he in great WRATH goes about with all his might to destroy the people of God. And he will do it largely in conjunction with his instrument of ANTICHRIST (cf. Rev. 13:5-7).

Revelation 12:13 (NKJV)

13 Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child.

The devil is here once again called “the dragon” emphasizing his ferocity – his destructive beastlike nature. Note his response. He is really mad and goes to take it out on the woman. He can no longer vent in heaven, so he upgrades his attack on earth, and in particular toward the woman, which is Israel. The devil hates Israel because this is God's chosen people. The devil's real problem is with God, but since he can't get directly at God, he goes after God's people, who have a very specific prophetic destiny (cf. Rev. 12:1). The way the devil does this is through HUMAN INSTRUMENTS whether it be Pharaoh, Haman, Herod, Hitler, or Antichrist. If you try to analyze the world's attitude and treatment of Israel on a purely rational plane, you will never make sense of it. There is a spiritual dimension, and there are spiritual realities that are behind all that is happening. The world is in rebellion to God and that is demonstrated in its treatment of Israel. This reality will come to a climax under antichrist, the supreme instrument of Satan in persecuting Israel.

Persecuted – this word can also be translated “pursued” and is thus reflected in some translations.

The woman is clearly Israel, who brought forth the male Child Christ, who became the instrument of salvation, for whosoever will believe in Him. The devil has a real problem with Jesus Christ and at core his animosity towards Israel relates back to her connection with the Christ. He hates Israel for producing the Christ. What is pictured in verse 13 is the last and greatest wave of anti-Semitism in the history of the world. This is the devil's last hurrah. With all the wrath he can muster, he goes against Israel (cf. Jer. 30:7).

Revelation 12:14 (NKJV)

14 But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.

But - This is a contrast word. In contrast to the mighty wrathful effort put forth by Satan to persecute Israel is the delivering, protecting, care of God for a special remnant of His people. The language here is very similar to that used to speak of God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt, and then His supernatural provision for them, which followed for 40 years in the wilderness (cf. Ex. 19:4).

Two wings of a great eagle: The eagle was the largest bird in the Middle East. It denotes power and speed, in terms of escape. The escape is depicted as happening in a rapid fashion. Many believe that this is the get-away mentioned by Christ in Matt. 24:15-21.

To her place: Apparently there is a PARTICULAR place (cf. Isa. 33:13-16, 41:17-20, Micah 2:12) where this remnant of Israel is “nourished” (that is fed) and cared for. In keeping with the imagery of God's supernatural deliverance from Egypt, and then His supernatural provision of manna, God will also supernaturally care for the remnant who fly to this place of refuge.

In this place of refuge the woman will receive nourishment from God just as Elijah received food at the brook Cherith and as Israel received manna in the wilderness. This is a critical

provision because no one will be able to buy or sell without the mark of the beast during this three and one half years. – **Robert Thomas**

Where is this place? Well, we can't say with certainty, but many think that very possibly it is **Petra**, which is located in the Biblical land of Edom (modern Jordan). There is a deserted rock hewn city there called Petra. It is about 125 miles s. of Jerusalem.

The various Scripture references point out that this will be a region in a wilderness/mountainous area. Many scholars believe this place will be what was called in the Bible, Bozrah, but today is called PETRA (cf. Dan. 11:40-45, Isa. 63:1-6, Jer. 49:13-14).

Daniel 11:40-45 indicates that three areas, designated by their ancient names of Edom, Moab, and Ammon, will escape the worldwide rule of Antichrist. This is exact area where the Jewish remnant will be nurtured by the Lord through the second half of the tribulation. The city of Bozrah will be the sheepfold [Bozrah means sheepfold in Hebrew] that will protect the Jewish remnant.

Jeremiah 49:13-14 indicates that at the end of the tribulation the Antichrist will find the Jews in Bozrah and send his armies to attack them. Hosea 6:1-3 teaches that the threatened Jewish remnant will plead in faith for Messiah to return. He will do this in order to protect the remnant, and this will lead to the eventual second coming to the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem.

Petra is the current name of an abandoned city in southern Jordan located at Mount Seir within a basin. Petra, known in the Bible as Bozrah, will likely be the location where the Jewish remnant will flee during the middle of the tribulation. The only way in and out of the city is through a narrow passageway that extends for about a mile and is usually traveled by foot or on horseback.

--**Fast Facts on Bible Prophecy**, Thomas Ice and Timothy Demy, pg., 40, 149

Building on Daniel and other references in Revelation, "time" denotes 1 year; "times" denotes 2 years; and an additional half a time would add up to 3 and ½ years. Note this picks up and develops what is mentioned in 12:6 (cf. Dan. 7:25, 9:27, 12:7).

From the presence of the serpent: Satan cast down to the earth goes after the Jews with a vengeance, but these escape his presence. He can't get to them via his human instrument of antichrist.

Serpent: a creature which has a poisonous bite full of venom that can kill you.

Revelation 12:15 (NKJV)

15 So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood.

The power of a serpent is in its mouth. Now the question is: What is that which is spewed out of his mouth?

1. Verbal slander calling for the extermination of this remnant (cf. Rev. 13:5). Some would argue that this is symbolic language consistent with "two wings of a great eagle" etc. This view says the devil's tactic is to try and drown (destroy) Israel, but with a flood of verbiage or a human army that calls for her destruction.

The serpent (Satan) cast out of his mouth 'water like a river' 15, symbolizing Gentile nations (17:15) energized by Satan with anti-Semitic hatred to destroy the Jew.

– **Merrill Unger**

2. Another view is that a literal flood is in view. Just as the "wilderness" in verse 14 is literal, so also is this flood. According to this view, the devil will try to flood the place of refuge and destroy the Jews there.

There is no way of determining whether this describes an actual flood or figuratively describes the onslaught of Satan against those protected by God. – **Nelson Study Bible**

...[it] is difficult if not impossible to determine. – **Robert Thomas**

Revelation 12:16 (NKJV)

16 But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth.

Here we have a case of supernatural intervention. God is behind the scenes preventing this flood from overtaking the Jews, whether it be a flood of a great army, full of aggressive hostility, stirred up by antichrist's malicious words; or whether it be a literal flood of water. Either way, the earth opens up and swallows the flood. Some think perhaps an earthquake is in view (cf. Num. 16:30-33), but we are not told. Whatever this "flood" involves, the earth opens up and swallows it, so that it can't overtake this remnant of the woman who is in the place of refuge. What is the devil's response?

Revelation 12:17 (NKJV)

17 And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

The devil is ENRAGED with the woman, but again he is thwarted, because he can't get to her in the place of refuge. What is pictured here is the devil's final outburst, the venting of his wrath because of being stymied. So he goes to take it out on the rest of God's people, who are still accessible to him.

Who are the rest of her offspring?

1. Physical Jews who are scattered about who did not make it to the place of refuge.
2. I would take it in a general sense, in the sense of those having a spiritual tie with Israel and the Christ she bore. The qualifiers at the end of the verse emphasize spiritual realities. In other words, those who have a commitment to the Christ of Israel would seem to be in view, which certainly includes believing Jews, but perhaps also believing Gentiles. So in view are those she brought forth spiritually. All believers have a spiritual tie back to Israel (cf. Jn. 4:22, Gal. 3:29).

Satan will turn his frustrated rage against every follower of the Lamb he can find—Jew or Gentile. – **John MacArthur**

God will sovereignly protect a remnant of believing Jews, as we have seen, but also many will die (cf. Zech. 13:8, Rev. 13:7).

Who keep the commandments of God: Every God-fearing Jew would know the key commandments of having no other God before YHWH (cf. Ex. 20). At the signal of the abomination of desolation in the temple (cf. Mt. 24:15-16), all true believing Jews will flee for the mountainous wilderness, if they are able to get there.

But we see here, there are others who will not make it to the hideout place; and antichrist will make war on them. They, too, keep the commandments of God starting with having no other gods. They, too, have the testimony of Jesus Christ and believe in Him.

They are not ashamed to own Jesus, to affirm that truth of Jesus Christ. In those days, the choice will be clear: Jesus Christ or antichrist. These under fire have rejected the claim of antichrist that He is god and have embraced the truth of Christ as God. They have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

...“the testimony which Jesus bore” i.e., the truth that He taught. – **Robert Thomas**

Note: Keeping the commands of God (cf. 1 Jn. 2:3-4) and having the testimony of Christ (cf. 1 Jn. 5:12-13) are the two marks of genuine saving faith (cf. Rev. 14:12).

These keep God’s commandments, the mark of godliness common to true believers of all ages, and “hold to the testimony of Jesus, i.e., bear faithful witness to Him.

– **Merrill Unger**

Obedience to God’s Word always marks a genuine believer. – **John MacArthur**

On one side is Satan and all those that stand in opposition to Israel and the Christ. On the other side is God and the people of God who take the Word of God seriously regarding His people Israel and Jesus Christ. Those on God’s side endeavor to KEEP the commandments of God and HAVE the testimony of Jesus Christ. They hold to what Jesus taught. In short, that He is Lord and Savior, the ultimate deliverer of Israel.

Anti-Semitism and antichrist go together (cf. 1 Jn. 2:18). True believers have always demonstrated their faith by aligning themselves with the people of God in appropriate ways, consistent with Scripture (cf. Gen. 12:3, Mt. 25:31-46).

Throughout the ages, devout believers have considered themselves to be living on the threshold of the Lord’s return and have been able to detect what they sincerely believed to be signs of the times in events taking place in the world around them.

When Islam burst upon the world, for instance, it must have seemed that the time was ripe for the end-time prophecies to be fulfilled. Here was a false prophet of convincing and tenacious power and a false religion being spread with astonishing success by the power of the sword.

The same must have seemed the case when Napoleon surged up out of the crimson sea of the French Revolution. He swiftly brought order out of chaos and proceeded to redraw the map of Europe. His dealings in the Middle East, his plans to occupy Palestine and rebuild Babylon.... It must have seemed that the last days had arrived.

I can remember as a boy listening to my elders discuss the international situation. Mussolini had come to power in Italy. He campaigned in Africa, openly declaring that he intended to revive the Roman Empire. Speculation was rife that he must be the antichrist.

But on all those occasions, there was one important factor missing from the equation. [What was it?] Israel was not yet a sovereign state. Now she is, and the configuration of events mentioned earlier... surely heralds the imminent return of Christ. – **John Phillips**

The woman ISRAEL is now back in the land and has been so for 60 years. This is KEY because Israel [the woman] must be in place for last days’ events to transpire. She is in the land and anti-Semitism is mounting. This will continue to do so until the emergence of antichrist, which will eventuate into the most intense time of antichrist activity and anti-Semitism ever seen by the world. However, true converts will show their commitment to God by their support for the Jews. Commitment to Christ and commitment to Israel will be a package and are so even now for the knowledgeable believer.

In chapter 13, two beasts arise. The beast out of the sea is antichrist. The beast out of the earth is the false prophet. Both of these evil characters are empowered by Satan, the dragon. These three form a satanic trinity. Together they will control the entire world for 3 and ½ years politically, economically, and religiously.

THE UNHOLY TRINITY

Dragon = Satan (corresponding to the Father)

Beast out of the sea = Antichrist (corresponding to Christ)

Beast out of the earth = False Prophet (corresponding to the Spirit)

Satan has always wanted to be like God and attempts to imitate him at many points. For example, in this chapter, we see a “resurrection” of the antichrist. Just as in the case of Christ’s resurrection, this becomes the MAJOR “sign” to rally his followers.

Revelation 13:1 (NKJV)

1 Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name.

Some versions place the beginning of this verse, “Then I stood on the sand of the sea”, at the end of chapter 12, in effect, giving chapter 12 one more verse. Note also, that some texts instead of reading, “I stood”, read “**he stood**”, referring to the dragon, who is Satan. This is probably the preferred meaning. Satan is then pictured as being positioned to call out the one who would help him in his fanatical mission to destroy God’s people, Israel and the saints.

Beast stands for a ferocious, vicious, killing animal. As God describes the world kingdoms that would have sway over His people during the times of the Gentiles in Daniel 7, He describes them as “beasts”. They are beast-like in nature in that they attack, and viciously go after His people, Israel. Collectively, they are simply called “beast”. However the name BEAST in this chapter represents both a KING and a KINGDOM as the final form of Gentile world power. It is both a person and His empire. The one is the extension of the other and they are both “beast like” in nature towards His people. Throughout Revelation the name “beast” is used for antichrist and also his kingdom.

When people thought of Germany under Hitler, they thought of Hitler. This trend will be consummated in the Beast, who will be a truly representative person. He will not only head the revived Roman empire. He will speak for it, act for it, think for it, decide for it.

– John Phillips

Three views of the identity of the sea.

1. Gentile Masses of Humanity: One view is that the Sea represents the seething masses of Gentile humanity, the Gentile nations as pictured in Rev. 17:15.
2. The Mediterranean basin: (cf. Dan. 7:2-3) The “Great Sea” in the OT always refers to the Mediterranean Sea. There were four great empires that rose up that oppressed Israel which all had the Mediterranean essentially as their HUB. They were Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. Some therefore conclude that this pictures the beast coming out of the Revived Roman Empire associated with the Mediterranean, based on the language of Dan. 7.
3. The Abyss: However, perhaps the view that best fits the immediate context is that the sea represents the Abyss, out of which the antichrist comes according to 11:7. The antichrist’s Mediterranean connection is already in place at the beginning of the Tribulation Period. I think at this point (the middle of the Tribulation), what we see is his coming out of the Abyss, as we saw introduced in 11:7. We noted in Rev. 9 that the Abyss is located in the center of the earth.

Having seven heads: This beast has much the same description as the dragon in 12:3. Both are said to have seven heads. I think that the same reality is in view in both cases. Satan is behind these seven key world powers, and the antichrist builds on his predecessors.

These heads apparently represent seven great world powers that have oppressed Israel down through history. The antichrist builds on and is the capstone of this history of infamy.

The seven major world powers related to Israel:

1. Egypt (Israel in the womb – so to speak)
2. Assyria – N. Kingdom
3. Babylon – S. Kingdom
4. Medo/Persia
5. Greece
6. Roman (1st coming of Christ)
7. Roman Empire Revived – final form under antichrist (2nd coming of Christ)

These heads are the devil's tools throughout history, and also the building blocks, on which the antichrist will build and bring to a climax the greatest time of trouble that the Jews will ever know.

ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns: Daniel 7 mentions 10 horns in relationship to the coming antichrist in Dan. 7:7, 24 (cf. Rev. 17:12). Horns in the Bible represent power – political and military power. These will be 10 rulers who will rule with the antichrist and form the core base of his empire. In the last half of the Tribulation, this empire will eventuate to be worldwide in scope.

This 7-headed BEAST has on his heads a blasphemous name. The leaders of these oppressive nations down throughout history have defied the God of Israel and many of them took the title “lord” or “god”, such as when the Romans said “Caesar is Lord”. However, the climactic blasphemer will be the antichrist who declares himself to be god as he sits in the temple (cf. 2 Thess. 2:4, Mt. 24:15). To blaspheme means to be irreverent, to treat with contempt. There will be nothing more blasphemous than for antichrist to declare himself to be god, but he will not be the first head of state in the line of Israel's persecutors to do it.

Revelation 13:2 (NKJV)

2 Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority.

The context shows that John is now zeroing in on the last BEAST of the times of the Gentiles; namely the antichrist and his kingdom. We know this because he uses the language of Dan. 7:4-6 which speaks of the 3 kingdoms preceding the Roman Empire in these exact terms of lion, bear and leopard, which precede a 4th kingdom which is shown to be a COMPOSITE BEAST. The composite beast is a hybrid of all the oppressive kingdoms that went before it and is simply called a BEAST. It is a nondescript hybrid beast that is more ferocious than anything previous. This is in perfect accord with the prophecies of Dan. 7.

This BEAST then represents the epitome and culmination of the key oppressive Gentile powers down throughout time. Thus he is the embodiment of the lion (Babylon), the bear (Medo-Persia), and the leopard (Greece). This final kingdom will assimilate the brutish qualities of the preceding beastly kingdoms.

Leopard denotes speed of conquest.

Feet of a bear denotes sturdy strength.

Mouth of a lion denotes ability to tear to pieces and destroy.

Daniel 7:7 (NKJV)

7 “After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns.

The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority: Behind this beast – that is the antichrist and his kingdom, is the DRAGON who is Satan. The beast is satanically empowered to do what he does. Satan is the source of his power. The antichrist is ultimately just an instrument that Satan is using for his diabolical agenda.

His power is his ability to dominate.

His throne is his position as ruler over all the earth.

His great authority is the extent of rule in the lives of people. This will include authority over the whole world in the realm of economics, politics, and religion.

When you see the activity of antichrist, you see the work of Satan (cf. 2 Thess. 2:9-10).

Satan is the prince of this world, and under the sovereign control of God, he is allowed to give authority to whomever he will at this present time (cf. Lk. 4:5-7). At this point, Satan gives it all to antichrist.

Revelation 13:3 (NKJV)

3 And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast.

One of his heads, refers to the 7th head, which is the leader of the Revived Roman Empire, who is the antichrist. Some have thought this refers to the empire being revived and not the ruler of it. However, note the thought that flows out of it in 3b into verse 4 and following. This is speaking of a very definite individual, namely the beast, who is antichrist.

Some have questioned whether he really dies or just appears to die because no where else do we find Satan having the power to raise the dead, since this power belongs to God alone. Certainly God is sovereign behind all power. However, I think this is a case of your theology determining the text, instead of letting the text speak for itself.

One of the heads of the Beast was (literally) “as having been slain to death.” This is exactly the same word that was used in 5:6 of the Lamb, where it is translated “as if slain.” Since Christ died actually, it appears that Antichrist will also actually die. But his wound will be healed which can only mean restoration to life. In 11:7 he was seen as coming out of the Abyss, and that coincides with his restoration to life here. He apparently actually dies, descends to the Abyss, and returns to life on earth. No wonder the world will acclaim him. –
Charles Ryrie

Mortally wounded meaning it was fatal.

Deadly wound meaning it killed him, which is consistent with 11:7, 13:3, 12, 14, and 17:8.

The deadly wound was healed. I take it he dies and goes to the Abyss, and then in a unique “miracle”, Satan is allowed to bring him back to life. This marks a critical juncture in the career of antichrist. This will be the event that will bring the whole world to his feet. I also think that very probably this is THE LIE that Paul speaks of in 2 Thess. 2:11-12.

2 Thessalonians 2:11-12 (NKJV)

11 And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie,
12 that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

The ultimate in deception is this resurrection. It will be allowed by God as a form of judgment on those who have been rejecting His gospel truth. The deception will be very effective and essentially take in the whole world.

All the world marveled and followed the beast: Note the WHOLE world marveled. They are wowed and in awe, and they are now willing to FOLLOW him wherever he leads them. Of course his leadership takes them right off the cliff into an eternal hell.

Revelation 13:4 (NKJV)

4 So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?"

In effect, to worship the beast, will be to worship the dragon. Satan has always desired to be worshipped. He wants what rightfully belongs to God (cf. Isa. 14:14). These are a package so closely bound together that to worship the one is to worship the other.

Worship of the dragon – explicitly mentioned only here in Revelation – who empowers the beast is one and the same with worship of the beast. Both will be associated with the image worship (13:14-15), which, like all idolatry, is devil worship (cf. 1 Cor. 10:19-21).

– Robert Thomas

They marvel
They follow
They worship

Who is like the beast? They consider him incomparable. In their minds he is unique in magnificence. He is the greatest and highest. He, in their thinking, is the highest form of deity. He is seen to be almighty God. This is great blasphemy because God alone is incomparable in greatness. In fact the word HOLY means that God is separate from all else. He is completely unique. Therefore, this is the height of blasphemy against the true God (cf. Isa. 40:18, 25, 46:5).

Who is able to make war with him? They consider antichrist to be omnipotent – all powerful. In Dan. 11, we find that antichrist will worship war.

Military power will be what he worships in conjunction with himself. I think this statement here at THIS POINT is very significant in that it probably alludes to some tremendous happenings that cause the world to believe this. In view may be the overcoming of the two witnesses (cf. 11:7). To overcome these two, who have been invincible up to that point, will indeed be impressive to the world.

However, I think that right here another major event comes into play. During the time of the Tribulation, there are going to be TWO major SHOW DOWNS.

- 1) God vs. Gog (Ezek. 38-39).
- 2) God vs. antichrist (Rev. 19).

As I see it, the first takes place at about the middle of the Tribulation, and the other at the end of the Tribulation at Christ's second coming. Ezekiel 38-39 records a coming Islamic Invasion of Israel led by the great power from the North; namely Russia (cf. Ezek. 38:8). As this strong northern alliance attacks Israel it will be seen by antichrist as an attack on him because he is in covenant relationship with Israel (cf. Dan. 9:27). Therefore, antichrist will prepare to respond to this attack, but before he can get there, God will have supernaturally wiped out this northern coalition. At this point, I think antichrist will take credit for it, and the world will give him credit for it.

Antichrist will undoubtedly take credit for his own resurrection; for the killing of the two witnesses; and now for the fall of Gog and Magog. This may well explain why the whole world at this point says: "Who is able to make war with him?"

It may be that the battle of Ezekiel 38 & 39, predicting the destruction of the northern confederacy, takes place just before this [Rev. 13:4] thereby removing the threat of eastern and northern powers to his authority and reign. – **John Walvoord**

The book of Ezekiel some 65 times says "Then they shall know that I am the Lord".

Ezekiel 38:23 (NKJV)

23 Thus I will magnify Myself and sanctify Myself, and I will be known in the eyes of many nations. Then they shall know that I am the Lord." ' "

The issue in the day of the Lord judgment will be the LORDSHIP OF THE GOD OF ISRAEL (cf. Isa. 40-48). It will be the Lordship of Jesus Christ versus the lordship of antichrist. Many will come to recognize the LORDSHIP of the true God of the Bible through this, but still most of the world will embrace antichrist as Lord!

Revelation 13:5 (NKJV)

5 And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months.

Note that antichrist has no power of his own, rather it is GIVEN to him. Is it given to him by God or Satan? Clearly the limiting of his time to 42 months is of God. Satan would not limit him. In fact, Satan is angry because he knows his time is short (cf. Rev. 12:12).

A mouth: The antichrist will come equipped with a MOUTH. His mouth will be a primary instrument in all of his diabolical accomplishments. He will be a great orator who is able to sway the masses with his speech, much like Hitler who mesmerized people with what he said.

Speaking great things: Four times in Daniel 7, it says he will speak "pompous words" (cf. Dan. 7:8, 11, 20, 25). He will be a BIG TALKER. What he says will be filled with pride and grandeur. It will be persuasive and impressive. He will be charismatic beyond comprehension and he will sway the world. He will talk so BIG as to make himself out to be GOD ALMIGHTY! Now that is "speaking great things".

Blasphemies: To blaspheme means to "speak injuriously". It means to speak irreverently of God. It is to put self up and God down. It is to desecrate the holy God of the Bible.

and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. He will be allowed to continue in this vein for 42 months which is 3 and ½ years. This is the time of the great tribulation, which is the worst time the world will ever know (Mt. 24:21).

Here is an example of the interweaving of the forces that go to make up events – God controls all, yet Satan controls the Beast, who, in turn acts on his own in blaspheming.

– **Charles Ryrie**

Revelation 13:6 (NKJV)

6 Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His

tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven.

He has no respect for the one true living God. He insults, offends, is totally irreverent with regard to Him. There is no doubt Who he ultimately has a problem with and it is GOD!

The Jews had such high regard for the name of God that they would not even use His most sacred name (*Yahweh*), for fear that they might use it in an irreverent way.

Instead they substituted what they considered the lesser name of *Adonai*. They did this with such frequency that eventually it was lost as to how to even properly pronounce *Yahweh*. This thinking was out of balance, but it does illustrate just how seriously they took the command not to use God's holy name in vain.

To blaspheme His name: This is defamation of character. Antichrist will seek to put down the PERSON of God, to demean and defame Him. He will undoubtedly speak of Him in vulgar and profane terms that are totally unmentionable. Note he will not deny God's existence, but rather will blaspheme Him.

Satan in a sense must know his place. At this point he knows he just got kicked out of heaven (12:9-10); he knows his time is short (12:12). Apparently antichrist does not know this. He (in his pride-clouded mind) actually thinks he can pull this off indefinitely (cf. Isa. 14:14, 2 Thess. 2:4). After all, he is risen from the dead and he thinks he is Lord. The whole world sees him as invincible and God allows him to have his way and go on in this delusion for 3 and ½ years, but then he comes to his end.

His tabernacle: Tabernacle means "dwelling place" referring to where God dwells in heaven. He will undoubtedly curse and express a complete frontal challenge to the God who lives in heaven.

And those who dwell in heaven. Again, it is amazing to me that he doesn't outright deny these realities, but rather blasphemes them. Of course, part of his blasphemy, may well be that he denies the reality to which he speaks. But if so, why would you blaspheme that which does not exist? That is like the evolutionist who in the heat of debate says "I swear to God, there is no God". In fact, the language of both Daniel and Revelation suggests that antichrist does not DENY these realities, rather he blasphemes them (cf. Ps. 2:2-3, Rev. 6:15-17).

They hate those who dwell in heaven. The statement is general. Antichrist is at enmity with the God of heaven and all those associated with Him, whether they be saints or angels.

Blasphemy and pride are a package. When you are this full of yourself, you think you can do whatever you want and no one can stop you, not even God. Pride always thinks independently of God. Pride always has an inflated view of self that in reality is not true. Pride is a delusion because you really don't see how weak and vulnerable you are (cf. Prov. 16:18).

Revelation 13:7 (NKJV)

7 It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.

Note that four times in verses 5 and 7, we find that antichrist is given these things. He operates on a permissive basis from God, and on an empowered basis from Satan. He will claim that he is a totally self-made man (cf. Jn. 5:43), but the fact is all this is GIVEN TO HIM.

Antichrist declares war on the saints, referring to those who become believers in Jesus Christ during the Tribulation Period. Saint means one who is SET APART for God. These people, instead of

worshipping antichrist, will be worshipers of Jesus Christ. Antichrist will call for their death and systematically do everything in his power to eliminate them.

Overcome them: He will be allowed to kill them in mass. Some will survive, but most won't. Those Jews that make it to the special place of refuge in 12:14 will be protected by God, but outside of that context, antichrist will have his way with most Christians. They will be slaughtered and killed en masse (cf. Rev. 13:15).

authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. The extent of his authority is GLOBAL at this point. He will literally govern the entire world. There will be no safe haven for Christians, such as a United States of America. This is the time of Satan's ONE WORLD ORDER (cf. Dan. 7:23).

Have you ever asked yourself about Adolph Hitler? How could one man destroy the whole of Europe? How could one man win the whole loyalty of a highly educated, brilliant, intelligent, civilization like Germany?

Answer: He couldn't – unless there were hundreds of thousands of Hitlers all around him who shared his Satanic purposes. ... there were not just thousands, but tens of thousands of Hitlers all over Germany who believed with all their hearts everything that he believed, who hated God and God's people Israel just like he did. You know he couldn't have done that all by himself. Impossible! Impossible!

He was the most spectacular, visible manifestation of something we never could have believed possible in the hearts and minds of hundreds of thousands of German people. That's how the antichrist can personally appear and do all the things this book says he will do. [cf. 1 Jn. 2:18] – **John Whitcomb**

Revelation 13:8 (NKJV)

8 All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Earth-dwellers is used ten times in Revelation and without exception always refers to unbelievers. They are committed to this world and the things of this life and they will do whatever to maintain that status, even if it means worshipping the beast. All in the category of "earth dwellers" will worship him. The whole world is now worshipping the beast.

These people are not in the book of life, they are not saved, they do not have eternal life. Those who worship the beast show that they will never be saved. Those who take the mark of the beast clearly cannot be saved (Rev. 14:9-11). Only those who have their name written in the Lamb's book of life will enter into God's eternal kingdom (Rev. 20:15). The phrase "book of life" occurs 7 times in Revelation (3:5, 13:8, 17:8, 20:12, 15, 21:27, 22:19) and only once elsewhere in the N.T. in Phil. 4:3.

The current non-appearance of their names in the Book of Life could be because they have never been there or because they were at there at one time, but have been removed because of disbelief and consequent disobedience. The discussion of removal of names from the book of life at 3:5 opts for the latter of these alternatives. Because the Lamb's death for all men, the simplest explanation appears to be that the names of all were originally in the book. ... This book is the Lamb's ...and the earth-dwellers have chosen to worship the beast instead of the Lamb. This is why their names have been permanently removed from the book. – **Robert Thomas**

There is a question about this verse in reference to the phrase "from the foundation of the world". The reference of the words *from the foundation of the world* is uncertain; they can be linked with the slaying of the Lamb....or with the writing of the saint's names in the book of life... Both meanings are equally true; for the former cf. 1 Pet. 1:19-20 for the latter Eph. 1:4.

The difficulty is settled for most by an appeal to 17:8 where almost identical language is used, connecting the phrase with the writing in the book. - **New Bible commentary**

Note: Verse 8 emphasizes the Sovereignty of God, but verse 9 emphasizes human responsibility. These two emphases are consistently held in tension in the Bible.

Revelation 13:9 (NKJV)

9 If anyone has an ear, let him hear.

This is a solemn statement of warning. People had better heed this. This is deadly serious! Christ repeatedly stated this phrase after saying something of great import in the Gospels that required serious attention. People that get saved start by LISTENING. So many turn a deaf ear to the things of God and therefore will never be saved (cf. Rom. 10:17, Acts 16:14, 17:11, 1 Thess. 2:13, Jn. 10:27, Heb. 3:7-8).

There is debate over whether this statement relates to what has just been said, or to what is going to be said in verse 10. Or is it just a general statement that takes into account the context of the whole book? Some argue that consistently in the Gospels, a statement of this nature comes at the end of Christ's teaching, and therefore the emphasis here is to apply it to what has already been shared in the preceding verses. Others say the immediate context here concerns the persecution and martyring of the saints, and the proverbial wording that follows in verse 10, makes it clear that the application of verse 9 is what follows, as it emphasizes what their attitude of response should be.

All those finding themselves in this context better listen up and take seriously what is in view. Worship of antichrist comes with an eternal price tag. Those who do this will not have their name in the book of life. That is sobering. Eternity is in the balance. On the other hand, for those who commit to Christ, verse 10 goes on to show that the cost will be extreme persecution or martyrdom; and they will need to accept whatever the sovereign will of God is for them. Therefore, I would take it as a general statement, that has application for "anyone" considering the issues related to whether or not to worship the antichrist.

Note in chapters 1-3 the consistent refrain seven times was, "**He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.**" (Cf. 2:7, 11, 17, 29, 3:6, 13, 22). In contrast this verse related to the middle of the Tribulation Period simply says: "If anyone has an ear, let him hear." This is a significant argument from silence that the church is not present during this period of time. Also note that verse 7 speaks of war on the saints generally, but says nothing about the churches.

Revelation 13:10 (NKJV)

10 He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

The language of this verse is quite similar to what is found in Jer. 15:2 and 43:11.

Some believe that this verse is stressing the principle of retribution. The thinking then is that this reality of coming retribution for their persecutors will encourage the saints to endure and be faithful in the midst of this terrible persecution.

However, there is another view. Robert Thomas says the best rendering for the verse is this: "if anyone is for captivity, into captivity he departs; if anyone is to be killed by the sword, [it is necessary for] him to be killed by the sword".

The problem with this line of thought [retribution] is that it does not harmonize with the immediate context. The tone in this part is the beast's vicious war against the saints, with no reference to the saints' eventual victory until 14:1-5. [the] view, resting on the Greek text

as printed above, has v. 10 warning the saints of the impending persecution by the beast and urging them to submit to divine providence... It stresses the inevitability of persecution and death for the faithful....It invites the faithful to recognize that the actions of this false Christ have been decreed by God.... This meaning also coincides with the emphasis on divine providence in the Jeremiah passages to which John alludes in v. 10 (Jer. 15:2, 43:11).

– **Robert Thomas**

The conclusion then, according to the Thomas view (which is where I would lean), is that those who find themselves in this situation need to submit to what has been ordained for them. Some will be taken captivity and some will die.

This is the patience and the faith of the saints.

Their willingness to ENDURE whatever persecution comes is a testament to their genuine saving faith (cf. Mt. 10:38-39). This attitude of submission and resignation shows their confidence in the Sovereignty of God. The emphasis on God's sovereignty is strong here and the truly faithful rest in that reality as seen in their being willing to go through and endure whatever they are called to endure (cf. 1 Pet. 4:19). The truth of God's sovereignty is a tremendous comfort in times of persecution and tribulation (cf. Rom. 8).

Revelation 13:11 (NKJV)

11 Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon.

In 13:1, John saw a beast rising up out of the sea which is very possibly speaking of the Abyss out of which the antichrist comes as he is brought back to life. Now he sees ANOTHER beast, which means another of the same kind. This beast is similar in type to the first beast mentioned, but he is also distinct. Instead of coming out of the sea, he comes out of the earth.

He had two horns like a lamb: This is the only place in Revelation where the word lamb is used in reference to anyone else other than the Lord Jesus. The emphasis here is on antichrist's deceptive nature that imitates the realities of the real Christ.

Two horns: Lambs have two little bumps which are here called horns. They don't come off threatening or dangerous. Horns in the Bible are consistently a picture of power, often of political or military power. However, there is no CROWN in view, so the description evidently speaks of RELIGIOUS power that is "lamb-like" in character.

This also suggests that this beast comes in a very deceptive manner, that is gentle as a lamb. He probably will be winsome, likeable, and mild in appearance, at least in the beginning (cf. Mt. 7:15). This in effect will be the last and the greatest of all false prophets who come in sheep's clothing. He will come off in character like a kinder/gentler person than the antichrist. Some believe that this man may have been the major leader in the apostate harlot religion of Rev. 17 in the first half of the Tribulation, but now in the second half gives all of his cunning and deceptive influence over to promoting the antichrist.

Antichrist's leadership is mainly related to political and military leadership. This false prophet will specialize in RELIGION, and more specifically, in promoting the religion of antichrist. His activity is largely RELIGIOUS, because he is called THE FALSE PROPHET in 16:13, 19:20, and 20:10. Being called the false prophet, along with his promotion of WORSHIPPING the antichrist in chapter 13, makes it clear that his activity is largely religious.

Spoke like a dragon. He has the appearance of a lamb, but his words give him away to those who have any discernment. His speech betrays his true character. He acts like a lamb, but he speaks like

the devil. The devil is a liar, a destroyer of God's people, and a promoter of idolatry. This will define his speech.

Revelation 13:12 (NKJV)

12 And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

This second beast, who is the false prophet, is also empowered by Satan, but his ROLE is to promote the antichrist. Note in the PRESENCE of antichrist, he has great authority to act on behalf of the antichrist. Evidently he will give the credit and glory to antichrist, claiming his power to do these things comes from him; and therefore the people ought to worship antichrist.

Causes: Either this word or an equivalent of it is used 8 times in this section. He is the mover and shaker of the hour. He is the promoter and enforcer for antichrist. In effect, he is the MINISTER OF RELIGION OF AND FOR ANTICHRIST. In particular, he influences "earth dwellers" (unsaved people) to WORSHIP antichrist. This is all about worship. Really when you get down to it, life is all about worship. It is brought out in stark contrasts at this climactic point in history, but it is always the case (cf. Jn. 4:23-24). At this juncture, in the DAY OF THE LORD, the issue will be: Are you going to worship the REAL CHRIST or antichrist?

Note the emphasis of promoting antichrist worship is closely tied to the antichrist's miraculous restoration from a deadly wound. Again we see this imitating and counterfeiting the resurrection of Jesus. And we see here the False Prophet copying the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit points people to Christ.

The False Prophet points people to antichrist.

The Holy Spirit is the instrument of divine revelation.

The False Prophet is the instrument of satanic revelation.

The Holy Spirit seals believers.

The False Prophet calls for the sealing MARK of antichrist.

The Holy Spirit builds the family of God.

The False Prophet builds the empire of antichrist.

The Holy Spirit enlightens people with truth.

The False Prophet deceives people with Satanic miracles.

Just as the Holy Spirit does not draw attention or promote himself (Jn. 16:7-15), so this false prophet's role will be in reference to the antichrist. He is the member of the unholy trinity that corresponds to the Holy Spirit in type, as far as activity.

Revelation 13:13 (NKJV)

13 He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men.

This false prophet will exercise Satanic/demonic power. He will be a signs and wonders guy – impressive to say the least. God has power, but so does Satan, as allowed by God. Simply because something supernatural happens, does not automatically mean it is of God. Satan can do miracles, too (cf. Ex. 7), but he does them to deceive.

God's miracles are always in accordance with Scriptural truth. Miracles in the Bible always were in accord with previous REVELATION. When Jesus did miracles, they were a fulfillment, and built on previous revelation in the O.T. True miracles from God never contradict His Truth, but rather are in harmony with the Word. However, when antichrist comes he will simply build on himself, and the same goes for the false prophet (cf. Jn. 5:43). Yes, he will do miracles, but they will not be tied to anything other than a self agenda (cf. 2 Thess. 2:9-12, 2 Tim. 3:7-8, 2 Cor. 11:13-15).

Satan, antichrist, and the false prophet are heavy into religion. In the end, atheism is not going to carry the day. The world will be full of people buying into the supernatural and specifically what the false prophet is promoting through signs and wonders, but without a reference; that is without a legitimate tie to Scripture.

Makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. Now that is impressive. That has not happened often. It happened under the miraculous ministry of Elijah (cf. 1 Kings 18). Also the ministry of the two witnesses involved fire (cf. Rev. 11:5-6). Evidently we again see a copying of the ministry of the Spirit, as he worked through the two witnesses. Undoubtedly this will be done to try and counter and even upstage what the two witnesses had done. They breathed out fire, but now the false prophet causes fire to come down from heaven. God will allow this level of deception as a form of judgment on those who refused to believe His truth (cf. 2 Thess. 2).

Revelation 13:14 (NKJV)

14 And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived.

The fact is this man is a deceiver. The people of the earth will BUY what he says. They actually will believe his message and buy into his promotion of antichrist as almighty God because of the "miracles" he is able to pull off. Once again we note the emphasis that he does these things "in the sight of the beast", evidently giving the glory to antichrist for making them happen. In conjunction with this miraculous power, by which he deceives the world, he uses his influence to then instruct the people to make AN IMAGE to the beast and again it is tied to this event where the antichrist was killed and came back to life.

This is the first of 10 references to this image in Revelation (cf. 13:15, - 3 times; 14:9, 11, 15:2, 16:2, 19:20, 20:4).

Wounded by the sword. We are not given specific details, but somehow a weapon of war was evidently used to kill antichrist and he was brought back to life. Perhaps he was assassinated as many think will be the case, but we don't know the details. However, worship of him is promoted in large part because of this event (cf. Mt. 24:24).

Revelation 13:15 (NKJV)

15 He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

The false prophet is then granted to give life to this image. All kinds of supernatural and strange things are allowed to happen. It is deception on a grand scale. Now we have an idol that in effect is given life.

The word for breath is *pneuma* ("spirit"). This could indicate a supernatural miracle (performed by the power of Satan) that actually gives life to the image.

– Charles Ryrie

Up to this time, the two witnesses have been ministering at the temple in Jerusalem, but “the beast” will slay them and take over the temple. When God raises the two witnesses from the dead and takes them to heaven, the false prophet will answer that challenge by giving life to the image of the beast. – **Warren Wiersbe**

We know that antichrist will himself go into the temple and declare himself to be God (2 Thess. 2:4). However, some surmise that possibly when he is not able to be there, this image of himself will be in that place of worship. It will thus serve as a living idol of his image (cf. Mt. 24:15). This idol not only moves, but also speaks!

The period of the times of the Gentiles in Babylon began with forced worship of an image set up by Nebuchadnezzar as found in Dan. 3. The times of the Gentiles will close in similar fashion, but this time on a UNIVERSAL SCALE. However, just as Daniel’s three friends refused to worship the image, so also will be the response of true believers in the time of Great Tribulation.

Revelation 13:16 (NKJV)

16 He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads,

The subject is the false prophet. He now causes all categories of people, no matter their status or station in life, to go and receive a mark either on their right hand or their forehead. This is the ULTIMATE IDENTIFICATION SYSTEM by which antichrist will control people on a worldwide scale.

The word “mark” means “an impress made by a stamp,” like a brand used on slaves and animals. People will become slaves of the Beast and have the identifying mark of their slavery. Without it they cannot buy or sell. – **Charles Ryrie**

Worship of the beast and his image is always associated with receiving his mark as v. 16 ...indicate(s). Receiving the mark is impossible without the act of worship (cf. 14:9, 11; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4). – **Robert Thomas**

This MARK then becomes a symbol of worshipping loyalty to this worldwide leader. It will be visible and non-removable; and all who receive it will be lost forever (Rev. 14:9-11).

Revelation 13:17 (NKJV)

17 and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

No one can buy or sell without it. This will be economic warfare. How will people feed their families or get even the basics of life? Well, they will have to go down to the local center and get the MARK! All God’s people will go into hiding. This will become pure *survival level* for those who are true believers. But alas, most won’t survive!

This is constant pressure to become a worshiper of the beast, because receiving the mark and worshipping the beast are inseparable commitments. – **Robert Thomas**

The mark

The name of the beast

The number of his name

These three all represent essentially the same thing, namely worshipful allegiance to the beast. However, the question remains as to whether they actually represent three separate things, or just one thing expressed in three different ways. There is some mystery here. Whatever is in view, they

all essentially relate to this mark either on the right hand or the forehead. Apparently the beast's name will be revealed in connection with some type of numerical code.

Revelation 13:18 (NKJV)

18 Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666.

Whole books have been written trying to explain what this entails. The fact is it remains to be seen exactly what is in view, but consider the following. Many have pointed out that 6 is man's number. For example, man was created on the 6th day. On the other hand, seven is God's number in the sense that in the Bible, and in the book of Revelation in particular, the number seven consistently represents completion or perfection. Six is always short of seven. The antichrist, no matter how great his power, is still just a six. He is still just a man empowered by Satan. He is not God. 666 may be an emphatic emphasis such as "holy, holy, holy" in relation to God. In the case of antichrist it is a negative. He comes, "short, short, short. He is just 666.

Others suggest that 666 relates to the evil trinity which shows that each one of them comes short of the glory of God. They imitate the Godhead, but they fall short.

However, more than this seems to be in view. In ancient times, the letters of alphabet also served for numbers. Even in our language, Roman numeral 5 is a V and Roman numeral 10 is an X, while L equals 50, and C equals 100, etc. So it was in both the Greek and Hebrew languages, each letter had a number equivalent. Therefore, it appears that there is a RIDDLE here using numerical equivalents that correspond to the letters of a man's name, and totaled up, they equal 666.

