REVELATION:

NOTES AND COMMENTARY

BY

ROBERT G. SIMPSON

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INTRODUCTION TO REVELATION

Revelation is probably the most challenging book in the New Testament. There are numerous interpretations presented by various authors. Many commentators believe that their interpretation is the “correct” one; but; often their interpretations contradict each other. Logically, if twenty interpretations disagree with each other, at least nineteen are incorrect, and possibly all twenty are incorrect. The challenge of interpreting Revelation should generate humility in anyone attempting it. The author readily concedes that there are passages in Revelation that he cannot explain. Those passages also appear to defy explanation by others.

To write the present commentary, the author examined commentaries by other conservative writers. Conservative is defined as writers who believe the Bible is the inspired word of God and that it has been translated correctly. Examined were commentaries on Revelation by Albert Barnes, James Coffman, B. W. Johnson, Arthur Ogden, Ferrell Jenkins and Homer Hailey. Commentaries that were cited as secondary sources in the text were written by R. C. H. Lenski and Albertus Pieters. The author also consulted the commentary on Ezekiel by C. F. Keil.

The author’s interpretation was heavily influenced by the interpretation offered by Homer Hailey in his book *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, published in 1989. Hailey employed thorough scholarship and an impressive knowledge of Old Testament prophecy to support his interpretation. Though sometimes disagreeing with specific points contained in Hailey’s work, the author agrees with the general interpretation he offers.

In interpreting each chapter of Revelation, the author reviewed explanations offered by various commentators and selected the explanation that seemed most logical and was also compatible with prophecy in the Old Testament and teaching in the New Testament. The author employed the five rules for interpreting Revelation that are presented later in this document. In some instances, the author disagreed with interpretations offered in all the commentaries reviewed and formulated his own interpretation. Presented in this commentary is an interpretation that seems most logical to the author. It is up to the reader to decide if the interpretation seems logical to you.

References for word studies included *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* by W. E. Vine and The *Interlinear Literal Translation of the Greek New Testament* by George R. Berry. A secondary source for word studies cited in the text was the *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* by Henry J. Thayer. References consulted for historical information included the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* and an article concerning the Roman Emperor Constantinethe Great in the on-line encyclopedia Wikipedia. The primary Biblical translations examined were the *King James Version* and the *New American Standard Bible*. The references for each of the sources consulted are presented at the end of the commentary.

In the text of the commentary, reference citations include only the author’s last name (e.g., Coffman or Hailey) unless the text contains a direct quotation or a specific idea by an author. If the text contains a direct quotation or a specific idea, the reference citation includes the last name of the author and the page on which the quotation or idea can be found in the original source (e.g., Hailey, p. 126). When referring to *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, reference citations do not include page numbers because the dictionary is arranged in alphabetical order of words as they are found in the *King James Version* of the Bible.

TITLE OF THE BOOK

“Revelation” comes from the Greek word APOKALUPSIS, which means an uncovering or unveiling (Vine). Something that is uncovered or unveiled is revealed. Something that is revealed is a revelation.

PURPOSE

Revelation is an apocalyptic book that uses symbols and imagery to prophesy about the persecution of the church and to encourage Christians to remain faithful because they will ultimately be victorious. The apocalyptic language prevents the enemies of God from understanding the message. Old Testament apocalyptic books are Daniel, Ezekiel & Zechariah.

AUTHOR

The author is believed to be John the apostle (Revelation 1:1, 4, 9; 22:8). There is substantial external evidence to support the conclusion that John wrote the book. The following early writers ascribed the writing of Revelation to John the apostle: Justyn Martyr (110 AD – 165 AD), Irenaeus (120 AD – 202 AD), Tertullian (145 AD – 220 AD), Hippolytus (170 AD – 236 AD) and Origen (185 AD – 254 AD).

DATE OF WRITING

There is substantial debate over the date of writing. The two most likely dates are:

64-68 AD during Nero’s reign (known among many scholars as the “early date”) and

91-96 AD during Domitian’s reign (known among scholars as the “late date”).

Respected Bible scholars have made extensive and persuasive cases for both dates. After reviewing available evidence, the author favors the “late date.” Lengthy defenses have been made for both positions. It is beyond the scope of this commentary to give extensive explanations to support the author’s conclusion. Nevertheless, a brief summary of three reasons why the author favors the “late date” is presented as follows:

1. Nero blamed Christians for burning Rome in 64 AD and began persecution of them in Rome. Though he supported persecution of Christians in Rome, apparently no formal persecution of Christians was ordered by Nero throughout the empire. Domitian wanted the people to worship him as a god and saw Christians as a political threat. He ordered Christians persecuted throughout the empire because they refused to worship him as a god. The elevated level of persecution by Domitian seems to fit the later date of writing.
2. It is believed that John wrote Revelation while he was exiled on the island of Patmos. Apparently, exiling political opponents was practiced more by Domitian than it was by Nero. That John wrote Revelation while in exile seems to fit the later date of writing.
3. Paul’s letter to the Ephesians is believed to have been written around 62 AD. He addressed the letter to the saints who are faithful in Christ Jesus (1:1). He referred to the Ephesians as fellow citizens with the saints (2:19) who were formerly in darkness, but “now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light” (5:8). Paul also met with the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:17-38) and warned them to be on the alert because “from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after them” (Acts 20:30-31). The elders grieved and wept at Paul’s departure because they knew that they would not see him again (Acts 20:37-38). Though Paul warned the Ephesian elders of perilous times to come, his parting comments and his letter to the Ephesians indicates that they were functioning well spiritually as a church. This contrasts with what is said about the church at Ephesus in Revelation 2:4. They were described as having lost their first love. Apparently, their spiritual condition had deteriorated since the time when Paul wrote his letter to them. If Revelation was written between 64 and 68 AD and Paul’s letter to the Ephesians was written around 62 AD, then the church spiritually deteriorated very quickly. It is possible that such a quick deterioration occurred, but more probable that it took longer to happen. This seems to support the later date of writing.

PLACE OF WRITING

External evidence indicates that John was exiled by Domitian to Patmos, where it is thought he wrote Revelation (Revelation 1:9). When Domitian died in 96 AD, John apparently returned to Ephesus.

SYMBOLISM AND NUMBERS

One should guard against trying to explain each detail of symbols in apocalyptic language.

Some figurative events in Revelation have an apparent relation to events on earth (e.g., the birth of Jesus), while other symbolic events have no obvious relation to specific events on earth. Many scholars have tried to identify specific people and events with symbols contained in the book. These efforts usually produce greatly conflicting results. It seems best to focus on the ideas conveyed by the symbols.

Scholars agree that the numbers used in Revelation have a symbolic meaning. Hailey (pp. 41-48) discussed the symbolism of these numbers in detail. Following is a list and short discussion of the numbers and their apparent symbolic meaning:

3 – Symbolic of a complete and ordered whole.

The number three is used often in Scripture and is found ten times in Revelation. Many scriptural examples could be given, but only a few will be mentioned. Possibly the most meaningful use of the number three involves the members of the Godhead: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Jesus rose from the dead after three days in the tomb. The sheet containing all manner of animals which Peter saw while in a trance came down from heaven three times (Acts 10:16).

4 – Symbolic of the world or creation.

The number four is used often in Revelation. Four living creatures in heaven are mentioned throughout the book. Four angels stood at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth (Revelation 7:1). Daniel’s interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream involved four kingdoms to rise in power on the earth. There are four directions on earth: north, east, west and south.

7 – Symbolic of completeness or perfection.

The number seven occurs 54 times in Revelation. A few examples are provided. Letters were written to the seven churches of Asia. There were seven stars, seven golden lampstands, seven seals, seven spirits, seven angels, seven trumpets, seven heads on a beast and seven plagues.

6 – Symbolic of incompleteness.

If seven is the number of completeness or perfection, then six is short of seven and symbolizes incompleteness or imperfection. Multiple sixes would emphasize imperfection.

3 ½ - Symbolic of trial, persecution and oppression.

In the Bible, the number 3½ is usually synonymous with time, times and half time, one thousand two hundred sixty days, forty-two months, and three- and one-half years. Daniel (7:25) prophesied that the saints would be worn down and would be given into the hands of a king who would speak out against the Most High for a time, times and half a time. In Revelation, the holy city would be trodden under foot for forty-two months (11:2). Two witnesses were killed and their bodies were left in the streets for three and a half days (11:9). A woman clothed with the sun fled into the wilderness for one thousand two hundred and sixty days (12:6). The blasphemous sea beast was given authority to act and make war with the saints for forty-two months (13:5, 7).

10 – Symbolic of fullness of power or rule.

In Revelation the number ten occurs several times regarding ten kings, ten horns (often indicating power) and ten diadems (crowns worn by rulers). Multiples of 10, such as one thousand or one hundred forty-four thousand, indicate superlative power.

12 – Symbolic of religious ideas or concepts.

The number twelve is associated with basic religious ideas or concepts throughout the Bible. In the Old Testament Jacob had twelve sons who became the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel. In the New Testament there were twelve apostles who were said to sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. In Revelation, twelve thousand came from each of the twelve tribes totaling one hundred forty-four thousand. The woman clothed with the sun wore a crown of twelve stars (Revelation 12:1). The holy city had twelve gates of twelve pearls with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel on them. At the gates were twelve angels (Revelation 21:12-13, 21). The twelve foundations of the holy city were twelve precious stones bearing the names of the twelve apostles (Revelation 21:14, 19-20).

RULES FOR INTERPRETING REVELATION

1. Interpretation must be consistent with the teaching of the rest of the New Testament.

The New Testament was written by men through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 2:4). The Holy Spirit would not reveal testimony that would contradict itself. Therefore, the interpretation of Revelation must be consistent with teaching in the rest of the New Testament.

1. Interpretation must be consistent with the prophecies of the Old Testament. Many of

the visions that John saw in Revelation appear to be based on events or visions revealed to prophets in the Old Testament. Just as with New Testament writers, the Holy Spirit revealed truth to Old Testament prophets (I Peter 1:10-11). To fully understand the meaning of what was revealed to John one must be acquainted with many prophecies found in the Old Testament and any interpretation of Revelation must be consistent with those prophecies.

1. Interpretation must consider the meaning of the book to the first century Christians to

whom it was written. John was instructed to write what he saw and send it to the seven churches (Revelation 1:11, 19). The readers of the letters were told repeatedly, “He who has an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Revelation 2:7). Any interpretation of Revelation must consider that the message of the book had meaning for the first century Christians.

1. Interpretation must acknowledge that the language of the book is symbolic and that

some symbols or numbers should not selectively be interpreted literally while others are interpreted symbolically. Many writers have developed creative theories about world events or future spiritual happenings based on literal interpretations of selected passages in Revelation. These are usually based on pure speculation and are often indefensible when compared to what is actually said in scripture. One must be careful not to force meaning onto scriptures where there is no basis to support it.

1. Interpretation must consider the impact of pagan idolatry on the Roman Empire.

Despite the evidence that an omnipotent and omniscient God created the heavens, the earth and all forms of life, mankind has demonstrated a proclivity toward idolatry almost since the beginning of time. For thousands of years man has created images of wood, stone and precious metals and then worshipped them. Acknowledgement of this practice is contained throughout the Old Testament and was considered an abomination by God.

The tendency toward idolatry was also common in the first century. God continued to condemn the practice of idolatry through the inspired writers of the New Testament. In the New Testament there are 24 passages across 10 books in which idolatry is either addressed negatively or directly condemned.

Pagan idolatry permeated the Roman Empire. Worship of idols was rampant, but was also accompanied by mandated worship of the Roman Emperor. Domitian and many emperors who came after him decreed that members of the empire must worship the emperor or be persecuted, tortured or killed. Christians were often victims of this mandate because worshipping the emperor as a god would mean recanting their faith in Jesus Christ. Many Christians died because they refused to forsake Christianity.

It is believed that understanding the impact of pagan idolatry and mandated emperor worship on early Christians plays a significant role in interpreting the message of Revelation. In the book not only is idolatry condemned, but Christians are given assurance that remaining faithful to Christ unto death (2:10) will result in their eternal salvation. Presented below is a list of the New Testament passages in which idolatry is either addressed negatively or is directly condemned. Five of those passages are found in Revelation.

NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES CONCERNING IDOLATRY

**Acts 15:29; 21:25** Gentiles were warned to abstain from things sacrificed to idols.

**Acts 17:16** In Athens Paul’s spirit was provoked within him as he was beholding the city

full of idols.

**Acts 17:29** Paul said we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold, or silver, or stone,

an image formed by the art and thought of man.

**Romans 1:22-23** Men became fools and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an

image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling

creatures.

**I Corinthians 5:10** Paul grouped idolaters with immoral people, the covetous and swindlers.

**I Corinthians 5:11** Paul told the Corinthians not to associate with any so-called brother if he

should be an idolater.

**I Corinthians 6:9-10** Idolaters will not inherit the kingdom of God.

**I Corinthians 8:10** Paul spoke of those who are seen dining in an idol’s temple.

**I Corinthians 10:7** Paul told the Corinthians not to be idolaters.

**I Corinthians 10:14** Paul told the Corinthians to flee from idolatry.

**I Corinthians 10:28** If someone should say to you, “This meat is sacrificed to idols,”

do not eat it.

**I Corinthians 12:2** Paul spoke of pagans who were led astray to the dumb idols.

**II Corinthians 6:16** What agreement has the temple of God with idols?

**Galatians 5:19-21** Idolatry is a deed of the flesh and those who practice such things shall not

inherit the kingdom of God.

**Ephesians 5:5** No immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an

inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

**I Thessalonians 1:9** Paul spoke of how the Thessalonians turned to God from idols to serve

a living and true God.

**I Peter 4:3** Peter grouped abominable idolatries with those pursuing a course of sensuality,

lusts, drunkenness, carousals and drinking parties.

**I John 5:21** Little children, guard yourselves from idols.

**Revelation 2:14** Balak put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed

to idols and to commit acts of immorality.

**Revelation 2:20** Jezebel leads My bondservants astray, so that they commit acts of immorality

and eat things sacrificed to idols.

**Revelation 9:20** Evil men did not repent, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and

silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk.

**Revelation 21:8** For the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral

persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns

with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

**Revelation 22:15** Outside the gates of the holy city are the dogs and sorcerers and the immoral

persons and murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.

REVELATION CHAPTER 1

**1:1** God gave the revelation to Jesus who sent it to John through His angel. Things which must “shortly take place” indicates the relevance of the message to the people to whom it was written.

**1:2** John bore witness of the testimony of Jesus to all that he saw.

**1:3** “Words of the prophecy” indicates prediction of events to come. Readers will be blessed.

“The time is near” indicates the relevance to the people to whom it was written.

**1:4** Him who is, was and is to come is God the Father and indicates His eternal presence.

“Seven spirits before His throne” probably refers to the Holy Spirit (seven indicates completeness, perfection). He is mentioned in the context of the Father (1:4) and the Son (1:5).

**1:5** Jesus is the faithful witness of His own divinity (John 8:14). “Firstborn of the dead” refers to the resurrection of Jesus. “Ruler of the kings of the earth” indicates Jesus’ reign over His spiritual kingdom which encompasses all physical and political kingdoms. He is not subject to the rulers; rather, they are subject to Him. Jesus loves (present tense) us and demonstrated that by dying on the cross to release us from sins.

**1:6** By releasing us from sin, Jesus made Christians a part of God’s spiritual kingdom (the church). We are priests who offer sacrifices to God the Father (I Peter 2:9). “Dominion forever and ever” indicates that God’s dominion is eternal.

Descriptions of Jesus in Revelation 1:5-6:

* Faithful witness of His own divinity (John 8:14)
* Firstborn of the dead – His resurrection from the dead
* Ruler of the kings of the earth – His kingdom is spiritual.
* Released from our sins by His blood – when He was crucified.
* Made us to be a kingdom – the kingdom of God (the church)
* Made us priests to His Father – Christians offer spiritual sacrifices.
* To Him be glory & dominion forever – His reign and power are eternal.

**1:7** could have a dual interpretation:

1. It could refer to the second coming of Jesus when He will return in the clouds

(Acts 1:10-11) and all mankind will acknowledge Him (Philippians 2:10-11).

1. Apocalyptic language could indicate judgement on political entities as in:

**Isaiah 19:1** - The Lord is riding a swift cloud to punish Egypt.

**Matthew 24:30** - The Son of Man will come on the clouds and all the tribes of the earth

will mourn the destruction of Jerusalem.

**Revelation 1:7** - Could refer to coming judgement on the Roman Empire.

**1:8** These words appear to be spoken by the Father. Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. God is the beginning and the end. “Is and was and is to come” indicates the eternal nature of God.

**1:9** John describes himself as:

* Your brother – He was a fellow Christian to those to whom he wrote.
* Fellow-partaker in the tribulation – He was persecuted for his faith by being exiled to Patmos (probably by order of Domitian) as his fellow Christians were being persecuted.
* Fellow-partaker in the kingdom – He was in the spiritual kingdom of God like his fellow Christians.
* Fellow partaker in perseverance – Like his fellow Christians, he had not yielded to the governmental pressure to renounce his testimony that Jesus is the Son of God.
* Exiled because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus – John was exiled because of his testimony.

**1:10** “The Lord’s Day” is an expression used only here in the New Testament. Nowhere in the New Testament is it stated that the Lord’s day is Sunday; but the logical assumption is that it refers to Sunday for the following reasons:

Jesus rose from the dead on Sunday (John 20:1).

The church was established on Pentecost (always on Sunday) (Acts 2:1).

Christians observed the Lord’s supper on Sunday (Acts 20:7).

The collection for the saints was to occur on Sunday (I Cor. 16:2).

“In the Spirit” probably means he was in the process of receiving a revelation from the Holy Spirit as in Ezekiel 3:12, 14. It appears not to mean that John was in a trance.

“Like the sound of a trumpet” describes a voice, not a trumpet. A trumpet is often used to call attention to a coming announcement. The voice called John’s attention to instruction in 1:11.

**1:11** Not clear if the speaker was Jesus (as in 1:17) or his angel (1:1). John was told to write in a book (scroll) what he was about to see (indicating a vision) and to send it to the seven churches.

**1:12** “Seven golden lampstands” – Each lampstand represented one church (1:20); they were independent of each other. Gold was used in the Old Testament to make vessels of worship.

**1:13** “Son of Man” is the common Biblical reference to Jesus. He was God, but He came to earth in the form of man. He was clothed in royal garb. He stood in the middle of the lampstands where He could monitor all activities of each church.

**1:14** “White wool” is a symbol of purity. “Eyes like flame of fire” indicates intensity and the ability to penetrate the heart.

**1:15** His feet were like burnished bronze (or brass). The metal is translated from the Greek CHALKOLIBANO (Vine). The exact metal is unknown, but emphasis is on the fact that it is glowing as if it had just come out of a furnace. Therefore, it is very hot and would melt whatever it walks on (in judgement?). “Sound of many waters” – probably refers to a roaring sound (like a large waterfall) as in Daniel 10:6 (tumult) and Ezekiel 1:24.

Revelation 1:14-15 is similar to what Daniel saw in Daniel 10:5-6. Daniel saw a man in a vision who was dressed in linen, whose waist was girded with a belt of pure gold (10:5), whose face had the appearance of lightning, his eyes were like flaming torches, his arms and feet like the gleam of polished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a tumult (roaring) (6).

**1:16** The “right hand” usually indicates strength or honor. “Seven stars” were the angels for the seven churches (1:20). “Sharp two-edged sword” – reminds one of the gospel (Hebrews 4:12); but, the word translated “sword” in Hebrews 4:12 is MACHAIRA and indicates a short sword or dagger. A different word (RHOMPHAIA) is translated “sword” in Revelation 1:16; 2:12, 16; 19:15, 21.

RHOMPHAIA denotes a weapon of large size, whether a sword or spear is not certain, but usually longer than a MACHAIRA (Vine). In Revelation the RHOMPHAIA appears to be an instrument of anguish (Vine) used by the Lord to invoke judgement against an enemy (2:12, 16; 19:15, 21). In 6:8 it refers to saints slaughtered by their enemies with such a sword (RHOMPHAIA). The face of Jesus shining like the sun probably symbolizes the intense brilliance of His divinity.

**1:17** John was physically overcome by the power of what he saw. But the person whose image was so fierce and who could destroy his enemies laid a gentle hand on John and told him not to be afraid. Faithful Christians have nothing to fear from Jesus. “First and last” indicates the eternal nature of Jesus.

**1:18** Jesus described Himself as the “living One” who was resurrected from the dead in victory. He overcame death and Hades and He provides the keys for Christians to overcome death and Hades. Death is the end of our physical body. Hades is the world of departed spirits. Jesus overcame physical death by being resurrected and he overcame Hades because His soul was not left in Hades (Acts 2:27). Christians will overcome death at the final resurrection and our souls will be with God eternally and will not be confined to Hades.

**1:19** Jesus told John to write what he has seen so far, what he is seeing now and the things that will take place in the future.

**1:20** Jesus explained to John the meaning of the seven stars and the seven lampstands.

“Angels of the seven churches” – Scholars disagree as to who/what these angels were. The letters to the seven churches were addressed “to the angel of the church in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_.” There are many possible interpretations, but two are presented: (1) a heavenly being associated with each church or (2) the symbolic spiritual essence of each church. The author favors option (2).

REVELATION CHAPTER 2

**NOTE**: The letters are addressed to the seven churches in geographical clockwise order from Ephesus to Laodicea.

Things said to each of the seven churches indicate that Jesus knew their personal situation:

“I know your deeds” (2:2, 19; 3:1, 8, 15).

“I know your tribulation and your poverty” (Smyrna, 2:9).

“I know where you dwell” (Pergamum, 2:13).

“I know” is interpreted from the Greek OIDA and indicates full and complete knowledge (Vine).

Two things said to individual Christians are common to all seven letters:

Rewards are promised for “him who overcomes.”

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

The letters to each of the seven churches are considered as follows. First a brief description of each city to which a letter was written is presented. A pattern of praise, criticism and admonition is common in the letters to all seven churches. The manner in which that pattern occurs in each letter is presented in a summary of the letters to each church, followed by a verse-by-verse discussion of the content of each letter.

EPHESUS

Ephesus was in west Asia and was the chief city of the Roman province. Ephesus was a center for commercial trade and was the center for worship of the Roman goddess Diana (known as Artemis to the Greeks). There was a great temple to Diana in Ephesus. Paul spent three years in Ephesus (Acts 20:31). Demetrius the silversmith was fearful that Paul would ruin his business of making silver shrines to Diana (Acts 19:24-30). Paul warned the Ephesian elders that, after his departure, savage wolves would come in among them, not sparing the flock; and from among their own selves men would arise speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after them (Acts 20:28-30).

SUMMARY OF LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT EPHESUS (2:1-7)

**Praise**: Toil, perseverance, did not endure evil men, exposed false apostles, endurance, did not grow weary, hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans (apparently false teachers of an unknown type).

**Criticism**: They had left their first love.

**Admonition**: Remember from where you have fallen, repent and do the deeds you did at first. If not, your lampstand will be removed from its place.

He who overcomes will be able to eat of the tree of life in Paradise.

**2:1** “The one who holds the seven stars in His right hand” is Jesus. “Walks among the seven lampstands” indicates Jesus’ awareness of the activities occurring in the churches.

**2:2** “I know your deeds” – “know” comes from the Greek word OIDA (fulness of knowledge – Vine). The word OIDA is used in letters to all seven churches Jesus had full knowledge of the activities of the church. He knew their deeds, their toil and their perseverance (all positive comments). Apparently, they remained steadfast under pressure. They tested false apostles (Acts 20:29-30) and rejected them.

**2:3** They continued to endure and did not lose their intensity as Christians.

**2:4** One criticism: “You have left your first love.” John does not clarify how they left their first love. If Paul was in Ephesus in the early 50’s AD and Revelation was written in the 90’s AD, then about 40 years had passed. The church was probably in its 3rd generation of existence. Traditions, procedures and attitudes become set. Perhaps they had lost the enthusiasm that characterizes a young struggling congregation. They still demonstrated many positive characteristics, but something was missing.

**2:5** They were encouraged to remember the deeds they used to do, repent and start doing those deeds again. If they repented and did the deeds they did at first, their lampstand would remain in place. If they did not repent, Jesus was going to remove their lampstand. Since a lampstand represents a church (Revelation 1:20), then removing their lampstand would mean that Jesus would no longer acknowledge them as a church belonging to Him.

**2:6** Another positive comment. They hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans. Neither the Scriptures nor history tell us who the Nicolaitans were nor what their deeds were. Apparently, they were false teachers and the Ephesians rejected them.

**2:7** At the end of each letter, individual Christians are addressed. Christians are judged as individuals, not as part of a collective whole (i.e., a church). The Christian who will overcome is the one who has an ear (desire) to listen to what the Spirit has to say to the churches and practice it. Apparently, each church was to read the letters written to all the churches. The promise to him who overcomes is the ability to eat of the tree of life in God’s Paradise. Eating from the tree of life caused Adam and Eve’s downfall and brought death on all men (Genesis 3:22-24). Faithful Christians will be able to eat of the tree of life and live in Paradise.