In this passage whatever the personal name of the Antichrist will be, if his name is spelled out in Hebrew characters [or perhaps Greek] the numerical value of his name will be 666. So this is the number that will be put on the worshipers of Antichrist. Since a number of different calculations can equal 666 it is impossible to figure the name out in advance. But when he does appear, whatever his personal name will be, it will equal 666. Those who are wise (verse 18) at that time will be able to point him out in advance. - **Arnold Fruchtenbaum**

The better part of wisdom is to be content that the identification is not yet available, but will be when the future false Christ ascends to his throne. ...Through the God-given ability, they will be able to unravel the mystery of the number. Daniel 12:10 speaks of this special understanding also. – **Robert Thomas**

If you ever do figure out who the Antichrist is, then I've got bad news for you – you've been left behind! -**Mark Hitchcock**

Believers...before the time of the Rapture or the Tribulation, need not be superstitious about the number 666. If our address, phone number, or zip code includes this number, we do not need to be afraid that some satanic or mystical power will attach itself to us.

While we recognize that many occultists and Satanists are attracted to 666 because of its relation to future evil, the number itself does not contain mystical powers or influence. To believe that it does would mean that a believer has fallen prey to superstition. - **Mark Hitchcock and Thomas Ice**

In the days of the Roman Empire, a citizen yearly had to offer a pinch of incense on a pagan altar as a part of emperor worship. That was all, just a pinch of salt, just once a year. Yet, the true Christians refused to worship Caesar as Lord in this way, instead insisting that Jesus alone was their Lord. In a coming day, the last great Caesar of the times of the Gentiles will make a simple DEMAND. Take

my mark or face the death penalty. Take my mark or you can't buy or sell. All he will ask is a simple worshipful allegiance signified by a mark. The masses will follow and worship him under the deceptive leadership of the false prophet.

Revelation predicts a coming day of unparalleled GLOBALISM in which under the umbrella of one man the whole world will share in a one world government, economy, and religion.

The way is being prepared and the spirit of antichrist and apostasy will continue to build until the Rapture. Perhaps today! One of the chief Biblical indicators that we are moving to that point rapidly is the accelerating reality of GLOBALIZATION!

We now come to Chapter 14. The first five verses present a thematic contrast to the oppressive rule of antichrist in chapter 13. Instead of seeing antichrist, we now jump ahead to see the LAMB and His followers. It is as if in the midst of this terrible tribulation CONTEXT, we are given encouragement to see that in the end the Lamb is found standing on Mount Zion triumphant and His faithful followers are with Him. That in a nut shell is the bold relief emphasis in contrast to GLOBALIZATION under antichrist in chapter 13. Chapter 14 gives us a series of snap shots showing us where it is all going both in terms of antichrist and his followers, and in terms of Christ and His followers.

Revelation 14:1 (NKJV)

1 Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads.

John now sees a LAMB. He had been seeing the antichrist and the false prophet in chapter 13. They both were described as BEASTS because of their cruel nature and ferocious treatment of God's people. Now in contrast to that scene he sees a LAMB who is the Lord Jesus Christ. LAMB emphasizes first and foremost the sacrifice Christ made which is the basis for relationship with Him. He is the sacrificial Lamb who died for the sins of the world (Jn. 1:29). Lamb also pictures gentleness, and dealing with His people in grace. No more will God's people be brutally treated by the BEASTLY leaders of this world, but from this time on, they are led by the LAMB.

Standing on Mount Zion: Does this speak of the earthly Mount Zion as in Ps. 2:6 or of the Heavenly Mount Zion spoken of in Heb. 12:22? There is no easy answer. Good scholars are divided on which is the proper view. Are the 144,000 seen as martyrs who are now in heaven, or are they seen as survivors of the Tribulation who are now in Jerusalem on Mount Zion with Christ? Again, no uniform answer is given.

There are good arguments for both views. The important thing to note is that the 144,000 are a special category of redeemed Jews who are now WITH CHRIST either in the realm of heaven or at Jerusalem in the context of the millennial reign. The 144,000 were introduced in chapter 7 as being 12,000 from the 12 tribes (cf. 7:3-4, 9). We believe this to be the very same group in chapter 14.

The seal of protection in chapter 7 seems to be from the judgments of God. Some think this argues that they will be preserved through the Tribulation.

Others argue that they are protected only from the particular judgments of God mentioned in chapter 7, as they serve as witnesses, but that later they may be martyred when antichrist is allowed to make war against God's people (cf. 12:13, 13:7, 20:4). In chapter 7 we see the 144,000 in the throes of the Tribulation, here we now see them with Christ on Mount Zion. In the end, all 144,000 are found standing with Christ. He has lost none of them along the way. In contrast to the condemned who took the mark of the beast, these have the Father's name written on their foreheads.

Revelation 14:2 (NKJV)

2 And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps.

Now John hears a voice from heaven, a very powerful and loud voice with harps playing in the background.

Revelation 14:3 (NKJV)

3 They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth.

These sing a new song which signifies a new occasion of God's deliverance for which joyful praise is expressed to God in SONG. Certainly the song is in the context of celebrating God's redemption.

Bring the Lamb into the picture, and immediately there is song! The Lord has an amazing ability to make His people happy. When we are filled with the Spirit we sing! (Ps. 40:2-3, Eph. 5:18-19). – **John Phillips**

We are not told the identity of these singers. Some suggest that since they are singing before the 4 living creatures and the elders, they are not the 144,000. Other suggestions include: 1) An angelic choir, 2) The martyred multitude in heaven, or 3) The 144,000. But it is not clearly spelled out as to who these singers are. However, we are told that only the 144,000 can learn this song. This is a SPECIAL SONG of praise that is ultimately intended for the 144,000 to sing. They are seen to be an exclusive class of people, and in this case have SPECIAL MUSIC unique to them. Note the emphasis on the fact that they have been redeemed. This new song evidently underscores their redemption in an extraordinary way.

From chapter 7 we believe the CONTEXT emphasizes these 144,000 will be a special Jewish witness for God during the time of the Tribulation. We find their commitment to Christ is of the highest standard, even when this is happening in the time of the greatest oppression God's people will ever know. Their high level of commitment is matched with high honor.

Revelation 14:4 (NKJV)

4 These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.

Not defiled: This does not suggest that there is something dirty or unclean about marriage (cf. Heb. 13:4). The context here suggests a special calling to celibacy such as Paul emphasized in 1 Cor. 7:7. This will be a special context (The Tribulation) and these will have a unique calling in that framework where they will serve without distraction – a calling to which they will be faithful (cf. Jer. 16:1-4, Joel. 2:16, 1 Cor. 7:29, 32). These will be completely sold out to the Lamb as characterized by FOLLOWING THE LAMB wherever He leads them, which may include martyrdom for them.

Redeemed from among men. They are those purchased and set free from sin by the Lamb.

Firstfruits in the Scriptures can refer to one of two things.

- 1) It can refer to an initial harvest which is symbolic of a greater harvest to follow. In this case it would refer to the initial 144,000 Jews who were saved, but that a greater harvest of souls would follow them in the Tribulation and in the Millennium (cf. chapter 7).

- 2) It can also refer to a sacrificial offering that stands by itself, emphasizing the **QUALITY** of a wholly consecrated sacrifice, without emphasizing that more will follow. The firstfruits in this case would show the superiority of this group in terms of quality of service to God. They will be the choicest and finest of God's servants.

A case can be made for either view or perhaps a combination of both.

Revelation 14:5 (NKJV)

5 And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.

Their mouths are faithful to the Lord. They in no way share in the falsehood of the false religion of antichrist. They are true in their commitment to Christ which is manifest in their testimony – in what they say (cf. Mt. 12:34-35). Here is a hint that their special calling relates to their mouth. They are verbal witnesses for the Lord and they are absolutely faithful in that calling.

Without fault: Does this mean they are practically perfect – that they never do anything wrong? No! We have already seen (twice) in verse 3 and again in verse 4 that these have been redeemed. This means they too were sinners who were bought and cleansed by the Lamb. However, it is possible by the grace of God to live a high standard of holiness, that in effect God characterizes one as faultless. We are exhorted to live in such a way as to be “blameless” (cf. Rom. 12:1-2, Phil. 2:15, 1 Thess. 5:23, 2 Pet. 3:14).

Note: The last phrase of verse 5 (“before the throne of God”) is not in some manuscripts.

Revelation 14:6 (NKJV)

6 Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—

This is an extraordinary time filled with supernatural activity of all kinds. Certainly no one will have the excuse that they didn't hear! This is unique in the ministry of angels. No where else in the Bible do we find angels actually preaching the gospel. At this point God will employ even an angel in this task to canvass the world one last time, in effect crying out that people might even at this last moment respond. I take it this is right close to the time of the **MARK OF THE BEAST** where choices will be made that will have eternal consequences (cf. 2 Pet. 3:9).

Everlasting Gospel: This is the eternal good news. It is the Gospel in the fullest sense of the word.

Of course, there is only one gospel – the good news of salvation through faith in Christ. But there are different emphases in different dispensations. During the Great Tribulation, the gospel will seek to turn men away from worship of the beast and prepare them for Christ's kingdom on earth. – **William MacDonald**

This gospel, I take it, is full orb'd in the sense, it undoubtedly includes the person and work of Christ in contrast to antichrist, but the context here also implies that people can still get right with God. This in effect is the **LAST CALL** for people to respond to the Gospel!

This Gospel says in effect that God is about to bring down the final crushing judgment once and for all on the world, which is **GOOD NEWS** to the people of God (cf. Ps. 2:6-9). The everlasting Gospel is that God triumphs forever. It is eternal victory through Jesus Christ our Lord (cf. 1 Cor. 15:57, Rev. 19:5-6). Note the emphasis on the fact that this message is going out to **ALL** peoples of the world (cf. Mt. 24:14).

Revelation 14:7 (NKJV)

7 saying with a loud voice, “Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.”

Loud voice: This is an urgent warning. The warning is BLARINGLY LOUD at this point. People will take the mark of the beast, only going against the grain of all these warnings. When these people find themselves in hell, they will never be able to say that God didn't give them ample warning.

Fear God: Meaning to reverence God. This calls for a disposition of heart that is in keeping with repentance. It is a holy respect for God (cf. Prov. 1:7).

Give glory to Him: To honor and exalt Him. It is to properly recognize Him for WHO He is.

To fear God and give Him glory is an idiom for repentance. And to worship God the Creator certainly implies a believing response to the gospel. – **Ed Hindson**

No longer will it be preached that judgment day is coming (cf. Acts 17:30-31). The day has now come!

Worship Him: To worship means to “bow before”. It is to personally acknowledge Him as the supreme higher power versus antichrist. To fear, give glory, and worship, are all descriptive terms that, in reality, define the NATURE OF SAVING FAITH. They define the disposition of the heart that is necessary in saving faith for salvation.

The great ground of appeal calling for this response is CREATION! Worship the creator of all these things, who has revealed Himself through His people, Israel. The one true God is the CREATOR God. This is the great foundational truth on which all else builds (cf. Acts 14:15, 17:24, Heb. 11:3, Rev. 4:11, 10:6).

In chapter 14 we are given a series of “snapshots” related to the culmination of the Tribulation period, where God's judgment of the world comes to climactic conclusion. Various angels are used to introduce these snapshots.

The announcement of each angel builds upon the message of his predecessor, implying a consequence of that message. In this instance, the declaration of the fall of Babylon intimates a rejection of the everlasting gospel just preached.

– **Robert Thomas**

Revelation 14:8 (NKJV)

8 And another angel followed, saying, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.”

14:8 is a summary statement of the conclusion of the matter. It prophetically anticipates what is spelled out in more detail in Rev. 16-18. This verse is very concentrated. This is the bottom line of where world history, regarding the times of the Gentiles, is going.

This topic of Babylon is one of the MAJOR themes in the Bible. Beginning in Genesis 10 where Nimrod is evidently the wicked leader behind the building of Babel, and concluding in Revelation 17-18, the SUBJECT of Babylon permeates the history of the world.

The first time something or someone is mentioned in the Bible is very significant. Usually the key ideas related to it are there established and the rest of the Scriptures then build upon it in a progressive manner. So is the case with Babylon.

In Genesis, Babylon is Idealized (Gen. 10).

In the Prophets, Babylon is Prophesied (Isa. 13-14, 47, Jer. 50-51, Zech. 5).

In Daniel, Babylon is Imperialized (Dan. 1-5).

In Revelation, Babylon is Globalized (Rev. 14, 16-18).

Key prophetic texts on Babylon include: Isa. 13-14, Jer. 50-51, and Rev. 17-18.

In all of these contexts, there is a SYSTEM connected to a CITY! The idea behind it is always UNITY of false religion and government, in unified rebellion to God. This concept of UNIFIED REBELLION is always behind Babylon from Genesis through Revelation. This is the BIG IDEA.

This whole SYSTEM goes back to Genesis 10. The city of Babylon is the mother of all false religion. The Babylonian mystery religions are the fountainhead of all false religion in the world. Babylon is the mother of all UNIFIED REBELLION, in the sense of organized rebellion that combines false religion and government.

The city of Babylon is the catalyst behind this whole thing. This city will again (in my view) come into prominence in the last days and will be the center for the greatest UNIFIED REBELLION ever seen in the world.

Rev. 17 speaks of a great harlot representing all false RELIGION spawned by Babylon that will be ECUMENICALLY UNITED and in league with the beast. At the midpoint of the Tribulation, Antichrist will destroy this ecumenical whore and replace her with the final form of this Babylonian system, which will combine worship of antichrist and commerce as seen in Rev. 18 (cf. Rev. 13). So we see a BABYLONIAN system that is progressive down through history, and will culminate in the worship of antichrist. The catalyst for this system is the CITY OF BABYLON on the Euphrates which will again come into prominence in the last days (cf. Zech. 5:5-11). The final form of the Roman Empire is also the culmination of the Babylonian system as they merge together in the climax of the times of the Gentiles. The "Times of the Gentiles" began with Babylon and ends with Babylon.

After the flood, the first outbreak of evil in the world occurred at Babylon. Everything will come full circle. The world's first capital city will be the place of its final city, Babylon. I believe this means that, in the end times, Babylon will become the world capital of an evil world economic system run by Antichrist.

- **Mark Hitchcock** – Second Coming of Babylon , pg. 99

Revelation has 404 verses. 44 of those verses speak of Babylon which amounts to 11 percent of the book. Obviously this place has a major emphasis in relation to the climax of human history, as we know it.

...I believe that just as the word "Israel" always refers to literal Israel in the Bible, so also does the word "Babylon" always refers to literal Babylon. - **Thomas Ice**

To be consistent with a literal interpretation, the straight forward way to take Babylon is to understand it as the city of Babylon, unless there is a compelling reason not to. The proper way to interpret prophecy is to take it at face value, unless there is some reason in the text itself to take it another way. For example in 11:8, Jerusalem is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt. Well, in that case God makes it very clear he is using figurative language to describe the corrupt condition of Jerusalem. However, without this type of qualifier, it seems to me we should just stay with the plain straight forward understanding of the text. We should not be trying to make it fit with the current headlines.

There is a lot of Scripture on Babylon from Genesis to Revelation and I take it that it consistently means Babylon. Jerusalem is the most mentioned city in the Bible, being named about 800 times. The next most mentioned city is Babylon, named about 300 times.

Revelation is filled with the names of many other geographical places such as Ephesus, Philadelphia, Patmos, Armageddon, etc. The one time John identifies a place with symbolic language, he makes it clear that this is what he is doing as found in 11:8. Note the literal references to the Euphrates, on which Babylon resides (cf. 9:14, 16:12). If the Euphrates is to be taken literally, we should also take Babylon literally. Many of the OT prophesies that relate to Babylon have not been fulfilled. Revelation is like the grand central station where all prophesy flows and finds ultimate fulfillment. The prophesies that speak of Babylon completely destroyed forever in the same fashion as Sodom and Gomorrah have yet to be fulfilled (cf. Jer. 50-51).

The main traits that define Babylon...

Unified rebellion.

A system that combines Religion and Government.

Man-centered Idolatry.

Sorcery – Occult practices.

Pride.

Luxury – Pleasure tied to Commerce.

Immorality.

Cruelty to God's people.

Reputation of Greatness.

Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city: Note the DOUBLE emphasis on FALLEN! This system was considered invincible by the world (cf. 13:4).

It is described as "great" six times in the Apocalypse (14:8, 16:19, 17:5, 18:2, 10, 21). This is the title Nebuchadnezzar, in his pride and arrogance gave to the literal OT Babylon (cf. Dan. 4:30). – **Robert Thomas**

because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication:

Here is the stated REASON for the great FALL of this great city. The scope of her influence was world wide (cf. Rev. 13).

...she exercised coercive power over earth's inhabitants in causing them to choose a path that they in no way would have chosen without her influence. – **Robert Thomas**

Drink of the wine: It was an intoxicating experience, which put people under the influence of antichrist. It's like the world will be drunk with the religion of antichrist.

Wrath: Perhaps meaning maddening in the sense of Jer. 51:7, but certainly the consequences of which incur the WRATH of God as seen in v. 10 (cf. Jer. 51:6-7).

Fornication: The context here is speaking of spiritual fornication against the Lord. This is spiritual unfaithfulness where the nations of the world are in intercourse with false religion. Babylon was all about religion – false religion in rebellion to God, which finds its apex in the religion of antichrist. Precisely, it is shown to be beast worship, signified in taking his mark, as seen in the following verses. This is the maddening wine served up by Babylon and antichrist. It's crazy and absurd in the extreme!

Revelation 14:9 (NKJV)

9 Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand,

The issue at this point is clear. Who are people going to worship? Will it be the one true Creator God (14:6-7), or antichrist? (13:8). And the WARNING is clear!

The issues are now made clear, the alternatives unmistakable. "Worship me" cries the Beast "or be doomed!" "Worship Me, cries the Lamb, "or be damned! – **John Phillips**

On the heels of the LOUD voice presenting the everlasting Gospel, is the LOUD voice of final warning for those yet undecided. This warning is yet another act of grace. It is amazing how far God goes in reaching out to people! (cf. Prov. 29:1, Ezek. 3:17-18)

The safest road to Hell is the gradual one—the gentle slope, soft under foot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts. - **C.S. Lewis**

Beast worship is signified by taking his mark!

Revelation 14:10 (NKJV)

10 "he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

If one drinks, that is if he partakes of the antichrist's fornication, meaning that if they worship him by taking his mark, then they will also DRINK of the wine of God's wrath. It is wonderful to experience the LOVE of God, but these people will experience the holy WRATH of God in full measure.

Full strength: There is no mixture of grace and mercy. This is just straight un-tempered wrath (cf. Ps. 75:8).

He shall be tormented: Note the emphasis on personal anguish, affliction, and pain.

Fire and Brimstone: This is burning sulfur. The pain of fire and the gagging, stifling smell of sulfur (smells like putrid rotten eggs), with no relief in view (cf. Gen. 19:24).

In the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb:

Throughout eternity, the Lake of fire is in the presence of the Lord, for nothing can be outside His omnipresence, even the Lake of fire. However, the wicked will be separated from His presence in the sense of contact and fellowship... -**Charles Ryrie**

God repays His enemies face to face (cf. Deut. 7:10). This doctrine is so undesirable that some professing Christians have rejected it, claiming it must teach annihilation.

Revelation 14:11 (NKJV)

11 "And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."

Note the duration emphasis here is FOREVER AND EVER. The logic goes like this: Where there is smoke, there is fire and in this case, the smoke ascends forever, indicating that their fiery torment is forever. The only straight forward way to understand this is to realize that this is a picture of ETERNAL torment that never stops.

No rest day or night: The emphasis here is that the torment goes on and on forever with no rest or break. It is a picture of constant nonstop torment. Now that is serious! If you really believe this, how could you not do evangelism? (cf. Mt. 25:46, compare Rev. 19:20 with 20:10)

Jesus used the word “*gehenna*” to describe hell. The word alludes to a place in the OT where people sacrificed their children to false gods (cf. 2 Chron. 28:3). Later this place was the national DUMP of Israel where garbage and refuse continually burned (cf. Jer. 7:31). Very possibly when Jesus spoke on hell, he may have turned and pointed to “*gehenna*”, the dump that continually burned, and said, “This is what it will be like.” (cf. Mt. 5:22, 29-30, 10:28, 18:9, 23:15, 33, Mk. 9:43, 45, 47, Lk. 12:5).

Jesus referred to hell (*gehenna*) eleven out of the twelve occurrences, made twelve out of nineteen references to hell fire, and used other similar expressions more than any other person in the NT. – **John Walvoord**

Once a person receives the mark of the beast, there is no hope. Eternal damnation awaits them.

Revelation 14:12 (NKJV)

12 Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

The patience of the saints refers to endurance. It refers to those who are genuinely saved who will not take the MARK no matter what they have to endure, even if it costs them their life. There is no easy-believism here! (cf. 12:11, 17, 13:10, 14:12)

There is no stronger evidence that saving faith perseveres than the reality that the most tested believers in history will maintain their saving faith until the end.

– **John MacArthur**

In this time of severe testing, the truly saved who have genuine faith will be tested. If they are genuine, it will bear out in this type of endurance. They will not worship the beast no matter what. This underscores the doctrine often called THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS. The truly genuine do persevere, they keep on keeping on. They never completely or finally abandon the faith (cf. Lk. 8:15, Jn. 8:31, 1 Cor. 15:1-2, Heb. 3:6, 14, 6:4-6, 10:38-39, 11:15-16, 1 Jn. 2:19).

That raises the question about those who once professed faith in Christ, but then fell away. The Bible teaches that such people were never saved in the first place.

– **John MacArthur**

Here is the point: The nature of saving faith is always the same. There isn't one kind of saving faith for Abraham, another for the prophets, another for the Church Age, and yet another for the Tribulation. NO! THE NATURE OF SAVING FAITH is consistent from Abel to the last person ever saved. The message was progressive, but the heart response of faith is the same. We are saved by faith alone and not by works, but it must be the right kind of faith. A saving faith is a life-changing kind of faith. One of the signs that faith is genuine is PERSEVERANCE in the faith. We are not saved by PERSEVERANCE. We are saved by faith, but if it is real, it will persevere! The saints here persevere, and to further qualify what these people are all about, it says they keep the commandments of God.

The first commandment in the Law was to have no other gods before God. This is reflected also in the NT. Believers in the time of the Tribulation will reject antichrist as god and embrace the God of the Bible. They will take the commands of God seriously, starting with the command to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

and the faith of Jesus. This description is a package called saving faith. Theologically, we might unpack it the other way around, in this order: 1) faith, 2) obey, 3) endure. Those truly saved...

Keep the faith of Jesus (no faith in antichrist).

Keep the commandments of God (they desire to obey the God of the Bible, not antichrist).

Keep on keeping on for Jesus, even if that involves martyrdom.

There is no NEUTRAL GROUND when it comes to Jesus! People won't be able to commit to BOTH antichrist and Jesus Christ. They will ultimately have to CHOOSE! So it is in principle today, as well (cf. Mt. 12:30). Rev. 14:13 presents a contrast. In contrast with those who take the mark and have no rest forever, are those who die in the Lord and enter into rest. Whereas Rev. 4:9-11 is a picture of hell for beast worshipers, Rev. 4:13 is a picture of heaven for the faithful martyrs of Jesus.

Revelation 14:13 (NKJV)

13 Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' " "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them."

Note the close connection between verse 12 and verse 13. The saints mentioned in verse 12 are addressed in the context of beast worship. This is what they will have to endure. This is the patience of the saints. The fact is MOST of them will probably DIE for their faith, and that is what is pictured in verse 13.

Voice from heaven: This signifies a divine pronouncement. Something of special significance is being brought out.

Write: An emphasis is being made. For those living in this MOST terrible time, these verses will be of immense encouragement. Twelve times in Revelation, John is told to "Write".

Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. This is the 2nd of 7 beatitudes in the book of Revelation (1:3, 14:13, 16:15, 19:9, 20:6, 22:7, 14). It is awful to think what these people will have to go through, but on the flip side, the Word says "blessed" are these who die in the Lord. Blessed means "happy". This is from the eternal perspective. Death is a release into eternity, and it is blessed for those who are in the Lord.

Die in the Lord speaks to the fact that they identify with the Lord in their death. In effect, they die as martyrs because of their stand for Christ. They die because of their faith in the Lord. This blessing is pronounced on the martyrs of the Tribulation Period.

From now on: Contextually this relates to the Tribulation Period. A special blessing is pronounced on those who refuse the mark of the beast and die because of it (cf. Ps. 116:15).

Relating the words to those facing persecution and death does not deny blessedness to all other saints when they die. It simply means that death for those who remain faithful in the face of more active persecution is a greater relief... - **Robert Thomas**

Rest: Denotes the absence of struggle, turmoil, brutal treatment, difficulties, and exhausting toil. Death ushers in a release from all of this horrendous persecution, they knew under the beast. Note at death, these saints enter into REST, while those who take the mark have no rest (cf. v. 11).

Rest from their labors: Labors here refers to hard, difficult, exhausting toil. It refers to their stand for the Lord in the context of the Beast. It will be very HARD to live for Jesus in those days (cf. Rev. 7:16).

Works follow them: These people made an impact during the short, but intense time that they stood for the Lord. In one sense, death does not separate them from their works. In fact, the only thing that follows you to heaven is your works (cf. Job 16:19, 1 Cor. 15:58, Heb. 6:10).

Now as we come to verses 14-20 we find two aspects of REAPING. Verses 14-16 use the illustration of reaping grain, while verses 17-20 use the illustration of reaping grapes.

Some think the first illustration speaks of reaping the saved, while the last illustration speaks of reaping the lost in judgment. There are Scriptures that speak of a mixed harvest, separating the wheat from the tares (cf. Mt. 13:30, 39). But note:

The present context of Revelation must provide the key. The prevailing tone of this section is one of judgment, not salvation.... Following the pattern of Joel 3:13, the scene furnishes two pictures of the same judgment for the same reason that Joel does, i.e., to emphasize the terror of it. – **Robert Thomas**

Joel 3:13 (NKJV)

13 Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe [grain]. Come, go down; For the winepress [grapes] is full, The vats overflow— For their wickedness is great.”

This fits. Building on the day of the Lord judgment theme in Joel, apparently we have a double emphasis essentially relating to the same thing; namely the judgment of the lost at the end of the Tribulation. It has been suggested that the grain reaping relates to the climactic bowl judgments, while the grape reaping relates to the ultimate climax of the battle of Armageddon, which fits well with the description we have in Isa. 63, etc. The bottom line is that this whole section of Rev. 14:14-20, I believe, is dealing with the climactic judgments and consummation of the Tribulation period.

Revelation 14:14 (NKJV)

14 Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle.

The description here harmonizes with Dan. 7:13-14 and Rev. 1:13, relating to Christ. This is Jesus coming in judgment. Some have questioned this because of the statement of “another angel” in verse 15 and the fact that seemingly a command is given by an angel to this individual, which doesn’t seem to fit with Christ. However, identical terminology in Rev. 1:13 is ascribed to Christ, and it fits perfectly with the background of Dan. 7. Also, the instruction in verse 15 could be in the sense of an entreaty or of relaying a message from the Father. As seen elsewhere and repeatedly in Revelation, God uses angels in the processes of judgment.

The white cloud speaks of HOLINESS, perhaps His shekinah glory.

Golden crown. The word here is *stephanos* meaning the crown of the victor/conquer, not the *diadema* (cf. 19:12), which is the royal crown.

The **sickle** was a harvesting tool used by ancient farmers to cut grain. It is consistently used in the OT as a figure for divine judgment (cf. Jer. 51:33).

Revelation 14:15 (NKJV)

15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, “Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.”

Temple: Relates to a Jewish emphasis and underscores the holy presence of God.

To Him: Christ. The angel is pictured as relaying this message to Christ.

The time has come: The “grim reaper” in context is Christ.

Choices concerning Christ versus antichrist have essentially been made. The time for invitation is now essentially over. Now is the time of full-force judgment.

Ripe: Means overripe. The world is more than ready for judgment. God in grace is never premature on judgment, but waits and waits. But finally there does come a time when judgment falls (cf. Gen. 15:16).

And with that said, in one fell swoop the world is reaped in judgment!

Revelation 14:16 (NKJV)

16 So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.

What a comprehensive statement. This gathers up all the bowl judgments, etc., into one grand statement of “and the earth was reaped.” The Son moves and it is done. However, as it is unpacked in chapter 16, etc., we see this reaping involves a process, albeit a fast one, as the bowl judgments come in rapid-fire sequence.

Revelation 14:17 (NKJV)

17 Then another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.

God is behind all this, but He uses angels as agents in this process (cf. Mt. 13:39).

Revelation 14:18 (NKJV)

18 And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, “Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe.”

The altar we believe relates to the altar of incense, which always had fire burning on it. The earthly altar was patterned after the one in heaven (cf. Heb. 9:24). Again, we are on Jewish turf here.

The altar was positioned right in front of the Holy of Holies, which was the most intimate presence of God. Twice a day the priest would pour incense on the burning coals on this altar and the incense would arise before God, representing the prayers of His people. We have already seen the prayers of God’s people in light of this imagery in 6:9-11, and 8:3-5. This angel evidently has a ministry related to prayer, and relaying the signal to bring down judgment, in relation to the prayers of God’s people.

Note here the imagery of reaping is GRAPES and not grain. These grapes are fully ripe. Again the emphasis is that wickedness in the world has reached a level of full maturity, with an emphasis on wicked rebellion against God, as demonstrated in the mistreatment of His people, Israel.

Revelation 14:19 (NKJV)

19 So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

The context is the realm of the entire earth, which is totally identified with the BABYLONIAN SYSTEM at this point, as reflected in the mark of the Beast (cf. 9-11).

Winepress: A rock-hewn trough about eight feet square with a channel leading to a lower and small trough. Grapes were thrown into the upper vat and trampled with bare feet. The juice was collected in the lower vat. –**NIV footnote**

This is a picture of judgment! This is crushing judgment from God Almighty that is brought about by the WRATH OF GOD (cf. Isa. 63:3, Rev. 19:15). One day God is going to assemble the rebel world to His turf (the Holy Land) and then trample them in the winepress of His wrath. A winepress pictures stomping, smashing, crushing.

Armageddon, as this passage indicates will actually be a slaughter rather than a battle.

– **John MacArthur**

Revelation 14:20 (NKJV)

20 And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs.

In Revelation, there are only 2 cities mentioned by name - Babylon and Jerusalem. The cities where the churches are found in Rev. 2-3 are not mentioned as cities per se. They are only referenced in relation to the location of the 7 churches. So, of the TWO mentioned, Babylon and Jerusalem, which one is it? Some have suggested Babylon, since it is prominently in view in this greater context. However, Babylon is not spared as this city is.

Jerusalem is the obvious answer to which city this is. The OT predicts that the final battle will happen near there, in the valley of Jehoshaphat which is traditionally located in the area of the Kidron Valley (cf. Joel 3:12-14; Zech. 14:4). – **Robert Thomas**

This is going to be an unparalleled bloodbath starting just outside of Jerusalem and extending the entire length of the Holy Land. The armies of the world will be assembled there, undoubtedly many millions of warriors, with Jerusalem (God's city) right in the middle of it all. When Christ appears in glory, they will unite to fight Him; and then HE WILL CRUSH THEM! The blood will run so deep that it will be up to the horses' bridles for the space of 1600 furlongs, which is approximately 184 miles.

Some have suggested that the blood will merely be spattering up to the horses' bridles. Others suggest that there will be pockets of blood approximately 4 feet deep all along this 184 mile stretch. No matter how you look at it, this is a bloodbath. It is interesting that this is the distance of Palestine from down south in Bozrah, from whence the Lord comes (as mentioned in Isa. 63), up to Meggido (as mentioned in Rev. 16:16). This fits the measurement of this area that will be blood-soaked. In other words, the picture is one of God trampling the trespassing world, who is on His property in total rebellion and defiance (cf. Joel 3:2).

Joel 3:2 (NKJV)

2 I will also gather all nations, And bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; And I will enter into judgment with them there On account of **My people**, **My heritage Israel**, Whom they have scattered among the nations; They have also divided up **My land**.

This is GOD'S LAND! It is the HOLY LAND! And in the end, He absolutely crushes this united, rebellious Babylonian system on His home turf. Israel has much to do with the end times. Often the nation of Israel is called the end times' SUPER-SIGN! (cf. Zech. 12:2-3)

There is a huge amount of BUILD UP AND BACKGROUND to the climactic bowl judgments, as seen in chapters 10-15. This LONG section includes information about the ministry of the two witnesses, spiritual warfare in heaven, Satan's war on God's people, Beast worship, antichrist's one-world order, the mark of the beast, the final Gospel call, the 144,000, and the great harvest of judgment imagery in chapter 14. All of this builds to give us a greater appreciation for the bowl judgments; and there is still more. Now as we come to chapter 15, we have a prolonged introduction to these climactic bowl judgments. This introduction really started in 10:5-7, and now is brought to consummation in 15:1-8. Following this tremendous build up, the final bowl judgments fall in rapid-fire succession in chapter 16. And then a final note in chapters 17-18, which essentially says "THE END"!

Revelation 15:1 (NKJV)

1 Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete.

Just prior to the final bowl judgments, the scene shifts to heaven, as it did prior to both the seal judgments (Rev. 4-5) and the trumpet judgments (Rev. 8:2-6). This serves to remind us that all that is happening on earth is inextricably connected to the throne of heaven. The God of heaven rules over all events on earth. In Rev. 15, we have a "heavenly interlude" prior to "all hell" breaking loose on earth, in Rev. 16.

Another sign in heaven. The word "sign" means symbol. Something very significant is being signified by what is seen. The signs in Revelation consistently are tied to OT type and meaning. This builds on the sign in heaven, related to the woman in 12:1, and the sign in heaven related to the dragon, in Rev. 12:3. Now we have another sign in heaven related to final judgment.

Taken together these constitute THREE major elements in prophetic history: 1) Israel and her place in relation to Messiah; 2) The final world empire under the control of Satan which is at war with God and His people; 3) The conclusion of the matter in which God crushes the rebellious world system.

Great and marvelous: Great is "mega". This designation speaks to the incredibly terrible and ominous judgments that are about to fall in awesome finality. The scope will be worldwide and it will be the un-tempered awesome wrath of an all-HOLY God.

In effect, verse 1 is a superscription that you could write over the top of chapter 15 and 16. Chapter 15 is the introduction and chapter 16 is the description of the final climactic judgments of the Tribulation Period. These final bowl judgments also comprise the 3rd and final "woe" announced earlier in 11:14.

seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete.

This signals the wrap up of the Great Tribulation. These final 7 judgments will come in rapid fire, staccato fashion building to a dramatic crescendo! This will climax the worst time the world has ever seen; hence these events are great and marvelous (cf. Mt. 24:21).

In Rev. 15, we have 2 major things in view in heaven.

- 1) We see 7 angels through whom God is about to pour out His climactic judgments on a rebel world.

2) We see the Tribulation martyrs who are now seen in heaven as victors in worshipful celebration.
Revelation 15:2 (NKJV)

2 And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God.

In 4:6 we were introduced to the “sea of glass, like crystal”, but now we have the addition “mingled with fire”.

The sea is designed to reflect the glory of God. In chapter 4 its description “like unto crystal” speaks of the holiness of God. Here the sea mingled with fire speaks of divine judgment proceeding from God’s holiness. – **John Walvoord**

Those who have the victory over the beast are evidently those who died as martyrs at the hand of the beast. Rather than worship the beast as signified in taking his image, mark, or number; these were willing to die for their faith in Christ, and so they are said to HAVE THE VICTORY OVER THE BEAST. Of special interest in this context are those who did not succumb to the pressure to worship the beast. They are found STANDING on the sea of glass. Their position of victory is rooted in the foundation of God’s holy judgment that will bring down the entire world system of antichrist.

The sea is a mighty reservoir of just judgments about to become realities. The overcomers have forded the new “Red Sea” (cf. 12:15-16) which will shortly engulf their foes...

- **Robert Thomas**

Having harps of God. The only 2 musical instruments mentioned in Revelation are the trumpet and the harp. These martyrs are given these special instruments of worship. In effect, they have the privilege to lead in special music in heaven.

Revelation 15:3 (NKJV)

3 They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: “Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints!”

Verses 3 and 4 address one of several hymns in Revelation.

Song of Moses: This seemingly refers either to Ex. 15 or to Deut. 32. Most probably Ex. 15 is in view signifying celebration for deliverance - God supernaturally defeating the enemy.

Song of the Lamb: Are there two songs or is this just one song merging together the words of Moses and the work of the Lamb? Certainly, the main theme of DELIVERANCE is clear, and it is because of the WORK of Jesus Christ on the cross that they are now in heaven. In short, they are singing about DELIVERANCE all made possible because of Jesus!

“Great and marvelous are Your works”

There is never a single mention in true gospel songs about man’s own goodness or achievements. Those persons who are truly redeemed forget themselves and see only the great purpose and plan of God in redemption. At least, it is that way in Heaven

- **Leman Strauss**

Note the words “great and marvelous” in verse 1 are the same words in this song of praise in verse 3. In other words it is apparent that the song is praising God for His mighty works of judgment that bring down the rebels.

Just as His works were great and wonderful in judging the Egyptians at the Red Sea, they also are and will be great and will cause astonishment in punishing the world through the seven last plagues. – **Robert Thomas**

Great works of judgment and deliverance call for great praise and worship in heaven!

Lord God Almighty! His omnipotence is in view. Antichrist claimed to be all-powerful but in reality only the God of heaven is ALMIGHTY!

Just and true are Your ways: God always works in accordance with that which is RIGHT in keeping with His holiness and His Word. His way is always TRUE according to what He has said. His deliverance and judgments are in perfect accord with the Bible.

O king of the saints [or nations]: There is some manuscript discrepancy here. Probably nations are in view. God’s sovereignty over all the nations is being praised in the context of judgment (cf. verse 4).

Revelation 15:4 (NKJV)

4 Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, For Your judgments have been manifested.”

This is a praise for the fact that when the dust settles ALL survivors will be found in awe, worshipping God.

Fear = reverence, honor, exaltation.

Lord = Master, Sovereign Authority.

You alone are holy. God is in a category all by Himself. He is incomparable (cf. Isa. 40-48).

All nations shall come and worship (which means to bow down) before Him. They will recognize Him as the ONE true Holy God who is LORD. All rebels will be purged out. Only true worshippers will go into the kingdom.

When the judgments of God are finished, all those surviving and entering into the kingdom will fear, glorify, and worship God. This is the end result of these judgments! In the Tribulation Period, the people say “Who is like the beast?” (cf. 13:4); but post-antichrist all will reverence, glorify, and worship the one true God who is HOLY.

Revelation 15:5 (NKJV)

5 After these things I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened.

Temple (Gr. Naos) refers to the inner sanctuary of the tabernacle; that is the Holy of Holies. The earthly tabernacle later gave way to the temple. The tabernacle was a tent that could be moved, while the temple was built as an established structure in the land of promise. The OT tabernacle was patterned after the heavenly reality which we see here (cf. Heb. 9:23).

Earlier we saw the temple opened in 11:19 and the Ark of the Covenant was seen. The Ark in the OT consistently represented the PRESENCE of God moving out in front and on behalf of His people,

Israel (cf. Josh 3). In the Tribulation, God will come to the aid of His people, Israel, once again. However here the “testimony” in the Holy of Holies is in view. The testimony speaks of the 10 commandments that were in the Ark of the Covenant. These commands speak to the holiness of God and hence, the sinfulness of man. The moral law of God, as reflected in these commands, is the basis for which God is judging the world.

The first command (“You shall have no other gods” – Ex. 20:3) was totally disregarded by the world as it worshiped antichrist. They had no regard for the commands of God and therefore they are about to experience the full measure of God’s judgment. That seems to be what is signified in this.

11:19 signified God’s presence now coming to the aid of His people, Israel.

15:8 signifies God’s judgment of the world for breaking His commandments.

The reference to the “tabernacle of testimony” refers to the place where the tablets of the Law were kept. These angels leave God’s presence because the Law has been violated. And they leave with the “seven plagues” (v. 6). – **Ed Hindson**

Revelation 15:6 (NKJV)

6 And out of the temple came the seven angels having the seven plagues, clothed in pure bright linen, and having their chests girded with golden bands.

Clothed in pure bright linen – representing holiness.

Golden bands (belts – sashes) – representing the glory of heaven.

Revelation 15:7 (NKJV)

7 Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever.

A merging of these four aspects [of the living creatures in chapter 4] result in the following identification of the four living beings of the Apocalypse: they are of an exalted angelic order engaged in worship, who bear a special relationship to those angelic beings described in Ezekiel and Isaiah and whose special function in the context of the Apocalypse is the administering of divine justice in the realm of animate creation. – **Robert Thomas**

Apparently these are the highest-ranking angels. They serve as special agents in matters close to God; in this case in administering judgment.

These guardians of the throne appear throughout Revelation (4:6, 5:6, 6:1, 7:11, 14:3, 15:7, 19:4) and are appropriate intermediaries between God and the avenging angels.

– **Ed Hindson**

Full of the wrath of God: Again signifying that this will bring God’s judgment to a completion. Full means to the brim.

The bowls are full to the brim with the hot anger of God. The fullness speaks of the devastating character as well as the finality of the coming divine judgment.

– **Robert Thomas**

who lives forever and ever. This phrase “forever and ever” occurs 21 times in Revelation. 17 times it speaks of God. God is eternal. This is the wrath of the eternal God. He is not someone who poses as a god for awhile. He lives forever and ever. Note also that this same phrase is used 3 times in reference to the duration of the punishment of the lost. This emphasizes the never-ending nature of

their torment. Likewise the word is used once in 22:5 to underscore the eternality of blessedness for the saved.

Revelation 15:8 (NKJV)

8 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.

The language in this whole context is consistent with the Exodus motif as seen in...

The song of Moses – v. 3

The tabernacle of testimony – v. 5

Smoke from the glory of God – v. 8 (cf. smoke on Mount Sinai)

The picture framed here is one of the LAST EXODUS from this world's Babylonian System that in many ways parallels the first Exodus from the land of bondage in Egypt. The main theme of judgment and deliverance are very close parallels.

The "smoke" that filled the temple refers to the shekinah cloud first associated with the tabernacle and then the temple. It symbolizes God's special presence and that He is the source of the judgments (Ex. 40:34; 1 Kg. 8:10-11, Ezek. 11:23, 44:4). - **Expositors**

No one was able to enter the temple: This speaks of God's absolute holiness, harking back to verse 4. Apparently, God at this point is unapproachable. There is no more ministry of intercession, no more prayers on behalf of the lost, no more invitations, no more window of opportunity. Judgment at this point is irreversible. The lost will be lost and the saved will be saved. All decisions are in and are final. Nothing remains except for the judgment to fall.

Until the 7 plagues are finished, no one is able to enter the temple. Once the time of final judgment has come, none can stay the hand of God. The time for intercession is past. God in His unapproachable majesty and power has declared that the end has come. No longer does He stand knocking: He enters to act in sovereign judgment.

- **Robert Mounce**

In Rev. 6-18, there are 3 movements of an interconnected series of judgments, namely the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments. The Bowl judgments are the final series; and are the most intense and severe coming right towards the end of the Tribulation. Rev. 10-15 is mostly background and an introductory build up to these final bowl judgments (cf. 10:5-7, 15:1). In 11:15-19 we were given a sneak preview; a panoramic overview of what was coming, but now we are given a blow by blow detailed account of these final judgments.

Revelation 16:1 (NKJV)

1 Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth."

This is the 3rd Woe (cf. 8:13, 9:12, 11:14). The 7th trumpet judgment, which is the 3rd woe, in effect contains the 7 bowl judgments. These judgments are especially severe and are therefore part of the "Woe judgments".

The bowl judgments are similar in description to some of what is named in the trumpet judgments, and yet they are clearly different. The trumpet judgments presented PARTIAL judgments (one third of...) in comparison to the Bowl judgments which picture TOTAL judgment where the whole earth is involved. The Bowl judgments are more severe, universal, and final. These judgments are the "seven last plagues" (15:1). They come right at the end as the climax of all God's judgments!

During the preceding judgments the goal is to bring people to repentance, and there is yet a measure of restraint. Here the point is PUNISHMENT! There is no restraint on this hardened category of humanity, and there apparently is no more opportunity to repent. Heaven is closed! This is climactic JUDGMENT on earth!

Loud: Can also be translated GREAT. 11 times in this chapter we have the word “Great”, more than in any other chapter in the Bible. Therefore some have called this, “The great chapter”.

Next in line would be Rev. 18, where it appears 9 times and that is an elaboration of the 7th bowl judgment mentioned in 16:17-21.

Great heat – v. 9
 Great River Euphrates – v. 12
 Great day of God Almighty – v. 14
 Great earthquake – v. 18
 Great city – v. 19
 Great Babylon – v. 19
 Great hail – v. 21
 Great plague – v. 21

This is the great and terrible day of the Lord!

Loud voice: This must be the voice of God, because it comes from the temple; and it is clear from 15:8, that no one else is in there.

Seven angels: They are all addressed at once as if to signify their actions will be unified and in rapid succession. There is no gap between the 6th and 7th bowl judgments, as there was with the seal and trumpet judgments. There is no more delay, no more gaps or parenthesis, just rapid-fire judgments coming at the end of the Tribulation.

It is like the FINALE at a fireworks display. You have a regular volley of explosions, some greater than others and little breaks between; but when the FINALE comes, there is no doubt. It is one EXPLOSION on top of another with such rapidity that it all meshes together in one climactic BOOM! So it is with these bowl judgments! The WRATH of God is now on full display. We have seen a measure of GRACE throughout, even to this very end point (cf. 14:6-7); but now the full impact of God’s wrath is upon the world.

Revelation 16:2 (NKJV)

2 So the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image.

The earth is the first of four divisions of nature hit by the first four plagues. The other three are the sea, the rivers, and the sky. – **Robert Thomas**

Foul – bad/harmful

Loathsome – evil/malignant

Sore – an ulcer wound that evidently can’t be healed (cf. 16:10-11 at 5th bowl still not healed). This is the word in the Septuagint that was used to describe the boils that plagued the Egyptians (Ex. 9:9-11), and that afflicted Job (Job. 2:7). In the N.T. it is used in relation to the beggar Lazarus (Lk. 16:21). Apparently this is an open, oozing, incurable ulcer-like sore that is very painful. It happens to people all over the world, all at once. In particular it afflicts those who have the mark of the beast, who are worshippers of his image. These people can’t be saved and so this is just plain punishment.

The warning had gone out loud and clear in 14:9-11. These had not listened and now so soon they are reaping the eternal consequences.

The plague here is as universal as the Mark of the Beast! (cf. 13:14-16)

Note: These final bowl judgments at many points in kind are similar to the plagues that came upon Egypt, only they are more severe and more universal. It is like in history God has given forewarning and foreshadowing glimpses of what this final judgment would be like. Now we have the full deal; judgment in its fullest sense. All that previously had pointed to this day now sees complete fulfillment.

Revelation 16:3 (NKJV)

3 Then the second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it became blood as of a dead man; and every living creature in the sea died.

The second angel's bowl relates to the sea. It became like the curdled blood of a dead man. The 2nd Trumpet saw 1/3 of the sea turn to blood (8:8-9). That was a MAJOR wake up call, calling people to repentance. This, however, relates to the WHOLE SEA. Now in final judgment, the whole thing becomes putrefied blood. Unimaginable! Every living thing in the sea died. Nothing can survive this.

Revelation 16:4 (NKJV)

4 Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood.

This third angel pours out his bowl on rivers and springs of water; that is FRESH WATER! It all turns to blood. The whole water supply of the whole world is turned to blood.

This is so shocking and so horrifying that the tendency may be to say, "Is this too much?" And so we have an interjection from heaven with the proper response.

Revelation 16:5 (NKJV)

5 And I heard the angel of the waters saying: "You are righteous, O Lord, The One who is and who was and who is to be, Because You have judged these things."

We see that various angels, under God, have jurisdiction over various categories of nature. It is appropriate for the angel of waters to respond at this point since all water has been turned to blood. Notice this angel does not challenge how a loving God could do this. Rather He asserts God is righteous and this is in keeping with His holiness.

The One who is and who was.... (the phrase "who is to be" is not found in the older manuscripts). This title is repeatedly used in reference to God in Revelation (cf. 1:4, 8, 4:8, 11:17), referring to God's eternality. It is essentially the same emphasis as when God told Moses, "My name is I AM" in Ex. 3:14. In 11:17; and here in 16:5, the phrase "who is to come" is dropped, because His coming is now upon them. It is no longer future. It is present.

Because You have judged these things: This action is RIGHT! It is horrible beyond comprehension, but then, so is the offense of the world, as seen through God's holy eyes.

Today many people have a skewed view of God. They do not see His HOLINESS for what it really is. They end up with a sentimental God that would never do this. They emphasize His LOVE, but not His HOLINESS, and so end up with an unreal picture of God.

The only reason it is difficult for people to conceive of God dealing in this manner is that for thousands of years He has been long-suffering and gracious, not meting out the judgment the world deserved. – **Charles Ryrie**

If you want a BALANCED picture, then study the cross. In the cross, we see the LOVE of God as Jesus pays the price for our sin. He takes our place. He thinks of us and not what it costs Him. But we also see God's HOLINESS, that demands this awful price be paid.

Revelation 16:6 (NKJV)

6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, And You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due."

Here is why God's judgment is right. They have shed the blood of saints and prophets. The world of unbelievers who were antichrist-supporters systematically were involved in rounding up and killing God's people en masse. An incalculable number of martyrs are found in heaven in Rev. 7, coming out of the Great Tribulation.

Saints - is a general word referring to God's people. It means "set apart" referring to those set apart for and belonging to God. The world killed them at will under antichrist, and now the world is being punished for it.

Prophets: Refers to God's special spokesman. Certainly the 2 witnesses in Rev. 11 are in view, but probably this is broader referring to those who boldly proclaimed, "Thus saith the Lord". Perhaps the 144,000 are in view.

This is the law of retribution. It is fitting. The punishment fits the crime. They are getting what they properly deserve. They shed the blood of God's people, and so God, in kind, is giving them what they have coming; namely, blood to drink. In the end, people do reap what they have sown. These were guilty of blood-crimes against God's people, and so a bloody punishment is in order (cf. Rom. 12:19).

Revelation 16:7 (NKJV)

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

This is like an "Amen" affirmation from heaven, affirming what the angel of the waters has said.

From the altar: This takes us back to the 5th seal in 6:9-11. Apparently this voice represents the martyrs in heaven who earlier cried out for God's vengeance. Now they are affirming that indeed this judgment is accurate (true) and righteous. Their earlier prayers are now answered. They also affirm God's omnipotence. He is the all-powerful God, and His judgments are RIGHTEOUS!

Revelation 16:8 (NKJV)

8 Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire.

Whatever is involved, the result is a turning up of the HEAT. Imagine the world being turned into one big DEATH VALLEY. There will be no fresh water supply, and the sun will be scorching people with fire. Fire in the Bible is consistently associated with God's judgment (cf. Isa. 24:4-6, Mal. 4:1).

Revelation 16:9 (NKJV)

9 And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has

power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory.

People were burned (scorched) with great heat! There is no place to find relief. There is nothing but bloody water in which to swim or bathe, or even drink.

They blasphemed the name of God: Instead of humbling themselves under the mighty hand of God, the rebel world of antichrist-followers blasphemes God.

Blasphemed: Means to speak irreverently of, to curse, to slander, to speak evil of, to put down in a hateful way. They are screaming and cursing at God in shrill, blasphemous terms! They recognize that God has power over these things. They understand that God is sovereign and in control of what is happening. Amazing, they don't deny His reality at this point. They just hate Him and what He is doing to them.

So much for the view that says if God just made Himself real enough, all would believe. This is not true. Belief is not just an intellectual thing. It is a matter of the will – the heart. It is a matter of surrender and allegiance. These people know FULL WELL the reality of God. They just don't want Him. They are completely hardened in their rebellion and rejection!

Did not repent and give Him glory. This is the bottom line. Repent means to change your mind. It says I am wrong and God is right. It admits guilt. It is a change of attitude toward God and with regard to sin. This is Biblical repentance. Repentance humbles itself before God and yields to His Lordship! Repentance goes from rebelling against God to giving Him glory. It is a complete change of mind with regard to God. This whole section is dealing with the LORDSHIP of God. This is the day of the Lord and the great issue is REPENTANCE!

Now we come to the fifth and sixth bowls, which build up to the concluding 7th bowl judgment. The 7th bowl, in effect, is the "Battle of Armageddon."

Revelation 16:10 (NKJV)

10 Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain.

The throne is the power center. We are not told where this is, but apparently it is Babylon, which is dealt with at length in chapters 17 & 18. It is there shown to be a great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth (17:18). This will be the power-center throne of antichrist's reign. However, note that apparently Jerusalem is also a palace/worship center the last half of the Tribulation (cf Dan. 11:45, 2 Thess. 2, etc.). So it would appear the worship center for antichrist is Jerusalem, but his economic/political center would be Babylon. This would make Babylon the seat of government, the throne.

This power center takes a direct hit, with darkness being the result, which spreads throughout his entire kingdom, which at this point is the entire world (cf. 13:5-7). Evidently just as the plague of darkness that came upon Egypt (cf. Ex. 10:21-29), so this will come upon antichrist's kingdom. The difference is that this will be UNIVERSAL. We have seen the similarities between these final bowl judgments and the plagues that came upon Egypt. The difference is that these are more intense and universal, but they are similar in kind. With that in mind, remember the darkness in Egypt was such that it could be felt. It also did not affect God's people in Egypt, but we are not told that is the case here.

Undoubtedly DARKNESS makes LEADING more difficult. It is always more difficult to work in the dark. That probably is why the "throne" is referenced. Matters related to governing will especially be impacted. As seen earlier, these beast-worshippers have gotten the idea that GOD is behind this, and I am sure antichrist will know this and will decide that once and for all he is going to deal with

this God by taking out His people (cf. 12:13) Antichrist does not deny the reality of God in heaven, the God of Israel. He just has such a super ego that he thinks he can take on God and win (cf. 13:6).

I believe at this point antichrist, with his super ego, is really mad. This DARKNESS is a big problem in terms of leading his vast world empire. He determines to do something about it and under Satanic inspiration moves to enact the FINAL SOLUTION; namely wiping out Israel. What he doesn't realize is that, in fact, God is drawing him and his armies to Israel to crush them (cf. Rev. 14:20).

The plague puts the realm in a lasting condition of darkness. This is like the ninth Egyptian plague (Ex. 10:21-22), but worse because it aggravates the continuing effects of the previous plagues. Since the beast's kingdom is worldwide, this amounts to a darkness that covers the whole earth. It may be assumed, however that the faithful remnant in its place of refuge is untouched by the plague, just as were the children of Israel... (Ex. 10:23). – **Robert Thomas**
Gnawed their tongues because of the pain. Gnawed is the idea of chewing on their tongues to deal with the pain. Here they are in darkness with nothing but blood to drink or to use for bathing. And they are still dealing with the ulcers from the 1st bowl. Pain defines them! But they are steeled in their rebellion.

Revelation 16:11 (NKJV)

11 They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds.

Blasphemed – meaning to speak irreverently of, to curse, to speak evil of.

The God of heaven: They know who is behind this. They don't deny it, they just won't turn from their rebellion. The phrase "God of heaven" is found only one other place in Revelation in 11:13 where the earthquake in Jerusalem brings about a response of giving glory to God, which I would take as indicative of true conversion (cf. Dan. 2-4).

their pains and their sores – implies the cumulative effect of these 5 bowls of wrath.

Not repent of their deeds: Repent means to change your mind – a complete change of attitude with regard to sin which results in a change of direction in living.

It is a change of thinking in the heart, that then demonstrates itself in life. This they refuse to do. Many people think that they can have an easy believism – a type of faith that is void of repentance, and still go to heaven. That is wrong! Saving faith involves repentance. It is a change of mind kind of faith that says I am wrong about my sin, I need Jesus as my Savior, and I recognize Him for Who He is as Lord. The kind of faith that says, "I want Jesus as fire insurance," but I have no change of mind about my sin, will not get anyone into heaven (cf. Mt. 7:21). These people are not sorry for what they have done. A huge thing in view has been the murder of vast numbers of God's people. They were part of the system that worked to wipe out the people of God and that is why God has given them blood to drink. But they do not repent of their murderous, idolatrous, and immoral deeds, etc.

This is the last reference in Revelation to a lack of repentance (cf. 9:21, 16:9, 16:11). From here on out, it is a forgone conclusion that these people are beyond repentance. But the emphasis is made to show just how HARD these people are. No matter what, they won't repent!

Revelation 16:12 (NKJV)

12 Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was

dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared.

Great River Euphrates

This is one of the great rivers of the world that constituted the eastern boundary of both the ancient Roman Empire and the land God promised to the seed of Abraham (Gen. 15:18, Deut. 1:7, 11:24, Josh. 1:4). The city of Babylon was also beside this river. The first mention of this river in the Bible is in Gen. 2:14, and its last mention is here. Rev. 9:14 mentions the river in connection with the origin of the 6th trumpet judgment.... – **Robert Thomas**

Because of the plague on the sun, this river maybe swelling from the ice caps that have melted in the mountains, etc. In this bowl, God sovereignly dries up the water of the Euphrates.

All that we know about the kings of the East is that they represent nations East of the Euphrates. - **Mark Hitchcock**

There are several views of who these kings from the East are.

1. Some see these as kings from the Orient who are coming in rebellion against the antichrist because his kingdom is now beginning to crack. The fact is there is no exegetical support for this.
2. Some see these as kings from the East such as India, Pakistan, China, Japan, etc... who are coming in league with antichrist to the Middle East. In effect, they are joining antichrist in his campaign to wipe out Israel once and for all.
3. Some see this as a reference to the region of Mesopotamia (Assyria and Babylon) and the drying up of the river will make it easier for the forces of antichrist to rapidly move into the Middle East from his capital of Babylon. The armies joining him will be the remaining kings of the European confederation (cf. Dan. 2, 7:24-27, Rev. 17:12-14).

My view is that this could encompass a large picture. The word “East” is literally “sun rising” which suggests nations of the Far East. Certainly this drying up of the Euphrates would open up the way for the antichrist and his forces to make a speedy maneuver from Babylon to Israel, and also allow for this great host from the Far East to join him.

Verses 13-16 are an expansion of verse 12 and the 6th bowl. Verse 15 represents a parenthetical interjection.

Revelation 16:13 (NKJV)

13 And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.

Unclean spirits is the common NT way to speak of demons! Frogs were unclean under the Mosaic Law and an abomination to God's people (Lev. 11:10-11, 41). This denotes wicked demons. Note the threefold emphasis on MOUTH. This is a propaganda campaign under demonic influence emanating forth from the mouth of the dragon who is Satan, the mouth of the beast who is antichrist, and the mouth of the false prophet who is the chief spokesman for antichrist. This demonically-empowered propaganda machine will influence the world to come to Israel with the goal of eliminating God's people.

Revelation 16:14 (NKJV)

14 For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth

and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

Several things are coming together to rally the whole world to Israel for Armageddon. The barrier of the Euphrates has been removed. A demonically-inspired propaganda campaign is in place.

Performing signs – that is miracles. We are not told specifically what these signs are, but they will influence the kings the world over, resulting in their gathering to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. What is happening is that under demonic influence, all these kings are rallying to Israel to crush her once and for all. The idea is RUSH TO CRUSH! What they don't realize is that God is allowing this and using this for the purpose of crushing them once and for all. Repeatedly the prophets spoke of God gathering the kings of the earth for this battle. What we have here is the world uniting (Babylonian System) for what will be a battle against God almighty, which as it turns out, is no contest for God. Note the **whole world** will be involved here.

Whether to translate (polemon) "battle" or "War" is probably only a decision of semantics. Whether it will be a series of conflicts or one major confrontation, depends on how one views the events of the 7th bowl in 19:19-21, cf. 14:16, 18-20, 17:14). – **Robert Thomas**

Here Armageddon is referred to as the battle of that great day of God Almighty (cf. Rev. 16:14).

However, it is also referred to as....

A day of vengeance (Isa. 34:8).

The great winepress of the wrath of God (Isa. 63:2, Joel. 3:13, Rev. 14:19-20).

The great and awesome day of the Lord (Joel. 2:31).

The harvest (Joel 3:13, Rev. 14:15-16).

The day burning like a furnace (Mal. 4:1).

The great and terrible day of the Lord (Mal. 4:5).

It is obvious from places like Zech. 12 and 14 that all the nations of the world will come to battle, against Jerusalem in particular. The most likely explanation is that under demonic influence and antichrist's leadership, they are determined to exterminate the remnant that has come to faith, as seen in 11:13. Evidently they are also intending to wipe out the remnant in the "safe place", because we also see the area of Edom/Bozrah in view in this final battle. This "safe place" very possibly may refer specifically to the vacant city of Petra (cf. Isa. 63, Rev. 12).

Into this context, we have a sudden interjection from Christ.

Revelation 16:15 (NKJV)

15 "Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame."

I find it hard to believe that at this point Christ's coming will be as a thief in the night for the faithful who have held out to this point. I mean, if they know anything about prophecy, they will know that the end of the Tribulation is near. I can understand how His coming will still be a surprise to the rejecting world, but this is addressed to the would-be believer.

There are two views here and Robert Thomas summarizes them nicely. I concur with Thomas's conclusions:

- 1) If the warning is an encouragement to the persecuted remnant under the beast, Christ's promised coming is the one in 19:11-16, which by the time of the sixth bowl follows almost immediately.
- 2) If the warning is to the people in the churches, it returns to the theme of chapters 2-3, the imminence of the hour of trial as an incentive for the book's recipients to make their calling and election sure, so they can escape this coming dreaded period. The close similarity to 3:3, 18 and the parenthetical nature of the announcement, favor the latter alternative. ... The other possibility of this being an encouragement to the faithful to persevere could serve no useful purpose at this point.... The beast's oppression of the saints has run its course. Therefore this announcement is a repetition of the excerpts from the two earlier messages to Sardis and Laodicea; it is a call to genuineness of faith.

In the midst of these climactic judgments, comes this warning from Christ to be ready, so that you don't have to face this awful period of time! Christ's coming as a thief is consistently tied with the Day of the Lord Judgment that will transpire immediately following the rapture (cf. 1 Thess. 5:1-4, 2 Peter 3:10). The imagery of "garments" is taken from a soldier or guard. In the Roman Empire, if they were caught sleeping, their clothes were taken from them; and they were shamed and disgraced by being naked. That would serve as a great motivation to stay awake!

Shame: Is thought to be a euphemism for "private parts".

In Christ's teaching in Matt. 22:1-14, the person without the proper garments is shown to be a person who is not saved. The main idea is that to be caught unprepared means suffering the consequences! After all the horrific judgment scenes that have been presented, it is fitting that such a final warning be given. BE READY! (cf. Rev. 22:16)

Why did Jesus give all this information to the church concerning a period of judgment that doesn't directly relate to them? The reason is because there are MANY in the churches who claim to belong to Christ, but are not genuine. One of the purposes of this book is to WARN THEM TO BE READY! In addition, the church in this age of grace is warning the world of what is coming.

Revelation 16:16 (NKJV)

16 And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.

They gathered – The "they" here refers to the aforementioned demons in verses 13-14.

We can think on several planes here.

- 1) Antichrist is bringing the world forces together to crush Israel.
- 2) Satan is bringing them together to fight the God of heaven.
- 3) God is bringing them together for judgment.

In fact, the majority of passages related to Armageddon emphasize God bringing them together for judgment.

God is directing this (v. 19); demons accomplish it by using earthly rulers (v. 16); Satan and the Beast and the false prophet are involved in it (v. 13); yet the kings of the earth will think they are making decisions of their own free will (Dan. 11:44). How intricate are the ways of God! – **Charles Ryrie**

The word Armageddon is one of the most well-known Bible words, and yet it is found ONLY here in the Bible. It refers to a location and an event.

The word is made up of two Hebrew words: *Har* (mountain) and *Megiddo* (a city in the northern part of ancient Israel). Megiddo was built on a hill, so the hill was called the

mountain (*har*) of Megiddo – or Armageddon. The city of Megiddo overlooks a large valley variously known as the valley Jezreel, the valley of Esdraelon, the plains of Megiddo, and the valley of Taanach. – **Mark Hitchcock**

This large valley has been the site of more than 200 notable battles through the centuries.

What an excellent place into which all the armies of the world could be maneuvered.

- Napoleon

The valley is rather large, being 14 miles wide and 20 miles long. Large as this area is, it obviously cannot contain the armies of millions of men, and it seems to be the marshalling point. Actually, the armies are scattered up and down the Holy Land for a length of some 200 miles. – **John Walvoord**

This apparently is the marshalling place, the staging area in preparation to overthrow Jerusalem and possibly the rock hewn city of Petra, which may be the stronghold for the protected remnant mentioned in Rev. 12.

The purpose of these armies seems to be to destroy Jerusalem, in particular. God's purpose is to bring them together for judgment. This is the primary showdown between Babylon (systematized rebellion under antichrist) and God; between unified rebellion (all the collective force that man can muster under Satan's power and influence) and GOD ALMIGHTY! (cf. Zech. 12:3, 9, 14:2-3, Zeph. 3:8)

Following are the main passages in the Bible that deal with the Battle of Armageddon.

1. Ps. 2
2. Isa. 34:1-16
3. Isa. 63:1-6
4. Joel 3:1-17
5. Zeph. 3:8
6. Zech. 12:1-9
7. Zech. 14:1-15
8. Mal. 4:1-5
9. Rev. 14:14-20
10. Rev. 16:12-16
11. Rev. 19:19-21

We now come to the 7th bowl judgment, which is the last and final judgment. It brings everything to conclusion. It is what is commonly referred to as the Battle of Armageddon. It is wrapped up in summary fashion in Rev. 16:17-21, but then chapters 17-18 give a detailed account of the fall of this Babylonian System, which is the crux of what happens at Armageddon; followed by the coming of Jesus Christ in Rev. 19.

God's judgment of Antichrist and the Babylonian System under him really involves three dimensions.

1. The religious aspect (Babylonian system) of this empire – Rev. 17.
2. The economic aspect – Rev. 18.
3. The military aspect – Rev. 19.

This worldwide empire of Antichrist will fall in totality under Jesus Christ. Religiously, economically, and militarily, it will all come tumbling down. All of this comprehensively fits under the umbrella of the 7th bowl judgment. The 6th bowl was preparation for Armageddon. The 7th bowl deals with fulfillment of Armageddon proper, which involves many different aspects, but the bottom line is that Jesus Christ is bringing down this unified system of rebellion; namely Babylon in its final form, in all its facets.

Revelation 16:17 (NKJV)

17 Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, "It is done!"

Its first affects were on the earth's atmosphere, as if God were cleansing the former domain of Satan and his demon hosts (12:9 [cf. Eph. 2:2]). The earth (v 2) the sea (v. 3) the waters (v. 4) the sun (v.8) and finally the air are the targets of judgment. – **John MacArthur**

This must be the voice of God because no one else is in the temple (cf. 15:8), and certainly no one else is on the throne. It is fitting that this climactic pronouncement comes from God Himself!

Throne: signifies judgment and Sovereign Authority to whom all are accountable!

It is done! This plague will bring to conclusion the wrath of God poured out upon the earth. This verse echoes what the 7th trumpet introduced. Out of the 7th trumpet comes the 7 bowl judgments (cf. 11:15).

Chronologically, at 16:17 we are at the end. But thematically we still see the fall of Babylon and the return of Christ on the horizon [in chapters 17-19]. – **Edward Hindson**

Revelation 16:18 (NKJV)

18 And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth.

Repeatedly in Revelation, this phenomenon is associated with either an emphasis on the holiness of God or an introduction of judgment, or both. This is consistent with the emphasis elsewhere in Scripture where thunder is often associated with the awesome and holy voice of God Almighty (cf. Ex. 20:18-19). This is kind of like the idea of a divine drum roll emphasizing a dramatic finish to God's terrible judgments! Involved is an unprecedented earthquake, which in reality, is a world quake (cf. Isa. 2:19, 24:19-20).

The global earthquake at the judgment of the sixth seal (Rev. 6:12-17) had been so severe that "every mountain and island were moved out of their places." This earthquake, however, is far worse – in fact, so terrible that "every island fled away and the mountains were not found" (Rev. 16:20). -**Henry Morris**

He's the great, great God of the Bible,
He's the great, great God of all power,
He's the great God who can shake the world,
He's the great God of the hour!

Revelation 16:19 (NKJV)

19 Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath.

The great city. It is debated as to whether this is Jerusalem or Babylon. I think it is Jerusalem.

- a) Jerusalem is called "the great city" in 11:8.
- b) This city is divided, which is consistent with the topographical changes that will take place in Jerusalem at this time, in accordance with Zech. 14:4-10.
- c) While this city is divided, it does not say it falls, in contrast to the other cities.
- d) This city is in contrast to the other Gentile cities of the nations.
- e) This city is distinguished from Babylon, which receives its own special mention.

What is happening here is really the ruin of the cities of the world, with the exception of Jerusalem. What is happening in Jerusalem is for its good and is preparing it for the millennial reign of Jesus Christ. Jerusalem will be raised up as the exalted city of the world (Zech. 14:10). The Mount of Olives will be split in two and a new valley running east and west will be created (Zech. 14:4). A spring of fresh water will flow year round from Jerusalem to the Mediterranean Sea, causing the desert to blossom as a rose (Zech. 14:8, Isa. 35:1). All of these things are happening in very close proximity to one another, in conjunction with the end of the Tribulation and the 2nd Coming of Christ.

Cities of the nations fell. It was “historic” when the Twin Towers fell in New York, but think of it; all the cities of the nations will be impacted by this universal earthquake. The structures in these cities will collapse. It will all come tumbling down. There will be no place to hide! This is literally “sinners in the hands of an angry God”!!!

Great Babylon was remembered before God: God hasn’t forgotten about this city! In fact, while the cities of the world evidently still have a surviving remnant, when Babylon falls it goes down with incredible violence, with no hope of survival (cf. Rev. 14:8, 18:21). Babylon is the city which gave birth to all false religion. The idolatrous mystery religions emanated from her. She is going to make a comeback in the last days and will again influence the world with her idolatrous ways. She is great in the scope of her evil influence.

Jerusalem is the city of God. Babylon is the city of man. Jerusalem is the most mentioned city in the Bible. Babylon is second. From Genesis to Revelation, these two cities are tracked side by side. In Rev. 17-18, Babylon is destroyed forever. In Rev. 21, the New Jerusalem comes down out of heaven as the capital city of the new heaven and the new earth, and is the eternal abode of God and His people. In the end, man’s city falls, but God’s city remains for all eternity (cf. Heb. 11:16, 13:14).

All of these things are happening as a package in relation to the 7th bowl, but the city of Babylon is going to receive special judgment. This is dealt with, an extended treatment, in Chapters 17-18, showing the significance of this city. Babylon represents the core of antichrist’s worldwide empire. It is the crux of unified rebellion, under antichrist; and it receives the fierceness of God’s wrath, at this time.

Revelation 16:20 (NKJV)

20 Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

This connects to the unprecedented world quake of verse 18. The entire world will be rocking and reeling resulting in the islands being submerged in ocean water.

Fled away – meaning they simply vanished and are removed out of sight. And there are no more mountains. Consider the magnitude of turbulence that brings down all mountains. Not only did the cities of the nations fall, not only did the islands fall into the sea; but the mountains also collapsed (cf. Ps. 46:1-3, 10-11).

In conjunction with the FLOOD, great mountains arose. Apparently what is in view is a returning to a sort of pre-flood-like era in terms of mountains (cf. Gen. 7:19-20, Ps. 104:7-8). This is setting up the topographical outlay that will exist in the millennial kingdom of Jesus Christ (cf. Isa. 40:4-5)

The gentle rolling topography of the world as originally created will be restored. No more will there be great inaccessible, uninhabitable mountain ranges or deserts or ice caps.

– John MacArthur

Revelation 16:21 (NKJV)

21 And great hail from heaven fell upon men, each hailstone about the weight of a talent. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great.

Great hail – This is called the “great” chapter because the word “great” is used so often. It concludes with this exceedingly great plague.

Hailstone about the weight of a talent – This Greek term (talent) commonly referred to the weight a man could carry, somewhere around a 100 pounds.

...a talents weight was between 108 and 130 pounds, heavy enough to kill anyone on whom one landed... - **Robert Thomas**

These giant hailstones are more like BOULDERS. The largest hailstones of today are around 2 pounds. But these are the size of frozen water coolers falling out of the sky! Occasionally we see God using hailstones in judgment in the Bible, such as the hailstone plague experienced by the Egyptians in Ex. 9:24. Throughout Scripture, hailstones are indicative of God’s judgment (cf. Josh. 10:11, Job 38:22-23, Isa. 28:2, 17, Ezek. 13:11-13, 38:22-23). Note: There is no thought of REPENTANCE here (cf. 16:9, 11). These are hardened blasphemers who will not repent no matter what. In effect, God is going to stone these people for their blasphemy, which is in keeping with what the penalty for blasphemy was in the OT (cf. Lev. 24:16).

This hailstorm and its response obviously does not mark the end of the seventh bowl. Chronological sequence resumes in 19:11, after an [insertion] (17:1-19:10) expanding upon Babylon, her history, and what has made her what she is up to this point in history. ... Most exegetes feel that the seventh bowl description does not terminate at the end of chapter 16, but continues into chapters 17-18 with a detailing of Babylon’s downfall. Just how far it continues beyond that is, however, a point of obscurity. – **Robert Thomas**

The 7th bowl ushers in the 2nd coming, as seen in chapter 19. However, the 2nd coming brings this period of judgment to a close. What is anticipated in 16:17, “It is done”, relates to the culmination of judgment as seen in the Second Coming. Then it is truly done!

Down throughout history, ever since the fall in the Garden of Eden, mankind has ever been rebellious toward the RULE of God. This rebellion is chronicled from Genesis to Revelation. What began in Genesis will be brought to conclusion in Revelation. Mankind’s rebellion resulted in a worldwide flood (Gen. 6-8). Not long after the flood humanity was involved in unified rebellion against God at the tower of Babel as recorded in Gen. 10-11. This was the beginning of Babylon and humanity’s long term unified rebellion against God. The tower of Babel signified unified idolatrous rebellion against God. That is the crux of what Babylon represents.

Out of that context, God chose Abraham and began building a chosen nation to be His special witness. But because His witness nation (Israel) also fell into idolatry, God allowed them to go into captivity to Babylon, the very epicenter of idolatry. In the passage of time, God temporarily set aside His people, Israel, and is now building His church. The word “church” means “called-out ones”. When the church family is complete, Jesus will come and take them home to heaven. Then the concept of BABYLON will come to complete fruition, as found in Revelation.

In Genesis, we have Babylon **Idealized** (cf. Gen. 11:1-9).

In Daniel, we have Babylon **Imperialized** (Dan. 1-6).

In Revelation, we have Babylon **Globalized** (Rev. 13, 17-18).

Babylon is progressive in history. Beginning with the tower of Babel, it brings together religion and the state - unified in idolatry.

Gen. 11:4-5 (City = Government – Tower = Religion)

Dan. 3:4-5 (King = Government – Image = Religion)

Rev. 13:7-8 (Authority = Government – Worship = Religion) – cf. Rev. 14:8-9

Babylon represents both a city and a system that develops out of it. The city is the city of Babylon on the Euphrates River that births and propagates an idolatrous system, that infects and affects the entire world. All the false religions of the world go back to Babylon. In terms of a location, Babylon is the mother of all idolatrous religion in the world. Babylon is therefore localized in the literal city of Babylon. Babylon is also globalized in terms of a system that spreads from Babel and influences the entire world. This is state-sponsored unity, that is idolatrous. We see this at the tower of Babel; we see it under Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel; and we see it in Revelation in the ultimate sense under Antichrist.

Freedom of Religion where people are free from government interference in matters of faith is truly a GREAT freedom. Babylon stands for the exact opposite. It signifies state and religion in partnership, resulting in the persecution of God's people. Babylon therefore represents corrupt ecumenical religion. This system is on the move and is progressive even today, but will come to a climax in the Tribulation Period, following the rapture.

Babylon has two major climactic aspects in relation to the Tribulation. The first aspect represents an alliance of counterfeit religion that will be in place after the rapture. They will be ONE. It will be a RELIGIOUS ECUMENICAL ALLIANCE, not united in truth, but united in idolatrous ONENESS. Not only will this amalgamation of religion be in league with each other, but they will be in league with Antichrist, as we will see in Rev. 17.

Undoubtedly, APOSTATE CHRISTENDOM will be a (or the) primary player in this ecumenical system. I tend to think this because Antichrist comes out of the West (Europe), and by background, Europe is "Christian". In that context, we have this RELIGIOUS WHORE riding on the beast. Also, it would appear that the attack against Israel, and therefore Antichrist, (because he is in covenant relationship with Israel) in the middle of the Tribulation, will come from a confederation of Islamic countries (cf. Ezek. 38-39). That would indicate that this great whore so closely united to Antichrist is probably largely apostate Christendom from the West, but also represents a wide assortment of religious groups of various stripes.

The true Church is the bride of Christ and one day Christ will come for His bride and take her back to Father's House for the formal marriage ceremony – the marriage supper of the Lamb. However, the false church remaining behind will become "the bride of the antichrist". This false church, in league with all kinds of false religion, will initially be in union with antichrist. That is Babylon Stage One, in the Tribulation!

Now Stage Two. In the middle of the Tribulation, Babylon will progress into its final form. That is, Antichrist will destroy this ecumenical religious whore and will absorb into his system all that remains of it (cf. Rev. 17:16).

Note, it is PROGRESSIVE! It began in the Tribulation with apostate Christendom and other stripes of false religion in union with each other and in union with Antichrist; but in the middle of the Tribulation, Antichrist will declare himself to be God and destroy this ecumenical confederation. During the last 3 and ½ years of the Tribulation, the religion of Antichrist alone will be tolerated and promoted. This is the final form of Babylon! The final form of Babylon has the whole world under Antichrist with unified religion and unified government now centered in him. This emphasis comes to a climax in Rev. 18. It will be a religious unity centered in antichrist, but also tied to commerce and military power. It will involve a one-world government and a one-world religion. What began in Gen. 11 has now come to be full grown in Rev. 17-18.

Following the Church Age, God will judge the world as we have seen in Rev. 6-16. Chronologically, chapter 16 brings us to the end of the Tribulation period. However, the last judgment, that is the 7th

bowl judgment, really relates to Armageddon, which is the final showdown between God and the world.

At this point, many awesome things will happen in close proximity to one another. There will be a worldwide earthquake; the cities of the nations will fall; Jerusalem will be split up and its topography changed; the islands will go under the sea; 100 pound hail stones will fall, the battle of Armageddon is imminent, and in this mix, Babylon will fall. God will deal with Babylon in a very definite, sudden, catastrophic, and final way, as this city represents the core of idolatrous rebellion, that spread throughout the world.

This is so significant that 2 full chapters in Revelation are devoted to this subject. In Rev. 17-18 we have an extended footnote or an expansion of the 7th bowl judgment, that gives more background detail and history behind the final collapse of the city of Babylon and the Babylonian system she births. What was introduced in Rev. 14:8, and summarized in 16:17-21, is now expanded on in Rev. 17-18.

Revelation 17:1 (NKJV)

1 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, “Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters,

This links back to what we just saw in chapter 16, namely the climactic bowl judgments; and in particular, with the 7th bowl that in 16:19 speaks of great Babylon?. So in effect, this is saying that this is a continuation of explanation concerning the 7th bowl, and now gives more detail regarding Babylon. Climactic Judgment is in view.

Great harlot – Verse 18 shows us clearly that this is speaking of a city, but as you consider the details, clearly a system is also in view.

Harlot – speaks of spiritual unfaithfulness, usually in relation to idolatry. The major thing in view with Babylon is idolatrous religion. Religious apostasy is often spoken of in the OT in terms of spiritual immorality or spiritual adultery, so the language of harlotry here is fitting. Babylon is like the concept of Wall Street. They are not only literal places, but also systems. At this point, the “Babylon system” is spread around the world.

Who sits on many waters – according to verse 15, this represents peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues.

Revelation 17:2 (NKJV)

2 “with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.”

This apostate religious system with its many idolatrous prongs was involved in intercourse (spiritually speaking) with the kings and people of the earth.

People are by nature “religious”. They are created with a God-consciousness. However, when they reject the truth of God’s light, they turn to false religion. In the last days, people will be wicked, but still religious. They will still go to church even though they don’t order their lives according to the Bible (cf. 2 Tim. 3:5). Even after the rapture, unsaved people are going to continue to be very RELIGIOUS. In fact, they will probably get a little more religion! Undoubtedly many will tie into this BIG ecumenical religious system that is here called the “great harlot”. The world will be intoxicated with the wine of her fornication, which is a way of saying they will be under the influence of her idolatrous ways. The world will be greatly swayed, influenced, and intoxicated with this religious idolatry, to the point that it will be like they are in a spiritual stupor.

Revelation 17:3 (NKJV)

3 So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

Wilderness: Denotes a deserted, lonely, desolate wasteland, perhaps in keeping with the spiritual condition of this great spiritual harlot. Being in the wilderness in the Bible often is synonymous with being out of the will of God and wandering from God (cf. Isa. 21:1).

Saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast: Note the woman at this point (which evidently is in the first half of the Tribulation) is in the sitting or riding position. She is on top at this point, indicating the sway she has even over the beast, who is antichrist as brought out in Rev. 13. Going into the Tribulation, this woman has incredible worldwide power and influence, even to the point that she initially dominates over the beast. Note how she is in UNION with Antichrist. It is like a hand in a glove. They are working together. However, they apparently both have their own power agendas. We find when the beast gets stronger, he will throw off the woman and destroy her; but initially they work together in what seems like a mutually beneficial arrangement! This is a marriage of convenience, but divorce comes in the middle of the Tribulation!

Scarlet:

The color symbolized luxury and splendor, which are its apparent connotations here and in vs. 4.....But scarlet is also the color of sin (Isa. 1:18) and contrasts with the whiteness of righteousness and purity... - **Robert Thomas**

Full of names of blasphemy – The beast is full of irreverent names. This is what the beast is identified with and the woman is identified with the beast. They are all in the same blasphemous position.

Having seven heads and ten horns. This is also brought out in Rev. 13:1.

These heads apparently represent 7 great world powers that have oppressed Israel down through history. The antichrist builds on this and is the capstone of this history of infamy.

1. Egypt
2. Assyria
3. Babylon
4. Medo/Persia
5. Greece
6. Rome
7. Revived Roman Empire

These heads are the devil's tools throughout history. They are also the building blocks on which the antichrist will build, and bring to a climax, the greatest time of trouble the Jews will ever know (cf. Jer. 30:7).

Ten horns. Dan. 7 also mentions 10 horns in relationship to the coming antichrist in Dan. 7:7, 24. Rev. 17:12 tells us who these are – namely 10 kings who form the nucleus of antichrist's kingdom. What we see in this verse is a worldwide ecumenical false religion in UNION with the government of antichrist.

The second and third angelic announcements in chapter 14 implied a close association of this beast with Babylon (14:8-11) in that the doom of Babylon entailed the doom of those who worship the beast. Here that relationship becomes explicit. – **Robert Thomas**

Revelation 17:4 (NKJV)

4 The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication.

This woman is in the attire of a wealthy harlot. Purple is the color of royalty and scarlet is the color of luxury. She is something to look at outwardly. She is decked out to the max, as the harlots of history have been known to be. It's part of her lure and enticement.

Golden cup - which people drink out of and get spiritually drunk.

Full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. This is the language once again of idolatry consistently found in the Scriptures. It denotes blasphemous activities that God detests and her cup is full of them. Note the contrast between her outward beauty and her gross wickedness!

Revelation 17:5 (NKJV)

5 And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

Prostitutes in the old world commonly wore head bands that designated their activity (cf. Jer. 3:3).

...the inscription on the woman's head is resolvable through a comparison with 14:8 and 18:2. The woman's name is "Babylon the great" not "Mystery Babylon the Great"....

– Robert Thomas

Mystery: In the NT mystery consistently refers to something that previously was not known, but is now being revealed by divine revelation. In this case, God is showing us that all false idolatrous religion ultimately is traced back to Babylon. It has been developing throughout history and now finds ultimate fulfillment in the Tribulation period. Without this revelation, we would not know this. After the flood, the first organized rebellion was at Babel. Out of it came all the false religions of the world. The roots of them all (without exception), tie back to Babylon.

The seeds of all false religion that have spread throughout the world were planted in this ECUMENICAL religion at Babel. The Babylonian Mystery religions developed out of the idolatrous mythology related to **Nimrod** – the major builder behind the city of Babel (cf. Gen. 10-11). Supposedly Nimrod died and became the sun god. He then, according to the Babylonian mystery religion, impregnated **Semiramus**, his wife, via a sunbeam. She was the high priestess of the mystery religions. She then supposedly miraculously gave birth to a son named **Tammuz**. He in turn was killed, but following 40 days of weeping by Semiramus, came back to life. Thus began the beginning of the idolatrous Mother and Son religion that spread throughout the known world of the OT. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel rebuked Israel for falling into this idolatry (Jer. 7, 44, Ezek 8). These mysteries involved all kinds of idolatrous practices related to the occult and the worship of the Queen of heaven (the mother) and the son, Tammuz. All kinds of rituals were involved including things like holy water, candles, etc.