SMYRNA

Smyrna was about 40 miles north of Ephesus. It had an excellent harbor and was a commercial center. Many of the inhabitants were wealthy. Today the city is known as Izmir in Turkey and is almost totally Islamic (Jenkins, p. 51). The inhabitants maintained a strong allegiance to Rome from the early days of the empire. They built a shrine to Roma, the Roman goddess, as early as 195 BC.

SUMMARY OF LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT SMYRNA (2:8-11)

**Praise**: Though physically they suffered tribulation and poverty, they were rich (spiritually).

Part of their tribulation came from “those who say they are Jews and are not.”

The “synagogue of Satan” was probably composed of Jews by birth who rejected Jesus and persecuted Christians. Speaking against Jesus would be blasphemy.

**Criticism**: No criticism is offered.

**Admonition**: Do not fear what you are about to suffer (imprisonment and tribulation for 10 days, a complete period with a beginning and end). Be faithful unto death. If they remain faithful, their reward would be a victor’s crown (STEPHANOS – Vine).

He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death (the lake that burns with fire and brimstone (Revelation 21:8).

**2:8** Jesus described Himself as the first and the last (indicating His eternal nature) who was dead and has come to life (probably indicating His crucifixion and resurrection from the dead).

**2:9** Jesus knew (OIDA) their tribulation (probably persecution) and their poverty. Most residents of Smyrna were wealthy, thanks to the bustling commerce. Apparently, most of the Christians were not wealthy. Christianity does not appeal to most people of high estate. They were rich (spiritually). Jesus knew the blasphemy (speaking against) by those who claimed to be Jews but were really of the synagogue of Satan. They possibly were Jews by birth, but by rejecting Jesus and by persecuting His people they had become a “synagogue of Satan.”

**2:10** They were encouraged not to fear the coming suffering. The ultimate source behind their persecution was Satan. The persecution will last ten days (a complete period of unspecified duration with a beginning and end). Their faith and dedication will be tested. They were encouraged to be faithful until (literally “unto” - Berry) death, indicating they should be faithful even if it resulted in their death. If they remain faithful, they will receive a crown (STEPHANOS) of life. STEPHANOS is a victor’s crown like those given to winners in the games (Vine). The word is used in 2:10 to indicate a crown of reward or triumph.

**2:11** This verse is addressed to individual Christians. “Ear to hear” indicates a desire to hear what the Spirit has to say. Those who remain faithful will not have to worry about the second death. The second death is the lake of fire (20:14) that burns with fire and brimstone (21:8). It is the eternal destiny of the wicked (21:8).

PERGAMUM

Pergamum was about 30 miles north of Smyrna. It was the political capitol of the Roman province for two centuries. Greek and Roman paganism abounded. Roman Emperor worship was very political and recognizing the Emperor as deity became a test of loyalty.

SUMMARY OF LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT PERGAMUM (2:12-17)

**Praise**: They held fast Jesus’ name and did not deny their faith in Him.

**Criticism**: Some held the teaching of Balaam (a prophet) who advised Balak (king of Moab) to “put a stumbling block” before the sons of Israel by having the young women of Moab entice them to practice idolatry and fornication (Numbers 23, 24, 31:16). Apparently, there were “some” Christians who encouraged others to give in to idolatry. “Some,” in the same way, held the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

**Admonition**: Repent or Jesus would come quickly to make war against the false teachers with the sword (RHOMPHAIA) of His mouth.

He who overcomes will be given manna (hidden from view in the ark of the covenant - Hebrews 9:3-4), a white stone and a new name written on the stone.

**2:12** The sword (RHOMPHAIA) is a large weapon usually indicating judgement on an enemy (as in 1:16).

**2:13** “I know … where Satan’s throne is” probably refers to Pergamum being a center of emperor worship. The Christians “held fast His name,” maintaining their loyalty to Christ amid pagan idolatry. They did not deny the faith even when Antipas (apparently a faithful Christian) was martyred.

**2:14** “You have there some” indicates not all Christians were guilty of the accusation. The accused were guilty of the same thing of which Balaam was guilty in the Old Testament. Barak (Balak) was the king of Moab who wanted Balaam the prophet to curse the Israelites (Numbers 23, 24), but God would not allow Balaam to curse Israel. Balaam advised Balak to “put a stumbling block” before the sons of Israel by having the young women of Moab entice the young men of Israel to practice idolatry and fornication with them, which the young men did (Numbers 31:16). Apparently, there was a small group of Christians who encouraged other Christians to give in to pagan idolatry (i.e., emperor worship) in Pergamum. This would have been a compromise with the idolatrous society in which they lived and should not be tolerated.

**2:15** There were also some who held the teaching of the Nicolaitans. “In the same way” indicates that the Nicolaitans also favored compromise with the world. Little is known of the Nicolaitans.

**2:16** The command to repent was given to the whole church. They were to repent of compromising and tolerating error among their number. Jesus threatened to come quickly in judgement with His sword (RHOMPHAIA) against those who taught compromise and error.

**2:17** This verse is addressed to individual Christians. He who has the desire to hear what the Spirit has to say will learn that he who overcomes will be given hidden manna, a white stone and a new name written on the stone which no one else will know.

“Hidden manna” refers to the manna given to the children of Israel in the wilderness. The manna was kept in a jar for generations (Exodus 16:33) in the ark of the covenant (Hebrews 9:4) and was hidden from view. “White stone” – Interpretations vary and no one knows for sure. Speculation is that the white stone represented the stone sometimes given to a man found innocent at a trial. White is a symbol of purity. The new name could indicate a person’s new spiritual identity when he becomes a Christian (Romans 6:4). No one knows the true identity of a person but the person himself.

THYATIRA

Thyatira was a wealthy city about 40 miles southeast of Pergamum. It was a trade and manufacturing city known for its purple dye and dyed garments. Lydia (Acts 16:11-15) was a seller of purple from Thyatira. She was the first convert to Christianity on European soil. A temple dedicated to the Roman God Sambethe was located at Thyatira. At this temple was a prophetess who claimed to utter oracles from Sambethe. Many people in the city accepted these as “oracles” from the god (Hailey, p. 135). There were many trade guilds that closely associated themselves with pagan idolatry and conducted drunken feasts in the temple with meat offered to idols (Jenkins, p. 60).

SUMMARY OF LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT THYATIRA (2:18-29)

**Praise**: Love, faith, service, perseverance, later deeds greater than those at first (apparently, they had grown spiritually).

**Criticism**: They tolerated the woman “Jezebel,” who called herself a prophetess, who taught Christians to engage in immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. She could have been part of the church.

**Admonition**: Other than tolerating the false teaching of “Jezebel,” Jesus placed no other burden on those who did not hold this teaching. They were to hold fast the good qualities they displayed “until I come.” “Until I come” probably refers to Jesus coming in judgement against the evildoers in Thyatira instead of referring to His second coming.

He who overcomes will share with Jesus authority over the nations, rule with a rod of iron (Psalm 2:8-9) and be given the morning star (possibly means will share in the glory of Christ (the morning star - 22:16).

**2:18** Jesus refers to Himself as the Son of God, confirming His deity. “Eyes like a flame of fire” suggests eyes that can penetrate and know the thoughts of the heart. Jesus has feet like burnished “bronze” (CHALKOLIBANO - the same word used in 1:15). Composition of the metal is unknown. It appears to mean His feet are ready to trample in judgement those who do evil.

**2:19** “I know your deeds” – Jesus knows all our works. They were still strong in love, faith, service (to others) and perseverance even in the midst of pagan idolatry. Their spiritual deeds (works) had increased over time. Contrasts with church at Ephesus which left its first love (2:4).

**2:20** Jesus had something against them. They tolerated the prophetess Jezebel. This appears to refer to Jezebel of the Old Testament who married Ahab (king of Israel) and encouraged him to serve Baal (I Kings 16:31-33). Elijah defeated 450 prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel (I Kings 18). Jezebel tried to kill Elijah (I Kings 19:2) and she killed Naboth to get his vineyard for Ahab

(I Kings 21:9-10, 14-15). God said that dogs would eat Jezebel (I Kings 21:23; II Kings 9:10). She was thrown to her death, trampled by horses and eaten by dogs (II Kings 9:33-35). The Jezebel in 2:20-23 apparently refers to the prophetess in the temple of the Roman god Sambethe (although it could be the personification of a group of false teachers in the church). “You tolerate the woman Jezebel” – apparently, she was part of the church. She probably influenced Christians to participate in the pagan feasts characterized by eating meat offered to idols and in sexual immorality. Another possibility is that immorality and eating meats sacrificed to idols refers to spiritual immorality, meaning that the Christians compromised truth to associate themselves with pagans. She influenced Christians to compromise their Christian principles and to tolerate evil, resulting in their participation in evil. Compromise often leads to evil.

**2:21** Jesus gave her time to repent (change of mind), but she did not want to repent.

**2:22** Since she refused to repent, her time of judgement was coming. “Bed of sickness” apparently refers to coming tribulation to punish her. “Those who commit adultery with her” refers to those who succumbed to her influence and condoned or participated in evil. They would also be punished unless they repented of her deeds. She refused to repent (2:21); but, those whom she influenced could avoid punishment if they would repent.

**2:23** “Her children” appear to be a different group from “those who commit adultery with her” (2:22). Those in 2:22 were misled but could still repent. “Her children” could refer to those who willfully agreed to participate in her evil. They will receive judgement. Jesus searches the “minds and hearts.” The word translated “minds” literally means “kidneys” (Vine) and represents the innermost part (i.e., the innermost being and emotions) of man. With His “eyes like a flame of fire” (2:18) Jesus “searches the minds and hearts” of men. He knows our innermost being and He will judge us accordingly.

**2:24** “The rest” - Apparently there was a group of Christians who did not approve of nor participate in the teachings and practices of Jezebel (“hold this teaching”), but they tolerated her in their midst (2:20) and did not condemn her actions. The teaching of Jezebel was Satanic in that it was motivated by Satan. Apparently, the evil doers referred to what they were teaching as “deep things of Satan,” suggesting they thought of themselves as intellectually superior thinkers, though followers of Satan through Jezebel.

“I place no other burden on you” – The church had a lot of good qualities (2:19), but they had one critical flaw to correct (i.e., compromising with evil by refusing to condemn it). If they corrected this flaw, He laid no other burden upon them.

**2:25** “What you have” – refers to the good qualities they displayed. They were to remain spiritually pure (“hold fast”) “until I come.” This seems not to refer to the second coming of Jesus, but to his coming in judgement (whether good or bad).

**2:26** He who overcomes is he who remains faithful in keeping the deeds commanded by Jesus until the end. The end of 2:26 and the beginning of 2:27 is a reference to Psalm 2:8-9 where Jesus is given authority over the nations (Gentiles). Jesus will share the authority He has been given with “he who overcomes.”

**2:27** The authority and ruling refer to spiritual authority and ruling by those who are members of Christ’s spiritual kingdom. “Vessels of the potter are broken to pieces” refers to the power of the spiritual kingdom to overcome all opposing kingdoms. As part of the spiritual kingdom, Christians rule.

**2:28** Jesus identifies Himself as “the bright morning star” (22:16). The symbolism of the morning star is unknown. It could indicate the brightness with which Jesus shines. It could indicate the coming of a new day of glory. Individual Christians are addressed. He says that He will give him who overcomes the morning star. This probably means that Jesus will share His glory with he who overcomes (2:26).

**2:29** He who has the desire to listen will hear what the Spirit says to the churches and profit.

REVELATION CHAPTER 3

SARDIS

Sardis was about 30 miles southeast of Thyatira. It was built on a smooth rock hill about 1,500 feet above the ground. It was impenetrable on three sides and easily defended on the fourth. Twice it was taken by surprise and captured by soldiers who found a crevice in the hill (taken by Cyrus, King of Persia, in 549 B.C. and by Antiochus the Great in 218 B.C.). Both times it was taken as “a thief in the night.”

SUMMARY OF LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT SARDIS (3:1-6)

**Praise**: A few people in Sardis had not soiled their garments (with sin).

**Criticism**: The church had a name that they were alive, but they were dead. Their deeds were not completed in the sight of God. Apparently, they were once a spiritually active church, but their activity had ceased.

**Admonition**: Wake up (literally “Be watchful” – Berry) and strengthen the things that remain (as glowing spiritual embers) which were about to die. Remember what you have received and heard and keep it and repent. If they would not wake up (“would not watch” – Berry), Jesus would “come upon” them by surprise “like a thief” with tribulation.

He who overcomes will be clothed in white (pure) garments and walk with Jesus. His name will not be erased from the book of life (the redeemed in heaven – Revelation 20:15; 21:27) and Jesus will confess his name before the Father and before His angels.

**3:1** “The seven Spirits of God” refers to the Holy Spirit (1:4) and suggests that Jesus is acting in association with the Holy Spirit. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches (1:20). This seems to indicate that Jesus, through His association with the Holy Spirit, has total knowledge of the spiritual essence of each of the seven churches. The church had a reputation for being spiritually healthy, but they were spiritually dead. Are there congregations today that fit that description?

**3:2** “Wake up” (literally translated “Be watchful” – Berry) is an interesting choice of words since the city had been taken by surprise twice. “Strengthen the things that remain” indicates that spiritual embers were still glowing and the church could come back to life. They had begun the spiritual task of being an active church, but their work had not been completed.

**3:3** Apparently, when they first heard the gospel, they responded to it; but, they are no longer practicing it with enthusiasm. They were told to repent (change their mind) or Jesus would come upon them in judgement at an unexpected time (like a thief). Jesus coming in judgement upon the seven churches never seems to refer to His second coming. It seems to refer to a judgement that will happen during their existence on earth.

**3:4** “A few people” indicates that a church does not live or die as a collective group. There were a few who had not “soiled their garments,” suggesting that not all their sins were sins of omission and sloth. Garments become soiled from sin. Jude 1:23 speaks of garments polluted by the flesh. Those few faithful members of the church would walk in fellowship with Jesus in white (symbolizing purity and holiness) because their garments had not been defiled. They are “worthy” because of their initial response to the gospel and their faithful obedience to the teachings of Jesus.

**3:5** In this verse, Christians are addressed as individuals. The faithful Christian will be eternally clothed in white garments (symbol of purity and glory), will have his name in the book of life (indicating he is among the saved – 20:15) and Jesus will announce his name to the Father and to the angels (a glorious announcement as in a graduation ceremony).

There will be a different outcome for those who do not remain faithful. Those who deny Jesus before men Jesus will deny before His Father who is in heaven (Matthew 10:32-33). Those who deny Jesus before men Jesus will deny before the angels of God (Luke 12:8-9).

**3:6** He who is willing to listen should hear what the Spirit says to the church and implement it.

PHILADELPHIA

Philadelphia was about 28 miles southeast of Sardis. The city was founded around 140 BC by King Attalus II Philadelphus of Pergamum (reigned from 159 – 138 BC). Attalus had such great love for his brother (his predecessor Ecumenes II) that he named the city in his honor. “Philadelphia” means “brother lover” or “brother loving.” The city was founded to spread Greek culture to the east (Hailey, p. 145). It was a wealthy trade center and had so many pagan temples that it was often called “Little Athens.” Wealthy Jews had a beautiful synagogue in the city. Philadelphia was in a geographical location that experienced several earthquakes. The city was destroyed by an earthquake in AD 17 along with Sardis. After an earthquake, the people would live in tents in the fields while they rebuilt the city, then move back into the city. After the AD 17 earthquake the city was rebuilt with the help of Tiberius (a Roman emperor).

SUMMARY OF LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT PHILADELPHIA (3:7-13)

**Praise**: They kept His word and did not deny the name of Jesus. They kept the word of Jesus’ perseverance (literally “endurance” – Berry). They followed Jesus’ example of endurance.

**Criticism**: No criticism is offered.

**Admonition**: I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have in order that no one take your crown.

**3:7** Jesus describes Himself as “Holy,” set apart from the tainted world of sin. “True” (from the Greek HO ALETHINOS) means “dependable, genuine, real” (Hailey, p. 149). Jesus is the true Messiah and the true God (I John 5:20). He has the key of David. “Key” represents authority. The one who has the key (singular) has the authority to open and close the doors. “Key of David” indicates that Jesus was the descendant of David who was prophesied to be the Messiah. In Acts 2:34-36 Peter quotes David in asserting that God has made Jesus both Lord and Christ. “Opens and shuts” indicates Jesus’ total authority. He decides when to open and to shut. When He opens the door, no one can shut it. When He shuts the door, no one can open it.

**3:8** Jesus opened a door for them. It could have been a door of opportunity to grow, spread the gospel or escape the coming judgement. “A little power” could mean they did not have much political power in Philadelphia. Spiritually they were strong because they had kept His word and had not denied His name.

**3:9** “Synagogue of Satan” probably refers to an actual synagogue in Philadelphia composed of people who claimed to be Jews (God’s chosen people) but who had forfeited the right to be called Jews. Their evil deeds made them a synagogue of Satan. Judaism as a spiritual entity had been destroyed at the crucifixion (Colossians 2:14). Israel as a political entity had been destroyed in AD 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem. Christians are the true spiritual Israel (Romans 2:28-29; Galatians 6:16). Something was going to happen in which the Jews in Philadelphia were going to bow down to the Christians. How this occurred is unknown. Were the Jews going to acknowledge the validity of Christianity? It is unknown.

**3:10** “My perseverance” (i.e., My patience) refers to the patience of Christ. He had been patient in His own life and He is patient in giving men time to repent. The Christians had patiently kept the word that came from the patience of Jesus. “Hour of testing” indicates a given time period. The word “testing” comes from the Greek PEIRASMOS (trials with a beneficial purpose and effect – Vine). The word could also include temptations. The trials were going to test “those who dwell upon the earth” who, in Revelation, usually refers to people of the earth who have rejected Christ. The specific trials to come are not specified, but the church at Philadelphia would be protected from those trials.

**3:11** “I am coming quickly.” “Quickly” is translated from the Greek word TACHU which literally means “swiftly” or “quickly” (Vine). What was going to happen was going to happen soon. If they wanted to be protected from the trials, they were to remain faithful (hold fast) in order that “no one take your crown.” “Crown” is translated from the Greek word STEPHANOS (a victor’s crown as used in 2:10). The admonition to remain faithful Indicates that it is possible for Christians to fall.

**3:12** Individual Christians are addressed. “He who overcomes” refers to he who remains faithful. “Pillar in the temple of My God and he will not go out from it anymore” probably refers to being an unmovable part of the kingdom in heaven. Pillar probably does not refer to the church because if they left the church, their pillar would be removed from the temple (“go out from it”). “Write upon him the name of My God” indicates ownership; the faithful Christian is owned by God. “The name of the city of My God (the new Jerusalem)” indicates residence in the holy city. “New Jerusalem” appears to refer to the saved in heaven (21:2, 10). He who overcomes will be given the new name of Jesus (19:12) which indicates belonging to Christ and sharing in His glory.

**3:13** He who is willing to listen will hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

LAODICEA

Laodicea was about 45 miles southeast of Philadelphia. It was 11 miles west of Colossae and 6 miles south of Hierapolis (all mentioned in Colossians 4:13). It was founded by the Seleucid king Antiochus II who reigned from 261-246 BC. He named the city after his wife, Laodice. Laodicea was an extremely wealthy banking center and was a center of imperial worship. A famous medical school was 13 miles from the city and developed an eye medicine called Phrygian powder which was exported to many cities. The inhabitants also cultivated a special breed of sheep that produced black wool that was used to produce and sell prized garments (Hailey, p. 156). The city’s lifestyle was affluent and easy.

SUMMARY OF LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT LAODICEA (3:14-22)

**Praise**: No praise is offered.

**Criticism**: Because they were neither cold nor hot, but lukewarm, Jesus was going to spit (EMEO: “vomit” – Vine) them out of His mouth. They viewed themselves as rich and in need of nothing, but spiritually they were wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked and they did not know it.

**Admonition**: Buy from Jesus (spiritual) gold refined by fire. They were to show the proof (“genuineness” - Vine) of their faith (I Peter 1:7), become spiritually rich, clothe themselves with white (pure) garments to cover the shame of their (spiritual) nakedness, use eye salve that they may see, be zealous and repent. White garments present a contrast with the black wool of the local sheep and “eye salve” is possibly a reference to the local eye medicine (Phrygian powder).

He who overcomes will sit with Jesus on His throne. Jesus will knock at the door and dine with him who opens it. Dining together indicates a reciprocal relationship.

**3:14** Jesus refers to Himself as “the Amen.” He uses the term to confirm the validity of who He is and what He is about to say. The word is transliterated from Hebrew into both Greek and English and in the New Testament it generally means “It is true; it is sure” (derived from Vine’s definition). Paul used the word in this way in II Corinthians 1:20. What Jesus says as a Witness is absolutely trustworthy (faithful and true). “The Beginning of the creation of God” – the Greek text makes two interpretations possible: (1) Jesus was created by God or (2) Jesus had a part as the active agent of God in the creation. The second option seems to be the more valid interpretation (John 1:1-3, 10).

**3:15** “Cold” is from the Greek word PSUCHROS (cold or chilly – Vine). “Hot” is from the Greek word ZESTOS (to be boiling or fervent – Vine). The Laodiceans were described as lukewarm. Colossae got their water from a stream that was cold. Hierapolis got their water from hot springs. Water in Laodicea was notoriously undrinkable, so they imported water from Hierapolis through aqueducts. By the time the hot water reached Laodicea it was lukewarm (Jenkins, p. 70).

**3:16** We tend to drink liquids that are either hot or cold. Lukewarmness in this verse refers to a tepid liquid that produces nausea and vomiting. The word “spit” is literally translated “vomit” (EMEO – Vine).

**3:17** They had become complacent (rich, wealthy, in need of nothing). They could take false comfort in concluding that the Lord had blessed them. They had no zeal or fervor (wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked). Spiritually they were despicable, penniless, sick and shamefully naked. Yet, they deluded themselves about their spiritual condition.

**3:18** “Gold” refers to spiritual gold which I Peter 1:6-7 says is faith tested by trials (refined by fire) to become spiritually rich. They were to clothe themselves with “white garments” (signs of purity) that the shame of their spiritual nakedness may not be revealed. This could be a contrast with the black wool produced in the city. Eye salve needed to allow them to see their true spiritual condition could refer to the eye medication for which the city was famous.

**3:19** “Love” – Jesus used the Greek word PHILEO (tender affection one has for another – Vine) instead of AGAPE (a broader, deeper, dedicated, all-encompassing love – Vine). PHILEO is a word that expresses affection, suggesting that Jesus had not given up on this church. “Reprove” comes from the Greek word ELENCHO (to rebuke – Vine). “Discipline” comes from the Greek word PAIDEUO (to chasten by the infliction of evils and calamities – Vine). “Be zealous” means to demonstrate fervor, action, come to life. “Repent” means to change one’s mind from inactive to active. When one repents his deeds will follow.

**3:20** Jesus once again makes His invitation personal to the individual. He invites them through His word to open their hearts to Him. He is willing to enter, but only when invited. He will not force Himself on those who reject Him. When invited, He will enter and dine with them in a spiritual sense. Dining together indicated a close and affectionate relationship. The relationship was to be reciprocal (“I will dine with him and he with Me”).

**3:21** He who overcomes will be allowed to sit on the throne in glorious triumph with Jesus. After Jesus “made purification of sins”, He sat down at the right hand of God (Hebrews 1:3). Christians are spiritually sitting with Jesus in the heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6).

**3:22** Let him who is willing to listen, hear and apply what the Spirit says to the churches.

SUMMARY OF PROMISES TO HIM WHO OVERCOMES

The letters to each of the seven churches contained a promise to “him who overcomes.” In the letter to the church at Laodicea Jesus said that He “overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.” Presented below is a summary of the promises to him who overcomes:

I will grant him to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God (2:7).

He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death (2:11).

I will give him hidden manna, a white stone and a new name on the stone (2:17).

To him I will give authority over the nations; he shall rule with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces; I will give him the morning star (2:26-28).

He shall be clothed in white garments; his name will not be erased from the book of life. I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels (3:5).

I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God; I will write upon 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 My new name (3:12).

I will grant him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also *overcame* and sat down with My Father on His throne (3:21).

REVELATION CHAPTER 4

**4:1** A door was open apparently giving a view into heaven where God could be found. The voice was probably the same unidentified speaker from 1:10. John was invited to get a view of what was to come from God’s viewpoint as the omnipotent One. “After these things” seems to refer to what will come next after the events of chapters 1-3 have been completed.

**4:2** “In the Spirit” (as in 1:10) probably means he continued to receive revelation, but now it is revelation of what is going on inside heaven. He saw a throne and One sitting on the throne. A throne indicates authority, royalty, and power. The One sitting on the throne is God.

**4:3** Jasper is described in 21:11 as a brilliant crystal clear stone. One can only speculate about the symbolism of the jasper and sardius. The jasper could symbolize God’s righteousness and holiness and the sardius could symbolize God’s justice as per Psalm 89:14 (“Righteousness and justice are the foundation of thy Throne”). There was a rainbow around the throne like an emerald (green) in appearance. The rainbow could be a reference to the rainbow God created as a sign to Noah that He would not destroy the earth and living creatures again through a flood (Genesis 9:11-17). If that is the case, the rainbow would represent God’s mercy combined with His righteousness and holiness (jasper) and His judgement (sardius) (Vine, p. 245). The combination of stones projected a brilliant image.

**4:4** The twenty-four elders were clothed in white garments (symbol of purity and holiness) and were wearing crowns (from the Greek STEPHANOS: a crown of victory or triumph - Vine). Obviously, they were saved. They sat on thrones (symbols of authority and honor). Twelve is a religious number. Twenty-four is two twelves, possibly a combination of the patriarchs of the twelve tribes of Israel (21:12) and the twelve apostles (21:14; Matthew 19:28), indicating salvation for those under the Old Law of Moses (Hebrews 9:15) and those under the New Law of Christ (Ephesians 2:15-16) (Hailey, p. 169).

**4:5** “Lightning and thunder” represent commanding power and authority. “Lamps” comes from the Greek word LAMPAS and denotes a torch (Vine, p. 307). Seven is a number of completeness. These torches of fire seem to represent the Holy Spirit, presented as active at the throne of God.

**4:6** A “sea of glass like crystal” was before the throne, not under it. This possibly represents a separation between the throne area where God is and another location, possibly the domain of mankind on earth. Four living creatures were full of eyes in front and behind, indicating their ability to see in all directions. Nothing escaped their notice.

**4:7** What the four living creatures represent is unknown. They apparently have a variety of abilities.

**4:8** Each of the creatures has six wings. They are similar to the seraphim in Isaiah’s vision (Isaiah 6:1-3) in which he saw the Lord sitting on His throne, with seraphim standing above Him, each having six wings. The seraphim called out “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts.” One of the seraphim flew to Isaiah and touched his lips with a burning coal, forgiving his iniquity (Isaiah 6:6-7). The four living creatures have eyes that allow them to see everything. They constantly say, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty who was, is and is to come.” This indicates God’s authority and his eternal nature.

LIVING CREATURES IN BIBLICAL THRONE SCENE VISIONS

Living creatures are found in throne scenes in visions described in the books of Isaiah, Ezekiel and Revelation. Cherubim and seraphim are winged heavenly attendants to God in heaven (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, p. 604). Summary descriptions of those living creatures are presented below:

**Isaiah 6:2-3** – Heavenly beings were identified as seraphim. Each had six wings (two covered his face, two covered his feet and with two he flew). They said, “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts.”

**Ezekiel 1:5-14** – Four living beings had human form. Each had four faces and four wings. Under the wings on four sides were human hands. Each of the four had four faces: the face of a man, the face of a lion on the right, the face of a bull on the left and the face of an eagle. They ran to and fro like bolts of lightning. The creatures were identified as cherubim (Ezekiel 10:1, 20).

**Revelation 4:6-8** – Four living creatures were full of eyes in front and behind. The first creature was like a lion; the second was like a calf; the third had a face like that of a man and the fourth was like a flying eagle. Each had six wings. Day and night they said, “Holy, Holy is the Lord God.”

**4:9** The four living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to God who is eternal.

**4:10** When the four living creatures give glory and thanks to God, the twenty-four elders will fall down and worship the eternal God and “cast their crowns (STEPHANOS) before the throne.” The twenty-four elders are acknowledging that God is the source of their salvation. They worship Him eternally. A crown is a symbol of glory and honor (Vine). The elders cast their crowns before the throne, indicating they are yielding their glory and honor to God.

**4:11** The twenty-four elders proclaim that God is worthy to be praised for His glory, honor and power. God has demonstrated all power by creating all things according to His will. Acknowledging the eternal omnipotent nature of God would render emperor worship or idolatry unthinkable to a Christian.

REVELATION CHAPTER 5

**5:1** In God’s hand was a scroll with writing on both sides, sealed with seven (indicating completeness) seals. The seal was usually made of melted wax and was used to authenticate a document. The scroll possibly contained God’s complete plan for man’s salvation which remained a mystery (I Corinthians 2:7-8) that was not revealed until Jesus conquered death, and the mystery of universal salvation (Ephesians 3:6) was revealed by the Holy Spirit to the apostles and prophets (Ephesians 3:3-5).

**5:2** A strong angel asked, “Who is worthy (possibly who has the integrity and authority) to break the seals and open the book?”

**5:3** No created being in heaven, earth or anywhere in creation had the strength (authority) to open the book. John was unable to open the book.

**5:4** John wept greatly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll and he would not know its spiritual content.

**5:5** The Lion from the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:9-10; Hebrews 7:14) and the root of David (Psalm 89:3) apply to Jesus. He is also said to be the root of Jesse (Romans 15:12). Jesse was David’s father. Jesus overcame death and the powers of Satan to be the only one qualified to open the scroll.

**5:6** John was expecting to see someone described as a lion (5:5), but instead he saw a lamb. A lamb indicates sacrifice. Jesus acquired the power and authority to break the seals and open the book by being a sacrifice (as if slain). The Greek word for slain (SPHAZO) means “to kill” especially for victims of sacrifice (Vine). The lamb is said to be “between” the throne (literally in the middle of the throne). Therefore, He is at the center of all creation. The Lamb had seven horns. Horns were used by prophets in the Old Testament to indicate power. Hannah prophesied that the Lord would exalt the horn of His anointed (I Samuel 2:10). Seven is a number of completeness and perfection; so, seven horns is a sign of complete power or omnipotence. Having seven eyes symbolizes full and perfect knowledge (Hailey, p. 178). The Lamb has both omnipotence and omniscience. Assuming the seven spirits symbolize the Holy Spirit, then the Holy Spirit goes out into all the earth. The Lamb is also omnipresent.

**5:7** Jesus is the only One worthy to take the scroll out of the Father’s hand. He was the only One worthy to open it and reveal its contents.

**5:8** The four living creatures and the twenty-four elders worshipped the Lamb. The harp was used in the Old Testament as an instrument of praise (Psalm 33:2; 71:22). Incense was often associated with prayer in the Old Testament (Psalm 141:2). This verse indicates that the prayers of the saints come before God.

**5:9** The four living creatures and the twenty-four elders sing a new song. It is a new song because the mystery of redemption is revealed for the first time through the Holy Spirit to the apostles (Ephesians 3:3-5). Jesus’ sacrifice was for men of every tribe, tongue, people and nation (i.e., universal salvation, Ephesians 3:6).

**5:10** Those purchased by the blood of Christ (I Peter 1:18-19) are part of a spiritual kingdom (the church – Colossians 1:13-14). Christians are a royal priesthood, a holy nation, the people of God (I Peter 2:9-10).

**5:11** John heard the voice of angels, the four living creatures, the twenty-four elders and myriads of others.

**5:12** Jesus is worthy of praise in every way possible: all power, riches of all creation, wisdom to make the best choices because of infinite knowledge, might to exercise His power, honor for what He accomplished through His sacrifice, glory because of His triumph and blessing (respect and good will from others for what He has done).

**5:13** Those offering praise are extended from heavenly beings to all created beings everywhere. Praise is also extended to include the Father and the Lamb. All creatures acknowledge the blessing, honor, glory and dominion of God the Father and Jesus the Lamb. Dominion indicates absolute control over all things created. For ever and ever indicates eternity.

**5:14** The four living creatures said “Amen” (“Let it be so” – Vine) voicing their support for the praise given to the Father and the Lamb. The twenty-four elders participated in the worship.

REVELATION CHAPTER 6

**6:1** The Lamb (Jesus) broke the first of seven seals. One of the four living creatures spoke with a voice of thunder (indicating authority and power) and said, “Come.”

**6:2** “White” indicates purity and “horse” indicates power. The rider had a bow, indicating battle and he was given a crown (STEPHANOS) which was given to the victor. The rider conquered. The rider probably symbolizes Jesus, who completed a spiritual conquest when He overcame death. He continues to conquer hearts spiritually when people obey the gospel.

**6:3** The Lamb (Jesus) broke the second seal and the second living creature said, “Come.”

**6:4** “Red,” the color of blood, is thought to symbolize warfare. The horse symbolizes power. The rider on the red horse was given a great sword (MACHAIRA: the short sword of the Roman infantry) and would take peace from the earth. MACHAIRA is the two-edged “sword” that is used to describe the word of God in Hebrews 4:12. The red horse probably symbolizes physical warfare within the Roman Empire in which men would slay (SPHATTO) one another and possibly includes the death of persecuted Christians.

**6:5** The Lamb (Jesus) broke the third seal and the third living creature said, “Come.” Black in the Bible and in many cultures symbolizes mourning, grieving and often death. When Jesus was crucified, the sun was darkened and darkness fell over the earth from noon until 3:00 pm (Luke 23:44-45). The horse symbolizes power. The rider had a pair of scales in his hand which are used to measure food in 6:6. The fact that food (staples) will be measured out indicates a scarcity of food.

**6:6** The voice is said to come from the center of the four creatures, not from one of the creatures. Maybe it suggests that all four creatures agreed with the message. A quart is a translation of the Greek CHOINIX, which is a dry measure equal to almost a quart and is about enough to feed one person for a day (Vine). The denarius was worth about 18 cents in silver and was equal to a day’s wage (NASB footnote). The fact that staple foods were being measured out indicates a shortage of food. A man might be able to afford food to feed himself but would have difficulty feeding a family. “Do not harm the oil and the wine” is difficult to interpret. Some say that it means the wealthy could still afford the luxury of oil and wine. Another interpretation is that the scarcity of oil and wine was not as severe as the scarcity of wheat and barley. Perhaps the black horse symbolizes oppression, discrimination and financial persecution of Christians who refused to honor the pagan deities. Financial persecution rendered them unable to buy food.

**6:7** The Lamb (Jesus) broke the fourth seal and the fourth living creature said, “Come.”

**6:8** The fourth horse was ashen (sickly pale – NASB footnote), the color of people who are sick or dying. The rider on it was Death, followed closely by Hades (the realm of departed spirits of the dead). Authority was given to Death. Authority could only be given by the Lamb; so, Jesus used Death to accomplish His purposes. The authority given was not complete. It was limited to a fourth of the earth. Killing would occur using the sword (RHOMPHAIA – the great Thracian sword to be distinguished from the Roman sword in 6:4 and the two-edged sword in Hebrews 4:12). In the places in Revelation where RHOMPHAIA is used, it is the powerful instrument of destruction that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lamb (1:16; 2:12, 16; 19:15, 21). Death would conquer with the sword (physical warfare), famine, pestilence (literal translation is “death” from the Greek THANATOS – Vine) and wild beasts of the earth. Perhaps this symbolizes the Lamb’s use of earthly forces to render judgement on those who reject His message as God used countries to render judgement against other countries in the Old Testament.

**6:9** When Jesus broke the fifth seal, John saw martyred souls underneath an altar. The altar was a place of sacrifice. The souls were those Christians who had been slain (sacrificed) because of their faith in the word of God and their testimony by mouth and action. They “maintained” (refused to recant) their faith and testimony in the face of persecution and gave their life for doing so.

**6:10** “How long O Lord…?” indicates that the suffering had been going on for some time and was going to continue. At the time of writing, Christians had first been persecuted (slain) by the Jews and then by the Romans. This vision indicates that persecution was going to continue for an unspecified time. “Those who dwell on the earth” in Revelation usually refers to the evil people who rejected Christ and persecuted Christians. The martyred Christians wanted justice rendered against those who had killed them. In Romans 12:19 Paul writes, “Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord’” (Deuteronomy 32:35). Their question as to “how long” is not answered in this verse.

**6:11** Each martyred saint was given a white robe (symbol of purity and righteousness). They were told to rest (i.e., their work was completed) a little while longer because more Christians were going to be killed. The Christians who read Revelation understood from this that religious persecution and death were going to continue. “A little while longer” indicates a period of time that will end. It probably means until the persecution ended or it could ultimately mean Judgement Day when God will avenge their death.

Two different interpretations of 6:12-17 are commonly held by scholars:

Interpretation 1 – The second coming of Jesus and the Final Judgement Day.

Interpretation 2 – Wrath imposed upon and downfall of the Roman Empire.

**6:12** The Lamb (Jesus) broke the sixth seal. The scene symbolizes the calamity of a judgement scene. The question is whether it refers to judgement on those who had killed Christians or to the final judgement. The symbolism is similar to Old Testament prophecies that refer to the downfall of political empires. Isaiah predicted the downfall of Babylon by describing a scene in which the stars of heaven shall not give their light, the sun shall be darkened, the moon will not shine…The heavens will tremble and the earth will be shaken out of its place (Isaiah 13:10, 13). Joel predicted a final judgement against Jerusalem by describing a day of darkness and gloom (Joel 2:2-3), the earth quakes, the heavens tremble, the sun and moon grow dark and the stars lose their brightness (Joel 2:10). Joel further prophesied that the sun will be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes (Joel 2:31). Given the similarity of the symbolism used in Revelation to the symbolism used by Old Testament prophets, the judgement appears to be against the people who persecuted the Christians (i.e., the Romans) and would suggest that “a little while” (6:11) would be until the fall of the Roman Empire.

**6:13** “Stars of the sky fell to the earth” is similar to symbolism describing the fall of Jerusalem (Matthew 24:29-30) when the sun and moon would be darkened, stars will fall from the sky and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

**6:14** Isaiah used similar symbolism (Isaiah 34:4) to describe the Lord’s judgement against the nations (Isaiah 34:2) when he said the sky will be rolled up like a scroll and their hosts will wither away. “Every mountain and island were moved out of their place” indicates the end of what was once thought to be unmovable (i.e., the Roman Empire).

**6:15** Groups listed descend in power and social standing: kings, great men (in rank), commanders (CHILIARCHS – commanders of 1,000 troops, NASB footnote), the rich, the strong (in authority), slaves (owned by another) and free men (not owned by any other). The list is inclusive of all men in a political nation or empire. With the coming destruction, their social or political status would be irrelevant. They would all be reduced to hiding in caves and among rocks to try to escape death.

**6:16** They would rather the mountains and rocks fall on them than to face the presence of Him who sits on the throne (God the Father) and the wrath of the Lamb (Jesus). Men hiding in rocks and mountains and wanting rocks and mountains to fall on them occurs three other times in Scripture: Hosea 10:8 (the destruction of Samaria by the Assyrians), Isaiah 2:19 (the conquest of Jerusalem by the Babylonians) and Luke 23:30 (the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans). The language in 6:16 supports the conclusion that the vision symbolizes the fall of the Roman Empire. The fact that men will be hiding in fear is evidence against concluding that the passage symbolizes the final judgement of man. In I Corinthians 15:52 Paul wrote that the second coming will occur “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.” Peter said that “the day of the Lord will come like a thief” (II Peter 3:10). The suddenness of the second coming does not indicate that men will be able to anticipate it and try to hide to escape their fate.

**6:17** “The great day of their wrath” refers to the wrath of the Father and the Lamb. They will dispense judgement on the evildoers who have rejected the Lamb and persecuted Christians. “Who is able to stand?” is a rhetorical question, indicating that no one will be able to stand. On this day, the deaths of the persecuted Christians will be avenged. The day of wrath described is a partial answer to the question asked by the martyred saints in 6:10. The Christians are assured that their persecutors will face the wrath of God and the Lamb, and their persecution will be avenged, but no specific time is given.

SUMMARY OF VISIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SEVEN SEALS AND POSSIBLE INTERPRETATION

Visions associated with six of the seven seals broken by the Lamb are described in Chapter 6. The vision associated with the seventh seal is not revealed until Chapter 8:1-5. Presented below is a summary of the visions associated with each of the seven seals and a possible interpretation of each:

**1st seal** (6:2) White horse, rider is Jesus, conquering with His spiritual kingdom.

**2nd seal** (6:4) Red horse indicates blood and warfare, bringing death to many.

**3rd seal** (6:5) Black horse indicates mourning, scarcity of food and possible oppression.

**4th seal** (6:8) Sickly ashen horse indicates death to ¼ of the earth (includes martyrs and evil men).

**5th seal** (6:9-10) Martyrs cried out, “How long until our blood is avenged?”

**6th seal** (6:12-17) There was a great earthquake, the sun became black, the moon became like blood, stars fell to the earth, the sky split apart and mountains moved out of their places, symbolizing the wrath of God against evil governments, empires and evil men.

**7th seal** (8:1-5) An angel at the golden altar added much incense to the prayers of all the saints. The smoke and prayers of the saints went up before God. The angel threw fire from the altar to the earth (symbolizing the wicked). Thunder, lightning and an earthquake symbolize God’s powerful judgement on wicked men. It is reassurance to the martyred saints who asked how long until their blood is avenged.

REVELATION CHAPTER 7

**NOTE**: Chapter 7 appears to be an interlude during which a new vision begins that is not necessarily chronologically related to the events in Chapter 6. Verses 1-8 of Chapter 7 appear to describe what is happening on the earth. In verses 9-17 the scene changes to describe what is happening in heaven.

**7:1** “After this” apparently means after the avenging that is described at the end of Chapter 6, but the seventh seal has not yet been opened. The four angels stood at the four corners of the earth (symbolizing the entire earth, all four directions). They were holding back four winds, preventing them from causing destruction (7:2). If released, the four winds could cause devastation on the earth, sea or any tree (symbolizing any place on earth).

**7:2** “Another angel” was apparently similar to the four angels in 7:1. He came from the east (possibly indicating optimism that comes with the sunrise). The seal of the living God indicates ownership or authorization by God of the angel’s mission. The newest angel cried out to the other four angels “to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea.” The angels are not said to cause destruction. Rather, they are restraining the forces (i.e., the four winds) that would allow destruction to occur.

**7:3** The newest angel told the others not to harm anything on the earth until the bondservants of God had God’s seal placed on their foreheads. The seal indicates ownership of the servants by God and that God will protect them in some unspecified way. The seal had the name of the Lamb and the name of His Father on the foreheads of the bondservants (14:1). Since the earth, sea and trees are on earth, the bondservants are still on earth. They are living Christians.

**7:4** John does not witness the sealing process. He heard that 144,000 were sealed. 144,000 is a symbolic number (12,000 x 12 tribes = 144,000) probably indicating completeness. They came from every tribe of Israel, also indicating completeness. It probably does not refer to physical Israel since Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD and the Jews rejected Jesus as the Messiah. It probably represents spiritual Israel (all Christians on earth) because “there is neither Jew nor Greek…. for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28).

**7:5-8** Twelve tribes are listed, beginning with Judah (the tribe from which Jesus came). Ephraim and Dan are not listed. Manasseh, Joseph and Levi are included. The 144,000 “from every tribe” probably represents all the living Christians on earth at one time.

**7:9** There is a shift back to the throne scene where there is an innumerable multitude of people from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues. They are now in heaven with God and the Lamb. They seem to be a different group from the 144,000. The 144,000 are still on earth while the multitude are in heaven. White robes indicate purity. The palms indicate a festive occasion. Palm branches were used to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles under the Old Testament Law (Leviticus 23:40). When Jesus made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem the people waved palm leaves (John 12:13).

**7:10** The multitude praised God and the Lamb for their salvation. They acknowledge Him as “our God.”

**7:11** All the angels, the elders and the four living creatures fell on their faces to worship God because His plan for man’s salvation has now been revealed (I Peter 1:12).

**7:12** “Amen” indicates that the angels, elders and the four living creatures voiced their approval and agreement with the praise given to God by the multitude. They acknowledged Him as “our God,” indicating their allegiance to Him. They acknowledged Him as “our God” just as the multitude did in 7:10. They acknowledged His blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honor, power and might.

**7:13** One of the elders asked John if he knew who these people were who were clothed in white robes. It appears that the angel knew who they were, but asked John perhaps to get him to focus his attention on them.

**7:14** John appeared to acknowledge that he did not know and, admitting that the elder knew, John wanted to know the answer. The elder stated that these are “the ones who come out of the great tribulation.” The answer is stated in the present tense, indicating that the tribulation was still occurring at the time of the writing. Christians were still dying. Their robes were white (pure) because they had been washed in the blood of the Lamb, indicating that they had been baptized for the forgiveness of sins. The great multitude included those under the altar (6:9-11) who were martyrs for Christ. The “great tribulation” is the persecution of Christians that was occurring at the time the book was written and was said to continue occurring. The question is how long did the great tribulation last. Some believe that the tribulation refers to persecution that lasted until 313 AD when the Roman Emperor Constantine halted the persecution of Christians. This view seems to be supported by 6:12-17. Others believe that the tribulation refers to persecution suffered by Christians until the second coming of Jesus.

**7:15** “For this reason” (i.e., because the multitude had washed their robes through baptism) they appeared before the throne of God in heaven. They serve Him day and night in his temple (or sanctuary – NASB footnote) which is the holy place where God resides. “Spread His tabernacle over them” indicates that God will protect them and care for them.

**7:16** God’s protection will keep them safe from hunger, thirst and oppressive heat.

**7:17** This verse contains an interesting combination of metaphors. Jesus is presented as the Lamb (who was sacrificed for the redeemed multitude, i.e., Christians) and the shepherd who guides and protects the sheep who follow Him. Jesus described Himself as the good shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep (John 10:11). The Lamb is said to be in the center of the throne, sharing the glory and praise with the Father. Jesus offered the woman at the well living water that would give eternal life (John 4:10, 14). The Shepherd will continue to guide the sheep to the water of life (spiritual eternal life) even after they are in heaven, symbolizing the eternity of heaven. “God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes.” Tears are the result of pain and suffering. In heaven, God will protect the redeemed from pain and suffering.

REVELATION CHAPTER 8

**8:1** After the interlude of Chapter 7, the narrative resumes where it had been interrupted at the end of Chapter 6. The Lamb (Jesus) opens the seventh of seven seals (6:1) on the scroll (5:1). When He broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. The silence is a dramatic pause in the vision. It creates anticipation about what is to come next. The praise and activity of the angels, the four living creatures, the multitudes, etc. stopped. Apparently, all were awaiting the revelation of what was to come.

**8:2** John saw seven angels who were handed seven trumpets. Seven symbolizes completeness, fulness and perfection. The number of angels is probably not to be taken literally.

**8:3** Another angel stood at the altar, holding a golden censor that dispensed incense that was added to the prayers of Christians. The prayers of the Christians were on the golden altar before the throne. The altars symbolized the altars in the Hebrew tabernacle. The golden altar was symbolized by the golden altar in the Hebrew tabernacle (Exodus 30:1-7). It was placed in front of the mercy seat where God said He would meet with the priests. The golden altar was only to be used once per year when Aaron was to offer the blood of the sin offering of atonement (Exodus 30:9-10). According to Hebrews 9:3-7, the golden altar was in the Holy of Holies where the high priest would enter once per year to offer a blood sacrifice for the sins of the people. The angel in 8:3 assumes the role of the high priest in Hebrews 9:7. He is merely the servant, offering the sacrifice to God. It is probable that the golden altar in 8:3 is different from the altar in 6:9. The altar in 6:9 symbolized the bronze altar of daily sacrifice that was in the tabernacle courtyard (Exodus 27:1-3; 29:38). The incense was added to the prayers of all the saints, not just those who had been martyred.

**8:4** The incense and the prayers went up before God. The prayers of Christians are heard.

**8:5** The angel filled the censor with fire from the altar and threw it to the earth. What followed was thunder, lightning and an earthquake. This symbolizes God’s response to the prayers of Christians. Thunder and lightning symbolize God’s power. The earthquake symbolizes judgement and destruction as in Isaiah 29:6. Since this is a response to the prayers of all Christians (8:3), one cannot specify a time period when this judgement occurred against a specific nation. It could mean that God will eventually judge all evil nations throughout time. With this verse, the opening of the seven seals is completed.

**8:6** The seven angels with the seven trumpets prepared to sound them. In the Old Testament, trumpets were used to summon the congregation (Numbers 10:2), sound an alarm (Numbers 10:5) and when making peace offerings (Numbers 10:10). The trumpets in 8:6 were apparently used to signal an event.

**8:7** The first angel sounded his trumpet, resulting in hail and fire mixed with blood being thrown to the earth. This is God’s judgement and destruction of evil men. Hail is symbolic of God’s destruction of evil men (Isaiah 28:2, 17). The blood is probably the blood of the wicked who are punished by God. A third of the earth, trees and grass were burned up. This suggests the destruction of one-third of the physical earth, making life in it difficult. One third indicates great, but not total, destruction of the physical environment of the earth. There is no way to know of any specific application of this destruction.

**8:8-9** The second angel sounded his trumpet and a burning mountain was thrown into the sea. Mountains were sometimes used by Old Testament prophets to symbolize world kingdoms. Babylon was said to be a mountain that would be burnt out (destroyed) in Jeremiah 51:25. Possibly the great mountain burning and thrown into the sea was a world empire that fell in judgement by God. A third of the sea became blood, sea creatures died and ships were destroyed. This could represent the associated negative impact of the fall of the evil kingdom described. Specific application is unknown.

**8:10** A third angel sounded and a great star fell from heaven. Stars were sometimes used by Old Testament prophets to symbolize evil rulers. Isaiah referred to the king of Babylon when he said, “How you have fallen from heaven, o star of the morning (Isaiah 14:4, 12). The falling star could symbolize the fall of an evil ruler (e.g., the Roman Emperor). It burned like a torch and fell on a third of rivers and springs, indicating the negative impact of the star.