Later the Babylonian Mystery religions moved to Pergamus (Rev. 2), and yet later were adopted by the church in the Roman Empire. The Babylonian cultic rites, rituals, and holidays, were simply "Christainized" by the church as the church and the state were unionized under Constantine in AD 313. In this context, The Roman church drank deeply of the Babylonian mystery religions and plunged into the dark ages.

After the Persians took over Babylon in 539 BC they discouraged the continuation of the mystery religions of Babylon. Subsequently the Babylonian cultists moved to Pergamus

where one of the seven churches of Asia Minor was located (cf. Rev. 2:12-17). Crowns in the shape of a fish head were worn by the chief priest and the Babylonian cult to honor the fish god. The crown bore the words “Keeper of the bridge” symbolic for the bridge between man and Satan. This handle was adopted by the Roman Emperors who used the Latin title Pontifex Maximus which means “Major keeper of the Bridge”. And the same title was later used by the bishop of Rome. The pope today is often called the pontiff, which comes from pontifex. When the teachers of the Babylonian mystery religions later moved from Pergamum to Rome, they were influential in paganizing Christianity and were the source of many so-called religious rites which have crept into ritualistic churches.

– **The Bible Knowledge Commentary, p. 971**

Proper understanding builds on the premise that the city in view is not Rome, Jerusalem or any other city like New York. Just as Jerusalem always normally means Jerusalem in the Bible, the same is true of Babylon. Unless there is clear exegetical reason to take it otherwise, and I don't think there is, Babylon means Babylon! (cf. Isa. 13:19-20, Jer. 51:26). This argues for a future fulfillment of these prophecies concerning the literal Babylon on the Euphrates. There is also the very significant prophetic passage of Zech. 5:5-11. This is a vision of a woman in a basket. Mark Hitchcock explains...

The final OT prophecy about Babylon is found in Zech. 5:5-11. This prophecy also indicates that Babylon will be rebuilt in the end times.

The prophet Zechariah sees a vision of a basket that is full of evil and wickedness personified as a woman. A heavy lid is put on the basket to keep the evil in check. God doesn't want the wickedness to get out. As Zechariah sees the basket being carried away, he asks a question. “Where are they taking the ephah [basket]?” The answer is given. “To build a temple for her in the land of Shinar [Babylon]; and when it is prepared, she will be set there on her own pedestal”.

Zechariah is telling us that wickedness will someday be focused again in the land of Babylon. When the necessary preparations have been made, wickedness will return to its place of origin – Babylon.**-Seven Signs of the End times –p. 63**

.... After the flood, the first outbreak of evil in the world occurred at Babylon. Everything will come full circle. The world's first capital city will be the place of its final city, Babylon. I believe this means that in the end times Babylon will become the world capital of an evil world economic system run by antichrist. **-The Second Coming of Babylon – p. 99**

Revelation 17:6 (NKJV)

6 I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement.

Down through the ages, ORGANIZED FALSE RELIGION has been responsible for the death of multitudes of God's people. In the immediate context of the Tribulation, an innumerable amount of people will be killed and martyred because of their faith.

This truth is shocking to John. People tend to think of religion as good thing. But in reality, false religion always persecutes those standing for truth (2 Tim. 3:12). This Babylonian system is guilty of all kinds of sin, but the stress in this verse is on her murderous ways concerning the true believers in Jesus (cf. Jn. 16:2-3).

Under the Babylonian System, it becomes **Politically Correct** to conform to the idolatrous system and to persecute those who won't do so (cf. Dan. 3:17-18). It was the Grace of God to break up the Babylonian Unity at the tower of Babel. This system had people locked in so tight that they couldn't

break out (cf. Gen. 11:6), and this Babylonian pressure will come to a climax at the end of the age, through antichrist.

Rev. 17:1-6 summarized concerning the Babylonian Ecumenical Religious System.

1. She is a large harlot – worldwide in scope. – 17:1
2. She has religious intercourse with kings and peoples of the earth alike. - 17:2
3. She has tremendous influence and power in the political realm – initially being in the dominant/sitting position over antichrist. - 17:3
4. She is outwardly attractive, but inwardly full of idolatrous corruption. –17:4
5. She is a product of the Babylonian mystery religions – combining many strains of false religion, all tracing their source back to Babylon. – 17:5
6. She hates the true people of God, as seen in her murdering of them. –17:6

Religion and Politics do mix in the Babylonian System. Where they don't mix is when you bring in the *TRUTH of Jesus Christ*. Christ is exclusive, insisting that He alone is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Babylonian Religion is broad and compromised, tolerant of all idolatrous error, but not tolerant of the truth.

The cradle of civilization began in the area related to Babylon on the Euphrates River. Amazingly, the Bible in effect teaches that the history of man as we know it will essentially end there as well. From the cradle of history to the grave, Babylon (modern day Iraq) is prominent in the destiny of this world. History is coming full circle – back to the beginning – back to where it began - at Babylon. This is not an accident. It is exactly what was mapped out in the prophetic Scriptures long ago.

Revelation 17:7 (NKJV)

7 But the angel said to me, “Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns.

This murderous sight is shocking to John. The question is, “*Why*”? False religion is seen to be guilty of the bloodshed of God's people on a huge scale. This woman, with her worldwide ecumenical false religion, has huge amounts of blood on her hands. God has ordained human government to protect life (cf. Gen. 9:6, Rom. 13:4). This is the government's job, and ideally government functions correctly in this role. And if it doesn't function ideally, hopefully it functions to where there is some level of protection against the wholesale murder of God's people. That is why John is so shocked. How could false religion do all this killing of God's people with the institute of human government in the picture? Answer: *False religion in and of herself could not, but in league with corrupted government, she can.* The answer is that government has been corrupted by false religion, and in fact, is in union with it, resulting in the terrible oppression of God's people. This in essence is what the angel will explain to John, as he gives him insight into the climax and demise of the Babylonian system, as revealed in Revelation.

Mystery: That which previously was not known and would not be known except by divine revelation. A mystery is a secret that only God knows, but now He is revealing it through His Word.

The mystery here is said to be “of the woman and the beast that carries her”. This mystery relates to the relationship of the woman and the beast, and the fact that they are in UNION, with the woman in the riding position.

The term “beast” is used in a number of interrelated ways in the context of Revelation.

- 1) A composite term referring to the major world powers that have persecuted Israel from her birth in Egypt until the Antichrist (cf. 13:1, 17:3, 7).
- 2) The Revived Roman Empire (13:2).

3) The antichrist as a person (13:3-4).

Dan. 7 presents an overview of the TIMES OF THE GENTILES from God's point of view. It presents the major oppressors of Israel as being 4 BEASTS. From God's standpoint, the governments in view during the times of the Gentiles have treated His people with brutish harshness! Now in this final stage of world history, the angel is giving the background of the development of this BEAST of history, and the final BEAST of history (the antichrist). He is revealing the progressive relationship of false religion down through history with this BEAST, culminating in the UNION of antichrist and the woman of false religion in the last days. Realize that the end PRODUCT in the Tribulation is building on centuries and centuries of history. It didn't develop overnight. This UNION is the result of long term processes in history involving false religion in league with government going way back to the time of Israel's birth as a nation.

Seven heads: probably refers to Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo/Persia, Greece, Rome, and revived Rome. The last form of the Roman Government consists of 10 horns, who are 10 kings in league with the antichrist, that form the nucleus of his Revived Roman Empire.

Revelation 17:8 (NKJV)

8 "The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

In effect, John saw a seven-headed BEAST that is progressive down through history. But most pronounced in what he sees is that the last form of the BEAST, (which is antichrist and his kingdom) is contemporary with the woman riding the beast. The first sentence of verse 8 in a nutshell is a history of antichrist in the Tribulation.

Was – relates to his rise to power in the first half of the Tribulation.

Is not – Signifies his death in the middle of the Tribulation.

Will ascend out of the bottomless pit (Abyss/Hades) - This signifies his "resurrection" from the dead, which is the crucial turning point, resulting in his empire being worldwide for 3 and ½ years. It closely connects with his killing the 2 witnesses in 11:7.

Here it is said that he "is about to come up" indicating that the events of verses 1-7 precede his seizure of power in the middle of the tribulation period. – **Charles Ryrie**

Go to perdition – referring to his being cast into the lake of fire at the end of the Tribulation.

Note the description of "was, is not, yet is" is brought out twice in this verse. This takes us back to Rev. 13 where we find this beast will receive a mortal wound and is then healed. Note in 13:3-5 (cf. 13:12, 14) following his resurrection the world marvels, follows, and worships him. Then he is given authority for 42 months.

The language here is similar to that of describing Christ's death and resurrection in Rev. 1:17-18. This EVENT of antichrist's resurrection at the midpoint of the Tribulation is one of the most significant events in his career and launches his worldwide empire. This is probably what is in view in 2 Thess. 2:9-12. The world will be awestruck with admiration, thinking he is invincible, not realizing that in a very short while he will be on his way to PERDITION, taking with him all his followers (cf. Rev. 13:4).

Dwell on the earth – is a technical phrase used 10 times in the book of Revelation to refer to the lost. They are earth-dwellers in that they sell out to antichrist for the things of this life. They have no pilgrim character, they live for the here and now, for this life.

God has a Book of Life. He knows all who will be saved from the foundation of the world. They are all recorded in this book. All the lost who will follow antichrist, however, are not in this book (cf. 20:15). These are the ones who are enthralled with him and totally taken in by this powerful deception. Only the elect will not fall for antichrist's deception (cf. Mt. 24:24).

Revelation 17:9 (NKJV)

9 “Here is the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits.

Here is the mind which has wisdom: It will require wisdom to figure this out.

Realize that Revelation is the last book of the Bible that builds on the rest of the previous Scriptures. Of the 404 verses in Revelation, 278 of them are tied to OT Scriptures. In other words, to properly understand Revelation deeply, you really need to know the rest of the Bible first, because it builds on this foundation and then ties it all together. In particular, Revelation BUILDS ON DANIEL. Daniel gives the broad outline of future things, and then Revelation fills in the details. With all this in mind, let us consider what is being said.

Seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits. Some have come to the conclusion that Rome is in view because she is known as the 7-hilled city of history. Therefore, they often seek to tie in 7 major leaders with Rome. But that doesn't really fit when you consider the background and context further.

Mountain in the prophetic OT Scriptures, and in Daniel in particular, consistently symbolizes the idea of a kingdom or empire (cf. Jer. 51:25, Dan. 2:35). Prophetically speaking, “mountains” here would most naturally refer to 7 successive kingdoms in history on which this woman of false religion sits. I would take it that Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and the Revived Roman Empire are in view. These 7 fit history perfectly. They fit with the 7 that have in a major way affected God's people, Israel, in terms of persecution, in accordance with what is revealed in the Bible. All 7 of these involved the marriage of religion and government resulting in the oppression of God's people.

Revelation 17:10 (NKJV)

10 “There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time.

Verse 10 continues the thought of verse 9.

Seven heads
Seven mountains
Seven kings

These are all used interchangeably. Because of the reference to 7 kings, some have argued that 7 Roman Emperors are in view. However, the precedent of Daniel is that king and kingdom are used interchangeably (cf. Dan. 7:17). The most consistent view is to see these as 7 kingdoms personified as 7 major leaders/kings of 7 consecutive kingdoms.

Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come. The idea that Roman emperors are in view doesn't fit because MORE than 6 Roman emperors had already been in power and fallen by the time John wrote. The best way to take it is that five have fallen refers to 5 empires – namely; Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece. These 5 kingdoms that played such a major role in relation to God's people, Israel, have fallen. They are history or part of the past.

One is – refers to the Roman Empire in place at Jesus' first coming and during the time of John the Apostle.

The other has not yet come – refers to the future REVIVED ROMAN EMPIRE which will come to power in conjunction with antichrist. We read about this in Dan. 2 and 7.

When he comes, he must continue a short time. When antichrist makes his appearance, it will be a big splash, but not for long. He ascends to power in the first half of the 7-year Tribulation, and then rules over all the earth for the last 3 and ½ years.

The confusion of the seven heads of the beasts with the seven hills of Rome, however, arises from inattention to what the passage states. John was informed, "They are also seven kings" (v. 10). If the hills represent kings, then they do not refer to the seven hills of Rome, and the whole conclusion that Rome is the capital of ecclesiastical Babylon is brought into question. Further, a statement is made, "Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain a little while" (v. 10). This could not refer to hills. How can the five that are fallen and the one that is and the one not yet come be identified? – **John Walvoord**

Revelation 17:11 (NKJV)

11 "And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition.

The beast in view here is antichrist. Again he is described in terms of "was" relating to his first 3 and ½ years in the first half of the Tribulation; and "is not" describes his death at about the middle of the Tribulation. In effect, antichrist is the 7th head, that is he is the head of the Revived Roman Empire, during the first part of the Tribulation, but then he dies. He is the 7th head in this succession of persecuting empires. But that is not the end of the story. He then comes back to life, and thereby becomes the 8th also. That is how he can be of the 7 and yet be the 8th. In his capacity as 8th, his domain encompasses ruling over the entire world in contrast to his role as 7th, which was just in relation to the Revived Roman Empire. This would seem to be the distinction; and his death and resurrection are the TRANSITION point.

...as one of the seven, the beast is a kingdom, but as an 8th he is the king of that kingdom who sustains the wound and ascends from the abyss after his wound (v. 8). When this occurs, he is king over an 8th kingdom because his reign following his ascent from the abyss will be far more dynamic and dominant than before. This is the sense in which he is one of the seven, but also an eighth.... Making the 8th a fusion of the raised beast and the empire over which he rules is the only way to meet all the criteria of this passage. – **Robert Thomas**

Again his final destination of perdition is emphasized. God is emphasizing that his duration is short, and here is where he is going. Perdition means destruction or utter destruction referring to eternal damnation in the lake of fire (cf. Rev. 19:20). Note the double emphasis on this reality in verses 8 and 11.

Revelation 17:12 (NKJV)

12 "The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but

they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast.

Horns in the Bible symbolize either military or political power. Here these 10 horns represent 10 kings. They are parallel to the 10 toes in Dan. 2, or the 10 horns in Dan. 7. It all fits consistently. At the time of John, these 10 were future. These 10 serve the antichrist. Never in history have there been 10 major leaders in Europe serving a superior. This is unfulfilled to date and will be fulfilled ONLY when antichrist shows up on the scene. They are allowed “one hour” of authority, serving under the beast. One hour denotes a short period of time. These kings make up the nucleus of antichrist’s Revived Roman Empire. They are the backbone of what will become a worldwide empire.

I believe based on Dan. 7:2-3 that a Revived Roman Empire is in view. Daniel picked up the prophetic picture from his day, that is starting with Babylon instead of Egypt. He counted 4, and only 4 major world empires that would be major players in relationship to God’s people, Israel, in the history of the world from his day on. All 4 of these relate to the context of the Great Sea (Dan. 7:2) which is always the Mediterranean Sea in Scripture. The 4th empire of Rome however is shown to have 2 stages – The Roman Empire in power at the first coming of Christ; and the Revived Roman Empire in place at the second coming of Christ. These 10 relate to that last phase of the Roman Empire – the Revived Roman Empire which will develop into a worldwide empire in the last half of the Tribulation (cf. Dan. 7:7, 24).

In the first half of the Tribulation the emphasis is on Europe -the Mediterranean base from out of which antichrist emerges in the Revived Roman Empire (cf. Dan. 9:26). The second half of the Tribulation has the emphasis on a worldwide empire under antichrist – headquartered in Babylon.

Revelation 17:13 (NKJV)

13 “These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast.

These 10 are of one purpose. They are unanimous in their full support of the beast. They are so ONE-minded that they are totally with the beast in his taking on the Lord at His second coming (cf. v. 14). They are “with the beast” totally and completely.

Revelation 17:14 (NKJV)

14 “These will make war with the Lamb, and 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.”

John in verses 12-14 summarizes the coming history of the 10 kings who will be in league with antichrist. Therefore verse 14 runs to the conclusion of where it all ends. Chronologically it fits in Rev. 19, in conjunction with the Second Coming of Christ. Initially there are 10 kings, but according to Dan. 7:24, antichrist will subdue 3 of them – perhaps because of rebellion. Nonetheless, these 10 kingdoms (forming the European base of antichrist’s empire) are found to be with antichrist to the very end, which culminates in a showdown with the Lamb.

Make War with the Lamb. That is a really stupid thing to do, but these are so tight with antichrist that they will have total allegiance, no matter the cost. They carry their commitment this far! These really did accept antichrist as their god. This action is in keeping with the fact that antichrist worships the god of munitions (weapons), and that antichrist is considered to be unequalled in the matter of WAR (cf. Dan. 11:37-38, Rev. 13:4).

This in effect is the climax of the battle of Armageddon as summarized in Rev. 16:14-21.

Antichrist and his forces will have assembled in the promised land in an effort to crush Israel and Jerusalem, once and for all (cf. Zech. 14). All of the sudden, Jesus is seen coming in the clouds of glory and what do they do? They muster themselves to fight Him (cf. Rev. 19:19-21). Verse 14

summarizes “and the Lamb will overcome them.” Jesus will triumph over them. He will conquer them. In the descriptive language of Rev. 14, He will “SMASH” them. Note the oft repeated title of “Lamb” used here. They will aggressively make war with the very one who died for their sins (cf. Mt. 23:39).

Lord of lords and King of kings: Lord means MASTER. Jesus is Master of all masters. Whatever position of authority people may have had over others, Jesus’ position of authority surpasses them all. Jesus is supreme KING over all other kings and the great King to Whom all shall give an account. Jesus REIGNS supreme!

and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.

Coming WITH Him are those referred to in Rev. 19:14 as the armies of heaven. They are here defined as “called, chosen, and faithful”.

Called – they have received and responded to the divine summons. They have heard the voice of Christ and followed Him in saving faith.

Chosen means “elect”.

The elect are the 'whosoever wills' the non-elect 'whosoever wont's'.

- D.L. Moody

There is no doubt about the doctrine of election. It is clearly stated in Scripture. The only question is, “What does it all involve and how does human responsibility mesh with it?”.

No one has this completely figured out. Some emphasize God’s sovereignty. Some emphasize human responsibility. Both sides can point to their “silver bullet” verses, but the fact is an INDUCTIVE STUDY presents a very balanced view. Certainly you want to end up with a GOD-CENTERED theology, and yet how it all fits is a mystery. His ways are past finding out (Rom. 11:33).

The ORDER here is interesting. First “called”, then “chosen”. Theologically, we would tend to think in terms of chosen in eternity and then called in time, but here the order is called and then chosen. The same order is found in 2 Peter 1:10.

Faithful: These by grace who have responded to God’s call and are part of the special chosen family of God, demonstrate that reality in the outworking of being faithful, not perfectly, but characteristically. This is a description of TRUE BELIEVERS. They are loyal, committed, holding fast in their allegiance to the truth of Christ. They persevere in the faith – that is they are faithful. The issue is not the perfection of their lives – but the direction. Those that are coming “with Him” are described as faithful, in contrast to the unfaithful harlot.

Revelation 17:15 (NKJV)

15 Then he said to me, “The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues.

The idea of the harlot sitting on waters was introduced in 17:1. Now we have the meaning given. Water in Revelation always means water unless it is specifically qualified in another way, as it is here. Proper interpretation always takes the text literally/normally unless there is some compelling reason from the text to take it figuratively. Such is the case here.

This verse shows that this harlot – this great ecumenical system of false religion is worldwide in scope. We saw in 17:5 that all false idolatrous religion goes back to Babylon. However, it develops from there to where eventually it influences and rests on the entire world.

Revelation 17:16 (NKJV)

16 “And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire.

The best reading indicates that both the ten horns and the beast combine in this effort. The expression “upon the beast” is more accurately translated according to the better manuscripts “and the beast”. – **John Walvoord**

This alliance is totally behind promotion of antichrist, and they detest the dominance of the harlot religious system. They tolerated her, they used her, but now when antichrist is moving into a position of strength, they are going to do away with this worldwide ecumenical religious system. In accordance with Rev. 13, this apparently happens about midway through the tribulation. In that context some very significant things happen that will propel antichrist and his European kingdom to international dominance.

1. The great Northern confederacy of Ezek. 38-39 will be defeated by God – but undoubtedly antichrist will take credit for it.
2. But most significantly, antichrist will suffer a deadly wound and come back to life(cf. Rev. 13:3-8).

In the last half of the Tribulation (42 months – 3 and ½ years), antichrist will declare himself to be god. All other RELIGION will be outlawed. Beast worship will be enforced worldwide. This reality does not allow for the HARLOT RELIGION to function. Antichrist will demand all worship go to him and his 10-nation base will be fully behind him in this.

make her desolate and naked, This figurative language evidently means they will strip her of her vast resources and wealth. All the finery that is pictured adorning her in 17:4 is now stripped away. She will be completely plundered by antichrist and his 10-nation confederacy. But they don't stop there. They will go so far as to completely destroy this false religious system.

eat her flesh and burn her with fire. This is the language of complete destruction. They will obliterate her and wipe her out. Exactly how it happens we are not told, but the fact of annihilation is clear. It is fitting because in the OT those who were guilty of gross immorality and harlotry were to be burned (cf. Lev. 20:14, 21:9). This great religious system was all about idolatrous false religion (spiritual harlotry), instead of faithfully worshiping the true God; and so is put to death accordingly.

Revelation 17:17 (NKJV)

17 “For God 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.

This verse brings home the fact that God is sovereignly behind all that is happening. In this case God uses the antichrist and his kingdom to destroy the harlot. He intends that this great whore be taken out and the instrument he uses is the beast and his 10 horns. God is sovereign over all. Under the umbrella of that sovereignty – He promotes some things, permits some things, and prevents some things. Great are the ways of God. These will think they are doing this, and they are, but they are working in keeping with God's sovereign workings, which are beyond what we can fully comprehend.

Revelation 17:18 (NKJV)

18 “And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the

earth.”

Woman = Babylon (cf. 17:5). Babylon is a city and a system. Her defining mark is false religion that she uses to influence and in many ways dominate the kings of the earth.

An overview of Babylon.

- Babylon represents the UNION of Government and False Religion.
- Babylon represents a CITY and a SYSTEM.
- Babylon as a SYSTEM is progressively DEVELOPING throughout history – coming to a climax in the Tribulation.
- Babylon in the Tribulation: Phase One – UNION of organized False Religion and Antichrist.
- Babylon in the Tribulation: Phase Two – Government and False Religion CENTRALIZED in Antichrist.

The emphasis in the first half of the Tribulation is Religious Babylon – this great religious system in ecumenical union that is in league with antichrist. Scholars have often referred to this as ECCLESIASTICAL BABYLON.

The emphasis in the second half of the Tribulation after antichrist destroys the harlot is on COMMERCIAL AND POLITICAL BABYLON. The reason is not because false religion won't be around - it will be, in fact it will reach its zenith under antichrist. Babylon will now be in its purist form with government and religion all CENTRALIZED in antichrist. However, the emphasis on this last form (as seen in Rev. 18) being commercial Babylon, is because commerce is key to CONTROL in the government of antichrist (cf. Rev. 13:16-17).

It appears that Babylon in its final form in Revelation 17-18 is again a system and a city. The location is clearly the same in both Rev. 17-18. It's the city of New Babylon. The city of New Babylon will be rebuilt in Iraq in the last days.

It will boast two different aspects that will bring the world under its sway. The city will be home to a great religious system pictured as a prostitute in Rev. 17 [during the 1st half of the Tribulation] and to a great economic, commercial, and political center for the Antichrist's empire [during the last half of the Tribulation] described in Rev. 18. Wickedness will return to this place for its final stand. (cf. Zech. 5:5-11) - **Mark Hitchcock**

Revelation 18:1 (NKJV)

1 After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory.

After these things: This is significant because it shows a break from what has been seen in chapter 17. There is a distinction between the RELIGIOUS aspect of Babylon in Rev. 17 and the COMMERCIAL aspect in Rev. 18.

Rev. 18:1 begins with the words, “After these things.” In Rev these words generally signal something new being introduced (see Rev. 4:1 cf. [7:9, 15:5, 19:1]). I believe that in Rev. 18: this phrase signals a shift or change in focus from Babylon in its religious aspect, in the first half of the seven-year Tribulation, to its economic, commercial, and political aspect that dominates the world in the last half of the Tribulation. – **Mark Hitchcock**

These two aspects of Babylon share the same geographic location, but they are distinct.

Note in chapter 17, it was the Beast and his allies that destroyed the harlot Babylon. In chapter 18 it is God Himself who destroys the commercial aspect of Babylon (v. 8). In chapter 17 the kings hate

religious Babylon, but in chapter 18 the kings of the earth mourn the destruction of commercial Babylon. Chapter 17 says nothing of Babylon interacting with the merchants of the earth and maritime trade, but this emphasis is very strong in relation to the Babylon of Rev. 18. These things give ample evidence that chapter 17 and 18 present two different aspects of Babylon in the Tribulation period. It starts out as the RELIGIOUS CENTER, but ends up as the ECONOMIC center of the world.

Another angel – Because of his power and illumination some have thought this may be Christ, but the Greek word “another” is “*allon*” meaning another of the same kind as mentioned in 17:1. This would not be said of Christ as he is not in the same category as angels, but rather far superior to them. Perhaps it is the same angel who made the announcement of the fall of Babylon in Rev. 14:8.

Coming from heaven – he comes from the presence of God.

Having great authority: God often uses HOLY angels in the process of judgment. He has entrusted them with great authority.

Earth was illuminated with his glory: Evidently there is a time of brightness in the heavens, piercing the darkness that accompanied the 5th bowl judgment in Rev. 16:10. His glory is really a radiating of God’s glory since the angel comes from heaven (cf. Ex. 34:29-35). This may be an indicator of the glory of God that will return to the temple at the 2nd coming of Christ, as similar language is used in reference to it in Ezek. 43:2.

Revelation 18:2 (NKJV)

2 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!”

His voice BOOMS out powerfully and loud. Note the emphasis of “mightily” and “loud”.

Babylon the great is fallen is fallen. There is a double emphasis on fallen. She was great, but she has now fallen. This language is in keeping with the prophetic statements and language in the OT that looked to this time (cf. Isa. 13:19-22, 14:11, 21:9, 47:1-15, Jer. 50:39, 51:8, 1-58). This reality was introduced in 14:8, but now a detailed treatment is given which is often the pattern in Revelation. This statement looks to the end of the Tribulation. The fall of Babylon in this final form comes at the pouring out of the 7th bowl judgment (cf. 16:19) which is right at the end of the 7-year Tribulation.

Even though Rev. 17 and 18 both have the same city in view, she is no longer called “Mystery, Babylon the great” [17:5] since her ecclesiastical aspects have been destroyed (Rev. 17:16-18). At this point, approximately at the middle of the seven-year tribulation all the ornate religious and cultural trappings of “the great whore” will have been destroyed by the ten-kingdom federation, and the beast will reign supreme in his great commercial and political capital, now called simply, “Babylon the great”. - **Henry Morris**

And has become a dwelling place of demons: Apparently, all the demons are going to be imprisoned at this location during the millennial reign of Christ. All that is unclean and vile are represented here in terms of the spirit world, and all kinds of detestable creatures that represent that which is unclean. This is exactly what the OT prophesied in Isa. 13:19-22, 34:11, and Jer. 50:38-40.

Revelation 18:3 (NKJV)

3 “For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury.”

This city has influenced and infected the entire world with her idolatrous ways. That was true in relation to false religion of the great harlot, and it is also true in terms of BEAST WORSHIP tied with the economic system under antichrist that will evidently be headquartered in Babylon. Many will become RICH through this commercial system, especially the MERCHANTS of the world. Big business will be intricately tied with antichrist which is KEY to him governing the world. Babylon is going to become an extremely WEALTHY CITY again one day – a catalyst for luxury and high society living.

Antichrist will control the world market – the world's economy, and those tied in with his base in Babylon will become exceedingly wealthy. Apparently there will be two HEADQUARTERS for antichrist in the Great Tribulation – that is the last 3 and ½ years of the Tribulation Period.

1. Religious headquarters would seem to be in Jerusalem (cf. Dan. 11:45).
2. Economic headquarters would seem to be in Babylon (Rev. 18).

A major key to antichrist's empire is controlling the world's economy. This will be a major component to Babylon in its final form under antichrist.

Revelation 18:4 (NKJV)

4 And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.

This is no time to be in Babylon. If you belong to God at this point you are given fair warning to get out because she is going down (cf. Gen. 19:12-13, Num. 16:26). Any believer nestled in here and not found out yet, should get out. To stay is to be identified with the sin of this place and therefore to partake of the judgment that is imminent. God has his scope right on Babylon and if you have any hope of getting into the kingdom alive, you must get out of Babylon at this point. I think this warning is pertinent to the last half of the Tribulation period, when Babylon becomes commercial headquarters for the world in combination with the mark of the beast; but especially in view is the time of the bowl judgments that come right towards the end of the Tribulation. Judgment day for Babylon has arrived.

The literal city is in view, but by way of application, the system is also in view.

...survivors will face powerful temptations to participate in the system. Family and friends will no doubt pressure them to save themselves by accepting the mark of the beast. The need to obtain the basic necessities of life will also pressure them to conform to the system (cf. 13:17). – **John MacArthur**

God is warning to have nothing to do with this city or this commerce system that emanates from her (cf. Rom. 12:1-2, 2 Cor. 6:14-17, Ja. 1:27, 4:4, 1 Jn. 2:15).

Revelation 18:5 (NKJV)

5 "For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.

Her sins having reached to heaven is the idea that they are PILED UP HIGH. They have been accruing and building up to this point where now God is going to bring the whole thing down in one day. Sins are accumulative in the sense that they are building towards judgment. The world is building towards judgment day. Sin is building towards judgment (cf. Gen. 15:16, Rom. 2:4-5, Acts 17:30-31).

God has remembered her iniquities. God hasn't forgotten. He will never forget the sin of the unrepentant. On the other hand those that repent are forgiven and God "forgets" all their sins in the sense they are never held against them ever for all eternity (cf. Jer. 31:34, Heb. 10:17). Remembering for God involves calling people to account. He is now calling defiant, unrepentant Babylon to account and judgment is rendered.

Revelation 18:6 (NKJV)

6 “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.

Apparently, an angel is speaking here to God and expressing the will of God.

Double has the sense of fullness or completeness. In the Mosaic Law, wrongdoers were often required to pay double restitution for their crimes: - **John MacArthur**

What Babylon did against God, she in effect did against His people. They go together. (cf. 18:24, 19:2). Vengeance belongs to God. He alone pays people back for what they have done (Rom. 12:19). The punishment appropriately matches the crime, according to what God determines, for He alone is judge.

Revelation 18:7 (NKJV)

7 “In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, ‘I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow.’

Glorified herself: Babylon was all about exalting herself.

Luxuriously: No expense was spared to make this the most pampered place on the planet. It was all about living for self, living for now, and living for self gratification. It means to “live deliciously”. It is to be wanton or to revel in the appetites of the flesh. It is seeking to gratify self with all this world has to offer, and leaving God out of the equation (cf. Ecclesiastes).

in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; You reap what you sow is a consistent law seen throughout Scripture (cf. Gal. 6:7-8). The idea here is to bring her twice as LOW as she was HIGH on herself!

Torment: Literally means “torture” (cf. v. 10, 15, 9:5, 14:11). In 14:11 this very same word is used to speak of eternal punishment.

Sorrow: Mourning. Commonly used of mourning for the dead. It signifies deep grief. It is the grief that torment produces.

Heart: Represents the inner most being related to motives, thoughts, and commitments, etc (cf. Prov. 23:7).

‘I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow.’ In her mind she is very self-sufficient. In effect, she says, “I don’t need God, I can take care of myself. I am invincible.” She is very haughty, self-confident, and self-assured. In effect, she plays “god”. She thinks, “I am master of my own fate!” (cf. Dan. 4:30, 37).

Revelation 18:8 (NKJV)

8 “Therefore her plagues will come in one day—death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her.

Her plagues will come in one day: In light of her self-glorification, self-gratification, and self-sufficiency, her judgment comes swiftly. When judgment comes, it comes FAST. God gave Babylon a long leash, but suddenly it is all OVER.

[one day] does not express duration of time, but is a figurative way of expressing abruptness...[it] emphasizes how quickly Babylon will experience what she sought to avoid through her luxury. – **Robert Thomas**

This makes sense because “famine” would not seem to be merely a 24 hour thing. The idea seems to be one of suddenness.

Death...comes in response to her scorn of the prospect of widowhood, sorrow...in return for reveling, and famine...in response to her abundance... - **Robert Thomas**

However, the consistent picture is not that of a gradual decline, but rather of a sudden collapse, probably culminating with utterly being burned with fire (cf. 10, 17, 19). The overall sense then is that these plagues of death, mourning, and famine hit quickly. Suddenly these things overtake the city and then in one final FALL the city burns to the ground. It all happens with amazing rapidity – the final event coming like God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah (cf. Gen. 19:24, Isa. 13:19, Jer. 50:40).

for strong is the Lord God who judges her: She thought she was so great, self-made, self-sufficient, and invincible, but the fact is she was NO MATCH for God; and in short order, God reduces Babylon to nothing (cf. Jer. 50:34, Dan. 4:35).

To summarize: The final form of Babylon is a city and a system characterized by...

Glorified herself

Lived luxuriously

Full of self-sufficient pride -----18:1-8

Babylon reflects life that is all about self: Self-pride, self-gratification, self-confidence, self-sufficiency. This is Babylon: wealthy, prideful, self-indulgent, full of herself, but the Almighty God will bring down this city with great rapidity; and she will not recover. This happens right towards the end of the Tribulation in connection with the 7th bowl judgment, and in close connection to the second coming (cf. 16:19). Now we see the RESPONSE to the fall of Babylon by those intimately involved with the city and her idolatrous system.

Even a quick reading of Ezekiel 27 shows that here in these verses John had in mind Ezekiel's lamentation over the Fall of ancient Tyre. Those who entered into fornication with the great mother of prostitution wail over her destruction. In terms drawn from the fall of harlot cities in the past, John describes the end of the great reality of evil, Babylon the Great.

– **Expositors**

Revelation 18:9 (NKJV)

9 “The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning,

Three groups are mentioned in terms of lamenting the fall of Babylon. First mentioned is the kings of the earth that were in BED with this city and her idolatrous economic system.

The kings of the earth got “on board” with antichrist and his system in which one took his mark or wouldn't be able to buy or sell (cf. Rev. 13:15-18). This system will make many RICH in very short order; and the political leaders of the earth will be quick to tap into it.

Fornication denotes spiritual unfaithfulness, that is idolatry.

Lived luxuriously indicates that in conjunction with this city, these kings did very well economically. Being in league with antichrist will prove to be quite profitable financially, and because of it the kings

of the earth will be “on board”. Politicians are generally all in favor of WHATEVER will bring about prosperity.

But now all of the sudden this great ECONOMIC CENTER that was so KEY to the prosperity of the world is enveloped by fire. The world is watching and wailing, with the kings taking the lead in this tearful brokenness.

Weep: to sob openly, to wail.

Lament: Loud wailing and beating your breast in despair, to mourn fitfully (cf. Rev. 1:7).

When they see the smoke of her burning.

Some of those crossing the Euphrates on their way to Armageddon (16:12) may actually see the smoke rising from the burning city...The rest will watch Babylon's destruction through the world's media. – **John MacArthur**

Revelation 18:10 (NKJV)

10 “standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.’

Note they keep their distance for fear that they also may go up in flames, if they get too close. This is total annihilation by fire. No RESCUE efforts are taking place. It's “stay clear or die”! (cf. 18:4) This is EVIDENCE that a real city is in view! They cry “alas, alas” which in Greek is “ouai, ouai”. This appropriately sounds like what they are expressing, which is total anguish. In 8:13 it is translated as “woe”. The fall of Babylon represents the fall of a SYSTEM that affected the entire world. Many have surmised that this may be computer headquarters that coordinated the empire of antichrist. Whatever all is involved, it certainly seems this was CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS of the world's economy. This represents the COLLAPSE of the world's economy.

For in one hour your judgment has come: They are bemoaning the fact that it happened so SUDDENLY. This fact is brought out over and over as if they are shocked and can't believe it. Such a GREAT AND MIGHTY CITY, and yet it is brought down in one hour. That is to say with great unexpected suddenness (cf. Ps. 2:10-12).

Revelation 18:11 (NKJV)

11 “And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore:

Here we have the business men who buy and sell, who were getting rich off the system. They are weeping and mourning over Babylon, but really their concern is their “sales”. No more will Babylon be the catalyst in their financial enterprises. Babylon had been the major facilitator in their BUSINESS dealings, but now it is all falling down.

These folks have sold their souls out to the Babylonian commercial system of antichrist, and are now feeling really sorry for themselves, because it is all over in such short order (cf. 2 Cor. 7:10).

Now 28 items are listed relating to the STUFF they lived for. This was their god!

Revelation 18:12-13 (NKJV)

12 “merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble;

13 “and cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and

wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and bodies and souls of men.

Most of the items listed relate to exotic things and high living. This is what the Babylonian system was all about; STUFF, living for now, pampering self, wheeling and dealing in the fast lane, the life of luxury, the delicious life of excess and self-indulgence! Note at the end of verse 13, it says, “**and bodies and souls of men**”. This refers to slave trade in which Babylon will also traffic. We commonly, in our context, associate slave trade to a former barbaric time, but it is even now emerging as a real reality that will define the Babylonian system. This description of idolatrous opulence, in verses 12-13, is followed up by an interjection, in verse 14, that is a statement of final judgment!

Revelation 18:14 (NKJV)

14 “The fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you, and all the things which are rich and splendid have gone from you, and you shall find them no more at all.

The fruit – all the STUFF they lusted after and lived for is gone! All the STUFF that was rich and splendid is GONE and it is never coming back. They traded the permanent for the very temporary, and now it is over. The party is permanently over. They had their moment of debauchery, gratifying the flesh in every imaginable way. They thought it would continue indefinitely, but SUDDENLY a divine interruption brings it all crashing down (cf. Mt. 6:19-21).

Revelation 18:15 (NKJV)

15 “The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing,

Just as the kings stood at a distance, so do the merchants, and just as the kings were weeping and wailing (v. 9-10), so are the merchants (cf. Mk. 8:36).

Revelation 18:16 (NKJV)

16 “and saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls!’

That great city – the whole world was enamored with Babylon. It was the ritzy city of lights, glitter, glitz, and all that the flesh could enjoy. It was kind of like a Las Vegas (Sin City), only magnified many times over, and much more wealthy. It was the lap of luxury and self-aggrandizement. That great city WAS the pride of the world!

Revelation 18:17 (NKJV)

17 ‘For in one hour such great riches came to nothing.’ Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance

Note four times in this context, the emphasis on how quickly this happens (cf v. 8, 10, 16, 17).

Note the word NOTHING! It is all for not! For those who live for self and stuff, at the end of their life, one could write on their tombstone, “Vanity”, meaning emptiness/nothing. It all counted for nothing! (cf. the book of Ecclesiastes)

Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea

Now we see the response of the shipmasters, that is the pilots and all those involved with maritime trade.

Monarchs – v. 9-10

Merchants –v. 11-16

Mariners- v. 17-19

Note they all three³ are standing at A DISTANCE (v. 10, 15, 17). They obviously have the sense that if you get too close, you may be consumed in the fires of Babylon. This is not a small fire. Evidently a HUGE area surrounding Babylon will go up in a ball of fire. As a side note, the resiliency of world commerce is amazing. Remember that back in 8:9, a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed. What a comeback! But now it is all over!

Revelation 18:18 (NKJV)

18 “and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, ‘What is like this great city?’

All three of these groups – kings, merchants, mariners, speak of this great city (v. 10, 16, 18). They all are saying the same thing. They all have the same earthly perspective. They all were sold out to Babylon. Their mournful reflections are reminiscent of the worshipful statement regarding antichrist in 13:4.

In 13:4 “Who is like the beast?”

In 18:18 “What is like this great city?”

Previously, BABYLON had a world reputation as being the GREATEST, but now she has gone up in smoke.

Revelation 18:19 (NKJV)

19 “They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate.’

Threw dust on their heads: Denotes total despair. They are bemoaning the fact that their source of “riches” is gone. In effect, they are crying for themselves, not for Babylon per se. They are sorrowing, the sorrow of the world, which cries because of self, and not because of sin (cf. 2 Cor. 7:10). They are amazed at how QUICKLY this city is gone! People really underrate God. They tend to overrate man and underrate God (cf. v. 8).

All the wailing, lamenting, and weeping really is the beginning of hell for these folks. Hell is a place of unsatisfied desires. This comes right at the end of the Tribulation and eternity is in plain view now. These people are entering into the experience of anguish and despair that will never know relief. In that sense, this is the beginning of hell for these folks. Not only is Babylon aglow with fire and smoke, but on the horizon, coming in the clouds of glory, is the Almighty Judge, the Lamb of God, returning in all His glory! Now what?

There are TWO primary things that characterize the Babylonian system, as seen in Rev. 18.

1. Commitment to the self-life – the world.
2. Persecution of God’s people, as a reflection of rebellion against God.

The first part of the chapter deals with Babylon’s self life gratification; the last part deals with Babylon’s persecution of God’s people and her judgment because of it.

Revelation 18:20 (NKJV)

20 “Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!”

Heaven’s perspective and earth’s perspective are polar opposites. The world is mourning about Babylon, but heaven is called to rejoice OVER HER. God has brought judgment down on this evil system, and it is appropriate to rejoice in that triumph. This whole system represented perpetual REBELLION against God. But now it is over! Never again will a system of evil have dominance over the world. This is cause and occasion to REJOICE! The word “rejoice” is the same word used in

11:10 to describe the jubilation the world had over the death of the two witnesses. Now the tables are turned and heaven is called to rejoice, meaning to “make merry”. In 19:1-5, we have response to this exhortation.

In 18:9-19 we see THREE classes of mourners: Monarchs, Merchants, & Mariners.

In 18:20 we see THREE classes of rejoicers: Saints, Apostles, & Prophets.

The NKJV reads “holy apostles and prophets,” but actually the Greek text lists three classes with each one have a definite article to introduce it.

Saints – means set apart ones; – ones that belong to the Lord; “holy ones”.

Apostles – sent ones; special authoritative representatives of the Lord. However, it is used in both a technical and general sense in the NT, depending on the context.

Prophets – those who bring forth direct revelation from God. They speak, “Thus saith the Lord”, in the sense of a direct message from God.