**8:11** The star was called Wormwood. Wormwood was a bitter wood often associated with punishment for idolatry (Deuteronomy 29:18; Jeremiah 9:13-15). The wickedness of idolatry caused many to be affected by its influence and caused many to suffer and die. The waters becoming bitter symbolize the evil impact of idolatry in any form, causing the spiritual death of many. Specific application is unknown.

**8:12** The fourth angel sounded and a third of the sun, moon and stars were darkened. Old Testament prophets used the symbolic reaction of heavenly bodies to God’s judgement on evil men. God’s judgement against Pharaoh is described in Ezekiel 12:7-8 when he says that God will darken the sun, the stars and the moon. He will darken all the shining lights in the heavens which would cause darkness on the land. Verse 8:12 is another way of indicating God’s judgement against unspecified evil men.

**8:13** Each of the first four angels described God’s judgement in a different way. Three angels with trumpets remain. John hears an eagle say, “Woe, woe, woe” to those who dwell on the earth (wicked men) because the trumpet blasts from the final three angels are going to be even worse. The eagle flew in mid-heaven where it was visible to all to see and hear its warning.

**NOTE**: There is no mention in Chapter 8 of a specific evil nation/empire that would suffer God’s wrathful punishment. It is possible that John is simply being assured of God’s general policy of punishing wicked men on His own schedule throughout history. Nevertheless, the logical conclusion for Christians living at the time of the writing of the book would be to apply the policy to God’s judgement and eventual destruction of the Roman Empire.

REVELATION CHAPTER 9

**9:1** The fifth angel sounded and a star fell from heaven to earth. The star had an identity because he was given a key to the bottomless pit (the pit of the abyss- KJV). John saw the star after it had fallen to the earth. The star probably represents Satan. In Luke 10:17-18 the disciples were rejoicing that they could cast out demons in Jesus’ name. Jesus said He saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning. This was perhaps a prophecy of Satan’s final fall. In Revelation 12:7-9 Michael and his angels waged war against Satan (the dragon) and his angels. Satan and his forces were not strong enough to defeat Michael and his angels. So, Satan and his angels were thrown from heaven down to the earth. The star was given the key to the bottomless pit, which indicates limited authority granted by a superior being (i.e., God).

**9:2** Satan opened the bottomless pit and smoke went up that darkened the sun and the air. The dark smoke symbolizes the evil that was in the pit and its impact on darkening the vision of men to such a degree that they chose evil over the light of truth (II Corinthians 4:3-4). Contrast the smoke of 9:2 (evil) with the incense of 8:3 (good).

**9:3** Locusts and scorpions emerged out of the smoke and were given power to do damage. God used actual locusts as one of the plagues against Pharaoh (Exodus 10:4). God threatened using locusts against Israel for their disobedience (Deuteronomy 28:38). Power was given to the locusts as a force of evil to do harm. Scorpions sting and inject poison. They represent the afflictions of evil.

**9:4** The locusts are symbolic. Actual locusts consume grass, fruit and foliage. The locusts in this verse only hurt men, but they did not hurt men who had the seal of God on their foreheads (7:3). Satan’s efforts did not have a spiritual impact on faithful Christians. Those who were sealed were the 144,000 (7:4) who were still on earth, not in heaven. The apparent goal of the ferocious locusts and scorpions was destruction. In this case it was spiritual harm of the unsealed.

**9:5** The locusts were not permitted to kill anyone, but to painfully torment for 5 months. “Torment” comes from the Greek word BASANISMOS, which generally refers to mental and spiritual torment (Hailey, p. 228). The meaning of “five months” is unknown. It is symbolic, possibly indicating a definite time period. There is no known period on earth where a five-month scourge of locust is recorded. Since five is short of seven (a number of completeness), it could indicate that there was more harm to come before the harm was completed. The locusts were an evil force controlled by Satan. They had a harmful effect on mankind, but they were not allowed to kill, only to inflict pain. Possibly this symbolizes Satan’s harmful effect on the world.

**9:6** This verse describes a condition in which men are so miserable (perhaps caused by the evil influences of the devil and their living in sin) that they long for death, but death does not come. Those who give in to their misery might turn to suicide, but that will not bring relief.

**9:7** The locusts were like horses prepared for battle (spiritually aggressive) as they attacked men. The crowns (STEPHANOS) were like gold, but were not real gold. They were fake. They had faces like men, suggesting that the locusts symbolize men who are false teachers, leading astray the ungodly.

**9:8** The locusts had long hair. The meaning of this is unknown. Perhaps it adds to the wildness of the appearance of the locusts. “Teeth like lions” indicates ferocity and ability to do damage.

**9:9** The breastplates were not real iron, but fake iron, indicating the illegitimacy of false teachers who deceive men. Contrast with the breastplate of righteousness in Ephesians 6:14. The false teachers were aggressive and noisily charged into battle against those who were not sealed.

**9:10** Scorpions inflict pain by stinging (harming men spiritually) but they do not kill. The wicked who reject God (the unsealed) will be miserable, but the locusts were only given power to hurt them. The unsealed could not be killed by Satan’s agents. Ultimate destruction can only occur when God allows it. “Five months” refers to a definite period that will not be permanent.

**9:11** The king of the locusts is the “angel of the abyss.” Scholars are divided as to whether this refers to Satan himself or to one of his agents (as each of the seven churches was represented by an angel in chapter 2). Either way, the devil is the ultimate source of the evil destruction described here. His name in Hebrew is ABBADON (destruction) and in Greek is APOLLYON (destroyer – Hailey, p 232).

**9:12** John writes that the first woe is past and warns that two woes are yet to come. The first woe appears to symbolize the harm caused by the devil and his agents. The agents probably include false teachers and men who would influence men to forsake God and turn to evil deeds and to idols to false gods. The impact on men who choose evil Is miserable. The impact of sin is misery.

**9:13** The sixth angel sounded his trumpet. John heard an unidentified voice from the horns of the golden altar which is before God (8:3). The voice was obviously one of authority. The word “four” is not included in all manuscripts.

**9:14** The voice told the sixth angel with the trumpet to release the four angels who are bound at the Euphrates River. The four angels are different from the four angels in 7:1 who were restraining four winds. The angels in 9:14 are being restrained. The reason for mentioning the Euphrates is uncertain. The Euphrates was mentioned as a boundary for Israel for centuries. God told Abraham that the land promised to his descendants would extend as far as the Euphrates (Genesis 15:18). Isaiah prophesied that the Assyrians would invade Judah and he said that “the Lord is about to bring on them the strong and abundant waters of the Euphrates, even the King of Assyria and all his glory” (Isaiah 8:7). In 9:14 the Euphrates is probably symbolic. The four angels are being restrained at the border and will begin their destruction when they are unleashed. No actual invasion on earth is identified.

**9:15** Previous to this time, men were tormented, but not killed. In the present woe, men are killed. The four angels had been prepared to kill a third of mankind. The time of the angels’ release had been determined by God down to the hour.

**9:16** The destroyers are pictured as 200 million symbolic horsemen, too many for John to count, but he heard the number of them.

**9:17** The ferocious image of the horses and riders symbolizes the terror of destruction. Breastplates were the color of fire. Brimstone (sulfur) in the Bible is usually associated with the wrath of God (Psalm 11:6). When sulfur is burned it gives off a pungent aroma. The hyacinth is a plant in the lily family and is often associated by Greek poets with grief (Coffman). Why John referred to it is unknown. The heads of the horses were like lions (ferocious beasts) and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and brimstone, indicating fiery destruction and ruin.

**9:18** A third of mankind was killed by the fire, smoke and brimstone that proceeded out of the mouths of the horses. The destructive forces were labeled as plagues, suggesting massive destructive suffering.

**9:19** The symbolic animals had destruction in their mouths (fire, brimstone) and in their tails (with heads like serpents). The destruction caused by these beings was massive.

**9:20** The destruction appears to be limited to those who did not have the seal on their foreheads (9:4). One third of wicked mankind was destroyed because of their idolatry, but their destruction had no impact on the remaining two thirds who refused to repent and continued their evil ways of idolatry. Paul said that the wrath of God is revealed against unrighteous men who suppress the truth, ignore the evidence of the one true God and engage in idolatry, worshipping birds, animals and crawling creatures (Romans 1:18-23). They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, worshipping the creature rather than the Creator (Romans 1:25). John presents the idols in descending order of value from gold, silver, brass, stone, wood. He presents the absurdity of idolatry when men worship man-made idols that cannot see, hear or walk.

**9:21** The preceding verse indicts the wicked who engaged in idolatry. The present verse indicts the wicked who commit crimes against others. The mental attitude that allows men to practice idolatry is an attitude that leaves God’s laws out of the decision-making process. Men worship the creature (themselves and their own intellect) rather than the Creator. Men make up their own selfish rules, resulting in murder, sorceries, sexual immorality and thefts. Murder is killing a fellow human who was created by God.

“Sorceries” comes from the Greek word PHARMAKIA and involves the use of medicine, drugs, spells and poisoning. It is condemned as a work of the flesh (Galatians 5:20-21). It is translated in some versions as “witchcraft.” Drugs were given to others to supposedly protect them from demons, but their true purpose was to impress the victim with the powers of the sorcerer (Vine). Therefore, it was deception which could result in harm to the victim. Abuse of and addiction to drugs continue to demonstrate their devastating impact on men.

Sexual immorality could include homosexuality (Romans 1:26-27), sexual immorality and prostitution that accompanied idolatry or any other sexual promiscuity at any time in history. Theft involves taking without permission something that belongs to someone else.

John says that, despite seeing what happened to others who were killed for violating God’s laws, the remaining 2/3 of evil men did not repent. The fact that repentance is mentioned in both verses 20 and 21 suggests that one of the major reasons God imposes judgement on evil men is to try to influence other evil men to repent because they see where their evil course leads; but, many continue to reject God’s warning because they continue to worship the creature (themselves) rather than the Creator.

**NOTE**: The first woe (9:1-11) was Satan’s unleashing of evil influences from the bottomless pit. It darkened the minds of evil men and resulted in misery represented by locusts, scorpions, battle horses and lions. Wicked men were tormented, but not killed. The second woe (9:13-19) involved God’s release of horsemen who rode on beasts of destruction and killed 1/3 of the wicked population. This could refer to God’s use of nations throughout history to punish other nations who spiritually deteriorated into moral depravity. God used Assyria to punish Israel and Judah (Isaiah 10:6). After He used Assyria to punish Israel, He punished Assyria (Isaiah 10:24-25). God used Cyrus (King of Persia) to punish the Babylonians (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1; Jeremiah 51:1-2, 11. 29). A logical conclusion for John and the readers of Revelation would be that God will eventually punish and destroy the Roman Empire for falling into the moral depravity of idolatry and sin. This would confirm the resolve of Christians to remain faithful to God. It is probable that God has used nations throughout history to inflict judgement on wicked men and nations. If so, it could happen to the United States if our once “God-fearing” nation continues to deteriorate spiritually and refuses to repent.

SUMMARY OF VISIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SEVEN TRUMPETS AND

POSSIBLE INTERPRETATION

Visions associated with six of the seven trumpets are described in Chapters 8 and 9. The vision associated with the seventh trumpet is revealed in Chapter 11:15-18. Presented below is a summary of the visions associated with each of the seven trumpets and a possible interpretation of each:

**1st trumpet** (8:7) Hail and fire mixed with blood were thrown to the earth and burnt up one-third of the trees and grass. Hail, fire and blood symbolize God’s destruction of evil men.

**2nd trumpet** (8:8-9) A mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea. One-third of the sea became blood, one-third of the creatures died and ships were destroyed. This possibly indicates the destruction of a world empire (the Roman Empire). Death and destruction symbolize the negative impact of the empire’s fall.

**3rd trumpet** (8:10-11) A great burning star named Wormwood (Roman Emperors) fell from heaven into one-third of the rivers, making them bitter (wormwood) and killing many. This possibly symbolizes the fall of evil rulers and the bitter impact of idolatry causing the spiritual death of men.

**4th trumpet** (8:12) One-third of the sun, moon and stars were darkened, dimming the day and the night. Darkness symbolizes the reaction of heavenly bodies to God’s judgement against evil men.

**5th trumpet** (9:1-11) A star (probably Satan) had fallen from heaven to earth and was given the key to the abyss to release smoke, locusts and scorpions (false teachers) that tormented, but did not kill, for five months evil men who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. Satan unleashed the tormenting attack of idolatrous false teachers on evil men.

**6th trumpet** (9:13-21) Four angels were released to kill one-third of mankind. An army of 200 million horsemen with tails like serpents killed men with fire and brimstone. Those not killed did not repent. This symbolizes God’s punishment of men (in the Roman Empire) because of idolatry.

**7th trumpet** (11:15-18) Unidentified loud voices said that the kingdom of the world (evil) has been conquered by the eternal kingdom of our Lord and His Christ who will reign forever. This occurred when Jesus conquered death through His resurrection (Eph. 1:20-23; I Cor. 15:25).

**NOTE**: Revelation 10:1 – 11:13 appears to be an interlude between the sounding of the sixth trumpet (9:13-21) and the sounding of the seventh trumpet (11:15-18) and their accompanying woes.

REVELATION CHAPTER 10

**10:1** The strong angel is apparently similar to the strong angel in 5:2. The angel came down with the authority from God (down out of heaven, clothed with a cloud, rainbow on his head, face like the sun and feet like pillars of fire) to deliver an important divine message.

**10:2** The little book is different from the book mentioned in 5:1, which was sealed. The book in this verse is already open, indicating that John could see its contents. One foot on the sea and one foot on the land indicate the universality of the angel’s message. It applies to the entire unrepenting world.

**10:3** The angel cried out with a loud voice like a roaring lion. The lion is presented as powerful, but it also devours its prey. The message was fearful and was described as a lion’s roar as God’s warning against Israel in Amos 3:1, 4, 8. The seven peals of thunder enhanced the authority and power of the angel’s message. Seven indicates completeness, emphasizing the completeness of the message. The peals of thunder spoke and enhanced the authoritative message of the angel.

**10:4** John heard what the seven peals of thunder said, but he was told not to write them down. What the peals of thunder said is unknown. Only John was allowed to know.

**10:5** The angel lifted up his right hand to heaven, swearing by the eternal God. The angel is affirming the veracity and fulfillment of what he is going to say.

**10:6** The angel swore by the one true God who is eternal, omnipotent, and created heaven, the earth and the sea and the things in them. “There shall be delay no longer” indicates that something is about to happen relatively soon.

**10:7** “The days of the voice of the seventh angel” occur in 11:15. “The mystery of God” refers to the revelation to all men of God’s plan for salvation. Paul spoke of God’s wisdom as a mystery which was predestined before the ages (I Corinthians 2:7). Paul said that by revelation the mystery was made known unto him and that when the Ephesians read what he wrote, they could understand his insight into the mystery of Christ (Ephesians 3:3-4). The mystery was God’s plan for universal salvation for all men (Ephesians 3:6). The unrevealed mystery was preached by the Old Testament prophets to whom the details of the mystery were not revealed (I Peter 1:10-12). The mystery was not fully revealed until it was made known to the apostles and prophets through the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 3:5, Romans 16:25). The mystery was fully revealed in the preaching of the gospel by the apostles (I Peter 1:12). “The days of the voice of the seventh angel” (11:15) refers to the apostolic age when God’s total plan was revealed and the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ (the church) was established (11:15).

**10:8** John again heard the voice from heaven (10:4) which had told him what not to do. Now the voice tells him what to do. The voice tells him to take the open book from the angel who stands on the sea and the land. “Sea and land” indicates that the message will have universal application.

**10:9** Ezekiel was told to eat a scroll on which were lamentations, mourning and woe for Israel (Ezekiel 2:7-10). When Ezekiel ate the scroll, it was sweet as honey in his mouth (Ezekiel 3:1-3), but the message and results would be bitter (Ezekiel 3:7, 14). Ezekiel’s message was one of judgement against Israel and caused Ezekiel’s spirit to be embittered with rage (Ezekiel 3:14). Ezekiel (4:7) was told to prophesy against Israel whom God would punish (Ezekiel 5:8-17).

John was told the same thing as Ezekiel about the message he was to receive. The angel told John to eat the book. It would taste sweet at first, but it would be bitter because of the negative, destructive nature of the message.

**10:10** John ate the book as instructed. At first the word from God tasted sweet, but it became bitter in his stomach. It was bitter because the message contained judgement against the wickedness of man.

**10:11** To whom “they” refers is unknown. They were authoritative voices. The voices told John that he must prophesy again, probably referring to the additional revelation to be revealed to him in Chapters 11-22. The prophecy would have universal application (many peoples, nations, tongues and kings). The sweetness of the message could refer to salvation for those who accepted and obeyed it. The bitterness of the message could refer to the results of the message for the wicked of the world whom God would punish with suffering and judgement.

REVELATION CHAPTER 11

**11:1** There are two Greek words for “temple.” HIERON in the New Testament usually refers to the entire physical temple and its various areas (Mark 11:11). HIERON is never used figuratively (Vine). NAOS refers to the sanctuary of the temple into which only the priests could lawfully enter (Vine). Zacharias entered the sanctuary in Luke 1:9, 21, 22. In the New Testament, the church is described as the NAOS, or sanctuary (Ephesians 2:21; I Corinthians 3:16-17; II Corinthians 6:16). The temple (sanctuary) in 11:1 refers to the church. “Those who worship in it” refers to Christians. John is told by an unidentified speaker to measure the temple, indicating that the temple has established boundaries that separate it from those outside the temple (those who are not in the church). The measurement of the temple, the altar and those who worship in it are defined by the measuring rod. The church, the altar (possibly symbolizing worship) and those who worship (Christians) are defined by the characteristics contained in the word of God. The word of God defines the church and those who are in it. Therefore, the measuring rod is the word of God.

**11:2** John was not to measure the court outside the temple. It had been given to the nations and they did not have access to the sanctuary; therefore, they were not in the church. Those inside the sanctuary (i.e., Christians) were measured (i.e., numbered, recognized and protected by God). Those inside the church were spiritual Israel (Romans 9:1-8), while those outside were enemies of spiritual Israel. The holy city is identified as “new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband” (Revelation 21:2). The holy city, Jerusalem, is described as “the bride, the wife of the Lamb” (Revelation 21:9-10). Paul described the church as the bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:23, 26, 27, 32; II Corinthians 11:2). Possibly, the sanctuary symbolizes the church (Christians) on earth and the holy city symbolizes the church (Christians) after they have gone to heaven. “The nations will tread underfoot the holy city” indicates that wicked men will persecute Christians while they are still on the earth before they eventually go to heaven. The persecution will symbolically last forty-two months

(3 ½ years). 3 ½ is half of seven (a number of completeness). So, 3 ½ is a number of incompleteness, symbolizing that the persecution will not be permanent. It will be a limited period of oppression.

**11:3** Many have speculated as to the identity of the two witnesses. Speculations include: the Old Testament and the New Testament, Moses and Elijah, the Holy Spirit and the apostles, the apostles and first century prophets. John is told that the two witnesses will prophesy. In the first century, the Holy Spirit enabled two groups to prophesy: apostles (I Corinthians 2:4; Ephesians 3:3-5) and prophets (I Corinthians 12:7-10). Possibly, the two witnesses symbolize the apostles and first century Christians who were empowered with the gift of prophesy through the Holy Spirit. Both groups prophesied. 1,260 days is the same time period as forty-two months (3 ½ years), again indicating that the period will be limited. The witnesses wore sackcloth, symbolizing mourning. They could have been mourning because of the coming oppression and destruction (Joel 1:13; Jeremiah 4:8; 6:26) or because they were being persecuted. The two witnesses were “granted authority” by God to continue prophesying despite the oppression and persecution. They would not be stopped.

**11:4** The two olive trees and the two lampstands are based on prophecy in Zechariah 4:1-6. In the Old Testament, lampstands required olive oil to continue to stay lit. Zechariah was told that there were two olive trees beside the lampstand, indicating an unending supply of oil to keep the lamps burning. This analogy is used to assure Zerubbabel that the temple would be rebuilt, not by human power, but by the Spirit of God (Zechariah 4:6).

The symbolism of the two olive trees and two lampstands in 11:4 corresponds to the two witnesses in 11:3. The two witnesses (apostles and prophets), now characterized as lampstands that emit the light of truth, will continue to prophesy thanks to an unending supply of olive oil (i.e., the Holy Spirit) to keep them lit. Having the two lampstands represent two of the seven churches of 1:12 does not seem logical if the sanctuary and the holy city represent the church.

**11:5** Old Testament prophets delivered messages that were said to consume their hearers with fire (Jeremiah 5:14-15). Jeremiah’s words consuming with fire referred to the conquest of Israel by Babylon. The fire proceeding out of the mouths of the witnesses is also symbolic. It is another way of saying that their testimony would not be stopped and their enemies would eventually be punished.

**11:6** “Shutting up the sky” is a reference to Elijah, through whom God caused rain to cease for three and a half years (I Kings 17:1; 18:1; Luke 4:25). Turning waters into blood is a reference to Moses turning the Nile River into blood in an effort to convince Pharaoh to let Israel leave Egypt (Exodus 7:20). The plagues could be a reference to the plagues imposed on Egypt by God through Moses (Exodus 7-11). These references in 11:6 are symbolic and indicate that the two witnesses cannot be silenced until they have delivered their message.

**11:7** The two witnesses (apostles and prophets) would continue to testify until they finished their testimony. After completing their testimony, they would be killed by the beast that comes up out of the abyss. The abyss was a source of evil (9:1-3). So, the beast who killed the witnesses was evil. The beast was an imperial power (apparently the Roman Empire) that made war against Christians.

**11:8** The bodies of the two witnesses will lie in the streets of a symbolic city characterized by moral depravity (Sodom), slavery and bondage (Egypt) and the crucifixion of the Son of God (Jerusalem). The symbolic city represents a composite of all things evil. The dead bodies will lie in the street, giving the initial impression that the evil beast has been victorious (i.e., has eliminated Christianity).

**11:9** The peoples, tribes, tongues and nations symbolize all the evil people who rejected the message of the two witnesses. They held the witnesses in such disdain that they prevented them from receiving a decent burial. They looked at the bodies for 3 ½ days, an incomplete period usually associated with persecution and suffering.

**11:10** The wicked people of the earth rejoiced over their “supposed” elimination of the two witnesses (apostles and prophets) who had “tormented” them by preaching the truth. The people of the world did not want to hear the truth and they rejoiced that those who spoke the truth were dead.

**11:11** When the 3½ days ended, God brought the two witnesses back to life. There is no indication that God brought the apostles and prophets back to life on the earth. The vision symbolizes that the wicked men had not been successful in eradicating the power of God. The impact of the message of the two witnesses continued and could not be stopped. The rejoicing of the evil men changed to fear as they recognized the power of God.

**11:12** The two resurrected witnesses heard a loud voice calling them to heaven. They went up into heaven, receiving their reward for their faithful testimony. They went up in the cloud, just as Jesus had been lifted up into a cloud (Acts 1:9). This symbolized the heavenly reward for faithful Christians. Faithful Christians will go to heaven in spiritual bodies in victory

(I Corinthians 15:51-57). This was a comforting message to the readers of God’s revelation to John.

**11:13** The meaning of the numerical symbolism in this verse is difficult to determine. The earthquake symbolizes God’s partial judgement on wicked men. It destroyed one-tenth of the evil city. This suggests a partial judgement/destruction of the evil systems in place (possibly paganism and idolatry). The partial destruction is evidence that the verse does not refer to the final judgement because the final judgement will be complete. Seven thousand is a multiple of the complete number seven. What this represents is unknown, but clearly God executed a complete judgement on a segment of the population as He saw fit. “The rest” (the remaining evil people who had not been killed in the earthquake) were terrified and gave glory to God. There is no indication that they repented or changed their evil ways. In fear, they acknowledged the power of God, but were not motivated to repent. This attitude is similar to those who acknowledge the existence of God, but choose not to obey His will.

**11:14** John says that the second woe is past, but warns that a third woe is coming quickly. “Quickly” is from the Greek EN TACHEI (quickly, shortly, with speed – Vine). The word “quickly” suggests that what is going to happen does not refer to Judgement Day.

**11:15** The seventh of seven angels sounded his trumpet. The loud voices in heaven are not identified. Maybe the voices belonged to the four living creatures who were said to be before the throne in heaven in 4:6. We are told what the voices say in 11:15. We are told what the twenty-four elders say in 11:17. The loud voices say that the kingdom of the world (evil) has been conquered by the kingdom of our Lord (God the Father) and by His Christ, who will reign forever and ever. Jesus is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him (I Peter 3:22). This occurred when Jesus conquered death through His resurrection (Eph. 1:20; I Cor. 15:20, 25). Jesus is seated at God’s right hand, above all rule, authority, power and dominion, not only in this age, but in the one to come. He is head over all things to the church (the spiritual kingdom) which is His body (Ephesians 1:21-23).