These three classifications of saints are seen to be in heaven. They had been persecuted and martyred at the hand of Babylon. The cause for rejoicing is because God has NOW avenged them on her. This is answered prayer (cf. Rev. 6:9-11). This is divine PAY BACK! God has gotten even, so to speak. “Pay day – some day!” Vengeance is God’s. Retribution belongs to God (cf. Deut. 32:35, Rom. 12:19). Heaven is called to rejoice which is followed up by a statement of final judgment.

Revelation 18:21 (NKJV)

21 Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, “Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore.

Mighty angel – God often uses angels in these judgments

Stone like a great millstone – Millstones were large round stones that were used to crush grain. There were smaller ones that a human being could maneuver (cf. Mat. 24:41), and then there were large ones that a donkey would pull in a circle (cf. Mk. 9:42). These would be about 5 feet in diameter and 12 inches thick and would weigh several thousand pounds. The picture is of a HUGE GIGANTIC BOULDER being thrust into the sea which makes a huge splash, and then disappears to the bottom never to be seen again. Note the emphasis on “violence”. This fall is not tame and uneventful. This is not fading into the sunset through attrition. No, it is a very VIOLENT thing. It is THROWN DOWN!

Note again, it is called “the great city Babylon” because this is how the whole world knew her. One thing is synonymous with this city and it is the word GREAT! But when she is VIOLENTLY THROWN DOWN, she vanishes from sight, NEVER to be seen again, just like a huge boulder thrust into the sea. The picture here is one of destruction that is final, complete, and irreversible.

The destruction of the city of Babylon is the final blow to the times of the Gentiles, which began when the Babylonian army attacked Jerusalem in 605 B.C. (cf. Lk. 21:24).

– The Bible Knowledge Commentary

The times of the Gentiles began with Babylon and ends there, too. Ever since the Babylonian Captivity, Israel has never had a king on the throne. Now the KING (the Lord Jesus Christ) is on the way, as even now the armies of antichrist are assembling at Armageddon in the Land of Israel. Many people just don’t believe in a God who would judge like this. These don’t believe in a coming JUDGMENT DAY. To them, God is all love. They don’t really know the God of the Bible. They

understand that He is love, but they do not understand that He is also Holy. In making Him only a God of love, without holiness, they invent a god of their own. In effect, they are rejecting the God of the Bible.

Now special mention is made of various activities that defined this GREAT CITY that are forever silenced. We have already seen Babylon's tie with luxury, riches, and big business. Now, we see more.

Revelation 18:22 (NKJV)

22 “The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters shall not be heard in you anymore. No craftsman of any craft shall be found in you anymore, and the sound of a millstone shall not be heard in you anymore.

There will be no more worldly music; no more parties where God is not welcome. Generally music and a good time go together for the world. People often use music to sooth themselves in their rebellion. The world finds solace in its music. Music is used in lots of different ways, but considering the overall description of Babylon, it probably was in a party atmosphere or a self-absorbed flesh context that this music was enjoyed. The emphasis no doubt includes the night life, the self-life, the ballrooms, the dances, and the social gatherings. All with no thought for God! It was all about pleasure and having a good time.

Music in general is synonymous with joy. But now there is no more worldly joy, only eternal misery for those in Babylon.

No craftsman: No longer will anyone be working a trade in conjunction with the Babylonian system.

No sound of a millstone – no more will the sound of people preparing food for elaborate dining be heard.

Revelation 18:23 (NKJV)

23 “The light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore, and the voice of bridegroom and bride shall not be heard in you anymore. For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived.

The brilliant lights and glitter that defined this city are all gone. No more will she be the bridal city of the world (cf. Las Vegas). It is interesting that God repeatedly mentions WEDDINGS in connection with the self-life, and in conjunction with what will characterize humanity's perspective at the time of the second coming (cf. Joel 2:12-13, 15-16, Lk. 17:26-27).

Does God have a problem with marriage? Only if He is not invited! Only if He is not Lord of it (cf. Heb. 13:4). However, at many WEDDINGS, people tend to think (I speak generally now – in the sense of the world) very selfishly. I praise the Lord that I have had the privilege to have part in many God-honoring weddings where it wasn't just about SELF. However, for many it is essentially about SELF. They spend elaborate sums of money on themselves. They do elaborate things to draw attention to themselves. The focus is all on SELF. Certainly, wedding days should be special, but God should not be left out. In fact the major focus should be on Him. Whatever we do, we should do it to the glory of God (cf. 1 Cor. 10:31).

Note the six “no mores” in verses 21-23.

v. 21 Babylon shall not be found anymore. – no more Babylon

v. 22 Music shall not be heard anymore. – no more music

- v. 22 No craftsman found anymore. – no more trade
- v. 22 No millstone heard anymore. – no more preparing of food
- v. 23 No lights in the city anymore. – no more lights
- v. 23 No voice of the bridegroom and bride anymore – no more weddings.

What now characterizes the city is SILENCE, DARKNESS, AND THE ABSENCE OF JOY! The city is completely gone and no vestiges of HUMAN JOY remain! This is a God-forsaken place! This place is now SILENT AS A TOMBSTONE, as a millstone sunk to the bottom of the sea. This place so full of life, hustle and bustle, full of lively music, manufacturing, weddings and work; now is completely STILLED.

As this has never been fulfilled, it lends credence to the concept that Babylon will be rebuilt in the end time and then suffer this destruction at the time of the Second coming.

– John Walvoord

He now comes back to make one more final statement regarding commerce. This city and the idolatrous system that emanated from her was very intimately tied with commerce and making money. All her activities should be seen through this lens.

For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived.

The major players in the final form of Babylon will be merchants or business men. They make the world of Babylon go round. They exported and promoted what Babylon had come to stand for. They were great in terms of influence, power, and wealth. They made Babylon buzz. Their home base was Babylon, where they were nestled with antichrist at his world capital. But that is all history now! Babylon represents all this world has to offer, and you can write across it TEMPORARY!

Sorcery: The Greek word translated “sorcery” is a word from which we get our English word “pharmacy”. It has the idea of mixing drug use and occult practices which generally go together (cf. Rev. 9:21).

Two things are probably in view: The influence of the demonic world of the occult and the idea that the world has been brought under the “spell” of Babylon in that regard.

The world was in effect charmed by this GREAT city and thereby DECEIVED. They were so enamored with her luxury, her wealth, her power; and behind it all is the idea that this great world leader (antichrist) could do the miraculous (cf. 2 Thess. 2:9-10). There will be all kinds of demonic signs and wonders related to this city, and to the antichrist who probably resides there and makes it the capital of his world empire.

Note: **“all the nations were deceived”**.

The whole world got caught up in this deception. The Bible is very clear that antichrist will deceive the world and that he will govern the world. His control of business in conjunction with Babylon as his governing headquarters will be KEY.

So commerce, demonic religion, government are all tied together in antichrist at Babylon.

Revelation 18:24 (NKJV)

24 “And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth.”

Babylon – the city and the system lived for self, but also hated God’s people, which really is a reflection of hatred for God. The Babylonian system KILLED the people of God.

Prophets – those that spoke forth revelation from God that their audience did not want to hear. So they killed them.

Saints – those devoted and loyal to God and were killed for that reason.

All who were slain on the earth: This is a very comprehensive statement. In a sense the world of rebellion from the very beginning ties into this system. Cain killed Abel for religious reasons, etc. Down through history all murder is rebellion against God, and so in that sense ties into this system which is responsible for all of God’s people who were killed. God has not forgotten these dear martyrs – most of whom were killed in obscurity. Most of them were never granted humane rights. This rebel system, in which they were slaughtered wholesale, will come to a climax in the days of the Tribulation.

Some take it that this last statement is really dealing just with the context of the Tribulation (cf. Rev. 16:6). Whether this comprehensiveness addresses just the Tribulation Period alone or the whole of history, the point is made that this Babylonian system spared no expense in lavishly living for self and had no mercy in the persecution of God’s people (cf. Gal. 5:6, 1 Jn. 3:14, Jn. 13:34-35, 15:19-20, Mt. 25:31-46). They pampered themselves and martyred the saints. For Babylon, it was all about SELF. Anyone who got in the way of that agenda was hated and killed. Living for self/stuff and hating God and His people is really a package! This is what defines Babylon and in the end, God will avenge His people, because of what the world has done to them (cf. Acts 9:4, 2 Thess. 1:6-9).

Revelation 19:1 (NKJV)

1 After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, “Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God!”

After these things: After the events of chapter 18. Chronologically, after the fall of Babylon, this celebration begins in heaven.

We saw in chapter 18, at the fall of Babylon, the world of wicked earth-dwellers lamenting, but in CONTRAST, the response in heaven is one of praise and rejoicing. A whole new era is about to be ushered in. The time of the Gentiles is being shut down and the KINGDOM AGE is about to unfold. It’s time for HEAVEN to celebrate!!! This is what all of history has been moving toward! This is what the OT prophesies looked forward to. This is what Jesus taught us to pray for: “Thy kingdom come”. This is the climax of the Book of Revelation: The fall of Babylon. The coming of the King of kings.

I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven: This is a LOUD RESPONSE. There is no half- hearted response here.

A great multitude: Some think this is the same multitude of martyrs seen in 7:9. Others think these are angels, but we are not told exactly who they are. My thought would be that ALL OF HEAVEN is a stir with excitement and joy!

Alleluia!: This is the Hebrew word “Hallelujah” brought over into the Greek.

This is the only place in the New Testament [Rev. 19] where hallelujah occurs. It is a Hebrew word (“Praise Yah [Jehovah]). It was transliterated from the Hebrew into Greek and passed on into English. The same thing occurred with Amen, hosanna, and marantha.

– **Edward Hindson**

Hallel means praise and *Yah* means God. Therefore” Hallelujah” means PRAISE THE LORD!

In Psalms, there are certain Psalms that are called “Hallel” Psalms. In these Psalms, the emphasis is on high PRAISE. They are praise Psalms. Hallel is especially applied to Psalms 113-118 – often referred to as the Egyptian Hallel because 114 emphasizes the Exodus. These Hallel Psalms were sung at the Passover: Two of them before the meal and four of them after the meal. Hallel Psalms generally deal with the punishment of the ungodly and the salvation of God’s people, as we find here in Revelation.

The word “Hallelujah” does not occur in the NT until right here. It is the climactic praise word. It was not fitting till right NOW! But now it is time to use this HIGH CLIMACTIC PRAISE WORD! It occurs four times in Rev. 19:1-6 (cf. 1,3, 4, 6). This is high intensity praise to God. Heaven is excited! They are praising God with all they have to give! It is LOUD and rich with meaning!

Salvation: Deliverance from evil – the very presence of evil is being done away with.

Glory: Excellence commanding respect - high esteem.

Honor: Value, precious, very special (Not found in the better manuscripts).

Power: Strength.

Belong to the Lord our God! These attributes belong God. These realities are ascribed to Him. He has manifested these attributes in the putting down of Babylon. What a great God! Heaven is expressing His greatness in the most exalted way possible.

Revelation 19:2 (NKJV)

2 “For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her.”

Here we have the reason for heaven’s praise. The judgments brought on Babylon are right! If you say that God is wrong, you are on the wrong side of heaven (cf. Gen. 18:25, Rev. 16:7). Babylon influenced the world in flagrant idolatry and was responsible for the murder of God’s people. These are the main reasons such VENGEANCE. This PAY BACK from God is totally justified. They deserve to be judged by God in this way (cf. Rev. 6:10).

Revelation 19:3 (NKJV)

3 Again they said, “Alleluia! Her smoke rises up forever and ever!”

Here is the second cry of “Alleluia”. They are not saying, “Oh, that is too bad about Babylon”. NO! They are jubilant! They are praising God for bringing this arrogant, abusive system down (cf. Ex. 15:1-2). The sense seems to be that this place smolders forever, evidently throughout the duration of the millennial (1000-year) reign, and then beyond somehow in relation to the lake of fire (cf. Isa. 66:24, Rev. 14:9-11). The judgment here is PERMANENT, FINAL, COMPLETE, AND IRREVERSIBLE, and heaven praises God for it (cf. Ps. 104:35).

Revelation 19:4 (NKJV)

4 And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sat on the throne, saying, “Amen! Alleluia!”

In chapter 4 we dealt with the possible identity of the 24 elders. My position is that these probably represent the church in heaven. In chapter 4 we were also introduced to the four living creatures which I take to be an exalted category of angels.

Some see the multitude in verse 1 as angels, then add to that the church, then add to that the four living creatures plus the tribulation saints, etc., in verse 5. In other words by the time you break it down the WHOLE of heaven is involved in fervent praise to God on this occasion.

Note: The most exalted in heaven FALL DOWN and worship. Worship means to bow down. On the other hand God is on the throne. Heaven is bowed down and God is exalted on His throne.

Saying, Amen! Alleluia! Both the church and the exalted angels “Amen” the praises of the multitude in verses 1-3. They are in total agreement! Amen means “so be it”. It is a strong affirmation! They are affirming the attributes of God, and the judgment from God on Babylon. And now they add their own “Alleluia” to the Hallelujah chorus!

Revelation 19:5 (NKJV)

5 Then a voice came from the throne, saying, “Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!”

This is probably the voice of an angel. We have already seen a great multitude in verse 1; the 24 elders and 4 living creatures in verse 4 praising God. Now an even more comprehensive statement is made “all you His servants” are called on to praise God. All of heaven is called to PRAISE! This is a praise service. None are left out!

Servants – is really “slaves” (Gk. *doulos*). Someone might be considered a “big shot” on earth, but in heaven, all are “slaves” (cf. 19:10). It doesn’t matter in heaven, all are slaves of God, all are fellow WORSHIPPERS.

Note also that all in heaven are characterized as those “who fear Him”. That is those in heaven reverence God properly. Everybody is on the same page! They are those who yield to God, honor and obedience. When we think of “Praise” we think of the Psalms. Psalms was the song book of God’s people. We might call it the HIM book of God’s people because all worshipful praise is centered in HIM! Certainly in heaven all praise is focused on GOD! Many believe that indeed the worship in heaven at this point is based on the *Hallel* section of Ps. 113-118 (cf. Ps. 113:1, 115:13).

The context here is all about LORDSHIP.

Creatures great and small need authority. Now supreme authority has spoken, and all whose longing to be properly ruled has been satisfied in God cry out in ecstasy – Hallelujah!
– John Phillips

Revelation 19:6 (NKJV)

6 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!”

We have here the climactic counterpart of the fall of Babylon. Yes, heaven is celebrating the fall of Babylon, but the other side of the coin is the celebration of the reign of God. This statement gathers the Alleluia emphases of all the groups of heaven, brings them all together in one magnificent climactic crescendo!

Voice of a great multitude: Picture the largest crowd you have ever witnessed exuberantly crying out at the top of their lungs, then magnify that thousands of times over, and you might get a feel for this.

Note the TRIPLE EMPHASIS....

Voice of a great multitude – a huge crowd.

Sound of many waters - (cf Niagara falls or the crashing of sea waves).

Sound of mighty thunderings (The kind that makes you tremble).

The volume here is INCREDIBLE! And what is being amplified from the mouths of those in heaven is, “Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!”

This is the fourth and final Hallelujah! This is the climactic praise word being shouted out with decibels that makes Heaven RING! It all builds to this MIGHTY CRESCENDO! We see the same thing in the book of Psalms. It all builds to the FINAL HALLEL SECTION. Psalms 146-150 all end with Hallelujah. And then it finally climaxes with Psalm 150 (cf. Ps. 150:1, 6). It is fitting the PRAISE BOOK (Psalms), the HIM BOOK of God’s people, ends with Hallelujah! It is fitting at this climactic point in Revelation that all of HEAVEN lets loose with this climactic praise in sonic boom-like fashion – ALLELUIA!!!

Why are they so enthusiastically praising God? Because the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! **God Almighty REIGNS!** (cf. Ex. 15:8, Isa. 9:6-7, Lk. 1:31-33, Acts 1:6, 2 Thess. 1:5, Rev. 11:15).

Omnipotent: Almighty, al- powerful, sovereign. This designation of Omnipotent/Almighty is used 9 times of God in Revelation (1:8, 4:8, 11:17, 15:3, 16:7, 14, 19:6, 15, 21:22).

The climactic Alleluias of this passage celebrate...

- 1) The salvation of God - v. 1.
- 2) The judgment of Babylon - v. 2-3.
- 3) The Person of God - v. 4-5.
- 4) The reign of God - v. 6.

This Hallelujah choir scene now segues to the marriage supper of the Lamb. This celebration atmosphere is a fitting introduction to the marriage supper of the Lamb as found in 19:7-10.

Revelation 19:7 (NKJV)

7 “Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.”

This is a time of heavenly celebration! It is now time for the marriage of the Lamb! Weddings are a time of festive celebration, a time of joy and gladness. This is the marriage of the Lamb and so it calls for an unparalleled celebration. In our culture the FOCUS on the wedding day is on the bride. All eyes are waiting for her appearance, and they play, “Here Comes the Bride”. Everyone rises and all eyes are on her. But in this case, the emphasis is on the BRIDEGROOM, the LAMB! The cry is to “give Him glory”.

Note that the marriage of the Lamb in many ways parallels the Jewish wedding customs in the NT days. A Jewish wedding involved a number of phases.

Phase One: Covenanted. The Betrothal Period. Either the parents or the prospective bridegroom would negotiate with the prospective bride’s parents about the price of a dowry. In other words, the purchase price of the bride. Once the price was paid, the marriage covenant was thereby established. The young man and woman were legally considered husband and wife. The marriage was now covenanted! The betrothal period would last for one year. During this time the young man would prepare a house for the couple in close proximity to his father’s house. She would ready herself for marriage physically, emotionally, etc.

Phase Two: Consummation. At the end of 12 months, the bridegroom would come for his bride. She never knew exactly when he would show up, so she had to be ready all the time. Usually he made the trip by night with a torch-lit procession. The groom’s arrival would be preceded by a SHOUT which signaled her to immediately come out to meet him. The wedding party would then

return to father's house. The couple would enter into the bridal chamber for one week. There the marriage UNION would now be consummated. She would not come out during this week at all. At the end of that week, she would come out, and her veil would be removed.

PhaseThree: Celebration. Following the consummation, there would be a celebration – a period of feasting and making merry.

By way of application, the church is right now betrothed to Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 11:2). He has paid the price for us and we have entered into a COVENANT RELATIONSHIP with Him by faith. His paying for us is reflected in the name "Lamb". He purchased His bride with His blood. At this point Christ is away preparing a place for us in Father's house. We love Him, but we have not seen Him (cf. 1 Pet. 1:8). Christ has given to us the "engagement ring", the promise of consummation, in giving us the Holy Spirit, who is repeatedly spoken of as the guarantee (cf. Eph. 1:13-14, 2 Cor. 1:22, 5:5). One of these days Christ is going to come for His bride [the church] and take her back to Father's house where the marriage will be officially consummated. This is what is in view in Rev. 19:7. Marriage signifies intimacy of relationship. It signifies the culmination of a covenant relationship (cf. Eph. 5:32).

Note the contrast: Babylon was all about relationship with idolatrous unfaithful religion and in 18:23 we read there will be no more marriage there and the world laments. In contrast there is rejoicing in heaven because of the marriage ceremony taking place between Jesus Christ and His bride.

Note: The wife has made herself ready. What this entails, we are not told. However, many believe this relates to the Judgment Seat of Christ spoken of in 1 Cor. 3 and 2 Cor. 5. This is the believer's judgment in which believers' works will be examined by fire. Anything not meeting Christ's approval will be burned up. Only that which is of good quality will survive and be the basis of our eternal reward. This phrase would seem to indicate that the Church has now completed that process and is ready to be presented to Christ (cf. Eph. 5:25-27). Even now God is applying a SANCTIFYING PROCESS to His bride, but it will reach consummation at the Judgment Seat of Christ when all dross will be forever removed. Apparently the believers' judgment comes first, and then the timing of this marriage is right before the second coming of Christ.

Revelation 19:8 (NKJV)

8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

In salvation, at the MOMENT we truly believe in Christ as Lord and Savior, we are clothed with the righteousness of Christ. His righteousness is imputed to our account. On the basis of Christ, God accounts us righteous (cf. Rom. 3:21-24, 4:5, 5:19, 1 Cor. 1:30, 2 Cor. 5:21, Phil. 3:8-9). That is justification. It is a judicial declaration – the statement of a Judge declaring us RIGHT with Him on the basis on Christ's sacrifice. However, that is not what is in view here.

The garments that the bride of Christ has on at this point relates to her works – literally, her "righteous deeds".

The delicate balance between the sovereignty of God and human responsibility is maintained in the two phrases "has made herself ready" (she did it) and "it was given to her (God did it). The brides array is "fine linen" which is explained as "the righteous acts of the saints." In other words, the bride's wedding garment will be made up of righteous deeds done in life. The bride is the bride because of the righteousness of Christ; the bride is clothed for the wedding because of her acts. Righteous acts flow from a righteous character, which is entirely of the grace of God. – **Charles Ryrie**

In addition to wearing what Christ has done for us, we will be wearing what we have done for Him, all by the grace of God (cf. Phil. 2:12-13, 1 Jn. 2:28, Eph. 2:10). What we weave in time, we will wear in eternity.

Fine Linen: Expensive cloth used to make the garments worn by priests and royalty.

Clean: Reflects purity, loyalty, and faithfulness.

Bright: Speaks of radiant bright white that depicts glorification. The clothing of the bride stands in stark contrast to the gaudy apparel of the harlot described in 17:4, 18:16.

Revelation 19:9 (NKJV)

9 Then he said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!’ ” And he said to me, “These are the true sayings of God.”

There has been lots of discussion about who the bride is for sure, as well as the location and timing of the marriage supper. I have indicated that I believe the wife is the Church.

It is true that in the OT, Israel is often referred to as the wife of God, albeit very unfaithful. However, in this context, I do believe the wife is the Church.

- 1) The scene is in heaven prior to the 2nd coming. Only the Church will have made herself ready at that point having been completed, resurrected and judged.
- 2) In the OT, Israel was pictured as a wife of the Lord already officially married. By contrast, in the NT, the church is pictured as a virgin awaiting the coming of her bridegroom. She is just betrothed, awaiting the official marriage.
- 3) A place on Christ's throne is promised to overcomers in the church, which is the position of the bride (Rev. 3:21).
- 4) The apparel of the armies that are coming with Christ at His second coming match that of His bride. (19:14)

The difficulty of including Israel along with the church as part of the bride is a chronological one. OT saints and dead saints from the period of Daniel's 70th week will rise in time for the Millennium (Dan. 12:1-2) but not in time to join Christ in His triumphal return (19:14).

– **Robert Thomas**

So it would appear that in chapter 19, the “bride” is the church. However, when we get to the New Jerusalem in the eternal state in Rev. 21-22, the city is also spoken of as the bride, evidently referring to its citizens. At that point both OT and NT saints are represented.

Yet it is incontrovertible that Israel will appear with the church in the New Jerusalem which is also Christ's bride. The city's twelve pillars and twelve foundations (21:12, 14) prove the presence of both distinctive groups.

So the bride of Christ will be a growing body of people, with the church functioning as Christ's bride during that phase of the wedding feast that comes during the Millennium, but with the integration of the new order (21:1) the bride receives the enhancement of the redeemed of Israel and of all ages, including the Millennium. – **Robert Thomas**

While the term ‘bride’ often refers to the church, and does so here...it ultimately expands to include all the redeemed of all ages, which becomes clear in the remainder of the book.

– **John MacArthur**

Write: Evidently the angel who began addressing John at 17:1 is in view.

Blessed – Happy. This is the 4th of 7 beatitudes in Revelation (cf. 1:3, 14:13, 16:15, 19:9, 20:6, 22:7, 22:14). Each of the beatitudes pronounces the blessedness of those who are in right relationship to Christ.

We have seen the betrothal period which relates to the present church age. We have seen the marriage proper which will evidently take place in heaven after the judgment seat of Christ. Now we see the marriage SUPPER of the Lamb. This is the celebration phase of the wedding.

Some think this supper takes place in heaven prior to the kingdom. However, a majority think it takes place in the kingdom.

The normal understanding would be that the event, coming after the destruction of Babylon and at the end of the Great Tribulation has the second coming of Christ to earth as its climax. This fixes the place of the feast as on earth and the time as during the Millennium.

– **Robert Thomas**

The saved of the ages will participate in this great supper. All the saved of all the ages will be invited, that is called, and they are the blessed in view.

“These are the true sayings of God” This is a solemn statement commonly verifying something that is being emphasized. It drives home the CERTAINTY of it.

In recognition that 19:9 is part of the concluding formula of the angel who became John’s guide in 17:1; the best interpretation is to refer “these words” to the prophecies and revelations since then. – **Robert Thomas**

Revelation 19:10 (NKJV)

10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, “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.”

One of the great evidences of the truthfulness of Scripture is that it tells the truth about great men of God even when it is bad. The Bible is not a book we would have written could we have written it, and it is not a book we could have written, would we have. John here tells of a terrible blunder on his part. He falls down to worship the angel who is telling him these things. And the worst part is he will do it again a short time later in 22:8-9, and will again have to be reprimanded.

To worship means to bow down before in the sense of adoring a “higher power”. It is beyond mere respect. It attributes worth, honor, and adoration that is only due God. Perhaps the glory of heaven overwhelmed John so that he was somewhat disoriented. It is easy for us to be critical, but here he is in the presence of a glorious heavenly being, in the context of being shown overwhelmingly incredible prophetic things. He is so overwhelmed, that he feels compelled to worship. The angel quickly corrects him.

Fellow servant – fellow slave. The angel tells John that they are on the same level in that they both SERVE the Higher Power. One is a glorious being, and John is not yet at this point, but both are under God and serve His purposes.

And of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus.

The angel lumps himself with the great company of believers who faithfully identify with and promote Jesus. 22:8-9 sheds more light on the sense of this. They are those who are faithful to the truth about Jesus. They hold fast to the witness of Jesus. And with that thought in mind, comes the

exhortation to “Worship God!” Worship is for God alone, not angels or any one else (cf. Acts 10:25-26, Col. 2:18).

It is noteworthy that when John falls down to worship an angel both here and in 22:8-9, that he is immediately corrected, and it is made clear that this is forbidden. However, in 1:17, when John fell at the feet of Jesus, there is no such reprimand; only the removal of fear. Clearly Jesus is GOD! In the Bible, NEVER are people rebuked for worshipping Jesus. In fact it is always seen to be proper because in fact Jesus is God (cf. Mt. 14:33). Note in this verse that “Worship God” is bracketed on both sides by “the testimony of Jesus” strongly inferring that worship is to be directed to Him. The angel in effect is saying, “It is not about me or any of us. It is all about Jesus. Worship God! Worship Jesus!”

For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. This is saying that prophecy always has Jesus as its theme. It all points to Jesus in one form or another. Jesus is the center and theme of all prophecy. Jesus is the grand subject of this book (cf. Rev. 1:1).

The angel is saying that all this Revelation centers on Christ. That is the point of all this: WORSHIP GOD! WORSHIP JESUS!

Luke 24:25-27 (NKJV)

25 Then He said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?” 27 And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

...the Lord Jesus gave them the great key to the understanding of Scripture – that He Himself is its subject and that in Him the entire Book finds its unity.

– **Scofield Study Bible**

The purpose and nature of prophecy is to testify of Christ. The “spirit” of essentially all prophecy is to point to Christ. The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. It is all about Him! Worship God! This statement introduces that great climactic moment of which all prophecy has been looking toward, and which is the grand subject of this book - THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST!!!

Note THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST is His Second Coming, and is not to be confused with the Rapture of the Church. They are two separate events.

Contrasting the Rapture of the Church with the Revelation of Christ

Rapture	Revelation (Second Coming)
1. Coming for the Church.	1. Coming to reign.
2. Concealed “in the clouds” - not visible to the world – 1Th. 4:17.	2. Revealed – all eyes shall see Him - Rev. 1:7, Matt. 24:27.
3. Sudden appearance – caught away in a moment – 1 Cor. 15:52, 1Th. 4:17.	3. Protracted presence - Zech. 12:10, Rev. 19:15.
4. Meeting in the air – 1 Thess. 4:17.	4. Place of arrival – on earth – Zech. 14:3-4, Rev. 19:15.
5. The Lord Himself receives the Church to Himself - 1 Thess. 4:16.	5. The Lord with the armies of heaven come to the earth - Rev. 19:14.
6. A N.T. “mystery” – 1 Cor. 15:51.	6. A “Revelation” made known in the O.T. – Zech. 12 & 14.
7. The day of Christ – 1 Cor. 1:8, 2 Cor. 1:14, Phil. 1:6, 10, 2:16.	7. The day of the Lord – 1 Th. 5:1-3.
8. With the Lord – “receive you to Myself” – Jn. 14:3.	8. Reign on the earth – they will receive Him – Zech. 12:10.

9. Descent and Ascent....

9. Descent only....

One of the great evidences that Rev 19 is not the rapture is that there is no hint of the translation of living saints as found in 1 Cor. 15 and 1 Thess. 4. This is the Revelation, not the Rapture!

The second coming of Christ is the most anticipated event in human history. It is the ultimate fulfillment of our Lord's promise to return. It is also the culmination of all biblical prophecy. The return of Christ is the final apologetic! Once He returns, there will be no further need to debate His claims or the validity of the Christian message. The King will come in person to set the record straight. Revelation 19 is probably the most dramatic chapter in the entire Bible. It is the final capstone to the death and resurrection of Christ. – **Edward Hindson**

In relation to His bride, the emphasis is on Him being the Lamb, but now in relation to His coming, it is on His Lordship and His Kingship. He is coming as Lord of lords and King of kings. The imagery throughout is one of a conquering King.

Revelation 19:11 (NKJV)

11 Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.

I saw... is introductory to the first of 7 scenes that bring closure to the book of Revelation. This vision connects with the 7th bowl introduced in 16:17-21, and expanded on in chapters 17-18. It flows to this climactic point.

In Rev. 4:1 John saw a door open in heaven which contextually relates to the Rapture.

In Rev. 6:14-17 the sky receded evidently for just a short time and the earth saw God on His throne; and they call on the mountains and rocks to hide them from the face of God.

Now in Rev. 19:11, John sees heaven opened to REVEAL the great KING and His bride (cf. Ps. 24:7-10). This is the time to sing, "Joy to the World, the Lord is come, let earth receive her King".

This event is preceded by blackness – the darkened sun, moon gone out, stars fallen, smoke – then lightening and blinding glory as Jesus comes. – **John MacArthur**

"I saw heaven opened" This specifically answers to Rev. 1:7.

and behold, a white horse. The irony here is amazing. When Jesus Christ opens the first seal which introduces the Tribulation period, the first thing mentioned in Rev. 6:2 is a rider on a white horse. This is the antichrist deceptively coming as a man of PEACE. He comes on the scene rather inconspicuously as the little horn (Dan. 7:8). He comes as a great peacemaker entering into a 7-year covenant with Israel (Dan. 9:24-27, cf. 1 Thess. 5:3). Satan constantly imitates God in a deceptive kind of way. In Revelation, we see an evil trinity, namely Satan, the antichrist, and the false prophet, imitating the true Trinity. We see antichrist in various ways imitating the true Christ. Antichrist raises from the dead as did Christ. Antichrist comes on a white horse as will Jesus. And so forth... (cf. Isa. 14:12-15).

But now we see the GENUINE article: The real Christ coming on a white horse. In the Roman Empire, when a Roman General won a victory he would come back home riding on a WHITE HORSE. It signified victory, conquest, and triumph. So with Jesus, this signifies the Messiah/Warrior coming in victory and triumph. The first time he came meek, mild, and lowly, riding into Jerusalem on a donkey (cf. Matt. 21:4-7, Zech. 9:9).

That was His first coming. But now He is coming on a WHITE HORSE in power and glory as triumphant King of kings and Lord of lords! The white horse is rich with symbolism, but the real attention is on the rider HIMSELF, as the remainder of the paragraph is focused on Him.

Faithful and True: Meaning He is Trustworthy and Real/Reliable. In contrast to antichrist, who is a deceiver; Jesus Christ is Faithful and True. He will make good on all His promises. His character is reliable. He will come through in accordance with His Word. The same two adjectives describe the words of the one on the throne in 21:5, 22:6.

In righteousness He judges and makes war. His actions of judgment are in accord with what is RIGHT. This is a “just war”! It is in accordance with God’s holiness. These people are getting what they truly deserve. It is right/righteous (cf. Acts 17:30-31).

At His first coming, Jesus came to save; to be the Savior of the World. This time He is coming to JUDGE. In view here is the Battle of Armageddon, or what is here called the “war” (cf. Ex. 15:3). 245 times in the OT, God is referred to as “The Lord of Hosts”; that is the God of the armies of heaven. At His first coming, He came on a “peace” mission. At His second coming, He comes as a man of war, to fully and finally put down all His enemies. All resistance will be squashed.

Revelation 19:12 (NKJV)

12 His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself.

His eyes were like a flame of fire in keeping with the vision of Rev. 1:14 (cf. 2:18). His eyes are able to fully penetrate all rebellion and unbelief. His gaze sees right through everyone. HE is omniscient and His judgment is totally accurate.

On His head were many crowns – that is diadems or “rulers’ crowns”, kingly crowns. In the old days when a king was defeated his crown was then given to the conquering king (cf. 2 Sam. 12:30). Jesus now has all the crowns of all the rulers, because He is putting them all down (cf. Rev. 11:15). All that these crowns signify, we cannot say, but most certainly they indicate total and absolute sovereignty. Jesus alone is sovereign ruler over all.

He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. What this means, we cannot say, because we are not told. We have to leave it there. It does show us that there are things about Jesus we still don’t know. There is awesome mystery too deep for us to comprehend. John could see the name but he couldn’t comprehend it! His person is unfathomable, indescribable. How awesome is the person of Jesus Christ. We can never fathom the depths of Him. The secret things belong to the Lord our God (Deut. 29:29, cf. Judges 13:18, Isa. 9:6). Some have suggested that perhaps this secret name ties in with the secret name God will give to the overcomers (cf. Rev. 2:17).

Revelation 19:13 (NKJV)

13 He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.

His robe is blood red in anticipation of the ensuing battle. We believe this is reflective of Isa. 63.

Isaiah 63:2-3 (NKJV)

2 Why is Your apparel red, And Your garments like one who treads in the winepress?

3 “I have trodden the winepress alone, And from the peoples no one was with Me. For I have trodden them in My anger, And trampled them in My fury; Their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, And I have stained all My robes.

When Christ comes to Armageddon, it is going to be a blood-bath, but this time it is not His blood that will be shed, but rather that of His enemies. This is the picture here.

His name is called the Word of God. John is the only NT writer that refers to Jesus as the “Word”. His Gospel starts out this way, as well as does the epistle of 1 John.

Word is “Logos” referring to communication. In effect, Jesus is the communication of God. Jesus communicates God to us. Word means the expression of thought. So the idea is the expression of God, the revealer of God. He is “the image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15). He is “the express image of His person” (Heb. 1:3). Jesus is the full and final revelation of God, and this is the consummation of that Revelation. He revealed His love in full measure at His first coming. Now His Righteousness/Holiness is fully on display!

Revelation 19:14 (NKJV)

14 And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.

There are three reasons to believe this army refers to the saints in heaven, with special emphasis on the bride of Christ (the Church). Others may be included such as angels, but they are not specifically emphasized in this verse. We know angels will be accompanying Christ, but they don’t seem to be mentioned here.

1. The clothing is essentially identical to that which is worn by the bride in 19:8, referring to the Church.
2. These armies would seem to correspond to the “called, chosen, and faithful” of 17:14 who accompany the Lamb as He engages the antichrist and his forces in war. This is language that consistently relates to the saints.
3. Also, the promise, in 19:15, of the overcomer to share in the ruling with a rod of iron as Christ does here, would seem to indicate the Church is involved.

I take it that essentially the bride of Christ, the Church is in view. However, “armies” is plural and could suggest several companies of people (that is OT saints, Tribulation saints), in addition to the church. We know from other passages that angels will be there. It would seem appropriate that all of heaven is emptied out on this occasion. However, again I think the contextual emphasis is on the bride, specifically the church at this juncture (cf. Jude 14-15).

In most wars, the General is in the back, while the armies are out in front doing the “hard” work of combat. In this case, the General, the King, is out in front and the armies are following. In fact the armies in this case are merely spectators. They have no weapons, no swords, no shields, no armor, and they do not fight. The LORD does all the fighting. Jesus single-handedly defeats the armies of the antichrist. The Church is simply there to celebrate and ride in the GRAND HEAVENLY PROCESSION of the King of kings. The rejected Savior is now returning in triumph as rightful ruler over all the world and WE (the church) ARE WITH HIM! We are going to have a front row seat and watch Him single-handedly wipe out the antichrist and his forces!

People wonder whether there will be animals in heaven. We can’t say much about that, but obviously there will be lots of white horses!

Revelation 19:15 (NKJV)

15 Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

The word for sword here denotes a large sword approximately 5 feet long. It goes out of His mouth which I take it symbolically relates to His Word, which in turn relates to His will.

All Jesus has to do is say the Word, to will it, and He wipes out the nations in rebellion (cf. Isa. 11:14, 2 Thess. 2:8).

He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. This emphasizes that He will crush and shatter them. It is the same idea found in Ps. 2:9. In fact this is the fulfillment of the Ps. 2 passage.

He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. The language here emphasizes brutal judgment and wrath. This is high intensity wrath.

Winepress... is vivid and colorful descriptive language related to judgment as already seen in Rev. 14. In the old days, the winepress consisted of two vats – one lower than the other with a duct connecting the two. Grapes would be thrown into the elevated one and then people would get into the vat and stomp and crush the juice out of the grapes resulting in the juice running into the lower vat. This is the picture of this judgment at the “feet” of Jesus Christ. He is going to stomp the rebel nations to where the blood is pictured, in Rev. 14:20, as being as high as the horses’ bridles for the space of the Holy Land. No wonder Jesus is clothed with a robe DIPPED IN blood.

Note the connection of “The Word of God” – the communication of God in v. 13, and the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God here in verse 15. Clearly Jesus, the expression of God, is expressing the wrath of God in full measure at this point. He is clearly communicating judgment. This also emphasizes that Jesus is ALMIGHTY GOD. If He Himself alone does it, how can it be the wrath of Almighty God, if indeed He is not God Almighty? The fact is, He is! He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God, because He is Almighty God! The book both begins and ends with this emphasis (cf. 1:8, 19:15).

Revelation 19:16 (NKJV)

16 And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Sitting on a horse, His robe and His thigh would be very visible.

King of kings and Lord of lords: This title in Scripture always denotes absolute sovereignty over all other kings and lords, over all other rulers and masters. This is Christ’s VICTORIOUS NAME! It signifies that He is the absolute supreme ruler over all other so-called authorities. It is to Him that every knee will bow and every tongue confess that “Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God” (Phil. 2:9-11, cf. Mt. 24:30).

In 19:11-16 we see the scene in HEAVEN!

In 19:17-21 we see the scene on EARTH!

Revelation 19:17 (NKJV)

17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, “Come and gather together for the supper of the great God,

Angels are prominent in the book of Revelation in relation to roles they play concerning the Second Coming.

The word angel means “messenger”, and they are key in communicating what God wants communicated. This is the second of the 7 “I saw” scenes that bring Revelation to closure. This angel is standing in the sun. That is, he is positioned conspicuously silhouetted in the sun so that the whole of his “bird” audience might get the message.

Cried with a loud voice. In relation to events tied with the Second Coming, repeatedly the emphasis is on a LOUD VOICE (cf. 18:2, 19:1, 19:17). The point is one of EMPHASIS signifying the IMPORTANCE of these momentous events.

This SUPPER is not to be confused with the marriage supper of the Lamb spoken of earlier in 19:7-9. The marriage supper of the Lamb indicates the celebration of Christ's union with His bride. This supper here indicates the destruction of Christ's enemies.

In effect, all the birds of prey are being summoned; all the scavenger birds, vultures, eagles, carrion birds that eat road kill, etc. In view are birds that fly in the midst of heaven. That is they circle high above looking for food. God says, "I have some food for you and lots of it." Mainly HUMAN FLESH! Come and "gorge" yourselves. Supper refers to the main meal of the day. God is going to wipe out these people in mass, which in effect, becomes a great SUPPER for the birds. That is why it is called THE SUPPER OF THE GREAT GOD (cf. Mt. 24:28).

Revelation 19:18 (NKJV)

18 "that you may eat 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."

The language of this judgment is borrowed from Ezek 39:17-20. The Ezekiel passage actually is referencing a great Northern power in alliance with a host of Muslim nations that will be judged by God. As I would take it, this will be at a time near the middle of the Tribulation. However, the descriptive language also fits in relation to the second coming.

Five times in this verse the word FLESH is mentioned. Note: There is no distinction. Whatever the rank, status, position, all who are arrayed with antichrist at this point will experience the same fate; namely they are going to die and the birds are going to eat their FLESH! God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). God at this point is going to reduce His enemies to bird food. In the OT the Jews put a tremendous emphasis on a proper burial. To leave a body out in the open to decompose or be eaten by birds and animals was the height of shame and disgrace. It was a sign of extreme judgment (cf. 1 Kgs. 21:23-24, Jer. 22:18-19). Repeatedly we find in the OT that those who were especially cursed by God had judgment pronounced on them that involved being eaten by birds (cf. Deut. 28:26, 1 Sam. 17:46, 1 Kings 14:11, 16:4; Ps. 79:2; Jer. 7:33, 16:4, 19:7, 34:20, Ezek. 29:5).

The consistent testimony of Scripture is that this signifies that which is demeaning. In the context of judgment, it signifies someone cursed by God and judged in a most humiliating and severe manner. There is going to be so much carnage that in 14:20, it spoke of the blood flowing from the winepress in a stream about 200 miles long, covering the Holy Land; a river of blood that will be as high as the horses' bridle. This will be the greatest slaughter the world has ever known; a literal blood-bath!

Note at this point the emphasis on God's greatness! Only God is GREAT! Everyone else that resisted His LORDSHIP is dead! The invitation has been given to the birds. Now the scene itself is described that leads to this great supper.

Revelation 19:19 (NKJV)

19 And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.

Saw the beast – that is antichrist.

Kings of the earth – those who are aligned with antichrist.

Their armies- This will include the 10 kings who form the hub of antichrist's empire 17:14. But also texts like Zech. 14 envision all the kings of the earth and their armies represented here (cf. Zech. 14:2).

The kings of the earth have assembled in the Holy Land, evidently for the purpose of exterminating Israel/Jerusalem as seen in other texts (cf. 16:14). I take it these believe they are coming to wipe out Israel/Jerusalem, but in fact God in His sovereignty is bringing them TOGETHER for judgment (cf. Joel 3:2).