**11:16** The twenty-four elders fell on their faces and worshipped God. The twenty-four elders possibly symbolize the saved from the Old Testament period (symbolized by the patriarchs from the twelve tribes of Israel) and the saved from the New Testament period (symbolized by the twelve apostles). See comments on 4:4.

**11:17** The elders gave thanks to God who “art and who was,” indicating the eternal nature of God. God demonstrated His power by raising Jesus from the dead, thereby overcoming the power of Satan. Jesus now reigns over His spiritual kingdom (the church) (I Corinthians 15:25).

**11:18** “The nations were enraged” is a reference to Psalm 2:1 (“Why do the heathen rage?” – KJV; “Why are the nations in an uproar?” – NASB). The judgement in this verse does not seem to refer to Judgement Day. It appears to be a reference to Daniel 7 and to Psalm 2:1-12 when God brings judgement on nations (2:8-9), kings and judges of the earth (2:10). Psalm 2:3-6 was fulfilled when Jesus conquered death by His resurrection and was installed as King on God’s holy mountain (Psalm 2:6).

The battle in Daniel 7:19-26 occurred between the saints and the fourth beast. The four beasts in Daniel’s vision represent four world empires (Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek and Roman). The fourth beast was a fourth kingdom on the earth. It would devour and crush the earth (Daniel 7:23). The fourth empire (Roman) in Daniel’s vision waged war with the saints (7:21). One of the kings was to speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints for “a time, times and a half a time” (3½ years). Judgement was passed in favor of the saints who took possession of the kingdom (7:22). The king’s (emperor’s) dominion was to be destroyed forever (7:26). The Roman Empire would be annihilated and destroyed. Dominion was to be given to the saints of the Highest One (God). His kingdom (the church) will be everlasting and all the dominions will serve and obey Him (7:27), but this did not signal the end of all evil kingdoms that would oppose God’s kingdom.

“The dead” probably does not refer to dead men judged on Judgement Day. It probably refers to those who are dead in sin. The Greek word translated “dead” is NEKROS: the spiritual condition of unsaved men (Vine). NEKROS is translated “dead” in the following verses:

**Ephesians 2:1** - You were dead in your trespasses and sins.

**Ephesians 2:5** - when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ…

**Ephesians 5:14** - Awake, sleeper, and rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.

**Colossians 2:13** - When you were dead in your transgressions …He made you alive together with Him.

**Luke 15:24** - For this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.

The reward to the prophets is that the previously unknown meaning of their prophecy is now fulfilled by the resurrection of Jesus and the establishment of the church (i.e., the revelation of the mystery (10:7). The reward for the saints is the assurance that they did not die for naught. They achieved victory through the resurrection of Jesus.

“Destroying those who destroy the earth” seems to refer to God’s wrath against the Roman Empire as prophesied in Daniel 7:19-26. It probably does not refer to the destruction to occur at Judgement Day. The Greek word translated “destroy” is DIAPHTHERIO, meaning to utterly corrupt (Vine) or to corrupt or change for the worse (Thayer, referenced by Hailey, p. 263). DIAPHTHERIO does not mean to extinguish or bring to extinction (Hailey, p. 263). The Interlinear Greek-English New Testament (Berry) translates the end of 11:18 as “to bring to corruption those who corrupt the earth.” DIAPHTHERIO is also found in I Timothy 6:5 where those who have a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes (6:4) are said to be “men of depraved (DIAPHTHERIO) mind” (NASB). The Berry Interlinear translation is that these men are “corrupted in mind.” The word “destroy” in 11:18 probably means that the evil men of the earth will be defeated or brought to naught because of their wicked ways, and probably refers to the Roman Empire.

**11:19** The temple (sanctuary) of God in heaven was opened and the ark of His covenant was visible. Under the Old Testament Law access to the holy place was limited to priests, but now Christians have access to the holy place because of the sacrifice of Jesus (Hebrews 10:19-20). The flashes of lightning, peals of thunder, earthquake and hailstorm all symbolize the power of God.

**NOTE**: The seventh angel sounded his trumpet in 11:15, The first six angels sounded their trumpets in Chapters 8 and 9. For a review of the visions associated with each of the seven trumpets and a possible interpretation of each, the reader is referred to the summary at the end of Chapter 9.

REVELATION CHAPTER 12

**12:1** A new vision begins. A great “sign” (from the Greek SEMEION - “a token portending a future event” - Vine) appeared. That it was described as a great sign indicates its importance. John saw a woman characterized by all forms of God’s light (stars, moon and sun). God’s light could symbolize His truth. One could speculate that the three sources of light represent three spiritual dispensations (Hailey, p. 268):

*Patriarcha*l represented by stars, relatively small sources of light. God spoke to the fathers and prophets in many ways (Hebrews 11:1).

*Mosaic* represented by the moon. The moon reflects light from the sun. Old Testament prophets were given glimpses of God’s plan of salvation that would come through the Messiah, but they were not allowed full understanding of what they were prophesying (I Peter 1:10-12).

*Christian* represented by the sun. The sun is the source of light that the moon reflects. God’s plan of salvation through Jesus was fully revealed (Hebrews 1:2).

The twelve stars could represent the twelve tribes of Israel or the twelve apostles or both.

**12:2** The woman was with child and was in labor and in pain before giving birth. Painful labor is probably a symbolic reference to Genesis 3:16, where Eve was told she would have pain in childbirth.

**12:3** Another sign appears in heaven. A great (powerful and imposing) red (often symbolizing bloodshed) dragon appears. The dragon is identified as Satan the devil in 12:9. The dragon has seven heads. It is futile to try to identify actual people represented by the seven heads. The seven heads (a complete number) could represent the emperors who ruled the Roman Empire (not necessarily one head per specific emperor, but symbolic of all the emperors). On his heads were seven diadems (from the Greek DIADEMA). Diadems originated in Persia and indicated royalty and power (Hailey, p. 270). The devil has power over the realm of evil.

Diadem (DIADEMA) is different from the crown of victory (STEPHANOS), a word frequently used to describe the crown that victorious Christians are to receive: an incorruptible crown

(I Corinthians 9:25), the crown of life (James 1:12) and the crown of glory (I Peter 5:4). The ten horns represent the devil’s complete evil power over his realm.

**12:4** The dragon’s tail swept away one-third of the stars of heaven. This indicates destructive, but not total power. It could be a reference to Satan leading angels to rebel against God

(II Peter 2:4; Jude 1:6). The dragon’s focus was on the child (Jesus) to whom the woman was about to give birth. He wanted to devour the child. If Satan could destroy Jesus, it would be a major victory against God. This conflict goes back to the garden of Eden (Genesis 3:15) when God told Satan that he would bruise Jesus on the heel (a nonfatal wound), but Jesus would bruise Satan on the head (a lethal blow).

**12:5** The woman gave birth to a son, a male child. The child is Jesus. Jesus was to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, as prophesied in Psalm 110:2, 5. Jesus’ spiritual kingdom would prevail. Jesus was caught up to God and to His throne, symbolizing victorious rule (I Peter 3:22). Thus, Satan’s attempt to devour the child (Jesus) failed.

There has been great speculation concerning the identity of the woman described in 12:1-6. Many theories could be offered. Three of them are presented below:

1. The woman is Mary the mother of Jesus. This theory seems illogical because the woman had more offspring who kept the commandments of God (12:17). If the woman is the mother of Jesus, then the dragon’s war would be limited to Mary’s biological children.
2. The woman is the church. This theory seems illogical because the woman gave birth to multiple offspring, meaning that the church gave birth to itself.
3. The woman is the nation of Israel. This theory seems illogical because most of the nation of Israel rejected Jesus.

Hailey (p. 272) concluded that the woman symbolizes all of God’s redeemed people. Coffman (online commentary) concluded that the woman is a symbol of the whole family of God. Albertus Peters (p. 54) concluded that the woman is the body of the redeemed people of God. It seems most logical to the present author that the woman represents the spiritual power of God’s word to produce people who are faithful to Him from the beginning of time. In the Old Testament, the faithful remnant was physical Israel. God’s spiritual power, through His word (the Old Testament), produced faithful Jews. In the New Testament, the faithful remnant is spiritual Israel (Christians). God’s spiritual power, through His word, produces faithful Christians.

The conclusion that the woman represents the spiritual power of God’s word to produce people who are faithful to Him appears to be consistent with the prophecy in Isaiah 66:5-8, the verses of which are summarized as follows:

**66:5** - Speaks of Jewish brothers who would fight each other. The majority of Jews rejected Jesus and persecuted their Jewish brothers who became Christians.

**66:6** - Probably refers to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman army.

**66:7** - A prophecy of the birth of Jesus.

**66:8** - Speaks of a nation (Christianity) that would begin quickly and flourish. Zion brought forth sons.

Zion was a term that was originally used to represent Jerusalem (II Samuel 5:7), or a part of Jerusalem, or the actual temple site. It was later used as a symbolic reference to things having to do with Israel. Zion appears in Messianic prophecies. God said, “I have installed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain” (Psalm 2:6). This refers to Jesus as King over spiritual Israel (i.e., the church). God said that Jesus would rule at His right hand and would stretch forth His strong scepter from Zion to rule in the midst of His enemies (Psalm 110:1-2). Zion represents spiritual Israel (i.e., the church). The Hebrew writer says that Christians have come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem and to the church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven and to Jesus, the Mediator of a new covenant (Hebrews 12:22-24).

Zion in Isaiah 66:7-8 appears to be prophecy of the woman in Revelation 12; but, Zion in Isaiah 66:7-8 does not refer to all of Israel; it refers to the faithful remnant of physical Israel. It also produced sons (i.e., Christians) who were the faithful remnant of spiritual Israel.

**12:6** The woman in the first century was manifested as the church (God’s spiritual Israel). She symbolically fled into the wilderness to be protected and nourished by God. This is possibly related to the 144,000 who had the seal of God on their forehead and were not to be harmed (Revelation 7:3-4). The woman (represented by Christians) was to be nourished (protected) for 1,260 days (3½ years), the time during which the nations (evil men) were to tread underfoot (persecute) the holy city (the church) (Revelation 11:2) and the two witnesses would prophesy (11:3). This is the limited time when wicked men (in the Roman Empire) would persecute Christians (see comments on 11:2). Based on these verses, the church (Christians) would be persecuted, but not totally destroyed.

**12:7** Given the nature of the book of Revelation, the war in heaven between Michael and his angels against Satan and his angels appears to be a symbolic battle between good and evil rather than an actual war. This battle has been continuing since Satan deceived Eve in the garden (Gen. 3:1-6; I Tim. 2:14). Michael is an archangel who disputed with the devil (Jude 1:9) and is mentioned by Daniel in 10:13, 10:21 and 12:1.

**12:8** Satan and his angels were not strong enough to defeat Michael and his angels. They were defeated and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. One can only speculate about the possible relationship between this verse and Jude 1:6.

**12:9** Satan and his angels were thrown down to the earth. “Serpent” refers to the devil’s appearance in Genesis 3:1. The devil deceived Eve in the beginning (I Timothy 2:14) and he was thrown down to earth where he continues to deceive through false teaching and lies by men. The devil is the father of lies (John 8:44).

**12:10** John heard a loud voice in heaven. The speaker is not identified, but coming from heaven, the voice is authoritative. The voice declares that some things have now come: salvation, power, kingdom of our God (the church) and authority of His Christ, “for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down.” All of these things were described as having come at the time when John saw the vision. Jesus defeated Satan when He was resurrected from the dead (Colossians 2:14-15) and claimed all authority (Matthew 28:18; I Peter 3:22). Satan is described as the accuser of our brethren day and night, but he has been defeated by Jesus because the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23) and Jesus overcame death.

**12:11** Christians were able to overcome the devil because of three things:

1. The blood of the Lamb – since Jesus overcame death, it became possible for man to overcome death through the blood of Jesus.
2. The word of their testimony – Christians remained steadfast in their testimony of faith in Jesus.
3. They did not love their life even to death – The Christians were willing to die instead of recanting their testimony of faith in Jesus (Revelation 2:10).

**12:12** The rejoicing is because the Lamb defeated the dragon, allowing Christians to overcome the devil, thanks to the blood of the Lamb and because of their faithful testimony of faith even unto death. The rejoicing occurs in the heavens among those who dwell in them. Those rejoicing probably includes a combination of the souls under the altar who had been slain because of the word of God (6:9-11), the great multitude (7:9), the ones who have come out of the great tribulation (7:14-15) and the angels, the elders and the four creatures around the throne (7:11). There is probably some overlap among the slain saints, the great multitude and those who have come out of the great tribulation. The rejoicing in the heavens is contrasted with the woe to the earth and the sea because that is where the devil will now focus his deceitful attention. The symbolism of the earth and sea is debated, but it certainly indicates the all inclusiveness of the areas in which the devil will operate among men. The devil has great wrath because he knows his time is limited (a short time). No length of time is specified.

**12:13** After describing Satan’s defeat, the complete authority of Jesus and Christians overcoming the devil, Satan’s subsequent efforts are described. When Satan realized that he could not defeat the male child (Jesus), he decided to attack the woman who gave birth to the male child. Though the woman represents the spiritual power of God’s word to produce people who are faithful to Him from the beginning of time, in New Testament days, she is manifested as the church (the New Testament result of the spiritual power of God’s word). At the time of John’s writing, the Old Testament law had been taken out of effect (Colossians 2:14). So, the devil attacked spiritual Israel (i.e., the church) that existed at the time of John’s writing.

**12:14** Two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman. The symbolism of eagle’s wings was used in the Old Testament and represents protection and deliverance provided by God. God described His delivery of Israel from Egyptian captivity by saying, “I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself” (Exodus 19:4). Isaiah (40:31) prophesied that those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength and will “mount up with wings like eagles.” Using the eagles’ wings, the woman would fly into the wilderness to her place, to be protected and nourished by God (12:6). The time, times and half time is the same time as that found in 12:6 (3 ½ years). It is half of seven years, indicating that it will be a temporary time. The church would be protected during that symbolic period while the devil attacked.

**12:15** The serpent (Satan) attacked the woman (the church) by pouring water like a river out of his mouth in an attempt to sweep her away. What comes out of the devil’s mouth is lies (John 8:44) in the form of false teaching, religious lies, deceitful spirits (I Timothy 4:1) and delusions because people did not receive the love of the truth (II Thessalonians 2:10-11).

**12:16** “The earth” symbolizes men and women who have rejected the gospel of Christ. When the earth opened its mouth and drank up what the dragon poured out of its mouth, it helped the woman (manifested in the form of the church) by drinking up (accepting) all of Satan’s lies, false teaching and deceptions. The woman did not drink the lies and was not swept away by the devil’s false teaching. She was safe in the wilderness where she was nourished (12:14).

**12:17** Satan was enraged because he had not been able to devour the man child (Jesus - 12:5) and had not been able to destroy the woman (manifested in the form of the church, 12:14). So, he turned to make war with the rest of the woman’s offspring (Christians) who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

REVELATION CHAPTER 13

**13:1** The better manuscripts say, “The dragon stood on the sand of the seashore.” (Some manuscripts say John stood on the sand.) John’s vision is best understood by comparing it to Daniel’s vision in Daniel 7:2-7. In Daniel’s vision, four great beasts (lion, bear, leopard and a fourth strong terrifying beast) came up from the sea (7:3). The sea appears to symbolize the mass of humanity out of which kingdoms (i.e., beasts) arise. In Daniel’s vision the beasts arise from the sea (7:3), but the beasts are said to represent kings who arise from the earth (7:17). They are later identified as kingdoms (7:23). In John’s vision the sea also appears to represent the masses of humanity.

A beast came up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads. On his horns were ten diadems. As in Daniel’s vision, the beast represents an empire that arose out of the mass of humanity. It has many of the same features as the dragon (Satan) in Revelation 12:3, indicating that it is Satanic and evil. The ten horns symbolize great power and the seven heads possibly symbolize the totality of Roman emperors (not necessarily one head per emperor). The diadems (from the Greek DIADEMA) were on the horns instead of on the heads, like the dragon. The diadems were not crowns of victory (STEPHANOS), but indicated royalty and symbolized the wearer’s rule over the kingdoms in which they existed. On the beast’s heads were blasphemous names. Blasphemy is speaking out against God and profaning things that are divine. Roman emperors demanding to be worshipped would be the ultimate in blasphemy.

**13:2** The beast was a combination of a leopard, bear and lion. In Daniel’s vision, the first three beasts were like a lion, a bear and a leopard (Daniel 7:3-6). The fourth beast Daniel saw was more powerful and it devoured and crushed the previous beasts (Daniel 7:7). It had ten horns, as did the beast in John’s vision. The four beasts were identified as kingdoms in Daniel 7:23. The four beasts were empires that would arise from the nations (i.e., the sea) and the fourth beast would wage war with the saints (Daniel 7:17-21). The Roman Empire well fit the description of the fourth beast.

The four beasts in Daniel’s vision correspond to the kingdoms in Nebuchadnezzar’s vision in Daniel 2:36-45. The four kingdoms symbolized by the beasts in Daniel’s vision were the Babylonian kingdom (the lion), the Medo-Persian kingdom (the bear), the Grecian empire (the leopard, which fell into four divisions after the death of Alexander the Great) and the Roman Empire (the terrifying and powerful beast that devoured and crushed the other beasts). The fourth beast in Daniel’s vision and the beast from the sea in John’s vision symbolize the Roman Empire that persecuted Christians. The fourth beast in John’s vision was said to have features like a leopard, a bear and a lion, indicating that it was the culmination of all the worldly empires that opposed God’s people.

The dragon (Satan) gave the beast from the sea (the Roman Empire) his power, his throne and great authority. The power and authority given to the forces of evil by Satan contrast with the power and authority of Christ in the kingdom of God (12:5, 10-11). Satan could not destroy the man child (Jesus) and he could not destroy the church (the woman); but, he continues to use forces of evil in the world to war against God’s people. Paul discussed the schemes of the devil and described the Christian’s struggle against world forces of darkness and the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places (Ephesians 6:11-12).

**13:3** John saw one of the heads as if it had been slain, but his fatal wound was healed. Scholars have offered multiple interpretations of this passage. One of the more logical ones is that the seven heads (a complete number) represent the totality of emperors of the Roman Empire who persecuted the church (not necessarily each head representing a particular emperor). Possibly it appeared that the persecution of Christians would cease with the death of Nero in 68 AD (as if one of the heads had been slain). After Nero’s death there was political confusion in Rome and persecution of Christians diminished; but, persecution of Christians resumed in 91 AD when Domitian became emperor and demanded to be worshipped by all people. Symbolically, the fatal wound of the destructive beast was healed when Domitian became Emperor. “The whole earth” represents those who were not Christians. They were impressed by the beast and followed after it. The great majority of the people were impressed by the power of the Roman Empire and obeyed its demands.

**13:4** In worshipping the beast (the Roman Empire and the emperor who represented it), the masses were actually worshipping the devil (the dragon) who had given his authority to the beast from the sea. The people were enamored with the grandeur and power of the empire.

**13:5** The emperor was given a mouth to speak arrogant words and blasphemies against God. On the seven heads (emperors) were blasphemous names (13:1). God allowed the devil to give the beast (the Roman Empire) authority to act for forty-two months (a limited time). This is a symbolic (not literal) length of time and corresponds to the same length of time that the holy city would be trodden under foot (11:2), the two witnesses would prophecy while the holy city was being trampled (11:3), and the woman (the church) would be in the wilderness where she would be protected and nourished by God (12:6, 14). These four periods of time refer to the same period when the beast (the Roman Empire) would be allowed to persecute Christians for a limited time. This corresponds to Daniel’s prophecy that the fourth beast (the Roman Empire) would wage war with the saints and overpower them (Daniel 7:21). The representative (i.e., emperor) of the fourth beast (the Roman Empire) would speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints for time, times and a half time (3 ½ years) (Daniel 7:25). John’s vision was the fulfillment of what Daniel saw in his vision approximately 600 years earlier (Daniel is believed to have been written circa 530 BC).

**13:6** The Emperor blasphemed against God, His name and His tabernacle (those who dwell in heaven). Those who dwell in heaven would include martyred saints (7:14-15) and possibly other heavenly beings.

**13:7** The beast “made war with the saints” symbolizes the Roman Empire persecuting Christians. The Empire was allowed to temporarily overcome the saints (11:7) until they symbolically came back to life (11:11-12). This corresponds to Daniel’s vision in which the beast (Roman Empire) is destroyed (Daniel 7:11) when the Ancient of Days comes and passes judgement against the beast and the saints take possession of the kingdom (Daniel 7:21-22, 26). The beast’s victory over the saints would be temporary. God allowed the beast (Roman Empire) to have authority over every tribe, people, tongue and nation. This included all the people under control of the Roman Empire who were not Christians.

**13:8** “All who dwell on the earth” symbolizes the masses of people who worshipped the beast (personified by the Roman Emperor). They are identified as those whose names have not been written in the Lamb’s book of life. The faithful Christians in Sardis were described as those who overcome and whose names will not be erased from the book of life (3:5).

From the Greek text, it is difficult to determine whether “from the foundation of the world” refers to names being written or the Lamb having been slain. Berry’s Interlinear translates the last part of the verse as “of the Lamb slain from the founding of the world.” The NASB applies “from the foundation of the world” to the names being written in the book of life. Whichever interpretation is correct, both refer to the same concept of God determining a plan of salvation before the foundation of the world and also determining the type of person who would choose to obey it. Before the foundation of the world God planned for salvation through Christ (Ephesians 1:7-10) and predestined that those who are obedient would be holy and blameless, adopted as sons through Jesus Christ and redeemed through His blood (Ephesians 1:4-5, 11).

**13:9** This is the same admonition to hear that was given to Christians in chapters 2 and 3. It places responsibility on the individual to listen to the gospel message, accept it and obey it.

**13:10** The meaning of the Greek text is difficult to determine. The NASB translation is “If anyone is destined for captivity, into captivity he goes." The King James Version translation is “He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity.” The Berry Interlinear translation is “If anyone gathers into captivity, into captivity he goes. If anyone with the sword will kill, with the sword he must be killed.” The NASB translation would indicate that Christians are not to physically resist captivity (or persecution). The King James translation and Berry’s translation would indicate that there will be retribution for those who persecute Christians. Given the context of the passage, it appears that retribution toward those who persecute Christians is the correct interpretation. “Here is the perseverance (“endurance” – Berry) and faith of the saints. Knowing that their persecutors will receive retribution for their evil deeds will motivate Christians to endure the persecution and remain faithful.

**13:11** A second beast came up out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb and he spoke as a dragon. Apparently, his appearance was deceptive. He had horns like a lamb (i.e., harmless), but spoke as a dragon (i.e., as the devil). If he spoke as a dragon (the devil) he spoke lies of deception. He was evil. Since he came up out of the earth, he had probably swallowed up the water (lies and deceptions) coming from the dragon’s mouth in 12:16.

**13:12** The earth beast exercised the same authority as the sea beast. He made “those who dwell in the earth” (not Christians) worship the sea beast (the Roman Empire represented by the emperor). The earth beast represents the pagan religion of the day which culminated in emperor worship. The false religion of paganism was an integral part of the Roman Empire. The supposedly fatal wound of the sea beast was healed, symbolizing that persecution of Christians temporarily diminished when Nero died, but resumed with a vengeance when Domitian became emperor.

**13:13** The earth beast performed great signs. The signs were pseudo miracles designed to deceive. They were equivalent to today’s magic tricks. Jesus warned of false Christs and false prophets who would show “great signs and wonders so as to mislead, even the elect” (Matthew 24:24). Paul warned of those who were in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders (II Thessalonians 2:9-10).

**13:14** The earth beast deceived those on the earth (emperor worshippers) with his false signs in the presence of the sea beast (the Roman Empire). The fact that the earth beast used the signs to deceive supports the conclusion that the signs were fake. The contrast between the true signs from God and the fake signs performed by the earth beast is similar to the contrast between the signs performed by Philip (Acts 8:6) and the astonishing magic tricks performed by Simon the sorcerer (“magician” – Vine) in Acts 8:9-11). The earth beast (the priests of paganism) told the earth dwellers who were not Christians to make idolatrous images in honor of the sea beast (the Roman Empire culminating in emperor worship). The sea beast was again described as having been wounded but came to life (probably referring to the death of Nero and the beginning of the reign of Domitian).

**13:15** The earth beast made the idol to the sea beast (Rome) appear to “come alive” and speak. The idol “spoke” and said that those who did not worship the emperor would be killed. This occurred when Christians were forced to make the choice between honoring Christ as Lord or honoring Caesar as lord and renouncing Christianity. Many Christians who refused to honor Caesar were killed.

**13:16** The earth beast (paganism culminating in emperor worship) forced all inhabitants of the empire (small, great, rich, poor, free and slaves – no exceptions) to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead. There is no historical evidence that such a physical mark was placed on inhabitants of the Roman Empire. The mark is probably symbolic of the people’s allegiance to paganism and emperor worship. This mark of allegiance to paganism is contrasted with the seal that God placed on the foreheads of his faithful ones (7:3 and 9:4). One mark indicated allegiance to paganism and emperor worship while the other mark indicated allegiance to God.

**13:17** It is possible that there was some sign, or mark or statement of allegiance indicating that a person was loyal to the emperor and that this indicator had to be produced or said when a person was doing business within the empire. If such were the case, Christians would refuse to express allegiance to the emperor and would be prohibited to buy or sell. Those who maintained allegiance to the emperor would refuse to do business with those who refused allegiance (i.e., Christians). Whether such an indication of allegiance existed in the Roman Empire is unknown, but it has existed in other nations (e.g., “Heil Hitler” and swastikas in Nazi Germany). It could be similar to needing a business license to do business in our culture today. Being denied the opportunity to buy and sell would mean that Christians would suffer financially and possibly would be unable to buy food.

**13:18** “Here is wisdom.” Wisdom is the application of understanding and knowledge to form a conclusion. Verse 17 refers to the name of the sea beast (the Roman Empire) or the number of his name. So, the number of the beast refers to the Roman Empire. “The number is that of a man.” This could refer to the emperor in general (i.e., no specific emperor) who was a mere man who did not deserve to be worshipped. It could also mean that the Roman Empire was a human kingdom as opposed to the spiritual kingdom of God. The number 7 indicates completeness or perfection. The number 6 indicates a lack of completeness or perfection. The number 666 emphasizes the lack of completeness and perfection. Possibly the number 666 indicates that the Roman Empire (a kingdom created by man) and/or the Roman emperor were incomplete and imperfect and were, therefore, doomed to fail, especially when contrasted with God’s spiritual kingdom. This would have been encouraging to Christians who were persecuted for refusing to bow down to the Roman Emperor.

**NOTE**: Many people have tried to make the number 666 correspond to the name of a particular person (e.g., a Caesar, a religious leader or some other person in history). The result is that multiple names have been proposed and it is impossible to identify a name that is clearly more logical than the rest. Revelation is filled with symbols, symbolic creatures (dragons, beasts, locusts, scorpions), symbolic weather events (earthquakes, floods and strong winds), and symbolic numbers. It seems best to use our “wisdom” in understanding the context of the book to conclude that 666 symbolizes efforts by men (emperors or kingdoms created by men) that are imperfect and deficient when compared to the perfect spiritual kingdom of God. This interpretation is also consistent with the rest of Revelation.

REVELATION CHAPTER 14

**14:1** The narrative changes from persecution of Christians on earth to a victory scene. Zion was a term that was originally used to represent Jerusalem (II Samuel 5:7), or a part of Jerusalem, or the actual temple site. It was later used as a symbolic reference to things having to do with Israel. For a discussion of how Zion represents the New Testament church in Messianic prophecies (Psalm 2:6; 110:1-2) the reader is referred to comments concerning Revelation 12:5. The Hebrew writer says that Christians have come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem and to the church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven and to Jesus, the Mediator of a new covenant (Hebrews 12:22-24). If Christians living in the first century came to Mt. Zion, then 14:1 refers to Christians still living on earth. Zion symbolizes the church (Christians still on earth) with Jesus standing on Mount Zion (i.e., standing among the Christians). Jesus standing among the Christians ensures their ultimate victory. The 144,000 is the same group as those mentioned in 7:3-4 and they were said to be on earth (7:3).

**14:2** John heard an unidentified voice. It came from heaven, not from the earth. It was like the sound of many waters (indicating a loud roar), like the sound of thunder (loud and powerful), and like the sound of harpists playing (indicating praise as in 5:8).

**14:3** “They sang a new song before the throne…” – The singers are not identified. The singers could not have included the 144,000 because they were still on the earth. The voice came from heaven (14:2) and the song was sung before the throne in heaven. The singers were not the four living creatures and the elders because the song was sung before them. Possibly the new song was sung by the great multitude who came out of the tribulation and are now in heaven worshipping God (7:9-17). Those in heaven sang the song, indicating that they knew it. It was a song of salvation (7:10). The 144,000 on the earth could not yet sing the song, but they could learn it. They would be able to sing the song of salvation after they died and went to heaven. The 144,000 had been purchased from the earth. The earth symbolizes the unsaved masses who could have learned the song of salvation (i.e., could have been “purchased”), but chose to continue to follow the earth beast (the Roman Empire).

**14:4** The Christians are described as “celibates.” Christians are not commanded to remain physically celibate (Matthew 19:4-6; Hebrews 13:4). Therefore, the 144,000 are those who are spiritual virgins. Paul told the Corinthians that they were betrothed to Christ, to be presented to him as a pure virgin (II Corinthians 11:2). Christians follow Jesus by obeying His word. They have been purchased from among men by the blood of the Lamb. Under the Old Testament, the first fruits of the harvest were offered to God (Deuteronomy 26:2, 10). Paul described the household of Stephanus as being the first fruits (i.e., first converts) of Achaia (I Corinthians 16:15), indicating that other converts would follow. Jesus was described as the first fruits of those raised from the dead (I Corinthians 15:20, 23), indicating that others would follow. In 14:4 those who were singing the new song were the first fruits of Christians who had remained faithful and who had received their heavenly reward.

**14:5** No lie was found in their mouth. They refused to confess the emperor as lord. They refused to deny Jesus as Lord; so, they are blameless.

**NOTE**: In 14:6-11 John records the messages of three angels flying in midheaven: the first angel had the eternal gospel and said to fear God and worship the Creator (14:6-7); the second angel prophesied that Babylon (the Roman Empire) would fall (14:8); the third angel foretold the eternal fate of individuals who worship the emperor and idolatrous images (14:9-11).

**14:6** John saw another angel flying in midheaven so he could clearly be heard. The literal Greek text says that the angel had “the everlasting glad tidings” (Berry). The NASB says that the angel had “an eternal gospel.” It was the same gospel message that was to be preached to all creation (Mark 16:15). It was to be preached to “those who live on the earth.” They are the unsaved masses of mankind from whom the Christians had been purchased (14:3). The gospel message is for everyone (every nation, tribe, tongue and people).

**14:7** The angel said with a loud voice to be heard, “Fear God.” “Fear” is translated from the Greek PHOBEO which means “to show reverential fear” that is a “controlling motive of the life in matters spiritual and moral” (Vine). Fear of God is reverential respect that motivates obedience. “Give Him glory” is the admonition to give glory to God instead of to men (e.g., the emperor). The final admonition is to worship the Creator instead of the creature (i.e., men). The “hour of His judgement” does not refer to the final judgement because the eternal message was “to those who live on the earth” to fear God, give Him glory and worship Him. After the final judgement, this message would be too late. The judgement refers to the wrath of God (downfall) that will be brought against those who worship the emperor and persecute Christians. The judgement description continues in 14:8.

**14:8** Judgement continues. The first angel gave the warning that the hour of God’s judgement has come and admonished those on the earth to fear God by obeying the gospel. The second angel predicted the fall of Babylon the great (Rome) who influenced the nations to practice evil. “Babylon is fallen” appears to indicate that the destruction has already occurred; but, instead it is a sure prediction of what is to happen if God is not honored. When God says something is going to happen, it is as good as done. Babylon symbolizes the Roman Empire and all of the evils she embodied. Rome made all the nations who interacted with her and honored her to drink the wine of the passion (wrath - NASB) of her immorality. The Greek text is challenging. It seems to indicate that the wine of passion and wrath are the same. Probably it means that Rome made all the other nations drink the wine of her passionate spiritual immorality that resulted in their having to drink the wine of God’s wrath.

**14:9** The third angel spoke with a loud voice to be heard. The angel addressed those who worship the (sea) beast (i.e. the Roman Empire) (as deceptively promoted by the earth beast, paganism, in 13:14) and his image (emperor worship) and receive a mark on the forehead or hand. The mark refers to the mark of the name of the beast or the number of his name in 13:16-17.

**14:10** Those who worship the beast will drink the wine of the wrath of God. His anger will be mixed in full strength (i.e., undiluted with mercy). The eternal fate of those who refuse to honor God will be torment with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and the Lamb. God used similar symbolic references to fire and brimstone with regard to judgement against Assyria (Isaiah 30:33) and against Edom (Isaiah 34:9).

**14:11** For those who worship the beast (the Roman Empire) and his image (idolatrous emperor worship) and receive his mark their torment will be forever, with no rest day and night.

**14:12** The dragon (Satan) made war with those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus (12:17). Christians who persevere (remain steadfast) in the face of persecution will be rewarded eternally, in contrast to the eternal torment endured by those who worship the beast.

**14:13** John heard a voice from heaven saying that those who die in the Lord from now on will be blessed. This would be comforting to first century Christians who faced death if they refused to deny their allegiance to Christ. They would be rewarded with eternal rest from their labors and their deeds would follow with them. Their deeds would serve as evidence of their faithfulness on Judgement Day and would also be remembered by those they left behind after death. Either the Holy Spirit is speaking or the voice from heaven is quoting the Holy Spirit.

**14:14** The scene changes. One like a Son of man (i.e., Jesus) was sitting on a white cloud. White indicates purity and holiness. He was wearing a golden crown (STEPHANOS) of victory on His head. He had a sharp sickle in His hand, apparently used to reap or harvest a crop. Clouds often indicate judgement in scripture. The destruction of Jerusalem was described as the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky (Matthew 24:30). God’s judgement against Egypt was described as the Lord riding on a swift cloud (Isaiah 19:1).

**14:15** Another angel came out of the temple (sent from God) and told the One on the cloud to “put in your sickle and reap.” “The hour to reap has come” indicates that it is time to harvest because the harvest of the earth is “ripe” (from the Greek XERAINO – overly ripe, usually translated as dried up or withered - Vine). This possibly indicates that the growing season has ended and the crop is ready for harvest. It seems to refer to the harvesting of Christians through the seed of the gospel, not to the final judgement. In Mark 4:26-29 Jesus said the kingdom of God (the church) is like seed (the word) that is planted (preached), sprouts and grows. When the head of grain matures (possibly when the hearer’s heart is ready) it is harvested with a sickle (the hearer becomes a Christian). In John 4:35 Jesus told the disciples to look on the fields, for they are white for harvest.

**14:16** Jesus swings his sickle and reaps Christians through His word.

**14:17** A different type of harvest is described. Another angel came out of the temple in heaven (sent from God) and also had a sharp sickle.

**14:18** Another angel who has power over fire (indicating judgement) came out from the altar. He is probably the same angel mentioned in 8:3-5 who came out from the golden altar where the prayers of the saints went up before God. In 8:3-5, the angel took fire from the altar and threw it to earth, resulting in thunder, lightning and an earthquake (indicating judgement in response to the prayers of the saints). In 14:18, the angel from the altar told the angel with the sickle to put in his sickle and gather clusters from the vine of the earth because her grapes are ripe. The word translated “ripe” is from a different Greek word than “ripe” in 14:15. “Ripe” in 14:18 comes from the Greek AKMAZO (to be at the prime, fully ripe – Vine). The word “ripe” indicates a readiness for judgement. The angel was to gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, not the vine itself. The clusters are evil people who are harvested from the earth (the evil masses who reject God).

**NOTE**: Opinions differ as to whether judgement described in 14:19-20 refers to judgement against the Roman Empire and paganism or to the final judgement. Persuasive arguments have been made for both positions. Presented below is reasoning that the passage describes judgement against the Roman Empire and those who participated in emperor worship.

**14:19** The angel swung his sickle and gathered clusters from the vine. The vine is described as the “vine of the earth,” distinct from the clusters it produces. The clusters symbolize people and the vine symbolizes the earth that produces them. The earth symbolizes the masses of people who reject God (8:13; 11:10; 12:16; 13:3, 8). The second evil beast was said to come up out of the earth (13:11). The angel threw the clusters into the wine press of the wrath of God. This symbolizes a time of judgement for those who reject God. The angel threw the clusters into the wine press but did not destroy the vine or the earth. This means that individuals were punished, but the masses of people on earth and the false teaching that produced the wicked people continued to function. This contrasts with the final judgement when the heavens will be destroyed by burning and the earth and its works will be burned up (II Peter 3:10-12).

**14:20** The wine press was trodden outside the city. The city probably symbolizes the holy city, the new Jerusalem (i.e., the church – ll:2). The wine press was trodden outside the city, probably referring to Old Testament law that bodies of sacrificed animals were to be burned outside of the camp (Hebrews 13:11). Jesus was said to have suffered “outside the gate” (Hebrews 13:12-13). When the wine press containing those who had rejected God and His Lamb was trodden, it produced blood that came up to the horses’ bridles for a distance of 200 miles (literally 1,600 stadia). The depth and distance of the blood is symbolic, indicating the magnitude and severity of God’s judgement against those who rejected Him and His Lamb. First century Christians would be comforted to know that punishing justice would be carried out against the paganistic Roman Empire that persecuted them. This is the same way God described His judgement against Edom as treading them down in the wine press. He trod them in anger and trampled them in wrath. It was a day of vengeance as God poured out their blood on the earth to such a degree that blood sprinkled on His garments (Isaiah 63:1-6). God’s destruction of the Roman Empire is described the same way.

REVELATION CHAPTER 15

**15:1** A new vision begins. John saw a sign in heaven, indicating that what he saw was happening in heaven. The sign was great and marvelous, indicating that something significant was coming. Seven angels had seven plagues, indicating punishment. Seven is a complete number indicating the completeness of the coming judgement against the Roman Empire. The plagues are the last, indicating the wrath of God is finished, meaning that judgement will be complete after the plagues are administered.

**15:2** Those who came off victorious from the beast and his image were Christians who did not yield to the pressures of the Roman Empire to worship the emperor (i.e., his image and the number of his name). The Christians stood on the sea of glass that was mixed with fire, but they had escaped the fire. The fire could represent the trials and persecution they had endured. They held harps of God that were used for praise. Peter told Christians that the proof of their faith would be tested by fire (I Peter 1:7).

**15:3** The song of Moses is the song that Moses and the Israelites sang after God saved them from Pharaoh and the Egyptian army who He drowned in the Red Sea (Exodus 15:1-18). They also sang the song of the Lamb. In heaven the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb and sang a new song (Revelation 5:8-10). Another group in heaven sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders (14:3). Even though the group in 15:2 is described as “those who had come off victorious from the beast (i.e., the Roman Empire), the fact that they sang the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb possibly indicates that the group included God’s saved people from the Old Testament era and from the New Testament era. Satan also had beasts that did his work during Old Testament times (e.g., Egypt, Babylon et al.). God is praised as King of the nations, indicating that His spiritual kingdom has overcome all the political entities that have opposed it. Egypt, Babylon, Rome and many others have fallen when God was ready for them to fall. Jeremiah (10:7) described God as “King of the nations” as he spoke of the foolishness of idolatry (10:8-9).

**15:4** “Who will not fear” is a quotation from Jeremiah 10:7. David said that “All nations whom Thou hast made shall come and worship before Thee, oh Lord and they shall glorify Thy name (Psalm 86:9). All nations should have recognized God’s holiness and righteousness and feared (reverenced) His name through obedience; but, most did not. The time will come when God’s holiness and righteousness will be revealed and all nations will have no choice but to acknowledge and worship Him.

**15:5** The temple (sanctuary – NASB footnote) of the tabernacle of testimony refers to the tabernacle Moses was instructed by God to build (Exodus 25:8). The mercy seat was to be put on top of the ark and the testimony which God gave Moses (probably refers to the stones upon which were written the 10 commandments – Exodus 34:1) was to be placed in the ark (Exodus 25:21). Only the Levites (the tribe from which priests came) had the authority to set up or take down the tabernacle (Numbers 1:50). Moses told the Levites to take the book of the Law (which Moses wrote) and place it beside the ark of the covenant (Deuteronomy 31:9, 24-26). In John’s vision the holy place of testimony was opened for all to see. Christians are said to be a royal priesthood (I Peter 2:9).

**15:6** The seven angels who had the seven plagues came out of the temple (sanctuary), indicating the plagues were judgement coming from God. The number seven is probably symbolic and indicates completeness. The seven angels were clothed in linen clean and bright, indicating purity. The bride of the Lamb was said to be clothed in fine linen white and clean (19:8). Jesus was said to be clothed with a golden girdle across his breast (1:13). Clearly the angels were coming from a holy place.

**15:7** One of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God. One might wonder why the angels who had seven plagues (15:1) were given seven bowls full of wrath. Probably the plagues and the bowls of wrath refer to the same thing (i.e., God’s impending judgement of the wicked). It is also possible that the plague symbolizes the judgement delivered and the wrath indicates God’s motivation for delivering the judgement. The wrath of God caused by the wickedness of men resulted in God punishing the wicked men with the plagues (i.e., pouring out His wrath as in 16:2-17). God “lives forever and ever” indicates His eternal nature.

**15:8** The temple was filled with smoke and no one was able to enter it until the seven plagues were finished. The same thing is said to happen when Moses finished constructing the tabernacle. A cloud covered the tabernacle, indicating that the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle and Moses was not able to enter (Exodus 40:34-35). In John’s vision the smoke indicated the glory and power of God. No one was able to enter the temple (sanctuary) until the plagues were finished, possibly indicating that God’s work was going to occur and no one could stop it.

REVELATION CHAPTER 16

**NOTE**: Summary of 16:1-17: God poured out His wrath (i.e., the plagues – 16:9) and contaminated everything that is needed for human survival. The earth became a loathsome and malignant sore upon men who worshipped the beast (16:2). The sea became blood and everything in it died (16:3). The rivers and springs of fresh water became blood and the wicked were forced to drink it (16:4-6). The sun which warms the earth and causes plants to grow gave off fierce heat and scorched men with fire (16:8-9). The air which is necessary for humans to breathe was affected in a negative manner that is not specified (16:17). Wrath was poured out on the throne of the beast (the Roman Empire) and caused his kingdom to be darkened. Men gnawed their tongues because of pain. Total misery prevailed. Wrath poured out on the Euphrates River caused it to dry up, meaning that protection from kings and armies from the east was gone. The seven bowls of wrath were poured out over every part of the earth, the throne of the beast and the Euphrates River. The judgement imposed by God on the Roman Empire was to be comprehensive.

**16:1** John heard a loud voice coming from the temple (sanctuary – NASB footnote), indicating that it was either the voice of God or one sent by God. The voice told the angels to pour out their bowls of wrath.

**16:2** The first angel poured his bowl into the earth. It caused malignant sores (misery) on those who had the mark of the beast and worshipped the image (i.e., all the pagan emperor worshippers). “The earth” appears to symbolize all of the emperor worshippers.

**16:3** The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea. It became blood and everything in the sea died. The sea appears to symbolize masses of humanity that were evil, as in 13:1. The morally destitute masses were punished when God’s angel poured out his bowl of wrath.

**16:4** The third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and springs (fresh waters) and they became blood. Fresh water necessary for life is turned into blood and death. It is a death sentence. There is no way for evil men to survive.

**16:5** The angel of the waters expresses the righteous, holy and eternal (Who art and Who was) nature of God. The judgement of God is righteous and just.

**16:6** “They” refers to the Roman Emperor worshippers who persecuted Christians (poured out the blood of saints and prophets). Since they poured out the blood of Christians, they are forced to drink blood as a punishment. They are getting what they deserve.

**16:7** It is unclear as to who is speaking when the altar is said to speak. The altar could be the altar from 6:9-10 under which were the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God who were crying out for avenging justice. Perhaps the slain souls are the ones acknowledging the true and righteous judgement of God as His justice avenges their suffering and martyrdom.

**16:8** The fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun. Men in pain with no water were scorched with fire from the sun. Those who reject God suffer painful consequences.

**16:9** Despite being scorched by the fierce heat, men blasphemed God and did not repent so as to give Him glory. The men were demonstrating the attitude of the sea beast (the Roman Empire) who had blasphemous names on his seven heads (13:1) and blasphemed against God, His name and His tabernacle for 42 months (13:5-6). The fact that men had the opportunity to repent, even though they refused, indicates that what is being described in this vision is not the final judgement. At the final judgement men will not have the opportunity to repent (Matthew 7:21-23; II Corinthians 5:10).

**16:10** The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast (i.e., the Roman Empire). His kingdom became darkened. Spiritually and morally the kingdom was already darkened by the actions of the citizens. This verse probably symbolizes the darkening of the Roman Empire’s political power. Once, its power was bright and glorious. It seemed invincible. Now it is darkening and losing its glory. The inhabitants of the empire gnawed their tongues in pain as the glory faded.

**16:11** Even as they endured the painful wrath of God, they refused to repent and they blasphemed the God of heaven. Paul described the condition of their heart when he described those who knew God, but they did not honor Him as God. They became futile in their speculations and their foolish heart was darkened. They became fools, exchanging the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man (Romans 1:21-25). Such was the stubborn heart of the Roman Emperor worshippers. In sending His wrath upon them, God was giving men a chance to repent, but they refused. This clearly does not refer to the final judgement where there will be no opportunity for repentance.

**16:12** God made a covenant with Abraham that God would give Abraham’s descendants land that would extend to the Euphrates River (Genesis 15:18). So, the Euphrates River became a border for Israel. The meaning of the drying up of the Euphrates has been a source of disagreement among scholars. Among the many explanations, one seems most likely: the drying up of the Euphrates symbolizes the military vulnerability of the Roman Empire, making it ripe for conquest by forces that would come from the east. In other words, it predicts the conquest of the Roman Empire.

The Euphrates River is believed to be used in a symbolic way in this verse; but, the symbolism could be based on the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus the Persian in 538 BC. Jeremiah (50:31-32) described Babylon as “an arrogant one” and prophesied that “the arrogant one will stumble and fall.” Jeremiah (51:7) said that “Babylon has been a golden cup in the hand of the Lord, intoxicating all the earth. The nations have drunk of her wine; therefore, the nations are going mad.” The symbolism of referring to Rome as Babylon in Revelation is obvious.

God said He would repay Babylon and all the inhabitants of Chaldea for all their evil that they have done in Zion (Jeremiah 51:24). Jeremiah (51:8) prophesied that Babylon would fall suddenly. Isaiah (44:27-28) prophesied that the waters of the depth of the sea would be dried up and that Cyrus would perform God’s desires. Isaiah (45:1) prophesied that Cyrus will subdue nations and that doors will be open for him so that gates will not be shut. Cyrus is referred to in Isaiah 46:11 as a bird of prey from the east, from a far country. In Daniel 5:28-31 Daniel interpreted the dream of Belshazzar (king of Babylon) and told Belshazzar that Babylon would be defeated and given to the Medes and Persians.

The prophesies of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Daniel were all fulfilled when Cyrus conquered Babylon in 538 BC. The city was well fortified and virtually impregnable. The Euphrates River flowed through the city and the riverbed was protected by gates. Cyrus dug a canal outside the city and diverted the flow of the Euphrates into the canal. The water level entering the city was lowered and the Persian army entered the city through the riverbed. The Babylonians were having a drunken feast and the gates protecting the city at the riverbed had been carelessly left open. The Persian army killed Belshazzar and conquered the city of Babylon.

Though the Euphrates River is used symbolically in Revelation, it is geographically located on the eastern extreme of what was then the Roman Empire (symbolized by Babylon). When Rome fell, it was conquered by invading armies from the east (“kings from the east” – 16:12). Rome’s political decline began in the 3rd century AD. There was great political instability and infighting. Between 235 AD and 285 AD Rome had more than 20 emperors. A plague began in 250 AD and lasted for years, killing millions of people. From 378 AD – 439 AD there were multiple invasions by Germanic tribes from the east. In 410 AD Bavarian Visigoth tribes sacked Rome. In 476 AD a Barbarian general named Odoacer defeated Emperor Romulus and declared himself king of Italy. Though the Roman Empire officially fell at this time, it had been deteriorating since the third century.

**16:13** John saw unclean spirits like frogs from the mouths of the dragon (Satan), the sea beast (Roman Empire) and the false prophet. What came out of the dragon’s mouth were lies (12:15; John 8:44). Out of the mouth of the beast came arrogant words and blasphemies (13:5). The false prophet appears to be the beast that came out of the earth who deceived those who dwell on the earth, promoted idolatry and encouraged worship of the image of the beast (13:11-17; 19:20). The unclean spirits were said to be like frogs. Multitudes of frogs were one of the plagues that God inflicted on Egypt (Exodus 8:1-6). Frogs were considered unclean under the Old Testament law and were not to be eaten (Leviticus 11:9). Comparing the unclean spirits to frogs symbolized their evil undesirability.

**16:14** The unclean spirits are said to be demons performing signs. The signs are fake. Jesus warned of false prophets who will show great signs and wonders so as to mislead (Matthew 24:24). Paul warned that Satan would use signs, false wonders and deceptions of wickedness to deceive those who did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved (II Thessalonians 2:9-10). The objective of the unclean spirits was to gather together the kings of the whole world for the war of the great day of God.

**16:15** This verse appears to be a parenthetical interjection. Given the content of the message, the words appear to come from Jesus Himself. “Coming like a thief” indicates the unpredictability of Jesus’ coming. It will be unannounced. Jesus made similar comments in Revelation 3:3 when talking about coming in judgement against the church at Sardis and in Luke 12:39-40. Jesus’ coming in this verse probably does not refer to His final coming at the end of time. Jesus said that the things He was revealing “must shortly take place” (1:1) and that relative to the words of the prophecy of this book “the time is near” (22:10). So, His coming probably refers to the events that are prophesied in the book (i.e., Jesus coming in judgement against the Roman Empire and those who engage in idolatry and emperor worship while rejecting the gospel of Christ). The parenthetical interjection is an admonition to Christians to stay awake and keep their garments (pure, i.e., remain faithful) as they see these events taking place. Because of persecution, the pressure on Christians would continue.