They are gathered together, united in their rebellion and their defiance of God. This is the spirit of "Babylon". They seem to have the mentality that there is safety in NUMBERS (cf. Prov. 16:4-5). The flagrant boldness of this is amazing. These are willing and ready to take on the God of heaven when they see Him coming in the clouds of heaven. It's kind of like Satan thinking he could overthrow God (cf. Isa. 14). That is a bad move (cf. Ps. 2). Thus, the antichrist and his forces prepare to battle against Jesus and His army. These people are really acting out in reality what is true of all unbelievers. They are in fact the enemies of God (cf. Rom. 5:10).

Fallen man is not simply an imperfect creature who needs improvement: he is a rebel who must lay down his arms. - **C.S. Lewis**

Note the battle of Armageddon is a very ONE-SIDED affair! In fact, there is no real battle. The rebels all line up to fight, and then it is over. They are the eternal losers! In verse 19, antichrist and his forces are "gathered together to make war...", and then immediately in the next verse we find it is OVER!

Revelation 19:20 (NKJV)

20 Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.

The first thing mentioned is that the beast (antichrist) is captured. His cohort, the false prophet is also apprehended. He is described in terms of his most defining characteristic, mainly his satanically-empowered signs and wonders that he was allowed to do in the presence of antichrist (cf. 13:13). The world has no excuse, but it was DECEIVED by this miracle-working false prophet. People are very taken in by his Satanically-empowered supernatural activity. Satan too has miracle-working power that he uses in a deceptive way (cf. 2 Cor. 11:14). The false prophet will perform incredible signs to show that antichrist is supposedly God. The problem is that these miracles will not be in accordance with Scripture as Christ's were (cf. Jn. 5:43).

Note the connection between the mark of the beast and worshipping his image. In effect, to take the mark is to be a beast-worshipper. We saw this same reality back in 14:11.

These two were cast alive into the lake of fire. This is the first mention of "the lake of fire" by this name. Up to this point in the Scriptures it was referred to as *gehenna*. Jesus used the word "*gehenna*" to describe hell. The word alludes to a place in the OT where people sacrificed their children to false gods (cf. 2 Chron. 28:3). Later this place was the national DUMP of Israel where garbage and refuse continually burned (cf. Jer. 7:31). Very possibly when Jesus spoke on hell he could have turned and pointed to "*gehenna*", the dump that continually burned, and said that this is what it will be like (cf. 2 Kings. 16:3, 23:10, Jer. 7:31-32, 19:6, Matt. 5:22, Mk. 9:43).

Now John uses the even more descriptive phrase "lake of fire". This is the final destination of the lost. This is the final place of punishment where the lost go after their judgment.

Brimstone: Is burning, yellow, sulfurous material. The gagging smell of sulfur is very much like rotten eggs. It is a stifling smell. It is consistently used in reference to TORMENT (cf. Gen. 19:24, Rev. 14:9-11) in combination with fire. That is HELL!

Note: They are cast alive into the lake of fire. They are the first ones to go there. Up to that point no one will be in the lake of fire. It's as if Jesus says, "You can go straight to hell", and they do. (cf. Num. 16:30-34). O.T. sinners went to Hades. Hades refers to the realm of departed spirits. There was a paradise section and a torment section (cf. Lk. 16:19-31). Jesus went to the paradise section when He died (cf. Ps. 16:10, Lk. 23:43, Acts 2:27). Today when sinners die they still go to the torment section of Hades awaiting resurrection and final judgment at which time they will be confined to the lake of fire. Today when believers die they go to heaven to be with Christ to await the resurrection (cf. Phil. 1:21-23). In the end all people will be resurrected. They will all receive resurrected bodies that will be suited either for heaven or for hell, but everyone is going to receive a resurrected body.

Evidently these two, the beast and the false prophet, are instantaneously judged and fitted with bodies that are suited for the lake of fire (cf. Dan. 7:11). They go to the lake of fire at this point at Christ's Second Coming. However, 1000 years later, at the end of Christ's millennial reign, they are still there suffering (20:10). The text is clear their TORMENT IS forever. So annihilation is not in view. Also, not in view is some kind of purgatory in which they get better and get out. No, they are there forever. And, according to Rev. 20:14-15,

all the lost of all the ages will eventually join them for all eternity (cf. Mt. 25:41, Mk. 9:48, Lk. 3:17, 2 Thess. 1:9).

Revelation 19:21 (NKJV)

21 And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.

In effect, Jesus says to antichrist and his false prophet, "Go straight to hell", and he says to all their armies, "Drop dead", and it is over!

The sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him evidently refers to His spoken Word of judgment (cf. Gen. 1, Heb. 11:3). All Jesus needs to do is say the word and the "war" with antichrist is over. This is probably what is in view when it speaks of the "sword of His mouth".

For the 6th time in this paragraph, we have the word flesh in view and again it is in reference to the birds eating the flesh of those who are killed. The truly amazing thing is how great the buildup to this Battle of Armageddon is, and then it is over! I think this point highlights the greatness of the one coming on the white horse, the one who is King of kings and Lord of lords. He is so GREAT that there really is no battle. When He shows up, it is all over, but the wailing! Triumph is swift, decisive, and complete! The curtain quickly comes down on the stage of human history, called the times of the Gentiles. Now comes the KINGDOM OF OUR LORD!

There are two great suppers in view in this chapter: The marriage supper of the Lamb and the supper for the birds, in which God's enemies are reduced to bird food. What a contrast!

Chapter 20 now gives us the grand contrast between the fate of Satan and those who follow him, and the blessed destiny of the faithful followers of Christ in the kingdom.

Revelation 20:1 (NKJV)

1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

I saw is the third of seven progressive final scenes that round out the book.

John sees an angel coming down from heaven. Some have supposed this to be Christ because they surmise that only Christ can really put Satan away like this. However, Christ is never presented as an angel AFTER the incarnation. Prior to that, He does appear from time to time as THE angel of the Lord, but never after the incarnation. Perhaps this is Michael the archangel or some other powerful angel. However, we don't know the exact identity of this angel because we are not told. It very possibly is the same angel as was seen opening the pit in 9:1 to let out a hoard of demons.

Having the key to the bottomless pit: "Key" denotes authority to put "under lock and key."

Note in Rev. 1:18, Christ is shown to have the keys of Hades and of death, and therefore it is understood that this angel is under the authority of Christ and acting as His agent.

The bottomless pit is best translated as "abyss". The Greek word used here is found 7 times in Revelation (9:1-2, 11, 11:7, 17:8). It is associated with the netherworld, the underworld which relates to the realm of the dead. It is the place where the departed spirits of the lost go. It denotes a prison of depths in the lower regions of the earth (cf. 9:1-2). It is the place where antichrist comes back from after he dies and comes back to life (cf. 11:7, 17:8). It is a place where Satan is said to be king of the demons who are confined there.

Many demons are currently being held there because evidently they were especially wicked demons. However, not all demons are there. Many are currently roaming free on the earth and working as Satan's army in the spiritual warfare (cf. Lk. 8:31). It is from this place, as seen in Rev. 9:1-12 at the blowing of the 5th trumpet, that a large army of demons will be released to torment people and wreak havoc on the earth during the Tribulation Period.

This realm of the underworld in the OT had a torment section and a paradise section as seen in Luke 16. The torment section is what is in view here in Revelation. There evidently is another category where the very worst demons are being held in a special place called *tartarus* referred to in 2 Peter 2:4. This evidently is the lowest compartment related to the Abyss. The demons that reside there relate to the days of Noah (1 Peter 3:19-20), who evidently sought to corrupt the human race by cohabiting with human women (Gen. 6:1-4). They will never get out until the final day of judgment (Jude 6). *Tartarus* is thought to be closely related to the Abyss, perhaps the lowest region of it.

In summary: The word Abyss is found 7 times in the book of Revelation, three times in chapter 11 where it denotes the abode of demons (11:1-2, 11). In Rev. 11:7 and 17:8 it indicates where the antichrist goes at the time of his temporary death. In Rev. 20:1 & 3 it denotes where Satan will be bound for the 1000-year reign of Christ. Outside of Revelation, it is found only 2 other times in the N.T.; once in Luke 8:31, where it is shown to be the abode of demons, and once in Rom. 10:7, where Christ is said to descend into the deep or into the realm of the spirit world for 3 days prior to His resurrection. Therefore this place refers to the underworld which is a prison house of demons (cf. Lk. 8:31, 2 Pet. 2:4, Jude 6) and to the realm of departed spirits (Rom. 10:7). In effect we believe the word Abyss can be used as a general word corresponding essentially to Hades and referring to the underworld which is the realm of departed spirits. However the word Abyss is most often used specifically to speak of the lowest netherworld located in the center of the earth which is the abode of demons.

And a great chain in his hand. Some have mistakenly taught that ever since Christ's first coming, Satan has been bound. Satan at the 2nd coming will be subdued and tied up, but that is not true of the present. In fact, right now we find ourselves in a major spiritual battle with Satan (cf. Eph. 6:11-12. 1 Pet. 5:8).

Right now Satan has access to the heavens and to the earth. He is called the "prince of the power of the air" in Eph. 2:2. He is called the "ruler of this world" in Jn. 12:31, 14:30, and 16:11. We find in Rev. 12 at the midpoint of the Tribulation, Satan will be cast out of heaven and confined to the earth. He will be enraged realizing that his time is short and he goes to take it out on Israel and God's

people. Upon the Second Coming of Christ, Satan will be banished from the earth and confined to the Abyss for 1000 years. That is what is in view in this context.

Revelation 20:2 (NKJV)

2 He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;

laid hold of....

This includes not only Satan but the demons as well. Their imprisonment will dramatically alter the world during the kingdom, since their destructive influence in all areas of human life will be removed. – **John MacArthur**

Although we are not told specifically that the demons are at this point confined, it would seem to be consistent with the context of Isa. 24:21-23.

the dragon: 12 times in Revelation Satan is referred to as “the dragon”. It is the name used most frequently for him in the book. It speaks of a powerful, cruel, and ferocious being.

Serpent of old: This title goes back to the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3. It speaks of his cunning, smooth, deceptive nature. He is full of trickery and guile, that is poisonous and deadly. He always is preparing to “strike” the unsuspecting.

Devil: This name means slanderer, or accuser. It has the idea of malicious, destructive talk (cf. Rev. 12:10). This is one of Satan’s most successful vices. He is so good at it that many of God’s people often get caught up in this activity. It’s a case of “friendly fire” from the mouth, and it is extremely destructive.

Satan: Means adversary or opposer. He is the arch enemy of God and His people.

These four names form a good summary of the PERSON of Satan. He is a cruel, cunning, malicious, adversary who intends nothing but harm for people. It is this being who was behind the CITY and the SYSTEM of Babylon. It was he who was the power behind antichrist. But now look, he is BOUND AND PUT IN PRISON, that is the abyss.

For a thousand years; The kingdom of Christ on this earth is repeatedly talked about in the prophetic Scriptures, yet only in Rev. 20 is the duration of it brought out. Note that the kingdom of Christ is an eternal kingdom, but it has two phases. The first phase will be for 1000 years on this earth, and then it will merge into the eternal state with the new heavens and the new earth. During the 1000-year reign, Satan will be bound.

There has been much debate over the phrase “a thousand years” in this text. It is called the continental divide of how you deal with prophecy. Some interpreters think that it should not be taken literally and some like me are very strong that it should be taken literally. There have been principally 3 schools of thought that have developed.

1. **Amillennialism:** This is the view that there will be no 1000-year earthly kingdom before the eternal state. The millennium is being fulfilled spiritually in the Church age. Christ’s millennial reign is in the hearts of believers. They “spiritualize” away huge amounts of Scripture to arrive at this position. They hold that both good and evil parallel each other until Christ comes again. At that time there will be a general resurrection and judgment followed by the eternal state. This view came into prominence under the leadership of Augustine (c. 354-430).
2. **Postmillennialism:** This view holds that a golden age of righteousness will precede Christ’s return to the earth. The spread of the Gospel in this age will usher in this golden era until the

world is essentially “Christianized”. When the kingdom era is over, then Christ will return. Thus His return is post (after) the millennium.

This view is very optimistic 1) that things are going to get better, 2) that Christians can turn it around. This type of thinking ties in with what is called “Dominion Theology” or “Reconstructionism”. They are very politically active because of this orientation to SUBDUE the world for Christ. At the end of this golden age, there will be a general resurrection and judgment, and then the eternal state.

3. **Premillennialism:** This is the view that Christ will return to earth BEFORE the 1000-year kingdom on this earth. This is the RIGHT view. Under this umbrella are two more refined views.
 - a. **Covenant (Historic) premillennialism:** This view says that Israel does not have a functional distinction in the kingdom. Saved Israel becomes part of the Church. Thus the millennium is the Church’s millennium, without an emphasis on Israel.
 - b. **Dispensational premillennialism:** This view sees Israel as having a distinct, functional purpose in Christ’s 1000-year reign upon the earth. The Church and Israel, though both sharing in the blessings of the millennium, are distinct from each other. In fact ISRAEL, not the church, is prominent in the millennial emphasis of Scripture. This is the RIGHT view.

The fact is, 6 times in this chapter (v. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7), we have references to this 1000-year period of time. A “literal” interpretation comes to the position of a premillennial return of Christ, followed by a literal 1000-year reign on the earth, which then gives way to the eternal state. Every other view must “spiritualize” the text.

There is nothing in the text to render the conclusion that “a thousand” years” is symbolic. Never in the Scripture when “year” is used with a number is its meaning not literal.

– **John MacArthur**

Revelation does not give us many details about this kingdom period, but it does emphasize two major facts 1) the duration will be one thousand years, and 2) SATAN will not be a part of it.

Many of the details are missing from the Apocalypse because they have been told again and again in the OT, and the Apocalypse has other and greater themes to discuss. But if the details are missing, the duration is not. – **John Phillips**

Revelation 20:3 (NKJV)

3 and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.

Cast – thrust with force, as we might say, “thrown into the slammer”.

Shut him up: Isn’t that an appropriate phrase? Satan is going to be “shut up” for 1000 years. No more cruel destruction and undermining of people, no more cunning deceitful strategies being implemented against people, no more slanderous and malicious attacks, no more the influence of the great adversary. Finally HE HAS BEEN “SHUT UP”! The understanding of shut up is the idea of restrained and confined to a prison house, the abyss.

Set a seal on him: The idea is one of making the holding place secure. They set a seal on Daniel in the lions’ den. They put a Roman seal on Christ’s tomb. The purpose was to make it as “secure” as possible. So the idea here is one of making this a tight seal’ so as to make escape impossible. Satan is not going to pull a “Houdini” move and somehow get out.

so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished.

The major activity of Satan is one of DECEPTION. He misleads people, tricks them, fools them. They are led to think one thing, when in reality TRUTH is something completely different. We need to realize that this is the major activity of Satan and he is very good at it. He deceives the nations and the masses of people therein (cf. Rev. 12:9). Few things are more hurtful and harmful than being deceived. It absolutely is hateful with no thought or concern about the individual being deceived.

No more - During the 1000-year reign of Christ, there will be peace and righteousness, and the influence of Satan will not be felt. Truth and righteousness will be in, and deception will be out.

But note: **till the thousand years were finished**. After the millennial reign, Satan must be released for a little while. When he is released for a little while, he will go right back to his work of deceiving the world of unbelievers who have been born into the world during the time of his confinement.

Only believers will go into the kingdom. Some mortals who become believers in the Tribulation period will survive and go into the kingdom. They in turn will have children in a near perfect environment. There will be a population explosion! However, many of these children born during this time will not be truly regenerate. They will go through the motions because Christ is ruling with a rod of iron. However, given an opportunity to rebel, they do so and follow Satan when he is released.

During the kingdom dispensation, things will be ideal on the earth. People won't be able to whine about the government. It will be perfect with Jesus in charge. They won't be able to whine about poverty or sickness and disease. They can't whine about not being treated fairly. They can't whine about the weather. They can't legitimately whine about anything, because it will be a golden age where everything is about as perfect as it can be, while sinful human beings still inhabit the planet.

Under these ideal conditions, wouldn't you expect that all people everywhere would applaud the goodness of God? Wouldn't all people just love God for His goodness? Surely in that environment, their rebellion would just melt away. **WRONG!** As the text goes on to show, no matter the environment or circumstances, the depravity of man is thorough. No matter what the arrangements, mankind is shown to be an utter failure, in total need of the grace of God in all dispensations, including the golden age of the kingdom. Even though Satan is bound, the heart of mankind is still wicked to the core (cf. Jer. 17:9). What this does is magnify the depravity of man, and at the same time, the GRACE of God. The conclusion is that we are what we are by the grace of God alone. All the glory goes to God for changed lives that properly honor Him.

Now verses 4-6 deal with the faithful and their part in the kingdom.

Revelation 20:4 (NKJV)

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

This is the 5th of seven "I saw scenes" concluding Revelation.

Thrones denote positions of authority and ruling.

They sat on them: We are not told who is sitting on these thrones so we must carefully consider the context. The most normal way to take this is that the “they” here refers to the armies of heaven that accompany Christ on His return (cf. 19:14, 2:26-27, 3:12, 21).

Judgment was committed unto them. This is a very intriguing statement. It builds on the vision of Dan. 7: 9-10, 22, and it would seem to tie with what Paul said in 1 Cor. 6:2.

1 Corinthians 6:2 (NKJV)

2 Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters?

In some fashion or another, apparently the bride of Christ, the church will have special administrative and “judgment” responsibilities in the kingdom. Evidently, under Christ they will manage the judicial processes related to kingdom government (cf. Rom. 8:17).

Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God,

“Then” indicates that John now saw another group. He sees them as “souls” who were beheaded, but are now ready to be resurrected, so that they, too, can share in Christ’s kingdom.

Beheaded is literally “killed with an ax”, which was a means of execution in ancient Rome. It signifies brutal martyrdom. Note: It happened to them because of their witness to Jesus and for the Word of God. They took their stand for the truth of Christ. They took their stand for the Word of God. And it cost them their lives. They died for this stand.

who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands.

These souls were those in the Tribulation Period who chose to follow Christ and reject the antichrist. Their rejection of antichrist is shown in the fact that they would not worship the beast or receive his mark. For this, they were killed (cf. Rev. 13:7, 15-18). This special group of Tribulation martyrs is singled out. Earlier in 6:9-11, this group had been told to rest for a little while until their number was completed. That number is now complete and they are being raised from the dead.

And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

Lived – signifies resurrection (cf. v. 5). As “souls” they were clearly conscious in heaven (cf. 6:9-11), but now they are resurrected with glorified bodies to go into the kingdom. Now, they too have received glorified bodies, as did the previously raptured church, and are privileged to share in the reign of Christ for 1000 years on this earth (cf. Dan. 7:27).

Revelation 20:5 (NKJV)

5 But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

The first part of verse 5 is a parenthetical thought. John inserts the reality of the resurrection of the lost, but points out that it doesn’t come until after the millennial reign of Christ. This is the resurrection of all UNBELIEVERS through all the ages and it will happen AFTER the 1000-year reign of Christ. This is what is addressed in Rev. 20:11-15. In effect, this is the LAST RESURRECTION, the resurrection of the lost.

Now he comes back to FIRST RESURRECTION, which connects back to his thought in verse 4. FIRST resurrection is in contrast to LAST resurrection. The Bible consistently makes the distinction between the resurrection of the saved and the resurrection of the lost (cf. Dan. 12:1-2, Lk. 14:14,

Jn. 5:28-29, Acts 24:15). The resurrection of the saved is called FIRST resurrection, because it is separated from the resurrection of the lost by at least 1000 years. First Resurrection, that is the resurrection of the SAVED, has several phases, but they are all under the umbrella of First Resurrection.

1. First Resurrection (The forgiven)

Stages:

- Christ
- Rapture of Church Saints
- Tribulation Saints
- O.T. Saints

2. Last Resurrection at the conclusion of the Millennial Reign (The lost of all the ages).

Special emphasis in context is on the Tribulation martyrs and their part in First Resurrection, but because of the qualifier in verse 6, it is clear that First Resurrection must also include the church and the OT saints, that is the saved of all the ages.

It is first in the sense of before. All the righteous, regardless of when they are raised, take part in the resurrection which is first or before the final resurrection (of the wicked dead) at the end of the Millennium. – **Bible Knowledge Commentary**

Revelation 20:6 (NKJV)

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

Blessed – this is the 5th of 7 beatitudes in Revelation. Blessed means “happy”, those made happy by God.

Holy: Set apart for God, set apart for special blessing and privilege.

Those who have part in the FIRST RESURRECTION before the 1000-year reign are blessed. They will not experience “second death”. The Bible teaches the reality of DEATH for sin. The penalty for sin is death (Rom. 3:23, 6:23). That is why Jesus had to DIE for us. This is the penalty for sin. None are exempt. All sin – all die. Death is complete in every generation.

The word death means “separation”. There are three primary types of death in the Bible.

- 1) **Spiritual Death:** Spiritual separation from God – not having relationship with Him or sharing in His life (cf. Eph. 2:12).
- 2) **Physical Death:** All people face this reality. At the moment of physical death, the spirit & soul of a person is separated from their body (cf. Ja. 2:26). As believers we may die PHYSICALLY ONCE, but we will never die again (cf. Jn. 11:25-26). Once we get our glorified bodies back at the resurrection, they will be bodies that are suited for all eternity to live in God’s presence. However, for the UNBELIEVER, there is a second death.
- 3) **Second Death:** This refers to eternal death. When the lost die physically, they initially go to HADES. This is a holding place in the center of the earth where they go to await final judgment. This is where the lost of all the ages are right now.

These people experienced PHYSICAL death and went to Hades, that is first death.

However, they are going to get their bodies back in resurrected form. They are going to get out of HADES, but only to appear before the great white throne, only to have their day in court and be found guilty. Then they will experience SECOND DEATH. Second death will involve being thrown into the lake of fire in their resurrected bodies. 20:14-15

The second death is the spiritual death beyond physical death referred to also in 2:11, 20:14; 21:8. Since the first death is clearly the death of the body, the second death must also apply to the body too. So the second death penalizes both the body and the soul (cf. Matt. 10:28).

– **Robert Thomas**

In summary: Second death is that experience that the lost will have when they receive a resurrected body only to have it (body and soul) forever separated from God in the lake of fire in a body suited for eternal torment. As believers we may die physically, but no more. Death is then swallowed up in victory. For unbelievers, physical death is just the first death step. They first step into Hades, where they are in torment. Then they are resurrected, only to be AGAIN separated from God forever in the lake of fire with never any escape or even momentary reprieve. This is second death. This is eternal death.

but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

Priests have a special role of service.

- 1) Special access to God.
- 2) They present offerings in one form or another to God.
- 3) Intercession - They represent men to God.

The function of being “priest of God and of Christ”.... Will consist of the privilege of unlimited access to and intimate fellowship with God. – **Robert Thomas**

Note the contrast between being “priests” and those experiencing second death. The one has unlimited access and will reign with Christ. The other will experience eternal separation from God.

They will join Christ in ruling the earth, but in what way this will be is not known. Priesthood and royalty are dual aspects of their future service to God. The thousand years at the end of v. 6 indicates that the priesthood and reign are special and temporary because of the limited duration of this kingdom on earth. This is not to say, however, that both will not continue with the ushering in of the eternal phase of the kingdom. The prophecy is explicit that they will continue (22:3-5). – **Robert Thomas**

This section in Rev. 20:4-6 HIGHLIGHTS the kingdom blessings in store for the saved which are shown to be in explicit contrast to the destiny of the lost.

Revelation 20:7 (NKJV)

7 Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison

Following the millennial reign of Christ, Satan will be released for a little while once again (cf. v. 3). He will proceed to do what he is most prone to do and what he does best, namely DECEIVING the nations (v. 3, 8). This clearly is a TEST for the human race. They have lived in essentially perfect conditions for 1000 years. Here is a PERFECT example that things could be PERFECT and depraved people still would not be happy. They are still depraved.

At the conclusion of the 1000 years, we find that Satan hasn't changed his deceitful ways a bit. You might think that through the experience of being in the pit for 1000 years, he would have a change of mind. You would be wrong. His nature has not changed. People also have not changed. They too still have a fallen rebellious nature and given the opportunity to demonstrate itself, it comes to the

fore. It is a lie that people are basically good. It is a lie that if their environment was better, they would be good. It is a myth that if their circumstances were just right they would do right.

Down through history, God has consistently TESTED man in various ways. Man has always FLUNKED the test showing in each dispensation his depraved nature and the need for the grace of God. We call these eras of testing stewardships or DISPENSATIONS.

There is overlap in some of the responsibilities from dispensation to dispensation but in and of himself man is not GOOD. Every "code of conduct" and corresponding context that God places man in, he demonstrates his depravity. God has shown this 7 times over (cf. the dispensations of Innocence, Conscience, Government, Promise, Law, Grace, and Kingdom). We need God! We can't be right or live right without His grace. The rebellion at the close of the kingdom era puts the capstone on this truth.

Revelation 20:8 (NKJV)

8 and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea.

After 1000 years of Christ's glorious reign on earth, Satan is let loose and he immediately goes about to deceive the nations of the whole world. At this point the whole world is again populated with descendants from those initial believers that entered the kingdom as mortals.

MANY of those born during the kingdom age will put on an act like they are with Christ, but given the opportunity to rebel, they will do so. Note however that this rebellious uprising does not happen UNTIL Satan is released and permitted to go about his deceptive ways.

How will Satan do this since he is a spirit being? Well, his most common method is to work rebellion in people's hearts (cf. Lk. 8, Acts 5:3-4), and to use people in the process to promote rebellion (cf. 1 Tim. 4:1, 2 Pet. 2:1). Satan will deceptively mastermind this, but implied in the term "Gog" is human leadership that will probably be behind their gathering together and marching on Jerusalem. This is a universal movement. They come from the four corners of the earth.

Gog and Magog: This phrase is first used in Ezek 38-39. Gog refers to a person who is a leader, and Magog refers to the people groups which he heads up. Ezekiel teaches that this leader and his people are identified with Russia and what are essentially Islam nations who come essentially from the North of Israel and will attack Israel with the purpose of destroying her. I believe this will probably happen near the middle of the Tribulation. At that point, God will supernaturally destroy this northern alliance. However, Gog and Magog in Rev. 20:8 cannot refer to that exact same situation because this group comes from the four corners of the earth, not just primarily from the north.

The problem is that the invasion of Gog and Magog in Revelation occurs after the Millennium described in Rev. 20:1-6, whereas in Ezekiel 38-39, the Battle of Gog and Magog occurs before Ezekiel's description of the millennial reign of Christ in Ezekiel 40-48 ... I believe the best answer is that John is using this phrase as a kind of shorthand to communicate to his readers what this battle will be like, just as today we might use the term Waterloo to describe a disastrous defeat. John is saying that at the end of the Millennium there will be another Battle of Gog and Magog when a vast confederacy of nations comes against Israel and is destroyed by the judgment of God.

- **Mark Hitchcock**, *The coming Islamic Invasion of Israel* –pg. 106-107

The similarities are clear between Gog and Magog in Ezek. 38-39 & Rev. 20:8

1. A united confederation of people groups.
2. They are coming to destroy Israel.

3. It happens when Israel is living peacefully in the land.
4. This attempted invasion is met with the supernatural intervention of God destroying the rebels.

To gather them together to battle: There is no doubt that these people are coming for battle. This picks up where Armageddon left off. From verse 9 it is clear that they MARCH on Jerusalem, the city of the great King. Here they are mustered and rallied for battle.

Under Satan's leadership, they are very aggressive in their hostility against Jesus and His people.

Whose number is as the sand of the sea - This is a way of saying that their number is exceedingly great, beyond what a person could count. This is a MASSIVE movement.

Again, mankind has the mentality that there is safety in numbers (cf. Prov. 16:5, Isa. 11:9, 66:24).

As the pilgrims from distant lands go up to Jerusalem and return home, they will look on the corpses (NASB – Isa. 66:24) of those who transgressed (rebelled) against the Lord, those slain by the Lord at Armageddon...- **Merrill Unger:**

Apparently all through the kingdom age, the corpses of those slain at Armageddon will be a lingering reminder of what happens to REBELS. There is no excuse for this rebellion.

Children born during this age will be born with sinful natures, needing to be saved, just as today, Children of believing parents today sometimes become gospel-hardened; so during the Millennium many will be glory hardened. – **John Phillips**

Revelation 20:9 (NKJV)

9 They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.

They come from the four corners of the globe – a massive collection of humanity.

They surround the camp of the saints – the headquarters of the kingdom which is the beloved city, which is Jerusalem. God responds with a one knock-out punch! Fire flashes and they are incinerated. There is no battle. They show up for one, and then they get FIRED (cf. Lev. 20:14).

There is not a word about a conflict; not a shot is fired; not a saint is harmed. With a flash, the fire of God falls, and it is all over. Nothing remains but a heap of ashes. No carrion birds are summoned... They are cremated in the fires that slay them. – **John Phillips**

Revelation 20:10 (NKJV)

10 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.

Devil – slanderer. He deceived them into thinking that they could actually take God on and win.

The Devil now is cast into the lake of fire, which is his final destination. This is the ultimate bruising of his head (a fatal wound), which was predicted in Gen. 3:15

Rev. 12:9-10 – Cast to the earth.

Rev. 20:1-3 – Cast into the abyss for 1000 years.

Rev. 20:10 – Cast into the lake of fire.

Fire and Brimstone: Brimstone is essentially sulfur. This phrase consistently denotes the final place of everlasting punishment and torment. Note: He is cast into the lake of fire, where the beast (who is antichrist) and the false prophet still remain. They were cast into the lake of fire 1000 years earlier

and they are still there. The devil now joins them so the “evil trinity” is forever together in the lake of fire.

This verse provides strong evidence that the lake of fire punishment is not temporary. Annihilation is not in view. For 1000 years the beast and false prophet have been there and they are still there. In fact, the text goes on to say that they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. There is never any relief throughout eternity. This is inconceivable, but it is true (cf. Mt. 25:46). The very same Greek word in Matt. 25:46 that defines **eternal** punishment is the one that defines **eternal** life. If the punishment is not eternal, neither is the life, but in fact both are eternal in duration. This place is the special place of torment that was specially prepared for the devil and his demons, but people who are deceived by Satan will also join them there (cf. Mt. 25:41).

There are two kinds of people: those who say to God, “Thy will be done,” and those to whom God says, “All right then, have it your way. - **C.S. Lewis**

Revelation 20:11 (NKJV)

11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.

Then I saw – this is the 6th of the seven “I saw” scenes that bring the book to consummation.

A great white throne: This is a GREAT throne because of the issues involved and because of the one who sits on it. It is the throne of FINAL JUDGMENT! It is pure WHITE denoting absolute holiness, purity, and righteousness, as the standard by which all will be judged.

Him who sat on it: Clearly this is God (cf. v. 12), but there has been some discussion as to whether it is God the Father or God the Son.

- 1) God the Father – consistently in the book God the Father is pictured on the throne (cf. 1 Cor. 15:24-28).
- 2) God the Father has given all judgment to the Son (Jn. 5:22).

Most are of the viewpoint that probably Jesus Christ is the one in view here. Certainly both the Father and the Son are ONE in this.

From whose face the earth and heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.

The face of God speaks of His presence. The earth and heaven flee from His presence. God’s presence is everywhere (cf. Ps. 139:7). To go from the presence of God is to go out of existence, and that is what is in view here, as seen in the qualifying statement, “And there was found no place for them.” This is the point where earth and heaven vanish. All that is left from that realm are people standing right there in the face of God in all His Holy Glory! This is the UNCREATION of everything. It’s all reduced to nothing and is therefore no longer in God’s presence. God created everything out of NOTHING, and He can turn it back into nothing (cf. Mt. 24:35, 2 Pet. 3:10-13).

Revelation 20:12 (NKJV)

12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

Saw the dead – this is all the lost of all the ages who had died in history. They are now resurrected to stand before God in judgment. Standing before God speaks to the fact that they have been resurrected.

This is FINAL RESURRECTION in contrast to first resurrection (cf. 20:5).

The question of what happens to the living just persons who are alive at the end of the Millennium does not come up in the passage. Presumably these saints will have divine protection during Satan's final rebellion and will survive the transition from the old earth and heaven to the new ones. The assumption must be that God will give them new bodies that suit them for conditions of immortality in the new heaven and the new earth.

– Robert Thomas

First Resurrection was the resurrection of all believers throughout the ages. Although First Resurrection has a number of stages, it denotes the resurrection of believers, which is separated from the resurrection of the lost by the 1000-year millennial reign of Christ. The saved are resurrected (in several stages of FIRST resurrection) before the 1000-year reign (20:5). Now after the 1000-year reign is the resurrection of all the lost of all the ages. They are resurrected to appear before the great white throne judgment (cf. Dan. 12:2, Jn. 5:29, Acts 24:15, Rev. 20:5).

Small and great: They are all there no matter what there station was in life. It won't matter whether you were a popper or a prince; whether you were poor or rich; whether you were unknown or famous. If you die without Christ, you will be here whatever your station in life. Position in life impresses man, but it means nothing on judgment day before God.

There they stand with nothing in the universe remaining, but them and God, one on one. Every person has their day in court! This is it. You think you are good enough to stand before God. You'll have your day. There will be no place to hide!

And books were opened: This is high drama in the ultimate courtroom scene! Here are the goods on every person's life. Here is the evidence all documented. We know what these books are about because of the last sentence in this verse; "And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books." God has a book on every person's life, and in context, I take it, the issue is guilt. Everything is well documented. Every sin, every evil thought, every unkind action, every selfish desire, every evil whisper, everything a person has ever said, done, or thought that is contrary to His perfect holiness. It's all recorded there. The BOOKS WERE OPENED! (cf. Mt. 12:37, Lk. 8:17, 12:2, Rom. 2:5-6, Heb. 4:13). The books contain PROOF of guilt. The evidence is all there (cf. Rom. 3:19-20).

And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. In contrast to the books on everyone's life which prove guilt, is the book of life which is a registry of those who have been forgiven and who now have life in Christ (cf. Dan. 12:1, Mal. 3:16, Lk. 10:20, Phil. 4:3, Heb. 12:23, Rev. 3:5, 13:8, 17:8, 20:12, 15, 21:27). Whenever someone becomes a Christian, their name is PERMANENTLY recorded in the Book of Life. They are from then on registered as citizens of heaven.

Some think that initially everyone's name is potentially written there because Christ died for all, but then those who die without Christ are blotted out. Others think that initially the book was blank, but then when someone becomes a believer their name is at that time recorded in the book. Either way, in the end, only the believers' names are found therein.

Luke 10:20 (NKJV) Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."

By the way, if your name is written down in the Book of Life, you don't have to worry about the other books - the books that have the goods on everyone. Those books are permanently done away with

so it will never be brought up against you, or as the Bible says, God will never remember our sins or hold them against us in accordance with the NEW COVENANT of Christ's blood (cf. Heb. 10:17). It is obvious from the overall context here that only unbelievers are in view at this great white throne judgment. This is the judgment of the lost, not the saved.

And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

All judgments before God are on the basis of works! Works become the evidence of faith or the lack of it. We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves does not remain alone (cf. James 2). Faith that is real is demonstrated in action! The works of the believer are judged to determine what amount of reward he will receive (cf. 1 Cor. 3). The issue is quality of workmanship, not punishment. The penalty of the believer's sin was paid for by Christ in full, so that is not even an issue. The issue is quality of workmanship and corresponding rewards.

The works of the unbeliever are judged to

- 1) Prove guilt (Isa. 64:6).
- 2) To determine the degree of eternal punishment they will receive.

All believers are going to heaven and all unbelievers are going to the lake of fire. However, believers will receive varying degrees of rewards, and unbelievers will receive varying degrees of eternal punishment (cf. Mt. 10:14-15, Mk. 12:38-40, Lk. 12:47-48, Heb. 10:29).

The fact that his name is missing condemns him, but the record of his evil works determines the degree of his punishment. -**William MacDonald**

Revelation 20:13 (NKJV)

13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.

Special mention is made of the sea. Why? Those who die at sea, have no burial place. They are "lost" at sea.

The special mention of the sea is occasioned by the fact that resurrection usually implies resurrection from the grave. The resurrection of the dead from the sea merely reaffirms that all the dead will be raised regardless of the condition of their bodies.

- **John Walvoord**

The God who creates out of nothing, and turns something into nothing will raise the dead bodies of all unbelievers no matter how decomposed, no matter how far broken down, and no matter where. There is a CORE of our bodies that never goes out of existence, and it will one day be resurrected either to life or in this case, condemnation. So the body is ultimately eternal as well as the soul!

Death – here represents the physical body that is in the grave.

Hades – represents the realm of departed spirits.

Taken together, this signifies the resurrection of lost people; that the body and soul are reunited only to appear before the BAR of God in judgment.

They were judged: This is the purpose of this resurrection – JUDGMENT! It is HOLY judgment!

Each one according to his works: This is one reason I hold to an age of accountability. How will little children be held accountable for their works? They don't even know what they are doing. I believe that Jesus died for all sin as found in Adam and with which all of are identified as we come into the world. What we are personally accountable for is personal sin once we reach the age of

accountability. Every one will give account of his own life. There will be no pointing fingers on this day. We emphasize FAITH, and rightly so, but faith without works is dead. A living faith has good works, and a dead faith has dead works. But the fact is our WORKS tell the story on us (cf. Jn. 5:28-29, Mt. 7:16-20), We are known by our fruits. We are not saved by fruits, but by faith. However, if the faith is real, there will be corresponding fruit.

Revelation 20:14 (NKJV)

14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

This is another way of saying that the resurrected body and soul of all lost people will be cast into the lake of fire. Death represents the grave out of which dead people are resurrected. Hades represents the realm which was the holding place for their spirits. Now resurrected, both of these realities of body and soul/spirit will be cast into the lake of fire (cf. Mt. 10:28).

First death involved a separation of the soul from the body. Only the soul went to the temporary place of torment called Hades. The body went to the grave. But now in second death, both soul and body will be cast into the place of eternal torment. This is the second death. Apparently, the resurrection body in view will be especially suited for the lake of fire, and the experience of suffering therefore all the more acute, than would be possible, without such a body. It appears to me that this body is made for suffering, just as the resurrected body of believers is made for glory (cf. 19:20).

Fire is used more than twenty times in the NT to depict the torment of hell (cf. v. 10, 15, 14:10, 19:20, 21:8, Matt. 3:10-12, 5:22, 7:19, 13:40, 42, 50, 18:8-9, 25:41, Mark 9:44, Lk. 3:9, 16-17, Jn. 15:6, Heb. 10:27, Jude 7) ...

The Bible also depicts hell as a place of total darkness, which will isolate its inmates from each other (Matt. 8:12; 22:13, 25:30, 2 Peter 2:17, Jude 13); as a place where the worm (possibly emblematic of an accusing conscience [or continual deterioration] devouring the wicked will never die (Isa. 66:24, Mk. 9:44); as a place of banishment from God's kingdom (Matt 8:12, 22:13); and as a place of unending sorrow, where there is "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Mat. 8:12, 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Lk. 13:28.) – **John MacArthur**

Revelation 20:15 (NKJV)

15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

This is one of the most sobering verses in the entire Bible. Either you are in the book of life or you will be in the lake of fire. It's one or the other. The only way to get your name in the book of life is to receive Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior by faith alone. Have you done that? (cf. Heb. 2:3) What do the "works" of your life really say? What does the evidence before God really point to?

20:15 concludes with the ETERNAL STATE of the lost. Now in chapter 21, John focuses on the ETERNAL STATE of the saved. What a contrast! The Lake of Fire versus a New Heaven and a New Earth.

In these two chapters [Rev. 21-22] we have the most detailed account in the Bible of what heaven will be like. – **Edward Hindson**

Revelation 21:1 (NKJV)

1 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.

I saw: A phrase that John consistently uses to carry us forward in the chronological progression of what is being revealed.

New: Means new in kind or character, different type of quality, brand new.

The first heaven and the first earth had passed away.: We saw this back in 20:11. What does this involve?

1) Renovation of the present heaven and earth. Arguments such as OT promises to Israel that seem to be eternal in nature concerning the promised land (cf. Gen. 48:4). This view is that “new” is the sense of the believer being a “new” creation (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17). New in the sense of putting on a new garment (cf. Ps. 102:25-26, Heb. 1:10-12, Rom. 8:19-22, Acts 3:21, Mt. 19:28).

2) Starting over with entirely NEW heaven and earth. (This is the view I prefer, but not with total dogmatism). There are good scholars in both camps.

Evidence from other Scriptures on this issue is a standoff and therefore indecisive. The language of 20:11 which depicts an entire dissolving of the old, a vanishing into nothingness followed by a new creation in 21:1 without any sea is the decisive CONTEXTUAL feature that determines this to be a reference to an entirely new creation. (emphasis mine)

– Robert Thomas

I would take it that the entire heavens and earth have been contaminated by sin and therefore must be completely destroyed to make way for a totally new heaven and earth, in which dwells absolute righteousness (cf. 2 Pet. 3:13).

Also, there was no more sea. This qualifying phrase makes it very clear that the eternal state is in view and not the millennial kingdom. In the millennial kingdom, the sea will still be present (cf. Zech. 9:10, Isa. 60:5, Ezek. 47). This is a radical change from the present earth which is about $\frac{3}{4}$ covered by ocean water. Looking from outer space, it looks like planet water. Life on planet earth as we know it now is very dependent upon water in terms of climate, atmosphere, and living conditions. All of this will be radically different. The oceans right now serve as a GIANT sanitizing system. The rivers of the world wash huge amounts of pollution, degenerating material, and death into the salt waters of the world where a relative purification process continually takes place (cf. Eccl. 1:7).

This constant cleansing, refreshing cycle will not be necessary in the new order. There will be no more death, therefore no need for such a sanitizing system! There will be no need for the rivers of the world to wash decay and death into salty oceans. Also, oceans signify barriers, but in the new earth there will be no more of these barriers. There will be a river of life, but no sea in the eternal state.

Revelation 21:2 (NKJV)

2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Holy City: Holy means “set apart”. This city is completely untainted and undefiled by sin. (cf. v. 27) It is a definite PLACE. This is the eternal home of the saints. John describes it as a city. He describes its size as a 1400-mile square with walls that are 200 foot high. It is made of pure gold and decorated with all kinds of beautiful gems. He speaks of its foundations (v. 14); its walls (v. 18); its gates (v. 12); and its inhabitants (v. 24). It is seen as a place of great activity, worship, and service to God. The idea of a city includes relationships, activity, places to go, responsibility, unity, socialization, etc; all of which we expect to be a part of this great society.