**16:16** John resumes the narrative of his vision. “They” refers to the spirits of demons who had gathered together the kings of the whole world (16:14). “Har-Magedon” is a Hebrew word that is often translated “Armageddon.” “Har” in Hebrew means “mountain.” “Mageddon” is the name of the place “Megiddo.” So, the literal translation of “Har-Mageddon” is “Mount Megiddo.” Megiddo was a strategic geographic point that guarded the northern entrance to Israel (Hailey, p. 336). It is in northern Israel, slightly southwest of the Sea of Galilee. The Bible mentions Megiddo several times, but does not mention there being a mountain there. This verse is the only place in the Bible where the name Har-Mageddon (Armageddon) is mentioned.

The word “Megiddo” is found several times in the Old Testament. Several key Old Testament battles occurred at Megiddo. Deborah and Barak defeated the Canaanite army in the plain of Megiddo (Judges 4-5). Gideon drove off the Midianites and Amalekites (Judges 6). Israel, led by King Saul, was defeated there because they did not trust in God (I Samuel 31). At Megiddo Pharaoh Neco and the Egyptian army killed Josiah, the king of Judah (II Kings 23:29).

In John’s vision, Armageddon is used symbolically, probably because many decisive battles were fought at actual Megiddo. In the vision, a spiritual battle is set to occur at Har-Magedon between the forces of evil and the forces of God. Other than this symbolic occurrence in Revelation, there is no scriptural evidence for an actual battle to occur in northern Israel at any time in the future.

**16:17** The seventh angel poured out his bowl upon the air. Idolatrous worshippers were plagued with malignant sores (16:2). The sea and fresh water were turned into blood (16:3-4). The sun scorched the blasphemers (16:8-9). The kingdom was losing power (darkened) and the blasphemers refused to repent (16:10-11). The earth, the sea, the springs and the sun are necessary for humans to survive. God using his plagues to contaminate all of them indicates total destruction. When God poured out His wrath on the throne of the beast, his kingdom was darkened and his power was diminishing. God completed the destruction by contaminating the air in an unspecified manner. Perhaps the air symbolizes the spiritual atmosphere of the Roman Empire that had been contaminated by idolatry and sin. Just as literal air surrounds men everywhere, the spiritual air throughout the kingdom of the beast was evil because it was ultimately influenced by the devil. Paul wrote about an atmosphere characterized by trespasses and sin in Ephesians 2:1-2. Those who walked according to the course of this world did so according to the prince of the power of the air. Those who continued in their sin did so according to the spirit that is working in the sons of disobedience. In John’s vision, the kingdom of the beast was darkened and the spirit that permeated the kingdom was evil. A loud voice came out of the temple from the throne. The speaker is not identified, but the source from which it comes indicates that the speaker is either God or Christ. The speaker says, “It is done.” With this final plague, God’s punitive judgement of the Roman Empire is complete. It will fall.

**16:18** The intensity of God’s judgement against Rome is described as lightning flashes, peals of thunder and the greatest earthquake since man first came upon the earth. The Roman Empire was the greatest empire to have existed until that time (Daniel 2:40) and its downfall would be the most intense destruction that had ever occurred. The impact of the fall of the empire was intense and severe.

**16:19** The great city was Babylon (symbolic for Rome). The meaning of the city being split into three parts is unknown, but certainly indicates destruction. “The cities of the nations fell” indicates that all the cities and nations that honored Rome and practiced her pagan customs of idolatry and emperor worship would fall. An angel had said that anyone who worships the beast or receives a mark on his forehead or upon his hand will drink the wine of the wrath of God (14:9-10). That was a reference to those whose loyalty was to Rome. In 16:19 God gives the cup of His fierce wrath to the empire itself.

**16:20** The symbolism is the personification of islands and mountains. The magnitude of the destruction of Babylon (Rome) was so great that islands and mountains fled in fear. Their departure also removed all places where men could hide.

**16:21** Huge hailstones weighing about 100 pounds came down from heaven upon men. Coming down from heaven indicates they came from God. Coming down upon men indicates punishment. Being hit by a 100-pound hailstone would kill a man. Those who survived the hailstorm were not motivated to repent. Instead, they blasphemed God because the plague of the hail was so severe. This judgement on Rome and its followers was severe, but it was not the final judgement since there were still evil men who survived and blasphemed God because His judgement upon them was so severe.

REVELALTION CHAPTER 17

**17:1** One of the seven angels (with the seven bowls of wrath – 15:1) told John that he would show him the judgement of the great harlot who sits on many waters. Jeremiah 51:13 predicted the fall of Babylon and described the city as “you who dwell by many waters, abundant in treasures” and he said, “your end has come.” A harlot is one who is sexually promiscuous with many partners, often for money. It is a term of derision used to describe evil cities in the Old Testament. Nineveh was described as a bloody city, a harlot, the charming one, the mistress of sorceries, who sells nations by her harlotries (Nahum 3:1, 4). Isaiah 23:17 prophesied that the city of Tyre would go back to her harlot’s wages and will play the harlot with all the nations on the face of the earth. Jerusalem was described as a harlot when the people turned their back on God and practiced idolatry (Jeremiah 2:2, 20). A harlot is a woman who is unfaithful to her husband, with the symbolism being that idolatrous nations are unfaithful to God. The harlot sits on many waters. The waters represent peoples, multitudes, nations and tongues (17:15) with whom the harlot interacts. The harlot represents Babylon (symbolic Rome) (17:5, 18). Contrast the harlot (Babylon) with the bride adorned for her husband, the holy city, the new Jerusalem (21:2). A promiscuous harlot is contrasted with a faithful wife.

**17:2** The kings of earth committed acts of immorality (literally “fornication” - Berry) with the harlot. Rulers of other nations honored Rome, interacted with her politically and economically to profit from the interactions. They also participated in the idolatrous emperor worship to stay in good standing with Rome. “Those who dwell on the earth” were the common masses who were made drunk with the wine of her immorality. The drunkenness symbolizes being seduced by the harlot and participating in the idolatry and sexual promiscuity that accompanies it, in addition to whatever economic advantages might come from being a willing participant with the Roman Empire.

**17:3** John was carried away through the power of the Holy Spirit into a wilderness. The wilderness is a symbol that can be positive or negative. The woman clothed with the sun fled into the wilderness prepared by God where she would be nourished (12:1, 6). In prophesying of the fall of Babylon, Isaiah (21:1, 9) said that Babylon would be a wilderness of the sea and that windstorms would come from the wilderness, from a terrifying land. The wilderness in John’s vision in 17:3 is an evil place. The woman John saw sat on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns. The woman was sitting on the sea beast from 13:1, that had ten horns and seven heads with blasphemous names. The beast symbolized the Roman Empire.

**17:4** The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet (colors of royalty and luxury). She was adorned in gold, precious stones and pearls (symbolizing great wealth). The gold cup symbolized wealth and luxury, but in the cup was abominations and unclean things of her immorality (literally “fornication” - Berry). The harlot gave the seductive appearance of pleasure, but in her cup were abominations and immorality that would eventually lead to destruction. She will be desolate, naked and burned up with fire (17:16).

**17:5** Upon the forehead of the harlot was written a name about which John wondered (17:7). There apparently was a mystery about the name that John did not understand. The name identified the harlot as Babylon the great (symbolizing the Roman Empire), the mother of harlots and of abominations of the earth. The Roman Empire generated other harlots symbolizing idolatry, sexual promiscuity and emperor worship that permeated the empire. All were foreign to the worship of the one true God.

**17:6** The harlot was drunk with the blood of the saints, which would include martyred Christians who were persecuted through execution and by being forced into the arena to be killed by gladiators and wild animals for the entertainment of blood thirsty crowds. The witnesses of Jesus were those Christians who maintained their faith in Christ and refused to recant. John looked at the true identity of the harlot (a bloodthirsty murderer) with wonder, amazed at what he saw.

**17:7** The angel said he would explain the mystery of the woman and the beast that carries her. The symbolism is intertwined. The woman is Babylon (symbolizing the Roman Empire – 17:5, 18). The sea beast also represents the Roman Empire (13:1). Apparently, the harlot and the beast were inseparable and represented a culmination of the evils of the Roman Empire (lust for power, sexual immorality, murder, idolatry, emperor worship, etc.).

**17:8** Biblical scholars are generally perplexed and offer a variety of interpretations of the next few verses. The most logical interpretation is that the passage begins a more detailed explanation of what John saw in 13:3. When Nero died in 68 AD Christians got a temporary reprieve from persecution as the empire was in chaos. Persecution resumed in 91 AD when Domitian became emperor and demanded that all subjects of the empire worship him. The beast in 17:8 appears to symbolize the emperors who represent the Roman Empire. The abyss was described in 9:1-3 as a bottomless pit out of which came smoke that darkened the sun and the air, and locusts and scorpions. The key to the abyss was given to Satan (9:1). Clearly, evil came out of the abyss. Evil emperors came up out of the abyss. At the time of John’s writing, the “beast that you saw and is not” could refer to Nero who died in 68 AD. The beast that is “about to come up out of the abyss and go to destruction” could refer to Domitian who began his reign as Emperor in 91 AD. Though reigning as an evil Emperor, his end would be destruction. “Those who dwell on the earth” refers to the masses of people who were not Christians who populated the empire. They will marvel at the regenerative nature of the new emperor who assumes power, not understanding that he is doomed to fail. Those whose name has been written in the book of life (i.e., Christians) will understand that, no matter how powerful the emperor appears to be, his eventual fate is destruction.

**17:9** “Here is the mind which has wisdom” means that the wise person will use his understanding of knowledge (revealed in the word of God) to understand the meaning of the symbolic language in this passage. The beast was said to have seven heads (17:3). The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits. Rome has been described for centuries as being built on seven hills, so readers of John’s description would immediately identify it with Rome. In John’s vision the mountains represent seven kings. Many Biblical scholars have tried to identify individual emperors to whom this passage refers. A problem is that the lists generated by various scholars include different emperors. If one of them is correct, then all the rest of the scholars are wrong. There appears to be no way to determine with assurance which list is correct.

**17:10** Seven is a number that represents completeness; so, the seven kings probably represent all the Roman Emperors instead of referring to seven individual ones. The five kings who have fallen represent Roman Emperors of the past who have died. The one who “is” represents the current Emperor of the time (apparently Domitian). The one who is yet to come represents all the emperors of the future, but they will only “remain for a little while.” Their time will come, but they will suffer the same fate as their predecessors. Their reign will be for a limited time, and they will fall.

**17:11** This verse appears to refer to all governments that oppose God, including those in the future from the time John was writing. “The beast which was and is not” symbolizes the fallen Roman Empire and all the Roman Emperors. Since seven is a complete number, the eighth beast is not one of the Roman Emperors; but is a future ruler just like them (“one of the seven”). He symbolically becomes the eighth king in that he is the next kingdom after the Roman Empire but continues to oppose the forces and people of God. He is symbolically the same beast (represented by the Roman Empire) who takes a new form in the image of the next world power to oppose Christians. “He goes to destruction” indicates that the fate of all future kingdoms that oppose God’s plan and God’s people will fail just as Rome fell.

**17:12** The ten horns are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom (i.e., have not yet come into power). The ten future kings will be evil because they receive authority as kings with the beast who received his authority from the devil (13:4). They will be different from the Roman emperors, but they will be similar in that they will continue to oppose Christ and His followers. The number ten in this verse is probably symbolic and represents all the kings and kingdoms that will come into power during and after the fall of the Roman Empire. They probably include future kings who will attack the Roman Empire (17:16) as it declines. The kings will receive authority to rule for one hour, indicating that their time to rule will be limited. The beast appears to symbolize all world powers (past, present and future) that have opposed and will oppose Christ (17:10) and it takes different forms over time.

**17:13** The kings have one purpose and that is to oppose Christ and His people (wage war against the Lamb - 17:14). They give their power and authority to the beast (ultimately the devil - 13:4).

**17:14** The evil kings will wage war against the Lamb (Christ), but the Lamb will overcome them. The kings had been summoned to battle against the Lamb by the demons that came out of the mouth of the dragon (Satan) and the beast (Rome in particular, but also all future governments that would oppose Christ - 16:13-14). The Lamb prevailed and will always prevail because he is the Lord of lords and King of kings (19:16). Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18). As the Lamb prevails in overcoming the forces of evil, so do “those who are with Him” (i.e., Christians) who are the called, the chosen, the faithful. Christians overcame the devil because of the blood of the Lamb, because of the word of their testimony and because they did not love their life even to death (12:11).

**17:15** The waters upon which the harlot sits symbolize the varied peoples, multitudes, nations and tongues that were part of the Roman Empire. The different nationalities, languages and customs did not form a cohesive group and made the empire vulnerable to splintering of groups, diminished loyalty to the empire and potential infighting. This is a fulfillment of Daniel’s (2:42-43) prophecy that the toes of the statue of the Roman Empire would be iron mixed with clay and they would not combine with one another.

**17:16** The ten horns are future rulers, some of whom had not yet come into power (17:12). They will oppose Christ (17:14) and will turn against the harlot (the Roman Empire). The beast symbolizes all world powers that get their authority from the devil (13:4). The harlot symbolizes the Roman Empire at the time of writing, but also represents all future kingdoms associated with the evil beast. The harlot was said to be sitting on a scarlet beast (17:3). The harlot and the beast were inseparable, but the harlot would eventually be replaced by another harlot in the form of a future empire or political state. So, the evil beast would continue to exist in the form of one evil world power after another, but it would destroy the present harlot (Rome). The harlot would eventually be replaced by another harlot intertwined with the new version of the evil beast. Loyalty to Rome broke down as ethnic groups turned against the Empire. They had only been loyal to Rome for economic and/or political reasons. They finally destroyed the empire (made her desolate and naked and burned her up with fire). The Roman Empire was the specific case during John’s time, but the pattern of the devil using the beast (political kingdoms, nations and empires) to fight the Lamb (Jesus) would be repeated throughout the future. The loyalty of the evil kings was to the beast, not to the woman sitting atop the beast. They also waged war against the Lamb (17:14).

**17:17** “God put it into their hearts to execute His purpose” is similar to what is said in Exodus 9:12: “And the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he did not listen to them” when God told Moses to tell Pharaoh to “let My people go” (Exodus 9:1). God knew that Pharaoh was a cruel, stubborn, evil man who had it in his heart to persecute Israel. God’s demand that Pharaoh release Israel motivated Pharaoh to harden his own heart against it. In Revelation 17:17 God knew that the kings already had it in their hearts to do evil and to oppose Christ because of their common purpose with the beast (17:12, 16). Recognizing their desire to do evil already, God used them to execute His purpose which, in this case, was the destruction of the Roman Empire. So, God and the evil kings had the common purpose of destroying the Empire. Throughout history, God has used wicked nations to punish other nations. For example, because Judah had not obeyed the words of God, He used Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar to punish Judah by sending them into Babylonian captivity for seventy years (Jeremiah 25:8-11). God used Babylon, a wicked nation, “to execute His purpose” “until the words of God should be fulfilled,” just as He did in Revelation 17:17.

**17:18** The woman on the beast was the great city, which was Babylon (16:19). Babylon symbolized the Roman Empire which, at the time of John’s writing “reigned over the kings of the earth.” The woman was a harlot who was clothed in purple and scarlet and had a gold cup full of abominations and immorality (17:4). She enticed the kings and peoples of the earth to practice idolatry, sexual immorality and worship of man (the emperor) instead of the one true God. Beneath the facade of wealth, luxury and seduction, her true self was revealed as a woman who is drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus (17:6). She was a murderer and her eventual fate was destruction as the beast and parts of the empire (the ten kings) turned against the empire itself. The beast and the ten kings attacked the harlot (17:16). She was made desolate and naked; her flesh was eaten and she was burned up with fire (17:16). John’s readers would be assured that the evil Roman Empire would eventually be brought to justice and the deaths of the martyrs would be avenged.

REVELATION CHAPTER 18

**NOTE**: Chapter 17 provided some of the details of the fall of the Roman Empire. In Chapter 18 the Roman Empire is being destroyed and the reaction of those who profited from the Empire’s existence is described as they watch it fall.

**18:1** “After these things” does not indicate a specific time period. It is simply a continued sequence in the revelation. John saw another angel coming down from heaven. The angel had great authority and his glory illumined the earth, indicating the significance of his announcement. The earth being illumined indicates the impact the angel’s message will have on earth.

**18:2** The angel cried out with a mighty voice, indicating authority. The angel foretells the fall of Babylon the great with words that suggest that it has already happened. When God says that something is going to happen, it is sure to happen and it is as good as if it were already done. The angel describes the depths to which the once glorious city would fall. Instead of a luxurious city, it will become a dwelling place for demons, unclean spirits, and every unclean and hateful bird. It will become a nasty place.

**18:3** Three groups are mentioned: nations, kings and merchants. “Nations” symbolizes all the nations in the empire that willfully participated in her seductive evils of idolatry, sensual immorality and emperor worship. The nations drank the wine of the passion of her immorality (literally “drank the wine of the fury of her fornication” – Berry). The wine is described in two ways: (1) The wine of spiritual and physical fornication enticed the nations in the empire to participate fully in the evils of the empire. (2) The wine that was originally so enticing became the wine of the fury and wrath of God. Those who get “drunk” on sin eventually pay a painful price. “The kings of the earth” symbolize the rulers of the evil nations who committed spiritual fornication by willingly interacting with the Roman Empire for selfish political and economic gain. The “merchants of the earth” refers to all the merchants who got rich by trading within the empire “by the wealth of her sensuality” (literally “through the power of her luxury” – Berry).

**18:4** An unidentified, but holy, voice from heaven encourages Christians to “come out of” Babylon that “you may not participate” in her sins (literally “not have fellowship in her sins” – Berry). It is not indicating that the Christians should leave Rome; rather, that Christians should not participate in the evils that characterized the empire. In Ephesians 5:11, Paul said Christians should not participate in (have no fellowship with” – Berry) the unfruitful deeds of darkness. By refusing to participate in the sins of the empire, Christians would be spared the wrath to come upon the empire through the plagues.

**18:5** The sins of Babylon (symbolizing the Roman Empire) were so many that they symbolically piled up to heaven. God was aware of their sins and has remembered them all.

**18:6** The voice from heaven called for harsh judgement against Rome. She would receive double punishment because of the frequency and severity of her sins. There is no indication in the Bible that some evil people will receive punishment and others will receive double punishment. The concept of double punishment in this verse is symbolic of the fact that Rome will receive severe and deserved punishment commensurate with the severity of her sins. Babylon (Rome) mixed a cup of evil to share with the nations. She will symbolically be forced to drink twice as much from the cup of God’s wrath.

**18:7** In her arrogance, Rome glorified herself and lived sensuously (literally “luxuriously” – Berry). She bragged that (1) she sits as a queen (powerfully and luxuriously), (2) is not a widow (lonely and sorrowful over the loss of a husband) and (3) will never see mourning. John’s description appears to be based on what God said through Isaiah concerning ancient Babylon. Ancient Babylon bragged that she would be a queen forever, would not be a widow and would not suffer the loss of children, but Isaiah (47:7-9) prophesied of ancient Babylon that “in one day, the loss of children and widowhood shall come on you in full measure in spite of your many sorceries.” Just as Isaiah said that loss of children and widowhood would come on Babylon in one day, so arrogant Rome was to be given torment and mourning to the same degree that she glorified herself.

**18:8** “For this reason” refers to Rome’s pride and sensuous living (18:7). Because of her boasting, plagues will come and Rome will suffer pestilence (literally “death - Berry), mourning and famine. The once luxurious empire will see death, the mourning that accompanies death and loss of glory and famine that comes from not having a way to produce or acquire food. The empire that once imported luxurious gourmet foods will now suffer from extreme hunger. She will also be burned up with fire, perhaps by the kings mentioned in 17:16. No matter how strong the Roman Empire was, God is stronger and His judgement will prevail. “In one day” is symbolic, indicating that the plagues will come upon the empire suddenly, not literally in one day. Historically, a plague began in the empire in 250 A.D. and killed millions. In predicting the fall of literal Babylon, Jeremiah (50:31) quotes God telling Babylon,“ Behold, I am against you, oh arrogant one,...for your day has come, the time when I shall punish you.”

**18:9** The kings of the earth (rulers) who fully participated in the evils of the empire and profited from their interactions with her will weep and lament when they see the smoke of her burning, realizing that their opportunities to profit are lost.

**18:10** The kings watch the empire burn from a distance for fear that they would get caught up in the destruction. Their “woe, woe” appears to be insincere grief for “the great city,” “the strong city.” Nothing indicates that they offer any help. Their interaction with the empire was purely for selfish reasons. “In one hour your judgement has come” is not to be understood literally, but indicates the kings’ amazement that the once powerful and supposedly indestructible empire could fall so fast.

**18:11** “The merchants of the earth” refers to businesspeople who made large sums of money in dealings within the empire. They weep and mourn, not because the empire has fallen, but because their source of wealth through people purchasing their cargoes (products) is gone.

**18:12-13** The angel from heaven lists many of the cargoes for which the merchants no longer have any buyers. They are mainly luxurious items (e.g., gold, silver, fine linen, silk and ivory) and items that probably had to be imported from distant lands (e.g., cinnamon, spice, incense, perfume, horses and slaves). The Roman Empire frequently used people from captured lands as slaves and traded them as a commodity throughout the empire. Some were used as gladiators in the arena. Possibly, the terms “slaves” and “human lives” refer to the same men. The Greek word (SOMA) translated “slave” is literally translated “body” (Vine). The Greek word (PSUCHE) translated “human lives” is literally translated “souls” (Vine). So, the end of 18:13 could be translated “the bodies and souls of men.”

**18:14** Rome would no longer have access to the luxurious fruits that had to be imported from distant lands. The fruits were once easily accessible to the wealthy, but would now be unavailable.

**18:15** The merchants watched from a distance in fear that they would be included in the torment of the city. They would weep and mourn, not for the city, but for their loss of income.

**18:16-17** The merchants would say, “woe, woe” and lament that the great city that was once so luxurious had so quickly been reduced to ruin. The shipmasters, sailors, passengers and all who made their living by the sea stood at a distance and watched the empire quickly collapse.

**18:18** The shipmasters and seamen marveled that the once great city could be devastated so quickly.

**18:19** Throwing dust on their heads was an ancient sign of mourning. They wept and mourned not for the fall of Rome, but for the fact that they had lost their source of income. They were purely selfish and they lamented that the fall had occurred so quickly.

**18:20** Saints (Christians), apostles & prophets in heaven were encouraged to rejoice, not because Rome had fallen, but because God pronounced judgement against the evildoers and avenged the death of those who had been martyred because they refused to renounce their faith in Jesus. God had now pronounced judgement for them (the martyred saints) against her (the Roman Empire). The question of “how long until our blood is avenged?” (6:9-10) is partially answered. It will be avenged, but the specific time is not mentioned. The group of martyrs in heaven probably includes saints (Christians) who maintained their testimony (6:9), most of the apostles who had died before John and Christians who had the gift of prophecy.

**18:21** A strong angel performed a symbolic act to represent the total destruction of the Roman Empire. The angel threw a giant millstone into the sea, indicating that Babylon (Rome) would be violently destroyed and would never regain power. Jeremiah (50-51) prophesied concerning the fall of historical Babylon. Jeremiah wrote about the calamity that would come upon Babylon in a single scroll and told Seraiah, the quartermaster, to read the scroll aloud when he came to Babylon. As soon as Seraiah finished reading the scroll, he was to tie a stone to the scroll and throw it into the Euphrates River, symbolizing the fact that ancient Babylon would sink down and not rise again (Jeremiah 51:60-64).

**18:22** The normal pleasant activities of a flourishing city would cease and be lost forever. The happy sounds of music usually heard on occasions of happiness would not be heard any longer. The craftsmen who make furnishings and build things for wealthy buyers would not be found any longer. The sound of a mill (needed to make bread from grain) would not be heard any longer. Happy occasions and daily business would permanently cease in the once thriving city.

**18:23** Wealthy people could afford to have candles and torches to light their homes. These lights, indicating life in the house, would no longer shine because the people and the houses would be destroyed. Weddings are occasions of happiness, but the happy voices of the bridegroom and bride would no longer be heard. The strong angel gives the reason why the sounds and activities of flourishing daily life would cease in Babylon (the Roman Empire). The merchants of the empire were described as “the great men of the earth,” not because of great positive accomplishments, but because they became great as they acquired wealth, power and influence to seduce nations by their sorcery (deception). “All the nations” (those influenced by the luxurious and sensual lifestyle of the empire) were deceived (enticed) to participate in idolatry, sensual immorality, greed and selfishness, all of which were opposed to the character of a Christian.