New Jerusalem: This is the name of the city. In the eternal state, everything is NEW. A new heaven, a new earth, and a new Jerusalem. This is the happy eternal home of believers. In this city,

God has designed a special eternal dwelling place for each one of His children. There is continuity with the name Jerusalem in history. Jerusalem is the city of God. It was there that God chose to dwell with His people in a very special way. It was there that God's people had communion with Him. In the New Jerusalem, this will take place eternally and in an unparalleled way.

Coming down out of heaven from God: Some have thought this means that this city will be suspended between heaven and earth, hovering like a satellite city. Some think this will be the capital of heaven, since the throne is there. The truth is we don't entirely know what it means. The city is pictured as coming down, descending out of heaven which is significant because it is mentioned 3 times in Revelation (3:12, 21:1, 10). This would seem to indicate that the city is actually separate from heaven. Therefore, some have surmised that this implies that the city was actually already in existence when the old heaven and earth went out of existence (cf. Heb. 12:22-24). It is thought that it is separate from the present universe, which is tainted by sin.

When the new heaven and earth is in place, this new Jerusalem is then presented as coming from God out of heaven descending into the midst of that holy new universe. Note it comes from God. God is the source of this city. It is like this is a special gift FROM GOD to His people.

Prepared: God put some work into this place. It is specially prepared (cf. Jn. 14:2-3). This is the city that the writer of Hebrews repeatedly mentions (cf. Heb. 11:10, 16, 12:22-24, 13:14). Think of it! This is a city whose builder and maker is God.

We have never seen a city built by God. Imagine what God can do! Everything that God makes is beautiful beyond description. Consider how beautiful are God's sunsets, the mountains, lakes, roses, forests, snowflakes, clouds, waterfalls, etc. How beautiful must this city be which is made by the Divine Architect!

Prepared as a bride adorned for her husband: Do you know how brides prepare themselves for their husband? They do it up to the max! They spare no expense! They are lavish in their preparing of themselves. They doll themselves up to the absolute best. She will be extravagant on that day. She prepares herself with the greatest of care and dresses as elegantly as possible. She will be beautifully arrayed from head to toe. A woman will never look better than on her wedding day. When she walks down the aisle, the people will say, "Isn't she beautiful?" So, too, God has put all kinds of preparation into this city. He is EXTRAVAGANT in making it look good!

Adorned: "to order" or "to arrange". The idea is to make it look beautiful. A.T. Robertson points out that the word "adorned" is from the Greek word, from which we get our English word "cosmetics". When you see this place, it will awe you to the very core of your being. It will be fabulously PERFECT in every way! I believe that God is looking forward to this in a very special way. This is the special place He has been preparing for His own for a long time. He also wants us to anticipate it with great expectation. We won't be disappointed. It will be worth it all when we see Jesus (cf. Rom. 8:18, 2 Cor. 4:17-18, Col. 3:1-2, 2 Tim. 4:8).

Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people.
Hell is a prepared place for an unprepared people.

Earth is but a pilgrim's stay, a pilgrim's journey, a pilgrim's tent. Heaven is a city, permanent, God planned, God-built, whose foundations are as stable as God's throne. - **E.M Bounds**

What a fantastic city! The remainder of the chapter will describe the glory and beauty of it, but first the GREATEST THING about the holy city, the New Jerusalem, is not how it looks, but who is going to live there, as seen in verses 3-4.

Revelation 21:3 (NKJV)

3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.

This is the last of 21 times in Revelation that “a loud voice” is in view. It is undoubtedly that of a powerful angel because the statement speaks of God in the second person.

A loud voice speaks of dramatic emphasis. It signifies that which is weighty and of great importance.

Tabernacle: “To tent”, “Habitation”, “Dwelling place”, “To make yourself at home”. It denotes where you live, the place of abode. God has always desired to have fellowship with mankind. In fact, He created us for that purpose, that we might glorify Him (cf. Gen. 3:8, Ex. 40:34-35, 1 Kgs. 8:10-11, Jn. 1:14, 1 Cor. 3:16, 1 Jn. 1:3-4, 4:12). God has long been dwelling with His people in one fashion or another, and yet the fullness of this reality awaits eternity. Then God will pitch His tent among His people. He will no longer be distant or seemingly far off. He will be living in their immediate presence. It will be like living in the Holy of Holies forever.

He will dwell with them: He will live intimately with them. You know what it’s like to dwell with someone in the same house. It will be like that with God and His people (cf. Ps. 73:25-26).

And they shall be His people: This underscores the special and intimate relationship God will have with the saved. They will be uniquely His, like the commitment in a marriage. These are God’s people in intimate relationship with Him.

It’s like John just can’t make this emphasis enough, so he keeps repeating it. This is the key idea of heaven, and so he dwells on this truth. In fact it governs the remaining portion of the book.

Tabernacle of God is with men.

He will dwell with them.

God Himself will be with them and be their God.

This is the PERSONAL PRESENCE of God forever intimately with His people (cf. Mt. 5:8, Jn. 17:24). Note the emphasis – “they shall be His people.... Be their God.” This is relationship and wrapped all around is the emphasis of TOGETHERNESS as found 3 times in this verse - “with men, with them, with them.” The wonderful thing about heaven is that relationships there are forever (cf. 1 Thess. 4:16-17). Separation is the law of earth, but reunion is the law of heaven (cf. Ps. 16:11).

Revelation 21:4 (NKJV)

4 “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.”

This is a poetic way of saying that God will comfort His people and there will never again be any suffering. God Himself will dry our tears!

No more death: Tears come for lots of reasons, but probably there are more tears shed over the reality of death than for any other reason. In the Holy City, where God dwells with His people, there will be no more death. In the New Jerusalem, there will be more broken relationships. Never again will we say, “I hope to see you again.” There will be no more parting in death.

Nor sorrow, nor crying. I am sure there will be emotions in heaven because it is a place filled with joy, but there will be no negative emotions. There is sorrow here. Things happen that crush us and give us a heavy heart. Things happen that make us cry! But not in the holy city!

There shall be no more pain: No inward pain, no outward physical pain.

Tears, death, sorrow, crying, pain – all of these things relate to sin. Sin at this point is completely banished, along with all the effects that come with it (cf. 2 Cor. 4:16).

The former things have passed away. That which will be former is still present. There are those that teach if we just had enough faith all of our pains would just go away. They are false teachers. The effects of sin are still part of our experience in this world, but in eternity “the former things have passed away.” In eternity, instead of us passing away, all the effects of sin will have passed away. Notable facts about this city!

A holy city.

A prepared city.

An indescribably beautiful city.

A city where God intimately dwells with His people.

A city where the effects of sin will never again be felt.

We will enter that wonderful era of “no mores”.

No more tears.

No more crying.

No more sorrow.

No more pain.

No more death.

No more sin.

This is what the holy city, the new Jerusalem, will be all about!

2 Peter 3:13 (NKJV) Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Ultimately, the New Jerusalem is the eternal HOME of the believer. It's about home. Home is a place, but ultimately home is about RELATIONSHIPS. Home is about SHARING in the context of those who love you deeply, unconditionally, and always (cf. Ps. 23:6, Jn. 14:2-3).

Now John goes on to expand on the contrast between the eternal destiny of the saved versus that of the lost. He presents a contrast between the overcomers and those that will experience second death.

Revelation 21:5 (NKJV)

5 Then He who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” And He said to me, “Write, for these words are true and faithful.”

It is debated as to Who this is referencing on the throne. Is it Christ or is it the Father? (cf. 1 Cor. 15:24-28) Godly scholars disagree. Certainly, it is God and the Triune God is always One in all His endeavors, so it really doesn't matter.

Throne: Signifies control – the power center of the universe – authority and power over all. He rules.

Behold, I make all things new: This is a summary statement regarding the transition from the old universe to the new. God, in effect, is starting over in terms of a created universe. Everything will be BRAND NEW!

New creations in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17)

New glorified bodies.

New heaven

New earth

New Jerusalem

Nothing contaminated by sin from the old era will make the transition.

Genesis 1:1 Heavens and earth created

Rev. 21:1 New heavens and earth created

Genesis 1:16 – Sun created

Rev. 21:23 – No need of the sun

Genesis 1:5 – The night established

Rev. 22:5 – No night there

Genesis 1:10 – Seas created

Rev. 21:1 – No more seas

Genesis 3:14-17 – The curse pronounced

Rev. 22:3 – No more curse

Genesis 3:19 – Death enters into history

Rev. 21:4 – No more death

Genesis 3:24 – Mankind driven from the garden

Rev. 22:14 – Mankind restored to paradise

Genesis 3:17 Sorrow and pain begin

Rev. 21:4 No more tears or pain

This is not merely a refurbishing of the old, but rather the old has been totally done away with and a brand new universe is being MADE by God. This is a completely NEW ORDER. God is going to make ALL THINGS NEW! And it will be in a context where nothing will ever get old.

Everything will be new, fresh and perfect, just as in creation week, and they will stay that way. The entropy law (aging, decay, death) will have been repealed, for the curse will be gone. **-Henry Morris**

Write: Many commentators think this suggests that John is so overwhelmed by what is being presented to him that he temporarily forgets his writing assignment and so has to be prompted. This is so significant that God makes a point to insure that it is recorded!

These words are true [accurate/real] **and faithful** [trustworthy/reliable]! This is the place of DOGMATISM! The emphasis here is that this is absolutely certain! In context, they are the words that speak to the reality of the new heaven, the new earth and the new Jerusalem.

Revelation 21:6 (NKJV)

6 And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts."

It is done: Signifies completion of the NEW CREATION. The transition from the old to the new is now complete. It is a statement of finality. The FOREVER STATE is now in place. This is the ETERNAL STATE. Things will never change again! This is the permanent state of things forever.

There are THREE great "It is done" statements in Scripture.

- 1) Jesus' statement from the cross, "It is finished!" (Jn. 19:30).
- 2) The climactic conclusion of the Day of the Lord JUDGMENTS in Revelation, as seen in the pouring out of the 7th bowl judgment (Rev. 16:17).
- 3) At the dawn of eternity, with the ushering in of a NEW universal order (Rev. 21:6).

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. Again, there is considerable discussion as to whether this is the Father or the Son who is speaking. Again, a case can be made for either, but the fact is there is a very close affinity throughout the book concerning the Godhead. Certainly, God is in view (cf. Isa. 44:6). However, it is clear that in Rev. 22:13, this title is used in reference to Christ. We also have the same essential statement in 1:8, which would favor Christ as being in view.

The Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. It is like saying A to Z in English. It represents TOTALITY. Everything begins and ends with Him. Nothing lies outside of Him. He is absolutely Sovereign over all. He is the source of all things and everything finds its consummation in Him.

Romans 11:36 (NKJV)

36 For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

History and eternity spell out the story that God orchestrates to His eternal glory.

Fountain of the water of life: This speaks of eternal life which our parched souls so desperately need. In Bible times people acutely understood the essentialness of water for life. Water was often scarce. Often it had to be carried from a great distance (cf. Jn. 4:14-15).

Thirsts: Thirst speaks of desire, to crave, to want thirst quenched. It speaks of human response that says, "I want that to satisfy my parched condition". It speaks of spiritual relief and refreshment that are found in Christ. People often look to the flesh, but only Christ can satisfy the deepest longs of our soul. The essence of hell is unfulfilled desires (cf. Rev. 18:14). True and lasting satisfaction is found only in the Lord (cf. Ps. 23:1, Isa. 55:1, Jn. 6:35). "Thirsts" here presupposes that there is desire to come to the Lord for fulfillment! The water of life is free, but you have to come and drink (cf. Jn. 4:10-14, 7:38-39, Rom. 6:23, Rev. 22:17). Our spiritual thirst is quenched in the here and now, but the full and final effects of satisfaction will be ushered in at the eternal state (cf. Mt. 5:6).

Revelation 21:7 (NKJV)

7 "He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son."

Overcomes: Conquers, Triumphs, Has the victory, Wins. This is a term that defines true believers in the N.T. We see it often in the book of Revelation. Overcomers are repeatedly made special promises in reference to Christ addressing the 7 churches in Rev. 2-3 (cf. Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26, 3:5, 12, 21, cf. 12:11, also cf. 1 Jn. 5:4-5). By virtue of faith in Christ, overcomers have overcome sin, and second death.

Inherit all things: Believers are the rightful heirs of all that is made new. Inheritance speaks of a privileged relationship, resulting in being given something because someone wanted you to share in what was theirs. It is hard to fathom, but believers will share in all that belongs to Jesus (cf. Ps. 2:8, Rom. 8:16-17, 32).

And I will be his God and he shall be My son: This reiterates 21:3. It speaks of intimate relationship that is so close that they share in the inheritance of all that is God's.

Revelation 21:8 (NKJV)

8 “But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

But: Is a word of contrast. This brings out an ETERNAL contrast. On the one hand is the eternal blessed state of the overcoming believers; on the other hand is the lake of fire for the damned. It is almost jarring to have such a contrast interjected into this discussion of all things new and the inheritance of the believer. What a graphic contrast. God is making a point. Ultimately there are two destinies, and every person here will share in one or the other. They are polar opposites. The one is all good and the other is all bad. In contrast to the eternal overcomers/winners, these are the eternal losers.

The tyrant dies and his rule ends, the martyr dies and his rule begins. - **Soren Kierkegaard**

The lost are cataloged here under 8 characteristic headings. There are similar lists of what characterizes the lost in Rom. 1:28-32, 1 Cor. 6:9-10, Gal. 5:19-21, 2 Tim. 3:2-5, and Rev. 22:15. The bottom line is that these people don't have a saving relationship with Jesus, and it reflects itself as a pattern of life in these types of ways. The bottom line of why people are lost is because they are not believers in Christ. John, the Gospel of belief, makes it emphatically clear that the ultimate issue is BELIEF/FAITH.

John 3:18 (NKJV)

18 “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

But this is not some easy believism that has no impact on how we live. No! True saving faith results in regeneration and transformation. It alters the direction of one's life. It does not signify perfection, but rather a change in direction (cf. Jn. 5:28-29, 1 Jn. 2:3-4, 3:10, 14).

We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves, does not remain alone. That is the consistent teaching of John (cf. Mt. 7:15-20, Titus 1:16, Ja. 2:17-26). UNBELIEF is ultimately the issue, but that reality reflects itself in how they characteristically live. That is the point of Rev. 21:8.

At the day of doom men shall be judged according to their fruits. It will not be said then, did you believe? But were you doers or talkers only. – **John Bunyan**

Cowardly: The foremost thing mentioned is cowardly. The idea here is to be fearful or afraid to commit to Christ because of the consequences.

It refers to those who repudiate their faith in Christ when faced with persecution and opposition. Without steadfast endurance based on that faith, they are not true followers of the Lamb. ... These are people who have never taken to heart the words of Jesus which said, "Whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's shall save it" (Mk. 8:35). – **Robert Thomas**

Unbelieving: Can also be understood as untrustworthy or disloyal. These are people that may profess, but they are not genuine followers of Christ (cf. Lk. 9:62).

Abominable: Meaning vile or polluted. They are engaged in detestable practices as a pattern of life that God hates. This is what characterizes their lives.

Murderers: They do not value human life. They are cold-blooded killers. This is not talking about self-defense or involvement in war. This is homicide whether in the womb or otherwise. It is the taking of human life (cf. Gen. 9:6).

Sexually immoral: Those who practice sex outside the bounds of God-ordained marriage in whatever form (cf. Heb. 13:4).

Sorcerers: This Greek word is related to our English word, "pharmacy". It denotes the combination of drug use and occult involvement. Often a drug-altered state of consciousness is involved in occult practices. These people are involved in witchcraft, magic arts, the occult, and traffic with demons.

Idolaters: Those who worship something else as a "god" other than the one true God.

And all liars: People by nature are natural liars. It is one of the first sins that children do. People in general are pathological liars to one degree or another (cf. Jer. 17:9).

The Apostle John not only wrote the book of Revelation. He also wrote 1 John, and in that book he defined more precisely what he calls a liar.

1 John 2:3-4 (NKJV)

3 Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.

4 He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

A liar according to John is someone who claims to have a relationship with Jesus, but their life of disobedience proves them to be a liar.

Liars are foremost among those doomed to an eternity outside the new creation as evidenced by their appearance in each of the three lists [in Revelation] of the ones excluded there from (cf. 21:27, 22:15). – **Robert Thomas**

It should be obvious that this passage is not affirming salvation by works, but rather is referring to works as indicative of whether one is saved or not. Obviously many will be in heaven who before their conversions were indeed guilty of these sins but who turned from them in the day of grace in trusting Christ as their Savior. Though works are the evidence of salvation or lack of it, they are never the basis or ground of it. – **John Walvoord**

This is not to say that those who have ever committed these sins cannot be saved, but that those who continue to do so give evidence of an unrepentant and unconverted heart.

– **Edward Hindson**

Their part in the lake of which burns with fire and brimstone, “Their part” seems to be in contrast to the inheritance that belongs to the believer. “Their” lot is in the lake of fire.

The first reference to fire in the Bible was in Gen. 19:24, in regards to Sodom and Gomorrah where it was also connected to brimstone, which is sulfur. Here is the last reference to fire in the Bible, and again it is associated with Brimstone. The picture is one of an environment of suffering involving a stifling sulfur that makes you gag and takes your breath away. It is a picture of anything but satisfaction. There is no rest here. No respite. Just an eternity of unsatisfied desires.

Which is the second death: This further reiterates what the experience of second death will entail. First death for these people involved the soul leaving the body and going to the place of temporary suffering in Hades. Second death is when they are resurrected and then are cast body and soul into the lake of fire as brought out in 20:11-15 (cf. Mt. 10:28, 2 Thess. 1:9).

Now John returns to further describe the glories of the New Jerusalem in the eternal state.

The section cannot apply to the Millennium because of the absence of the curse (22:3) that will continue during the Millennium (20:8-9). The absence of night (21:25) and the elimination of the sun and moon (21:23) cannot characterize the Millennium either (cp. Isa. 30:26 with 60:19). – **Robert Thomas**

The description of the glorious holy city, the new Jerusalem, is too detailed to admit anything but literal interpretation, though there have been many efforts to try to spiritualize it.
– **Henry Morris**

Revelation 21:9 (NKJV)

9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, “Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.”

One of the 7 angels (cf. cp. 15-16) who poured out the climactic bowl judgments now approaches John. Perhaps it was the same angel who showed him the judgment of the great Harlot Babylon in Rev. 17:1, but we don’t know.

I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife: The bride of Christ was introduced in 19:7 where I believe “the church” is in view.

Now the word bride is used in connection with the city of New Jerusalem. We understand the “marriage” picture when speaking of Christ’s relationship with His people, but now it is used in reference to this city. We saw the bride-city introduced in 21:2 and now John will enlarge on this concept. Some see this as an “Orientalism” which saw the city of a ruler as wed to him. New Jerusalem is the domain in which the bride dwells and Jesus is intimately associated with this whole city of people, so much so that the city is called His bride.

All that this city is about centers around Jesus and His relationship with the people which is most central. The idea is broader than just the people as seen in the material description that follows, but God’s relationship with the people involved is the main feature of this city. Therefore, this is a bride-city in that sense. God is intimately involved with every facet of this city, especially the people. Just as earlier an angel showed John the harlot representing the city of Babylon and the Babylonian system which was intimately involved with antichrist (ch. 17); so now he is shown the bride-city representing the New Jerusalem and the accompanying system that is intimately involved with Jesus Christ (cf. 17:1, 19:7, 21:2, 9).

The closeness of these words to those that introduce the extended vision of the great harlot Babylon in 17:1 makes unmistakable the intended parallelism between this passage about the bride and that earlier one. The clear point is that a person cannot inhabit both cities; he must choose between them. – **Robert Thomas**

Revelation 21:10 (NKJV)

10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,

Carried me away in the Spirit – indicates a prophetic trance in which in vision form, John was able to view what was shown him.

Great and high mountain: - Signifies a very high place where John could get a good view, much like going to the top of a high mountain, where you can look over a city.

“The great city” is omitted from some manuscripts.

Holy Jerusalem: Two times in this chapter, this city is referred to as HOLY (21:2, 10). Holy means “to be set apart” referring to that which is pure and uncontaminated by anything sinful. Everything about this city is right and pure!

Descending out of heaven from God: The city is pictured as coming down, descending out of heaven, which is significant because it is mentioned 3 times in Revelation (3:12, 21:1, 10). This would seem to indicate that the city is actually separate from heaven. Therefore, some have concluded that the city was actually already in existence when the old heaven and earth went out of existence (cf. Heb. 12:22-24).

It is thought that it is separate from the present universe which is tainted by sin.

When the new heaven and earth is in place, then this New Jerusalem is presented as coming from God out of heaven and will descend into the midst of that holy new universe. Note it comes from God. God is the source of this city. It is like this is a special gift FROM GOD to His people (cf. Heb. 11:16).

Revelation 21:11 (NKJV)

11 having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.

Having the glory of God. In the OT, God’s people spoke of the “Shekinah” glory of God. The word Shekinah means “residence”. It denotes the visible divine presence of God or where God dwells especially in reference to the Holy of Holies in the OT. It resided right in the very heart of the congregation of God’s people, Israel, where the Tabernacle was located.

When people got a glimpse of God’s glory in the Bible it was awesome (cf. Ex. 33-34, Acts 26:13, 1 Tim. 6:16, Rev. 1:17).

This is the radiance of the dazzling splendor of God.... This is not just a divinely caused splendor. It is the splendor of the presence of God Himself, the Shekinah.

– **Robert Thomas**

This glory of God is the most dominant characteristic of this city. It introduces all else that follows. It is the very environment of this city. This city has a radiant glow of the GLORY OF GOD which is beyond what we can possibly grasp at this point. But one day in our glorified bodies we will experience it and enjoy it fully (cf. Jn. 17:24).

Her light: The thing that stands out to John is the “light” which ties to the glory of God. This is a well-lit place. No darkness is there! In fact the whole next message emphasizes this very point. There will be no sun, or moon, or night there, for the glory of God lights this city.

John then uses three descriptive phrases trying to convey to us what it looked like.

Like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. Note the word “like”. John is trying to describe a brilliance and splendor which human words cannot completely convey and so he says “like”. It was like a most valuable gem, like a very expensive jewel.

A jasper stone: Clear gem, probably DIAMOND-like in appearance! It is perfectly crystal clear. That is a transparent, gleaming, rock-like crystal. Jasper is mentioned 3 times in this chapter. In Rev. 4:3 it is used to describe the appearance of God.

Jasper does not refer to the modern stone of the same name...it...describes a translucent stone. The word jasper in this passage is best understood as referring to a diamond, a very costly one because it is crystal clear and unblemished.[the] city is thus pictured as a huge, flawless diamond, refracting the brilliant, blazing glory of God throughout the new heaven and the new earth. – **John MacArthur**

This is a LITERAL place as is seen in the description John now gives of its walls, gates, and foundations in verses 12-14.

Revelation 21:12 (NKJV)

12 Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:

The city has a HIGH wall around it with 12 gates or 12 points of entry. Gates indicate security, and angels at the gates further reinforce the impression of security. This is the homeland of the saints. It is a place of ETERNAL SECURITY! The wall and angel-guarded gates are a constant reminder that this is a SAFE place. The redeemed of Israel are represented here (cf. Heb. 11:10).

Revelation 21:13 (NKJV)

13 three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west.

This is reminiscent of the set up in the OT where the 12 Tribes were stationed around the Tabernacle (Num. 2); and also of how the tribes will be arranged around the temple in the Millennium (Ezek 48:31-34). The picture in each case is the community of God’s people with God right in their midst. This is the concept in the New Jerusalem, but only on a much more intimate and glorious scale.

Revelation 21:14 (NKJV)

14 Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

The city has 12 gates, but also 12 foundations in which are the names of the 12 apostles of the Lamb. Israel is represented by the 12 tribes in v. 12-13. The church is represented by the 12 apostles in v. 14. Both groups have a place in this eternal city. In this, there is continuity and yet there is also distinction.

The words clearly show that God has an eschatological role for both peoples. Beyond dispute, this description of the bride-city separates believers among Israel from believers in the church, and in a symbolic way assigns the two groups separate roles in the new creation. If the two were one merged group of believers, there would have been twenty-four gates instead of twelve or twenty-four foundations instead of twelve. - **Robert Thomas**

So both truths are to be kept in view.

- 1) Both share in this city.
- 2) Distinctions are maintained (cf. Mt. 19:28, Lk. 22:30).

This is a city with EVERLASTING FOUNDATIONS. This is in contrast to the temporal and flimsy tent that Abraham and the patriarchs lived in while on earth. This is truly a place that will last. It is permanent, whereas everything around us in this life is temporary (cf. Heb. 11:8-10, 13:14).

There has been lots of discussion about who the 12 apostles are. In John 20:24 "twelve" refers to an occasion when only 10 were present. In 1 Cor. 15:5 the same designation refers to 11. As already noted the 12 apostles here represent a category of people as does the 12 tribes, namely the church and Israel.

The text clearly speaks of 12 foundations and on them were the names of the twelve apostles. The question invariably is this: Is Matthias the 12th apostle (Acts 1) or is the Apostle Paul? My vote would be for Paul who was definitely personally chosen by Christ as were the other 11. We will find out.

Verses 15-17 give us the measurements of the city which is another indicator that this is a real place.

Revelation 21:15 (NKJV)

15 And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall.

A reed was usually about 10 feet long. A golden reed is used here. This is the royal city where even the measuring stick is made of gold.

It is interesting to note that the Tribulation temple is measured in Rev. 11:1. The Millennial temple is measured in Ezek. 40: 3 and Zech. 2:1-3. In each case the measuring relates to marking out that which belongs to God. It relates to the ideas of protection, preservation, and possession. This is the city of God marked out for Him and His alone! This is the Glory Land and nothing tainted will ever touch it. This is the special place prepared by God for His own.

Revelation 21:16 (NKJV)

16 The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal.

Some commentators have pictured this city as a pyramid, but most see it as a perfectly square CUBE. The Holy of Holies was in the form of a perfect cube (20 cubits [15 ft] each way - 1 Kings 6:20), so there is continuity in type here.

12,000 furlongs is literally 12,000 *stadia*. A *stadion* is estimated to have been about 607 feet. Thus the city is about 1400 miles in each direction.

Revelation 21:17 (NKJV)

17 Then he measured its wall: one hundred and forty-four cubits, according to the measure of

a man, that is, of an angel.

144 cubits – a cubit was about 18 inches which means this would measure out to about 216 feet, or 72 yards. There is some question as to whether this is speaking about the height or the width of the wall. Most think it is probably speaking of its thickness. We saw in verse 12 that it has a great and high wall and it would be fitting that a very high wall would also have a really broad base.

According to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel: This footnote underscores the literalness of the measurement, meaning that while the angel did the measuring, it was according to human standards.

Revelation 21:18 (NKJV)

18 The construction of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass.

The wall was made of diamond-like material. The city was pure gold and it was transparent like glass. It has a combination diamond-gold glow to it.

Pure Gold: This is not some lower grade, but pure gold. This is the golden city!

Like clear glass: This is a see-through city. All is transparent. You take away sin and there is no need for privacy. There is nothing to hide (cf. Gen. 2:25).

Revelation 21:19 (NKJV)

19 The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald,

The foundations were visible and adorned with all kinds of beautiful stones.

Adorned: We derive our English word “cosmetics” from this word. The idea is to arrange or order in a way that makes beautiful. This is going to be something to SEE! It will be beautiful beyond imagination.

The names of some of the stones have changed throughout the centuries making their identification uncertain. Still there is a general consensus of the basic idea of what is involved. Eight of the stones named were on the high priest’s breastplate (cf. Ex. 28:17-20, 39:10-13).

Jasper: Diamond-like in appearance – crystal clear.

Sapphire: Brilliant Blue

Chalcedony: Greenish blue

Emerald: Bright Green

Revelation 21:20 (NKJV)

20 the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst.

Sardonyx: Red and white

Sardius: Various shades of red

Chrysolite: yellow-hued

Beryl: blue-green

Topaz: a yellow/green stone

Chrysoprase: gold-tinted green stone

Jacinth: violet
Amethyst: Purple

Looking at them would give a rainbow or prism effect of symmetrical beauty. - **Merrill Unger**

It is impossible to fully comprehend this dazzling city. Its beauty and splendor are literally out of this world. A glistening, sparkling, golden hue encompasses the city.

Revelation 21:21 (NKJV)

21 The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

The 12 gates were 12 pearls. Each gate was one pearl. Apparently these gates extend the full length of the city, thus providing access to the city at every level, meaning that each pearl is approximately 1400 miles high. That is one huge PEARLY GATE!

The street of the city was pure gold

Street refers to the city's thoroughfare, city square, or multiple streets. ... This may be singular to refer to all the streets of the city, or it may point to only one major artery of a typical ancient city that led from the entrance gate to the king's place.

It is more probable, however, that the term is generic referring to the material the streets were made of. ... Because the street will be continuous, even when it changes direction or joins with avenues coming from other gate-towers, it is only one and not many.

– **Robert Thomas**

That it is pure gold is underscored in the fact that it is like transparent glass. Earth knows no gold so pure as this. Transparent speaks of purity. It literally means "brightness" or "shining through". In Rev. 21:22-27 John is given an inside view of the city and the emphasis is on its illumination, and also noted is what is absent from the city.

Revelation 21:22 (NKJV)

22 But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

No temple in it: There is no sanctuary here, no localized place of worship.

In the OT, Israel had a temple. Jesus referred to His body as a temple (Jn. 2:19-21); the body of the individual believer in Christ in the church age is referred to as a temple (1 Cor. 6:19); the local church is referred to as a temple (1 Cor. 3:16); and the universal church is referred to as a temple (Eph. 2:21-22). Prior to the Eternal State there has always been a temple in heaven (cf. Rev. 7:15, 11:19, 14:15, 17, 15:5-8, 16:1, 7).

Temple refers to a SPECIAL DWELLING PLACE of God. The main thing about the OT temple was the Holy of Holies, where God's presence dwelt in a very special way (cf. Ps. 27:4).

In the OT, only the priests could enter into the temple proper, and only the High priest could enter the Holy of Holies, and he could only do that on one day in the year, that is, the Day of Atonement. Access was very limited. In the NT, access is much greater. We have spiritual access and are invited to come boldly into God's presence by faith (cf. Heb. 4:16, 10:19-22). Today we have unlimited spiritual access right into the holy presence of God, but we are still limited by our flesh. We must still "draw near". We come into His intimate presence via prayer and faith, but not physically, directly, immediately. We are still hindered by our flesh. But in the New Jerusalem, things will be different.

for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The connection of Lord God Almighty and the Lamb shows equality between the Father and the Son. They ARE the temple of the New Jerusalem. The cities of the world have been known for their houses of worship, but this city has no centralized place of worship. The reason is because God's PRESENCE engulfs this place. It pervades the entire city. He indwells the whole city even as He did the Holy of Holies in the OT temple.

In effect, the entire city is the Holy of Holies so no special structure is needed. The immediate presence of God abounds throughout the city. He is the TEMPLE. In other words, the PRESENCE of God, which was the main idea of the temple in the OT, is fully realized throughout this entire city (cf. Rev. 21:3). No longer is God distant in any sense. No longer is access limited in any sense. God's people now have immediate, intimate, and personal access to the most sacred, holy, and intimate fellowship with God that is possible.

Revelation 21:23 (NKJV)

23 The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.

no need of the sun or the moon to shine in it: Throughout history, idolaters have worshiped the sun and the moon, especially the sun (cf. Ex. 10:21-29). But God is so great, He doesn't even need the sun or moon to provide light. God is going to do completely away with the need for the sun and moon in the New Jerusalem, and His own glory will light the city (cf. Isa. 60:19-20, Rev. 22:5). Note again the union of the "glory of God illuminated it" and "The Lamb is its light". This again stresses the absolute deity of Jesus Christ, who is the Lamb. Jesus is the light of the world (Jn. 8:12), and He is the Light of the New Jerusalem.

In the OT temple, the outer court was illuminated by the sun in the daytime and the moon by night. The sanctuary was illuminated by candlelight where the sun and the moon did not penetrate. But the Holy of Holies was illuminated only by the Shekinah Glory of God. So also in the eternal home of the saints (the New Jerusalem), the entire city, which essentially is the Holy of Holies, will be lighted by the glory of God alone.

Revelation 21:24 (NKJV)

24 And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it.

Here we have just a little glimpse at life in eternity.

Who are these nations, who are these kings, and what is it that they bring into this city?

- 1) One view is that Gentile nations are in view. The word "nations" means Gentiles. Therefore this view is that the saved of history who are not apart of either Israel or the church (21:12-14) will be represented in this group where a distinction of roles will be maintained throughout eternity (cf. Heb. 12:22-24). They would see the category of "just men made perfect" in Heb. 12 as possibly referring to these people.
- 2) Another view is that which is put forth by Robert Thomas.

"None of the earlier proposals [9 of them] has any direct support. In fact, this is an issue on which the text of Revelation is silent, but there is one further theory which seems to satisfy the available criteria best. (10) This opinion holds that "the nations" are composed of saved people who survived the millennial kingdom without dying and without joining Satan's rebellion [it is interesting that the Bible nowhere tells us specially what happens to these people] and who undergo some sort of transformation that suits them for life in the eternal state. The

unmentioned transformation could occur in conjunction with God's work in creating the new heaven and the new earth (21:1, 5). ... They will be like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden prior to the fall. They will be unresurrected human beings who will inhabit the new earth, Paradise restored (22:1-5), throughout eternity. These will be the ones over whom God's resurrected saints will reign (22:5). Nations, peoples, and men on earth must continue in the flesh as Adam and Eve did before the Fall."

From this verse, it appears that subordination of ranks will continue to be a part of God's program throughout eternity. Evidently, not all will be kings on the earth. There must be distinction. Also, note that this verse speaks of kings of the earth (21:24), but in 22:5 we find that the citizens of the New Jerusalem will reign forever and ever. The question is who are the citizens of New Jerusalem reigning over? One answer is that those reigning with Christ in the New Jerusalem reign over the kings of the earth. This certainly is possible, but we are not given much to go on, so we must be tentative and not dogmatic about such conclusions. However, I would note that the kings of the earth do seem to represent a different category of people than the citizens of the city proper, as found in Israel and the church.

Glory and honor into it. Whoever these are in terms of specific classification, they too have access to the city. They bring the best they have to bring from the new earth, in terms of worship, into the city. What this entails, we can only imagine, but it does give us a feel that this will involve social life with bustling activity.

Revelation 21:25 (NKJV)

25 Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there).

This introduces a related parenthetical thought. The kings of the earth will have access. There will apparently be traffic coming and going in and out of the New Jerusalem.

The gates will never be shut by day, and by the way, it is always day. Night never comes there. We would say, "The gates will be open 24/7." They are always open. Access is always available. Never will there be a barrier preventing entrance. The gates eternally opened speak of security. All is safe here. There is no danger. In our world there is danger, especially in the night, but there is no night in the New Jerusalem.

Revelation 21:26 (NKJV)

26 And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it.

The same thing was said in verse 24. Whenever something is repeated, an EMPHASIS is being brought out.

Glory – excellence

Honor – giving what is valuable – attributing worship in some form.

In effect the worship center of the whole New Creation will be the New Jerusalem. The emphasis here is on worship. God pervades this place and this is where the people who inhabit the new earth will come to bring glory and honor, indicating worship.

The glory and honor of the nations ... refers to the choicest of their treasures, whatever they may be. – **Robert Thomas**

The greatest thing, the greatest pleasure will come from being in this place (cf. Ps. 65:4, 84:2, 10).

Revelation 21:27 (NKJV)

27 But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

The resurrected saints will be the citizens of the New Jerusalem (cf. Heb. 12:22-24).

Those having access from the new earth are "saved" (v. 24). But the lost who have not been cleansed from their sin will never enter into this beautiful city which is characterized by the glorious presence of God.

Defiles: unclean – impure – profane (that which is not holy).

Causes an abomination: That which is shameful – that which God hates.

A lie: God hates lying (cf. Prov. 6:16-19, Jn. 18:37, 2 Thess. 2:10-11).

Jesus Christ alone is THE TRUTH (Jn. 14:6). All else is a lie and a part of Satan's system. In the end, you either identify with the truth or with the lie. This issue of liars being condemned is stressed in Rev 21-22 (cf. 21:8, 27, 22:15).

Only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life: Earlier we saw that those not written in the book of life are cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:15). Here the reverse is stated. Only those written in the book of life will have access to this city. All others will be barred. This book of life is mentioned 6 times in Revelation (3:5, 13:8, 17:8, 20:12, 15, 21:27, cf. Phil. 3:20). God has the books and whenever anyone becomes a believer in Christ, their name is registered forever in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Those who are written: As a believer, your name is PERSONALLY written there, emphasizing the personal relationship each one individually has with the Lord.

Notice it is the Lamb's Book of Life. This is the book that belongs to Jesus and it has recorded in it the names of all those who have applied His blood to their account.

Jesus is referred to as "Lamb" only twice in the O.T. (Isa. 53:7, Jer. 11:19); only twice in the Gospels (Jn. 1:29, 36); only once in the book of Acts (Acts 8:32); and only once in the epistles (1 Pet. 1:19). However, in the Book of Revelation, He is referred to as Lamb 28 times.

Lamb takes its imagery from the OT sacrifices (cf. Gen. 22:7-8, Ex. 12, Lev, Jn. 1:29).

In each case, the picture is one of an innocent substitute dying in the place of the guilty offender. The penalty for sin is death. The Lamb would die, so the offender could go free.

John 1:29 (NKJV)

29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

John 1:12 (NKJV)

12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

The book is not a "good works book of life"; but rather the LAMB'S BOOK OF LIFE (cf. 1 Pet. 1:18-19, Rom. 3:25-26, 5:8, 6:23). Jesus paid our death penalty as the innocent substitute. Jesus paid it all! Now all we have to do is RECEIVE HIM by faith. You are either in the Book of Life or you are not. There is no middle ground.

As we come to 22:1-5, the emphasis on the New Jerusalem relates to the quality of "life" in the city for its inhabitants. In effect, the New Jerusalem is PARADISE RESTORED. That which was lost in

Genesis 3 is now restored, only on even grander scale. Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more!

Revelation 22:1 (NKJV)

1 And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

He showed me – referring to the angel seen in Rev. 21:9.

Pure river – no pollution, no contamination. Everything about this city is pure and holy. There will be no more sea in the new creation (Rev. 21:1), but there will be a river.

Water of life: The water of life is proceeding from the throne because God is the author of life (cf. Jer. 2:13, 17:13, Ps. 36:9). Eternal life in heaven means more than mere existence. It speaks of QUALITY of life. Life that is fresh, that is satisfying, that is full of enjoyment (cf. Ps. 46:4).

The point of the passage is to teach that in the eternal state God's people will live at the source of the life-giving stream, the very presence of God Himself.

– Robert Thomas

Clear as crystal: It is bright and sparkling. Apparently it looked like shimmering water that sparkles and glistens as it cascades from the throne.

Proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb: The source is the throne of God and of the Lamb. Throne denotes sovereign authority. The most important aspect about this city is life. Eternal life is here, and the source is God, for God Himself is LIFE! Note that the throne singularly is linked to both God and the Lamb, showing equality of the two.

Revelation 22:2 (NKJV)

2 In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

The focus at this point is on the TREE OF LIFE. That takes us back to Genesis where we last saw this tree in Genesis 2 and 3 (cf. Gen. 2:9, 3:22-24). If man were to have eaten of this tree in his fallen condition, he would have been locked into that condition forever.

To live forever in sin-cursed bodies that are continually breaking down would be miserable beyond comprehension. However, to have a glorified body like Christ's and live forever will be blissful beyond imagination.

In the New Jerusalem, we again see the Tree of Life which would seem to speak to the fact of PARADISE RESTORED. Rev. 2:7 also prophetically looks ahead to the blessing of eating from the tree of life in the context of PARADISE.

Paradise: Is the idea of a beautiful garden or park. This is paradise restored. The implication is that a new and better, everlasting EDEN has come, where God's people will forever enjoy intimate fellowship with God, in the context of a beautiful garden.

The five verses that begin Revelation 22 show that God's redemption will return the new creation to the Garden of Eden state and to the Creator's intention for humanity.

– Robert Thomas

In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life,

This is the golden street mentioned in 21:23 and the picture seems to be of a very broad street, so wide as to have a river running right down the middle of it. On either side of the river is the tree of life. So the river is running down the middle of the golden street and on both sides of the river is the tree of life.

There is some discussion as to whether this TREE OF LIFE is spoken of collectively, or involves a good number of trees on either side of the river. This would seem to fit the typology as seen in the millennial kingdom where we find the river flowing from the sanctuary that will have trees on either side with health-providing qualities (cf. Ezek. 47:1, 7, 12, Zech. 14:8). If it is a singular tree, we still have a problem in our understanding, because the singular tree is said to be on both sides of the river. However, THE TREE OF LIFE does seem to tie more closely with the singular tree of Genesis than plural trees along the living waters in the millennial arrangement.

which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month (NKJV)

bearing twelve *manner of* fruits, yielding its fruit every month (NASB)

Whether a singular compound tree is in view, or the tree of life collectively speaks of a number of different trees, this TREE OF LIFE bore 12 fruits, yielding fruit every month.

The month by month output...argues the probability of [twelve differing kinds of fruit]

– **Robert Thomas**

Though eating the fruit of the Tree of Life is unmentioned here, the implication is that this is what brings immortality, the same as was true for Adam and Eve originally (Gen. 3:22).

– **Robert Thomas**

Theologians believe that if Adam and Eve had successfully passed the time of testing in the Garden of Eden without sin, then they would have been allowed to eat of the tree of life resulting in them living forever in their mortal bodies. Their condition of immortality would have been sealed at that point. Sin would no longer have been a possibility because they would have then been allowed access to the tree. This will be the situation for God's people in the New Jerusalem. We will eat of the tree of life with never again the possibility for sin.

Every month: This indicates that there will still be some marking of time.

There will still be a flow of time ... and some means... of measuring time. ... It is not that time will cease, as some teach, but that time will never end... - **Henry Morris**

We know that the New Jerusalem will not be illuminated by the sun or moon or any other created light (Rev. 21:23-25), and we know that the citizens of the new earth will also walk in the light of the New Jerusalem, but many scholars think that this does not necessarily cancel out the reality of a sun and moon in relation to the new earth. The city receives no light from these, but what of the new earth? We are not explicitly told. Some think that a sun and moon may still exist in reference to the new earth, and this may tie in with the time factor as seen here.

The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. In the millennial scene, we find that the leaves of the trees along the river flowing from the sanctuary are medicine for the people (cf. Ezek. 47:12). There seems to be some parallel thought in the Ezek 47 passage and the New Eden we have pictured in Rev. 22.

However, there is a major distinction. While the curse will be largely removed in the millennial kingdom, it will not be completely removed (cf. Isa. 65:20). But now in the eternal state, there is no more curse as the very next verse clearly states.

So how do we explain this “healing” of the nations?

Therapeia (healing), however, does not imply illness. Perhaps a better way to translate it would be “life giving”, “health giving”, or “therapeutic”. – **John MacArthur**

Robert Thomas observes that the word “healing” is better understood as “health” for the citizens of the nations.

Nations means “Gentiles” or “Peoples”. It would seem that the church and redeemed Israel are the citizens proper of the New Jerusalem, so who is living on the new earth?

Robert Thomas proposes that it is those believers who survived the Millennial Reign in mortal bodies, who are then given bodies similar to that which Adam and Eve had at the beginning of creation.

The discussion of “the nations” at v. 24....proposed that these are mortals surviving to the end of the Millennium and then having their mortality transformed to a new state resembling that of Adam and Eve before the entrance of sin in Genesis 3. ...

Healing,...then, must connote a promoting of health of the nations such as will be an ongoing service in the new creation.... Those who have entered the new heaven and the new earth in an unresurrected state will have a means for perpetuating their health. – **Robert Thomas**

Both water and food are mentioned in these verses. Perhaps we will not have to eat or drink out of necessity, but will do so for enjoyment and quality of life in the eternal city.

Eating is a blessing and a pleasure. It is one reason we give thanks before we eat.

Eating is often associated with fellowship in the Bible. In the OT, Israel had the feasts, which involved eating. In the N.T., we find Jesus and His disciples often eating together. Most memorable is the LAST SUPPER. After the resurrection, Jesus ate with His disciples. He said He would drink wine with His disciples in the kingdom (cf. Ex. 24:9-11, Mt. 26:29, Rev. 3:20).

Revelation 22:3 (NKJV)

3 And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.

No more curse: This exact word occurs only here, but is a cognate of anathema which is found 6 times in the NT (Acts 23:14, Rom. 9:3, 1 Cor. 12:3, 16:22, Gal. 1:8, 9). The idea of curse goes back to Gen. 3 when Adam and Eve were banned from the tree of life and all the principles of death and decay set in because of sin. There is no more curse here. Nothing will ever break down. All is ever new in the NEW heaven, the NEW earth and the NEW Jerusalem.

The OT began so well with CREATION, but the OT ends with the threat of a curse with the very last word in the OT in Mal. 4:6 being the word “curse”. However, the NT opens up with the coming of the Lord of Glory to remedy the curse by being made a curse for us (Gal. 3:13). It concludes with the new creation where there is no more curse. Praise God the curse will be removed and paradise restored. As it was in the beginning, so shall it be in the end, although even better.

But the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, Whereas prior to the curse, God had fellowship with Adam and Eve, so now again unhindered fellowship will take place. Instead of the barrier of a curse, the intimate presence of God will be there.

Again the throne of God and of the Lamb are linked, demonstrating their unity. Note that 4 times in the immediate context, we have this linkage emphasized.

1. 21:22 – Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.
2. 21:23 - Glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.
3. 22:1 – throne of God and of the Lamb.
4. 22:3 – throne of God and of the Lamb.

It is very clear that Jesus is ONE with the Father. 1 Cor. 15:24-28 indicates that in the end the Son will deliver up the kingdom to the Father, but Rev. 22 makes it equally clear that He will also continue to reign with the Father. They both occupy the THRONE (cf. Rev. 3:21).

And His servants shall serve Him. “Servants” is literally “slaves”. Jesus bought us with His blood and we literally belong to Him! The Book of Revelation began with this emphasis and concludes here, too (cf. Rev. 1:1).

Note that they “shall serve Him”. God’s people are not inactive, just sitting around playing on harps and being eternally bored. No, they are ACTIVE in service. There will be things to do, service to render, and responsibilities to carry out. What it all entails, we again are left to contemplate.

Revelation 22:4 (NKJV)

4 They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.

To see the face of God is to experience Him in all His glory. This was not possible for sinful mortal man (cf. Ex. 33-34, Mt. 5:8, 1 Cor. 13:13, 1 Jn. 3:2). We shall see God and we shall be like Him. We will be perfectly glorified and able to fully enjoy God.

His name shall be on their foreheads. This speaks of identification and ownership. They are His slaves. But it also probably relates to the fact that we will see Him and reflect His glory. God’s name, His person, shall be reflected through the countenance of His people. They will reflect the divine glory in their persons.

Revelation 22:5 (NKJV)

5 There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.

There are no dark and gloomy days here. There shall be no night there is stressed TWICE in the context (21:25, 22:5). There is nothing scary or evil here. This city has no need of secondary or created light. It is God-lit!

For the Lord God gives them light: This phrase is thought to allude to Ps. 118:27, which in turn is thought to be a condensed form of the priestly blessing in Num. 6:25. In Numbers 6:24-26, the priests were told to bless the people and so put God’s name upon them.

Numbers 6:24-26 (NKJV)²⁴ “The Lord bless you and keep you;
²⁵ The Lord make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you;
²⁶ The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace.” ’

The people of Israel were thus blessed with the presence of God, but in the eternal state the presence of God will be immediate and direct. God will literally light on them and bless them with the countenance of His presence.

And they shall reign forever and ever. In verse 3, we find they shall serve, but here we find they shall reign. In fact they will do BOTH! The context relates to the citizens of the holy city, the New Jerusalem. They are serving and they are reigning (cf. Dan. 7:18, 27).

Now the question is this: Over whom are they reigning?

1. Some think the idea is that there will be no distinction of status. We will simply all serve as kings. There will only be kings and no subjects. I question that because to reign means you have jurisdiction and authority over others.
2. Some think saved Gentiles who were neither apart of the church or Israel are in view.
3. Perhaps the citizens of New Jerusalem will reign over the people who come out of the millennial kingdom in mortal bodies, who now reside on the new earth.

The text is not explicit regarding those over whom God's slaves will rule, but presumably it will be "the nations" (v. 2) who will continue to populate the new earth just as Adam and Eve did the old earth before the Fall. – **Robert Thomas**

A.T. Pierson summarizes....

There shall be no more curse – perfect sinlessness.
 The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it – perfect government.
 His servants shall serve Him – perfect service
 They shall see His face – perfect communion
 His name shall be on their foreheads – perfect resemblance
 There shall be no night there – perfect blessedness
 They shall reign forever and ever – perfect glory.

The Bible is a window I this prison life, through which we look into eternity.

- **Timothy Dwight**

We now come to the EPILOGUE of the book in Rev. 22:6-21.

The book closes in an epilogue (vv. 6-21) with a rapid succession of voices, instructions, statements, and promises. – **Robert Thomas**

Revelation 22:6 (NKJV)

6 Then he said to me, "These words are faithful and true." And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place.

These words are true [accurate/real] and faithful [trustworthy/reliable]! This emphasis was made in relation to the introductory verses regarding the New heavens, the New earth and the New Jerusalem at 21:5. Now again the very same emphasis is made at the conclusion of its discussion. God is making special emphasis concerning the REALITIES of the eternal state and the New Jerusalem.

"Faithful and True" is also used twice in Revelation as a title for Jesus Christ (cf. Rev. 3:14, 19:11). This message is just as certain as the very character of Jesus Christ.

In the first PARADISE, in the Garden of Eden, Satan came to Eve, and introduced seeds of doubt in reference to the Word of God, thereby questioning both the accuracy and authority of God's Word (cf. Gen. 3:1). Now in reference to PARADISE RESTORED, we have a double emphasis that it is all true. Don't let the devil get you to question or doubt it. It's all true. The best is yet to be.

From the throne: These words are true and faithful. (21:5)

From the angel: These words are faithful and true. (22:6)

Lord God of the holy prophets: This phrase is very significant because it ties together the whole of the prophetic Scriptures. The Scriptures as originally given were about 25 percent prophecy. We have prophecy interspersed throughout the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. The Lord God is behind it all. He sovereignly superintended and inspired all of prophecy. Just as He inspired the OT prophesies, so too, He has inspired the Book of Revelation. This phrase links all the prophets together with the Book of Revelation. Revelation is the CAPSTONE of prophecy and cannot be divorced from the rest of the Scriptures. It all comes to consummation in Revelation.

As we study prophecy, we find they ALWAYS have a literal fulfillment. All these prophecies were LITERALLY fulfilled. In that same vein, all the prophecies of Revelation will be literally fulfilled. Just as sure as the first coming prophecies were literally fulfilled, so also will be the prophecies related to the second coming and what follows. These words are faithful and true!

Angel: Angels have been involved in the Revelation all along, but in the most immediate context, we had one of the 7 angels, involved with the bowl judgments, reveal to John the New Jerusalem (21:9, 22:1).

To show His servants – “Servants” is literally “slaves”. The intention is to reveal what is coming to His people, and more specifically as we find in verse 16, these things are directed for the knowledge of the church. God’s pattern in prophecy is to reveal to His people what will take place, and then to make it happen (cf. Amos 3:7).

the things which must shortly take place. This phrase ties closely with the emphasis made in the prologue in Rev. 1:1-3. Repeatedly we find the same emphases coming through in both the prologue and the epilogue.

Shortly – means “soon”. Prophetically speaking these things are on the threshold of happening. On God’s prophetic calendar, these things will happen in the near future (cf. 2 Pet. 3:8).

Revelation 22:7 (NKJV)

7 “Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”

At this point, there is a parenthetical INTERJECTION from the Lord Himself.

Quickly: Can mean suddenly or soon. Both are true properly understood. However, the most natural meaning of the word, and the overall context, would argue for the idea of SOON. He is coming without delay. His coming is IMMINENT! Prophetically, speaking,

His coming for the church, which triggers the events of this book, is the next thing on God’s prophetic calendar.

Again, we need to understand the idea of “coming quickly” as coming soon in the prophetic sense. Note that this harmonizes with “shortly take place” in verse 6, and “the time is at hand” in verse 10. Three times in this chapter, Christ says He is coming quickly (v. 7, 12, 20). This is not just a DOUBLE EMPHASIS but a TRIPLE EMPHASIS! He is on His way without delay. The rapture is an impending event! The prologue stressed this, as does the epilogue (cf. 1 Cor. 1:7, 16:22, Phil. 3:20, 1 Thess. 1:10, 4:15, Titus 2:13, Ja. 5:9, 1 Jn. 2:28).

“Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.” Blessed – this is the 6th of 7 beatitudes in the book (1:3, 14:13, 16:15, 19:9, 20:6, 22:7, 14).

Keeps: Guards, to hold fast, or to heed. The same term is used in 14:12, to describe the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

This could be understood in one of two ways.

It could be a blessing pronounced on those who guard the message of the Book of Revelation. The critics and those who twist the Book of Revelation have been many. There is great need to guard it faithfully and stand for the straightforward truth of it without compromise. Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book without distorting or in any way corrupting the message (cf. 22:18-19). Or it could refer to the one who HEEDS, in the sense of, applies it to his own life. The sense then is obedience. This person takes seriously what it says in terms of the imminent coming of the Lord. He takes seriously the reality that judgment is coming upon the world. He takes seriously the issues developed in the book concerning eternity, and therefore lives in light of an eternal perspective.

I personally lean toward the latter emphasis, because it harmonizes with the emphasis in the prologue, and also the immediate context, which stresses the imminence of His coming, which in turn calls for holy living consistent with the Scriptures (cf. Rev. 1:3). The Book of Revelation is not just to satisfy our curiosity, but to spur us on in matters of practical Christian living. To take seriously the coming of Christ and all that goes with it as revealed in Revelation will change the way you live (cf. 1 Jn. 3:2-3, 1 Pet. 4:7, 2 Pet. 3:11-14). Those who do this are BLESSED indeed! The spirit of faith is reflected in that they HEED the prophetic truth in this book and live in light of it, which is in stark contrast to the earth-dwellers committed to the Babylonian system, as seen previously in the book.

Revelation 22:8 (NKJV)

8 Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things.

Verse 8 connects back to verse 6, and in context what John has just been shown is the holy city, the New Jerusalem. In effect, he was given a personal tour by the angel.

The EXPERIENCE in this spiritual realm was absolutely overwhelming. John feels compelled to worship! The same thing happened in Rev. 19:10 when John is shown realities related to the 2nd coming. Now the issue with the angel often gets all the press at this point, but the real issue is the REVELATION that John has just been shown. What John saw and heard (double emphasis) just blew him away. It was totally overwhelming. Don't miss that point. The REVELATION itself was the point! It was incredible beyond what we can imagine or comprehend.

With that in mind, John feels compelled to worship, which is the proper thing to do, but the problem is he directs it to the messenger angel, instead of to God. He has already been corrected on this score earlier in 19:10, and now again, he is having the same problem. He knows better theologically (cf. Jn. 4:21-24), but emotionally and experientially, he is overcome at the moment.

Revelation 22:9 (NKJV)

9 Then he said to me, “See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.”

The angel rebukes John! He too is just a “fellow servant” (slave). He, too, is just a created being, serving the will of God.

Of your brethren the prophets: Again John is LINKED with the prophets, but now the angel also links himself with them all, in the sense, that the angel too is merely an instrument of REVELATION. Prophets and angels are merely instruments of REVELATION. The very word angel means “messenger”.

Who keep the words of this book. Note that the angel makes a distinction between John’s brethren who are prophets, and those who keep the words of this book. John belongs to the category of prophets who bring forth new revelation, but the other category speaks to those who obey the revelation that is given.

John – apostle – authoritative representative of Jesus Christ.

Angels – agents of revelation.

Prophets – who bring forth new revelation - “thus saith the Lord”.

Who keep the words of this book – those who live according to what God has revealed.

All are on the same level of being fellow servants of God and His truth, although they have different roles in the plan and will of God! All are created beings. All serve the will and purposes of God. All are merely servants. Only God is to be worshipped!

Worship God. Worship is the proper response to the Revelation, but it must be directed to God (cf. Ex. 20:3, Mt. 14:33, Rev. 1:7). Christ is the grand subject of the book and throughout, worship is attributed to Him and the Father (cf. 1:1, 19:10).

Revelation 22:10 (NKJV)

10 And he said to me, “Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand.

600 years earlier, God had told Daniel to seal the words of his prophecy. The fulfillment would be a long way down the road. In many ways, it did not have an immediate relevancy (cf. Dan. 8:26, 12:4, 9). Frankly, without the view of history, the Book of Revelation, and other N.T. revelation, there is a lot of things hard to put together in Daniel’s prophesies. But now we are at the time of the end, and Revelation, which is a further commentary on Daniel, is an “open book”. It fills in for our understanding, that which previously was pretty dark and hard to comprehend.

The time is at hand: The church age is now in view, which will usher in these last days’ events found in the book of Revelation. The next thing is the END – so to speak! Therefore, there is immediate relevancy. Instead of postponing disclosure, now is the time to be aware of these prophetic things. The time for their fulfillment is upon us (cf. 1 Cor. 10:11).

Vs. 6 the things which must shortly take place.

Vs. 7 I am coming quickly! (soon)

Vs. 10 the time is at hand.

Again we must take this emphasis “prophetically” in terms of the program of God. The next event on God’s prophetic calendar is the rapture of the church, which will then usher in all the end time events mentioned in the book of Revelation. There is no more gap periods, no more delays, before the end of the ages. It is right now currently upon us. This God has clearly told us in Revelation!

Picture it this way. You are marching forward towards a destination. It is a ways off in the distance, but you move steadily towards the destiny. Then you come right to the cusp of the destiny, right to the river's edge, and on the other side is the destiny. You are RIGHT THERE. You then move up the bank of the river as it curves around. You go up and down hills, etc., waiting for a bridge to come into view, which will bring final passage to the other side. In effect, you have reached your destiny, all but for the passage onto the other side, but you have no idea how long you will follow the winding path of the river, until you reach the bridge. This is a fitting illustration of the idea of the "prophetic soon" as presented in Revelation. We are on the cusp of the fulfillment of end time events, but we don't know how far we will have to go until we reach the bridge of the rapture that takes us across the final threshold, and ushers all these things into place.

Revelation 22:11 (NKJV)

11 "He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still."

Unjust: unrighteous, wrong doer, evil, wicked.

Filthy: vile, impure, unclean.

Righteous: Does right, just, upright.

Holy: Set apart for God.

At first reading, this verse appears to be "fatalistic", but that is not the case (cf. Ezek. 3:27; Dan. 12:10).

The verse does not teach some kind of religious determinism that makes repentance and conversion impossible for some people. The invitation of 22:17 makes clear that an opportunity for the right choice remains. – **Robert Thomas**

The discussion, in context, revolves around the eternal state. The coming of Christ, triggering events eventuating in the ETERNAL STATE, is imminent. Eternity is in the balance, and once in the eternal state, people will have a fixed state. They will be locked into what condition they were upon arriving in eternity (Heb. 9:27). The coming of Christ permanently fixes one's character and eternal destiny.

As such, this is a fitting, URGENT warning in light of the context of the imminence of last days' events. Now is the time to change. If people won't respond to the awesome warnings of this book, there is no hope for them. They will retain their evil/filthy natures forever in an everlasting hell.

By this he does not mean that men should remain unmoved by the prophecies of this book, but rather that if the prophecies are rejected, there is no other message that will work. If the warnings of the book are not sufficient, there is no more that God has to say. ... It is an either/or proposition with no neutrality possible. – **John Walvoord**

Those who hear the truth but continue to do wrong and be filthy will be that hardened response fix their eternal destiny in hell. On the other hand, the one who continues to practice righteousness and keep himself holy gives evidence of genuine saving faith. Preaching Revelation draws a line. Its truths will melt the hearts of the repentant and harden the hearts of the unrepentant. Those same truths thus become either an instrument of salvation, or an instrument of damnation. – **John MacArthur**

A man is traveling in a railway train. Shall he get out at such and such a station? He halts between two opinions; really he can't make up his mind. Meantime, the train has gone up to the station and is off again thundering through the dark – and the man has decided against alighting there just because he could not make him mind up. Few people calmly and

deliberately decide against the Lord. But multitudes do it who never thought to do it, by the easy way of not deciding. -**George Morrison**

The train of time is moving on and there are a series of STATIONS we might call "Now Stations" along the path of life. Then the train moves on, but soon and very soon, either death or the Lord's coming will usher in eternity with no more opportunity to change position (cf. 2 Cor. 6:2, Heb. 3:15, Mt 12:30). To make no decision for God is to decide against God!

Revelation 22:12 (NKJV)

12 "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work."

We have another strong interjection here by the Lord Himself concerning the imminence of His coming. We saw the same thing in verse 7, and will see it again in verse 20.

Quickly can mean soon or sudden, but in the overall context, the emphasis here would seem to be SOON. The idea is a "prophetic" soon. The next event on the prophetic calendar is the coming of the Lord for His church. So, it is soon from that stand point. In the program of God, there is nothing else intervening. Once the church is complete, all these things revealed in Revelation will immediately begin to transpire. So, quickly should be understood in the sense of IMMINENT!

Reward: We have to understand that principally this message is being sent to the church (v. 16). When Christ comes at the Rapture for the church, the issue at that point will be one of REWARDS. Christ is coming with His REWARD! Some people play down the place of REWARDS, but Christ did not. It is one of the very last things He says to the church by way of incentive. As far as forgiveness, as far as eternal life is concerned, it is a GIFT. We do nothing to earn it or work for it. It is all by the GRACE of God. Jesus paid it all – all to Him we owe. We simply RECEIVE Him by faith (cf. Eph. 2:8-9). Salvation is not a REWARD, but rather a GIFT!

Heaven is a free gift, but rewards are based on QUALITY OF SERVICE. There are degrees of rewards. Some are more faithful than others, and will receive a greater reward (cf. 1 Cor. 3:11-15, 9:24-27, 15:58, 2 Cor. 5:9-11, Gal. 6:9, 2 Jn. 8). Our whole life is a STEWARDSHIP. We are not our own to live the way we want. We now belong to Christ. He bought us with His blood. So the issue is HOW we use the one life He gave us.

It is noteworthy...that all final judgments relate to works whether they are in connection with Christians who are being rewarded or unsaved who are being punished. – **John Walvoord**

Note how personal this is. EVERY ONE individually will be rewarded according to his work. This assumes that all God's people did something. Even the thief on the cross was a witness for Jesus. The issue is not necessarily HOW MUCH we did, but the QUALITY of it. "**According to his work**" is a QUALITY issue.

Revelation 22:13 (NKJV)

13 "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last."

In this verse, we have 3 interrelated statements all saying essentially the same thing.

Alpha and the Omega: These are the first and last letters in the Greek Alphabet. This is like saying "I am the A to Z" in English. Everything has both its beginning and consummation in Him. Everything starts and ends with Him.

Beginning and the End: He is eternal. He is sovereign overall from start to finish. Every created thing has its beginning in Him, as well as its consummation.

First and the Last: He is the cause of all, and the final aim of all history centers in Him. Time and eternity center around Him. Everything comes from and finds its conclusion in Him.

The “First and the Last” is a direct statement on the Deity of Christ. In the OT this phrase was used of YHWH, and in the NT it is used of Christ showing that He indeed is God Almighty (cf. Isa. 44:6). This is an emphatic statement that Jesus is no less than God Himself!

The context of this statement following right on the heels of His coming to reward is significant. Everything has its source in and finds its final end in Jesus Christ, and we ought to take that to heart as we SERVE Him. All are accountable to Him!

Revelation 22:14 (NKJV)

14 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.

This is the 7th and final beatitude in Revelation (cf. 1:3, 14:13, 16:15, 19:9, 20:6, 22:7, 22:14). There is some textual differences concerning this phrase. Some manuscripts read, “Blessed are those who do His commandments”; and some read, “Blessed are those who wash their robes”. Scholars can make a case for both, so it is not definitive. Even the context can be argued either way. Furthermore, John underscores both of these emphases in his NT writings and in Revelation.

In one case, attention is being directed to the keeping of the commandments, which is characteristic of believers, and in the other case to their cleansing by the blood of Christ with its emphasis upon the grace of God. – **John Walvoord**

If you take it as, “Blessed are those who do His commandments” that fits well with John’s consistent emphasis that overcomers’ lives are characteristically different from those who go to the lake of fire, as seen for example in Rev. 21:7-8. The very same contrast is again seen in Rev. 22:14-15, which itself is a powerful argument for this view (cf. Jn. 5:29, 1 Jn. 2:3-4).

Obedying His commandments is not the ground of our salvation, but it is the fruit. We are saved by faith alone but the faith that saves does not remain alone.

Although no one is saved by keeping commandments, it is surely true that any person who is genuinely saved will love His commandments and seek to keep them.

Obedience to God’s Word is a mark of true salvation. - **Warren Wiersbe**

However, if one takes it as “wash their robes” that fits well with John’s emphasis on Jesus Christ the Lamb of God who cleanses from sin (cf. Rev. 7:14).

A thorough study of John’s writings and the Book of Revelation, in particular, show both of these emphases coming through. We are cleansed by the blood of Christ on the basis of faith alone, and since that is really true, it will demonstrate itself in our practice, not in terms of perfection, but in terms of the direction of our life.

So however you take it, both of these descriptions are essentially true concerning those who have access to the New Jerusalem.

that they may have the right to the tree of life, These have right to the tree of life. They will partake of this tree that was in paradise, then lost (Genesis 3), and is now seen again in Revelation, in the eternal state. Believers will partake of this tree signifying that they have ETERNAL LIFE. They will live in PARADISE. This is the ultimate fulfillment of Jn. 10:10.

and may enter through the gates into the city. Believers characterized by cleansed and changed lives will have the privilege to enter into the city of the New Jerusalem. Entrance in will be a FANTASTIC experience (2 Pet. 1:11, Ps. 100:4).

Here also they had the city itself in view, and they thought they heard all the bells therein to ring, to welcome them thereto. But above all, the warm and joyful thoughts that they had about their own dwelling there, with such company, and that for ever and ever. Oh! By what tongue or pen can their glorious joy be expressed! – Thus they came up to the gate. Now when they were come up to the gate, there was written over it in letters of gold, ‘BLESSED ARE THEY THAT DO HIS COMMANDMENTS, THAT THEY MAY HAVE RIGHT TO THE TREE OF LIFE, AND MAY ENTER IN THROUGH THE GATES INTO THE CITY.’

- Pilgrim's Progress

Revelation 22:15 (NKJV)

15 But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.

But – is a contrast word. We have contrast between the blessed who can go into the city and those who are OUTSIDE and will never see the light of that wonderful city.

Dogs: Dogs in Bible times were scavenger critters that roamed in packs and often lived off the garbage of the land (cf. Ex. 22:31, 1 Kgs. 14:11, 16:4, 21:19, 23-24, 22:38). In the Bible, the term is used symbolically to describe people of low moral character (cf. 1 Sam. 17:43, 24:14, 2 Sam. 3:8, 9:8, 16:9, 2 Kgs. 8:13). The term is used of a male prostitute in Deut. 28:13, of Gentiles in Mt. 15:26, and of false teachers we call Judaizers in Phil. 3:2-3 (cf. Isa. 56:10). “Dogs” replaces the word “abominable” in 21:8, but the same idea is carried over. These people are characterized by disgusting vices that God hates.

Sorcerers: This word refers to those involved in the occult. They have rejected the true God in favor of the dark side of spiritual realities.

The Greek word is *pharmakos* from which we get the English word “pharmacy”. It denotes the combination of occult practices with drug use which often go together (cf. 9:21, 21:8, Gal. 5:20).

Sexually Immoral: Any type of sexual behavior outside the bounds of marriage is forbidden and is referenced by this phrase. The Greek word is *pornos* from which we get the English word, “pornography”. It signifies those who practice illicit sexual activities. No matter what they say, they are not saved (cf. 1 Cor. 6:9-11).

Murderers: Those who take another's life, whether it be a baby (inside or outside the womb), a child or an adult. This is not speaking of self-defense or matters of war, but rather premeditated murder (cf. Gen. 9:6). By the GRACE of God, any and all of these sins can be forgiven. However, if people don't repent and receive the grace of God, then they will die in their sins. That is what is in view here.

Idolaters: Idolatry is the worship of anything other than the ONE true God. It's putting anything or anyone above the God of the Bible.

Whoever loves and practices a lie – It is said that the besetting sin of mankind is PRIDE, but LYING is right in there, too. Perhaps we could say that pride and lying are the besetting sins of mankind. Of course, this list goes on and on.

In fact the sins listed in this verse as well as other similar lists in Revelation are thought to be merely representative and not exhaustive of the types of sinfulness that keep people out of heaven. These are prominent categories of sinfulness and LYING is very prominent. In fact it is mentioned in all 3 of the lists in Rev. 21 and 22 (cf. 21:8, 21:27, 22:5).

What is really in view here essentially relates to SPIRITUAL MATTERS – to matters of faith and practice. If we are committed to the God of Truth and the Word of Truth, this will be reflected in our lives. If we are not, then in fact, we committed to a lie (cf. Jn. 8:44, 18:37). John repeatedly in his writings uses some form of the word LIAR to refer to those who claim to be Christian, but yet in fact, they are not. They profess Christ, but their practice shows they are living a lie (cf. Jn. 3:20-21, 1 Jn. 2:4, 2:22, 4:20, Rev. 2:2). All phony Christians fit into this category, as well as all cults, isms, and all others who reject the truth in favor of the lie. This sin finds its apex in those who follow antichrist, who is Satan's ultimate lie, a counterfeit of the true Christ (cf. 2 Thess. 2:11).

Revelation 22:16 (NKJV)

16 “I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.”

Jesus – This name means “YHWH is salvation”. It is closely aligned with His HUMANITY, being given to Him in conjunction with His birth (cf. Mt. 1:21-23). It is the name that emphasizes Him being SAVIOR. He had to become a Man so that He might die for our sins and be our Savior (cf. Heb. 2:14-15). At this point, Jesus again speaks personally. The message of this book is from Jesus, although much of it has come through the mediation of an angel. This personal word from our Savior should be very encouraging to the Church.

To testify to you these things in the churches.

The reference to “the churches” is of significance because this is the first reference to the word “church” (Gr., *ekklesia*) since the message to the seven churches. The reason for this is that the church is not involved in the Great Tribulation.

– John Walvoord

This is a very interesting point, because it is essentially agreed on by scholars that the “these things” in this sentence refers to the whole book of Revelation. If indeed, Christ comes for the Church prior to the Tribulation Period, then the question is raised as to why the churches are given all this information about the Tribulation, since it doesn't apply to them.

This message is given to the churches so that they might WARN the world of what is coming. The church is the pillar and ground of the truth holding it forth to the world in WARNING (cf. Phil. 2:15-16, 1 Tim. 3:15). A primary job of the church is to WARN THE WORLD in most definite terms on coming judgment, and Revelation is the capstone of that most sober of warnings – “JUDGMENT DAY IS COMING” (cf. Acts 17:30-31). Immediately following the Rapture, multitudes of people will come to saving faith and one reason that will happen is because the church was WARNING and sowing the seed of the Gospel in the church age. That seed will continue to bring forth a harvest after the church is gone.

Revelation is ONE LONG WARNING! Repent! Get right with God, because judgment is coming! (cf. 2 Pet. 3:8-9)

I am the Root and the Offspring of David, Root means source. He is the CREATOR of David. This speaks to the DEITY of Jesus Christ.

Offspring: meaning He is a descendant of David in terms of His HUMANITY. This phrase speaks to the reality that Jesus is both God and Man (cf. Isa. 11:11, Mt. 1:1, Mt. 22:41-46, Rom. 1:1-4, 2 Tim. 2:8, Rev. 5:5). This phrase in Rev. 22:16 speaks to the fact that Jesus is the Messiah who fulfills all the prophecies regarding the Davidic Covenant in 2 Sam. 7:12-17. There God promised David an heir who would forever have the throne in an eternal kingdom (cf. Lk. 1:31-33).

the Bright and Morning Star.” The first part of the sentence stresses Jesus’ Messianic ties to Israel, and David in particular, as we have seen; but the last part of this verse, “the Bright and Morning Star” emphasizes His relationship to the church. As such, it brings together the Messianic continuity regarding both the OT and NT emphases.

The emphasis in relation to Israel is the coming THRONE – the Davidic Covenant.
The emphasis in relation to the church is in the HEAVENS – the Bright and Morning Star.

It all ties together in Jesus, the One Who is the centerpiece of all the prophetic Scriptures (cf. Rev. 19:10).

The Bright and Morning Star refers to the bright star which is actually Venus. This bright “star” appears ABRUPTLY just before dawn while it is still night. However, it heralds that a new day is coming. This we believe speaks to the RAPTURE. This is the event in which Jesus will snatch His church out of the dark world. We will be caught up in the brilliance of His light, but darkness will still prevail upon the world for a little while until the end of the Tribulation Period. Then Jesus will come as the Sun of Righteousness to His people, Israel in accord with Malachi 4:1-2.

The language here in Rev. 22:16 of the Bright and Morning Star apparently is based on the prophetic Scripture of Num. 24:17 in the O.T. which is then further developed in the N.T. (cf. 2 Pet. 1:19, Titus 2:13). Historically Jesus the Messiah is a descendant of David and prophetically He is the BRIGHT hope of the church which will signal a new day is soon to arrive.

Revelation 22:17 (NKJV)

17 And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.

Some think that in context the “Come” in the first part of the verse is speaking to Christ as seen in verse 16, and is in keeping with the spirit of John in Rev. 22:20, where the desire is for Christ to come. Certainly, that is possible. However, others see the whole verse as an INVITATION to the lost to respond to Christ so that they are rapture-ready; ready for eternity come death or rapture. Certainly, the last part of the verse is an invitation to the lost to come for salvation. It could be a combination of both which would fit the totality of the context. However, I lean toward the view that “come” throughout this verse is in regards to an INVITATION to the lost.

- 1) It fits with the greater context of severe warnings both before and after this verse (vs. 15, 18-19).
- 2) It fits with the mission of the church to WARN the world in conjunction with Christ revealing these awesome things to the church (16 a).
- 3) It fits with where the flow of thought goes in verse 16 which is certainly with regard to the lost.

- 4) But the KEY reason is because it says the Spirit says “Come!” It seems to me that the most natural way to take the Spirit saying “come” is to see this as an invitation to the lost. This is the Spirit’s ministry (cf. Gen. 6:3, Jn. 16:7-8, Acts 1:8).

So I would tend to see this verse as saying that both the Spirit and the Bride in combination are saying to the lost – “COME!” “Come to Christ for forgiveness.” The Bride preaches the Gospel, and the Spirit works conviction in the heart. Come is the language of INVITATION. God doesn’t FORCE people. He invites them (cf. Lk. 14:15-24, Mt. 11:28, Heb. 3:15).

The one who hears is the one who responds in a positive way. In other words, they accept the gospel message. They listen and believe. “Hear” signifies accepting the message. Those who don’t accept, never seriously LISTENED. They may even go through the motions, but have never really heard (cf. Jn. 10:27-28, Lk. 8:15). However, those who have heard are now exhorted to share. They, too must say “COME”!

The Spirit is saying “COME!”

The bride – the Church of Christ is saying “COME!”

The converts are to say “COME!”

Note the gracious tone of this verse. It is not beating people over the head with it. It is simply an INVITATION. They can either come or walk away. This is not forcing the issue, but lovingly PLEADING with people (cf. 2 Cor. 5:20- 6:2).

There is nothing standing in the way of the one who thirsts. All he has to do is come.

The invitation is WIDE OPEN! Thirsty refers to those who are spiritually parched. They have a recognized need. They desire to be satisfied by the forgiveness and life that can be found only in Christ (cf. Isa. 55:1, Jn. 4:10, Jn. 6:35).

Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely. “Ya gotta wanna.” This speaks to the issue of human responsibility. You have to desire it. You have to be thirsty. You have to TAKE of the water of life, and you do this by FAITH (cf. Jn. 1:12).

It also illustrates the biblical truth that salvation involves both God’s sovereign choice (Jn. 6:44) and human volition. God saves sinners, but only those who recognize their need and repent. – **John MacArthur**

Water of life: speaks of eternal life, the life found in Christ that quenches and fulfills spiritually (cf. Jn. 7:37).

Freely: It’s all of grace. You don’t earn it or work for it. It is freely bestowed on all who admit their need and look to Jesus for fulfillment and satisfaction. It is FREE, it is all of grace, and yet, you must COME. You must be THIRSTY. You must DESIRE. You must TAKE (cf. Rom. 6:23, Eph. 2:8-9). Let the thirsty COME – for NOW is the accepted time (cf. 2 Cor. 6:2). Those that refuse to COME, will one day hear Christ say, “DEPART from Me, I never knew you.” (cf. Mt. 7:23). The Bible warns of unparalleled coming judgment, but it also offers a final invitation of GRACE. COME! Now is the accepted time. The door of grace is still open!

This brings us to the final warnings in the book and the concluding benediction.

Revelation 22:18-19 (NKJV)

18 For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book;

19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

Verses 18 and 19 form a unit of thought. We are warned not to tamper with the message. This is amongst the most solemn warnings in the Bible. Verses 18 and 19 are very possibly a continuation of the direct message from the Lord Jesus Christ. This echoes back to Rev. 1:3, and certainly would apply to those in the churches who would hear this message, but then it also extends to all who are privileged to receive this message. Revelation is the one book that promises a BLESSING to those who hear and apply the message, but on the other hand a CURSE is threatened to any who would dare tamper with its contents.

Prophecy of this book: The book is essentially prophetic. It predicts what is coming. In general, it ties many prophetic themes together that relate to the coming of Jesus Christ (cf. Rev. 1:1). When it comes to prophecy, people have consistently had the tendency to want to try and embellish it. But God says: "DON'T YOU DARE DO THIS!"

When it speaks of "the prophecy of this book" it certainly has in view the Book of Revelation, but in that fact, it really embraces a much larger picture, because in fact Revelation is the capstone of all the Scriptures. Revelation gathers up all the grand prophetic strands of Scripture and ties them all together into one final grand consummation. Of the 404 verses in Revelation, 278 of them allude to the OT Scriptures. No other writer in the NT uses the OT more than this. In effect, Revelation ties in with all the other prophetic Scriptures of the Bible. So in a real sense it does not stand alone!

Since the subjects in this book are woven throughout the Bible, the verse, in effect, condemns any tampering with God's word. – **William MacDonald**

Revelation of truth is complete, for nothing can lie beyond the eternal state. While in the strict letter the threats of this terrible warning apply to the Revelation, yet inasmuch as this portion of the Book of God is rooted in, interwoven with, and is the completion of all the Word of God, it becomes impossible to taper with this final book without maltreating what had been given before. - **G.H. Lang**

The observation is true that this warning applies specifically to the book of Revelation only, but by extension it entails the termination of the gift of prophesy and the NT canon also. ... So the final book of the Bible is also the concluding product of NT prophecy. It also marks the close of the NT canon since the prophetic gift was the divinely chosen means for communicating the inspired books of the canon. – **Robert Thomas**

When John, the last living apostle penned this book there was no more prophecy to be given about the future. There are no more books of the Bible to follow. This is it (cf. Jn. 16:13).

The warning of these verses clearly echo Deut. 4:2 and are thought to build on it.

God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book Does this mean that it only applies to those living during the 7-year Tribulation period when the bulk of these plagues are in view? No, because when you read verse 19, it has eternity in view. Verse 19 speaks of not having part in the book of life or in the holy city, and the parallel thought to that, in verse 18, would be they will have part in the lake of fire which is the ultimate eternal "plague" defined in this book.

So I would take it that "plagues" is used in a very broad sense to speak of the terrible JUDGMENT results that are mentioned in this book, including the lake of fire, etc. In reality, that JUDGMENT encompasses and surpasses all the other plagues in the book. Whatever it means specifically, it isn't good. The plagues in Revelation all have to do with pain, suffering, and misery, and therefore

are to be understood in that vein. Terrible consequences of painful misery await those who would dare tamper with God's book.

And if anyone takes away - It applies both ways. It must not be added to or taken away from.

God shall take away his part from the Book of Life... [or tree of life] Some manuscripts read book of life and some read tree of life, but the end result is the same. These people do not have eternal life (cf. Deut. 4:2, 12:32, Prov. 30:5-6, Gal. 1:8-9, 2 Pet. 3:16, 1 Jn. 4:1, Rev. 22:18-19). It is characteristic of false teachers and false prophets to TAMPER with the Scriptures, but they do so to their own destruction. Those who would dare tamper with the HOLY BIBLE thereby prove they are not truly children of God.

This passage assumes that a child of God will not tamper with these scriptures.

– **John Walvoord**

There is a point of no return where God abandons people in their sin (cf. Rom. 1:24, 28). When people deliberately dare to add or take away from the Word of God, they would seem to have crossed that line.

THE BIBLE: Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, and the Christian's charter. Here Paradise is restored, Heaven opened, and the gates of Hell disclosed. CHRIST is its Grand Subject, our good its design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently, and prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. It is given you in life, will be opened in the Judgment, and will be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, rewards the greatest labor, and condemns all who trifle with its holy contents. – **unknown author**

No true believer would ever deliberately tamper with Scripture. ... That does not, of course, mean that believers will never make errors in judgment or mistakenly interpret Scripture incorrectly or inadequately. The Lord's warning here is addressed to those who engage in deliberate falsification or misinterpretation of the Scripture, those whom Paul denounces as peddlers of the Word of God (2 Cor. 2:17).

– **John MacArthur**

Revelation 22:20 (NKJV)

20 He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

Jesus now for the 3rd time in this chapter affirms His SOON return (cf. v. 7, 12, 20).

This is the LAST DIRECT word from the Lord Jesus. It follows right on the heels of the warning about NOT TAMPERING with the book! This book is really important to Jesus. It's all about Him and His grand finale concerning history. Better not mess with it (cf. 2 Tim. 4:1-5).

This again speaks of the Lord's IMMINENT return. It could happen at any time.

It is a PROPHETIC soon. The next event on God's prophetic calendar is the return of Christ for His Church (cf. 2 Pet. 3:8). We need to live ready (cf. Mk. 13:37, 2 Tim. 4:8, Heb. 9:28, 1 Jn. 2:28).

Amen. John adds his own affirmation to this certain and welcome prospect.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus! Lord means MASTER and indicates Deity. He is God/Master. Jesus means Savior. Indeed, He is Lord and Savior to all true believers!

This phrase in Greek is the equivalent to the Aramaic “Maranatha” (the Lord comes”) which became the watchword in the early church. Interestingly enough, Paul also used strong threatening language followed by Maranatha in 1 Cor.16:22. John’s heart at this point longed for the coming of Christ. All that He had seen leaves his heart enraptured with what is ahead for the believer. He had seen the glory of heaven – the throne room. He has seen the glory of the eternal city. He has tasted the delights of the kingdom to come and his heart leaps with, “Amen, Even so, come, Lord Jesus!”

Revelation 22:21 (NKJV)

21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

John closes the book with a note of GRACE! The last word (so to speak) in the book is GRACE!

How fitting! Against the back drop of the horrible judgments of this book, the GRACE of God shines brightly for those who are the recipients of it. One of the things the book of Revelation should do for all believers of our age is to give them a great APPRECIATION for their salvation – for the GRACE of God.

For the church age believers, we will...

Not have to face the antichrist.

Not have to experience the seal judgments.

Not have to experience the trumpet judgments.

Not have to experience the bowl judgments.

Not have to appear at the great white throne judgment.

Not have to be cast into the lake of fire.

Not be kept out of the eternal city, the city of God – paradise.

GRACE, GRACE, GOD’S GRACE – what a fitting note on which to end! This our song through endless ages, singing forever of the GRACE OF GOD!!!

There is some difference in the manuscripts at this point between as to exactly how it should read: “with you all”, “with all”, or “with all the saints”.

John’s usual way of referring to believers in Christ is... “the saints”... but here he uses... “all”. Perhaps he chooses a broader term here in hopes that many in the churches who have not yet attained to the standing of “saints” in God’s eyes will respond to the repeated pleas of this book through repentance, faith, and washing their robes in the blood of the Lamb. It is possible for them to do this through the enabling “grace of the Lord Jesus. – **Robert Thomas**

This view fits well with the last invitation of the Bible as given in 22:17. Others see it more as addressing a desire of blessing on the saints as only they are truly the recipients of the saving grace of God. They would argue that the book is essentially written to the saints and not the “aints”, and therefore it is fitting that the closing statement is addressed to them.

Perhaps it broad enough to embrace both – desiring that all who hear may truly experience the GRACE of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It has been said, “As in the Revelation, so in history – grace shall have the last word!” To which I would add, “And grace shall see us through!” – **Edward Hindson**

The book of Revelation is like a grand central station where all the major themes of Biblical prophecy come to their final destination of fulfillment. These major themes relate to...

The Messiah
The Church
Israel
Jerusalem
Antichrist
Babylon
The nations
The kingdom

HISTORY is HIS- STORY. These things all have a determined end to the GLORY OF GOD!

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.