**18:24** Added to the worldly lifestyle of the empire was the dedication to persecuting Christians. In her (the Roman Empire) was found the blood of prophets, saints and all who have been slain on the earth. Possibly “all who have been slain on the earth” includes all of God’s faithful people who have been killed because of their obedience to Him since the beginning of time. The dragon (i.e., the devil) has been tempting, enticing and deceiving men since the garden of Eden. His agents (beasts in the form of political powers) and harlots (idolatry and false religions) have been operating throughout history. The Roman Empire was the “harlot of the day” who sat upon the beast during John’s time of writing. There were other “harlots” who sat upon that beast before John’s time (e.g., Tyre in Isaiah 23:17 and Nineveh in Nahum 3:4) and there have been other “harlots” who sit upon that beast since John’s time.

REVELATION CHAPTER 19

**19:1** Possibly the great multitude was the multitude mentioned in 7:9 who wore white robes and cried out, “Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.” The word “hallelujah” occurs only four times in the New Testament (19:1, 3, 4, 6). It is a transliteration of the Hebrew phrase that means “Praise ye Jah” (Vine). “Jah” is a shortened form of the Hebrew word for “Jehovah.” Salvation is for those who remain faithful. Glory is the honor and praise that belongs to God. “Power” refers to the power that God has to overcome evil and to avenge the death of His bondservants.

**19:2** God judging the great harlot was true and righteous. The harlot (the Roman Empire) was corrupting the earth with her immorality (literally “fornication” – Berry) and was persecuting Christians. In bringing down the harlot, God avenged the blood of the Christian martyrs that the harlot had killed. He also responded to the plea from those who had been slain because of the word of God who cried out, “How long… will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood?” (6:9-10).

**19:3** The multitude praised Jehovah again as they saw the smoke of the Roman Empire rise up forever and ever, indicating that it was destroyed and would never rise again.

**19:4** The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures around the throne (4:4-6) worshipped Him, praised Him and said, “Amen” (“let it be so” – Vine).

**19:5** An unidentified voice came from the throne (authoritative) and instructed all of God’s bondservants, small and great, to give praise to our God. Since praise was to be given to “our God,” the voice belonged to someone other than God or Christ. It probably was the voice of an angel. The bondservants could include Christians who are still on the earth. If so, then praise was given to God by saints in heaven, the twenty-four elders, the four creatures and the saints still on earth (Haley, p. 376). In Christ, the small and great are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28).

**19:6** John heard the voice of a great multitude that sounded powerful like rushing water and peals of thunder. It was not really water and thunder, but the description describes the power of the voice. The multitude praises God again because He is Almighty. He is the Creator and He reigns as the Conqueror of all that is evil in the world.

**19:7** The unidentified voice from the throne said to give glory to Him. “Him” refers to God, the subject of 19:6. “The marriage of the Lamb has come” is best understood as “the time for the marriage to occur has come.” The literal Greek reads “for is come the marriage of the Lamb” (Berry). The marriage does not occur until 19:9. The Lamb’s bride has made herself ready. The Lamb is Jesus and the bride is the church (Ephesians 5:23-25).

**19:8** The bride (the church composed of Christians) clothed herself in fine linen, bright and clean. The voice explains that the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints (Christians). Jesus initially sanctified the church (believers) when they were baptized (“the washing of water with the word” – Ephesians 5:26). Christians, were initially sanctified by the blood of Christ, then continued to follow His word by demonstrating righteous acts. When Christians follow the cleansing word of Jesus, He presents to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle, holy and blameless (Ephesians 5:27). This is what is meant by “it was given to her to clothe herself” (19:8). By giving His word (the gospel), Jesus made it possible for the bride to make herself ready with righteous acts by following His word. Jesus made it possible, but the bride (Christians) had to willingly accept His offer.

**19:9** The marriage supper of the Lamb was the wedding itself. Those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb are those who accept the invitation (i.e., Christians). According to the parable of the wedding feast in Matthew 22, all are invited to the wedding feast (Matthew 22:4, 10), but some refuse the invitation (Matthew 22:3. 5). Those blessed in 19:9 are those who are invited to the marriage supper and accept the invitation (i.e., Christians). In the symbolism, the bride and those who attend the marriage supper of the Lamb are the same people, Christians (i.e., the church). “These are the true words of God” authenticates the genuineness and permanence of what has been spoken.

**19:10** It seems strange that John attempted to worship the speaker since much of Revelation condemns the evil of worshipping idols or beings other than God. Possibly John mistook the speaker for Jesus or perhaps he thought the speaker was an angel from God’s throne and was overwhelmed by what he had just been told. The speaker was certainly not Jesus because the speaker says to worship God and speaks of the testimony of Jesus. The speaker tells John not to worship him because the speaker is a fellow servant of John and John’s brethren.

The speaker was probably an angel, but possibly could have been one of the martyred saints under the altar who were described as fellow servants of those who were to be killed (6:9-11) (Lenski, cited by Haley, p. 380). No matter who the speaker was, he made it clear that God, not angels nor men, should be worshipped. Differing opinions are offered as to the statement that “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” “Those who hold the testimony of Jesus” could refer to the apostles who, by inspiration through the Holy Spirit, spoke the words of Jesus on earth after He ascended into heaven.

**19:11** In previous visions John saw a door standing open and a voice invited him to “come up here” (4:1). The temple of God in heaven was opened and John saw the ark of the covenant (11:19). The temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened and the seven angels with the seven plagues came out of the temple (15:5-6). Now heaven was opened and John saw a white horse ridden by One who is Faithful and True. The rider is Jesus. He always spoke truth and He was faithful to fulfill all of His promises. He judges and wages war in righteousness. He wages war against the forces of evil that oppose Him on earth. It does not refer to the second coming because that will not be a war; it will be judgement of the faithful and of those who have rejected Jesus (Haley, p. 382).

**19:12** Having eyes like a flame of fire confirms that the rider is Jesus (2:18) who can look into the hearts of men. Diadems (from the Greek DIADEMA) indicate royalty and power. Many diadems indicate great royalty and power. Only Jesus knows the name that is written on Him. The text indicates that only He knows the name; so, it is futile to speculate what the name is.

**19:13** Jesus is clothed in a white robe, indicating purity and holiness. His robe is dipped in blood. Dipped is translated from the Greek BAPTO (to immerse – Vine). Scholars are divided concerning the source of the blood. The blood could refer to the blood shed by Jesus on the cross or it could refer to the blood of His enemies as He conquered them. In Isaiah 63:1-6 God says that He has trampled His enemies in the wine press and His apparel is red (63:2). Their life blood is sprinkled on His garments and stained all of His raiment (63:3) and He poured out their life blood on the earth. Possibly the blood on Jesus’ robe is the blood that came from His rendering judgement on His enemies. His name is called the Word of God. In John 1:1-2 John says that Jesus is the Word who was with God in the beginning, indicating His eternal nature. Jesus is divine, eternal, has power over all of creation and represents the essence of all things good. His word will prevail.

**19:14** The army following Jesus rode white horses and wore white and clean linen (symbols of purity and holiness). The army was said to be in heaven, suggesting that they were deceased Christians. Possibly the army was comprised of deceased saints who had been described earlier in Revelation as wearing white robes: those who overcome (3:5), souls under the altar who had been slain (6:9-11), the ones who have come out of the tribulation (7:14) and the bride who was prepared for the marriage to the Lamb (19:8). The whiteness of the horses symbolizes purity.

**19:15** From Jesus’ mouth came a sharp sword (Greek RHOMPHAIA – a weapon of large size, whether sword or spear is not certain – Vine). The sword in this verse is a weapon of vengeance and destruction. Jesus smites the nations, rules them with a rod of iron and treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God the Almighty. The symbolic war probably refers to the war that was said to be coming in 16:13-16 between the forces of good and evil. The actual war is not described, but the result is proclaimed in 19:20-21. It fulfills Old Testament prophecies. Jesus was to be installed upon Mount Zion, God’s holy mountain where He would shatter with a rod of iron those rulers who took counsel against God and His Anointed (Psalm 2:2-9). Isaiah (11:4) prophesied that Jesus would strike the earth with the rod of His mouth and with the breath of His mouth would slay the wicked. The wine press of God’s wrath as an instrument of justice is described in 14:19-20.

**19:16** On His robe and His thigh was written His name: King of kings and Lord of lords. Jesus’ sovereignty is all powerful and no earthly ruler can compete with Him nor overcome His kingdom.

**19:17** An angel stood in the sun, where he cried with a loud voice so he could be heard by all and invited all birds that feed on dead animals to come feast on the carcasses of evil men. The angel assumed the outcome of the symbolic battle and knew that Jesus and His army would be victorious. The carcasses of the conquered evil men would be a great supper for the vultures and other carrion-eating birds.

**19:18** The great supper for the birds would include the carcasses of kings, commanders, horses and riders, and all men (including free and slave, small and great). The evil ones who oppose Christ come from all political and socioeconomic levels from slave to king.

**19:19** John saw the beast, the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Jesus and His army at the battle to occur at Har-Mageddon (16:16). The beast was the sea beast (the Roman Empire) described in 13:1-8 that was given 42 months to make war with the saints and blasphemed against God. All those who dwelt on the earth (except saints) worshipped him **(13:**8). The sea beast, along with the dragon (Satan), had called the kings of the earth together to make war against God, the Almighty (16:13-14). The armies of the kings of the earth included all the people who followed the rulers by practicing idolatry and emperor worship throughout the Roman Empire.

**19:20** The false prophet is the same as the beast that came up out of the earth (13:11-14) who made those who dwell on the earth worship the sea beast and performed fake signs to deceive those who dwell on the earth. The earth beast caused those who did not worship the image of the beast to be killed (i.e., Christians - 13:15) and he caused all men to be given the mark of the beast (13:16-18). The same activities were said to be performed by the false prophet in 16:13-14. The false prophet performed his deceptive signs in concert with the dragon (Satan 16:13). The false prophet symbolized the proponents of pagan idolatry and emperor worship.

The beast (the Roman Empire) and the false prophet (proponents of pagan idolatry and emperor worship) who performed the fake signs in the Roman Empire and deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. The details of the symbolic battle are not described by John. He only reports the outcome. The Roman Empire and proponents of idolatry and emperor worship were cast into the lake of fire, obviously defeated.

**19:21** “The rest” refers to the kings and their followers who willingly practiced idolatry and emperor worship in their continued association with the evils of the Roman Empire. In so doing, they yielded to the power of the sea beast (the Roman Empire) and willingly allowed themselves to be deceived by the false prophet (the proponents of paganism and emperor worship). They willingly participated in the sexual immorality that accompanied idolatry and the persecution of Christians that was encouraged by the beast and the false prophet. The rest (i.e., the masses) were killed by Jesus, who sat upon His horse and used the large weapon (RHOMPHAIA) of destruction that came out of His mouth. The destruction was so great that the birds that eat carrion were filled with the flesh of those destroyed. The Roman Empire and its evil affiliates were destroyed, never to rise again.

**NOTE**: To this point in the narrative, John has described the outcome of the battle between the forces of Jesus and the forces of evil on the earth. The sea beast (the Roman Empire) and the false prophet (the proponents of idolatry and emperor worship) symbolically have been thrown into the lake of fire. The masses who participated in the evils of the empire have been killed. The fate of the dragon (Satan) remains to be addressed.

REVELATION CHAPTER 20

**20:1** An angel came down from heaven with a key to the abyss and a chain. In an earlier vision (9:1-3) the key to the abyss had been given to a fallen star, apparently Satan (9:11), who had the power to open it and allow smoke, locusts and scorpions to come out of it. The key symbolizes power which Satan has now lost. The angel will use the chain to bind Satan.

**20:2** Satan is identified as a dragon (powerful), the serpent of old (sly and deceitful as in the garden of Eden) and the devil (the Christian’s adversary seeking whom he may devour – I Peter 5:8). The angel used the chain to bind Satan for a thousand years. The thousand years is a symbolic number, as are all the other numbers in Revelation. The number ten is a complete number. One thousand is a multiple of ten and indicates a complete period of time.

**20:3** The angel threw Satan into the abyss and sealed it so he could not deceive the nations any longer until the thousand years were completed. Satan had deceived the nations through the false teaching of pagan idolatry (i.e., through the false prophet) by which men were deceived into worshipping the beast (the Roman Empire personified by emperor worship). The period when Satan deceived the nations was symbolically 3½ years during which Christians were persecuted by the Roman Empire. During the 3½ years the following was said to happen: the holy city was trodden underfoot (11:2), two witnesses were to prophesy while persecuted (11:3), the woman (the church) clothed with the sun fled into the wilderness where she was to be protected and nourished (12:6), and the sea beast (Roman Empire) was given authority to speak arrogant words and blaspheme (13:5). In 12:12-13 the devil was described as having great wrath, knowing that he had only a short time. The number seven is a symbol of completeness. The number 3½ is half of seven and is a symbol of incompleteness. In Revelation, the number 3½ indicates a period of oppression and persecution of Christians that was to end; it would not be permanent. When the angel sealed the devil in the abyss, the 3½ years ended, as did the devil’s short time in which he was allowed the power to persecute Christians and deceive the nations. When the 3½ years ended, it also signaled the end of the Roman Empire’s dominance as a world power and its persecution of Christians. Some scholars believe that the thousand years began when Constantine became emperor of the Roman Empire from 306 AD to 337 AD (Haley, p. 392). Constantine claimed to become a Christian in 312 AD and was influential in the proclamation of the Edict of Milan (313 AD) which declared tolerance for Christianity in the Roman Empire (Wikipedia, 2 April 2023). At that time, the persecution of Christians ended and the devil’s power over men was restricted. We are currently in the thousand–year period. When the thousand-year period is completed, the devil will be loosed for a short time. What the devil will be allowed to do is not specified.

**20:4** The scene changes from the devil being sealed in the abyss to a triumphant throne scene in heaven. John saw thrones upon which apparently sat two groups of souls (not people). The first group was souls of those who had been beheaded (i.e., martyred) because they refused to recant their faith in Christ and worship the beast (the emperor). The second group appears to be the souls of those who refused to worship the beast (12:11) and refused the mark of the beast on their forehead or hand (13:16-17) who had died, but not as martyrs. Both groups of souls sat on thrones and judgement was given to them. The souls shared in the avenging judgement that God imposed on the devil who was sealed in the abyss – 20:3), and the sea beast (the Roman Empire) and the false prophet (synonymous with the earth beast, i.e., proponents of pagan idolatry and emperor worship) who were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone (19:20). These souls “came to life.” “Coming to life” does not refer to a resurrection of the physical dead after Judgement Day. The physical bodies of these souls had already died (the first death, which was physical death) and the souls were already in heaven. “Coming to life” refers to the fact that the souls were now reigning in victory with Christ. They are reigning now because we are in the thousand years.

**20:5** “This is the first resurrection” does not refer to a bodily resurrection. It refers to a symbolic resurrection of victory in the same sense as the symbolism used by Isaiah and Ezekiel. Isaiah (26:1, 17-19) prophesied concerning the victory of Judah over her enemies. Isaiah described Judah as dead (26:19), but “their corpses will rise” (a symbolic resurrection indicating victory for the people of Judah). Ezekiel (37:11-14) prophesied concerning the restoration of the scattered nation of Israel to their land of Palestine (Keil, p. 127). Ezekiel prophesied that God would “open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, My people” (a symbolic resurrection). The resurrection symbolized their return to the land of Israel (37:12). Ezekiel referred to the people as “coming to life” when God returned them to their own land (37:14).

The rest of the dead (20:5) did not “come to life” until the thousand years were completed. Those on the thrones in 20:4 were those who had remained faithful to Christ, including those who had been martyred for the cause of Christ and those who had remained faithful until they died, but had not died as martyrs. “The rest of the dead” refers to the souls of the evil ones who did not submit to Christ. The rest of the dead did not come to life in the vision until the thousand years were completed. They were the souls of those who will come to life to wage war against God and Christ when Satan is released from his prison after the thousand years (20:7-8). The verse does not refer to the final resurrection of the dead on Judgement Day.

**20:6** Those who continued faithful to Christ until their death (i.e., now part of the first resurrection) are described as “blessed and holy.” They are blessed in that they are in heaven, victorious over the evils of the world, and are reigning with Christ. They are holy (from the Greek HAGIOS: “separated from sin and consecrated to God, sacred” - Vine). Over those the second death has no power. The first death is physical death when the soul is separated from the physical body. The second death is the lake of fire (20:14) that burns with fire and brimstone (21:8) into which will be thrown unbelieving people, immoral people, sorcerers, idolaters and liars. The second death will occur as a result of the final judgement. Those faithful to Christ will escape the second death. John said that the faithful will be priests of God and of Christ. He used the same description of faithful Christians in 1:6. Priests offer sacrifices to God and Christ. Peter described Christians as a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (I Peter 2:5). Peter also described Christians as a royal priesthood and a holy nation (I Peter 2:9). Faithful Christians who have died physically are reigning with Christ now and will continue to reign for a thousand years (not literally a thousand years, but a full period of time).

**20:7** When the thousand years are finished, Satan will be released from his prison (the abyss – 20:3). John stated that Satan would be released “for a short time” (20:3). Specifying an exact time when Satan will be released is impossible. Christians were victorious over the dragon (Satan) and were protected from him because of the blood of the Lamb, because of the word of their testimony and because they did not love their life even to death (12:9-11). “When such a spirit and loyal devotion to the principles and cause of Christ no longer distinguish God’s people, the restraining power is gone; Satan is loosed once more” (Hailey, p. 396).

**20:8** Upon his release from the abyss, Satan will gather together the nations that he has deceived from “the four corners of the earth.” This group includes Satan’s allies from all over the world, not just the Roman Empire, and the number of them is like the sand of the seashore (innumerable). He will gather them together for “the war.” The battle for which Satan draws forces in 20:8 appears to be a different battle from the one described in 16:13-16. That battle was against Babylon (the Roman Empire) and Babylon was defeated (“Fallen is Babylon the great” – 18:2). God judged the great harlot (the Roman Empire) who corrupted the earth and God avenged the blood of His bondservants (19:2). As a result of the battle described in 16:13-16, the sea beast (the Roman Empire) and the false prophet (pagan idolatry and emperor worship) were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone and the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat upon the horse (Jesus) (19:20-21).

Gog and Magog appear to be based on Ezekiel’s prophecy in Ezekiel 38 and 39. God told Ezekiel to prophesy about “Gog of the land of Magog” (38:2). Gog and troops from many nations were to invade Israel (38:6-9) and attempt to plunder the land (38:11-12). Gog’s attack on Israel was to continue even “in the last days” (38:14-16), which is the Messianic period (Hebrews 1:1-2). The prophets of Israel had prophesied about Gog’s attacks on Israel (38:17), but those prophecies were not recorded in scripture. Apparently, there was a person named Gog who led attacks against Israel; but, it appears that Ezekiel used Gog to symbolize all of the nations that would attack Israel throughout the years into the last days (i.e., the Messianic period). Gog would be utterly defeated to the degree that predatory animals would feast on the carcasses of the dead men and animals of war (39:1-6, 11-12, 20).

In John’s vision, Gog and Magog appear to symbolize all the allies of Satan who wage war against the church (i.e., spiritual Israel). Upon being released from the abyss, Satan makes one last attempt to destroy the camp of the saints (20:9). The battle is a spiritual battle waged against the church. Satan’s weapons could include moral decay, atheism, materialism, false religions and attacks on the family. He could only be successful if humans allowed themselves to be deceived by him.

**20:9** Gog and his forces surrounded the camp of the saints (the church composed of Christians) and the beloved city. The beloved city is the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, the church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:22-23). As Gog and his allies were defeated by God in Ezekiel’s prophecy, Gog and his allies are destroyed by fire that came down out of heaven and devoured them, symbolizing that God protects the church from its enemies. This symbolic protection would be comforting to the readers of Revelation.

**20:10** The devil who deceived his allies with his lies was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast (the Roman Empire) and the false prophet (pagan idolatry and emperor worship) had already been thrown (19:20). The devil, the beast, the false prophet and the enemies of God will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

**20:11** The scene shifts to the final judgement. John saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it. White symbolizes purity. The text does not say Who is on the throne – God or Christ. Matthew 25:31-33 says that Jesus will sit on His glorious throne, judging all the nations gathered before Him. Revelation 22:1 speaks of the throne of God and of the Lamb. Paul referred to the day when, according to the gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus (Romans 2:16). Apparently, John saw Jesus sitting on the throne. Earth and heaven fled away at the time of final judgement. Peter said that, on the day of the Lord, the heavens will pass away and the elements will be destroyed, and the earth and its works will be burned up (II Peter 3:10).

**20:12** John saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne. The judgement will include every human being who has lived from Adam until the end of time. “The books were opened” is a symbolic way to say that every person’s thoughts, deeds, and manner of life will be acknowledged. The book of life is the book in which the names of those who remained faithful (have overcome – 3:5) are recorded. Paul spoke of his fellow workers whose names are in the book of life (Philippians 4:3). The dead were judged from the things written in the books according to their deeds. Paul said that each will be recompensed for deeds he has done in the body, whether good or bad (2 Corinthians 5:10).

**20:13** The sea gave up the dead which were in it. Since the entire book is filled with symbolism, it is doubtful that John refers to the literal sea. The term probably symbolizes the all-encompassing nature of the judgement. No person will be left out, whether they were buried in the earth or died at sea. Death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them. When the spirit leaves the body, the body is dead (James 2:26). Hades is the realm of departed spirits of those who have died. When Jesus died, His soul went to Hades, but remained for only three days until He was resurrected from the dead (Acts 2:27, 31). At the resurrection, the righteous will be raised and will put on an imperishable body (I Corinthians 15: 51-54). The scriptures do not say what kind of body the wicked will have at Judgement Day, but “there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked” (Acts 24:15; John 5:28-29). Every person was judged according to his deeds.

**20:14** Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. When a person dies (the first death, which is physical death), his soul goes to Hades (the realm of departed spirits). At judgement day there will be no more physical death and no souls to occupy Hades. Both will symbolically be thrown into the lake of fire. Death had been imposed on man since the first sin in the garden. Paul said that the last enemy that will be abolished is death (I Corinthians 15:26). Physical death is the first death. The lake of fire is the second death. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death (2:11). At this point in the visions, the beast, the false prophet and Satan have been thrown into the lake of fire (20:10) along with death and Hades (20:14) and the harlot (17:5, 18).

**20:15** Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire. This group would include those who worship the beast (emperor worship and idolatry – 13:8), those who dwell on the earth (the masses who reject Christ – 17:8), and Satan’s allies who surrounded the camp and the beloved city to fight against the saints (20:9), the cowardly, the unbelieving, the abominable, murderers, immoral persons, sorcerers, idolaters and all liars (21:8). They will receive eternal torment.

REVELATION CHAPTER 21

**21:1** The scene changes to heaven after the final judgement. The first heaven and first earth passed away (fled away - 20:11) as Peter said they would (II Peter 3:10). The sea appears to be symbolic because, if the first earth has passed away, the sea would be a part of it and would be passed away as well. There is no longer any physical sea. The sea appears to symbolize the masses of humanity out of which kingdoms (i.e., beasts) arise (13:1). The present order of existence under which we now live will be replaced by a new spiritual order: a new heaven and a new earth.

**21:2** John saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, the bride adorned for her husband. All three descriptors represent the church. Christians were told that they had come to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, which is the church of the firstborn (Hebrews 12:22-23). Christians were told to seek the city which is to come (Hebrews 13:14). Abraham looked for the city whose architect and builder is God (Hebrews 11:10). So, the holy city included all the saved since Adam. He who overcomes would be part of the new Jerusalem which comes down out of heaven (3:12). The church being made ready as a bride adorned for her husband is that to which Paul referred in Ephesians 5:25-27. Christ would present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle, holy and blameless. That the holy city came down out of heaven indicates its divine origin.

**21:3** In the Old Testament, God told Moses to build a tabernacle (a sanctuary: a holy place, a structure set apart to God – Vine) where God could dwell (Exodus 25:8-9). Moses built the tabernacle as the Lord had commanded him (Exodus 40:16-17) and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle (Exodus 40:33-35). Only the high priest was allowed to enter the tabernacle (the Holy of Holies) once per year (Hebrews 9:3, 7). Jesus is our High Priest in the sanctuary, and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man (Hebrews 8:1-2). When Jesus offered Himself as a sacrifice for sin, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation (Hebrews 9:11-12). In heaven God shall dwell among saved men (i.e., His people). It is the ultimate relationship for the saved to have God dwell with them.

**21:4** In heaven, all the unpleasant things of our physical life will be eliminated (“passed away”): tears, death, mourning, crying and pain. All of these unpleasant things had been caused by sin, which will not exist in heaven. There will be no devil, no temptation and no sin.

**21:5** He who sits on the throne is not identified. It could be God or Christ because both sit on the throne (3:21). The old order (i.e., the physical existence of things) will be replaced by a new spiritual order. Whether spoken by God or by Christ, John receives divine assurance that what he is being told to write is faithful and true. It is sure to happen.

**21:6** It is difficult to determine who is speaking. God said that He is the first and the last (Isaiah 40:1; 41:4). Jesus says He is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end (22:13). The speaker is probably God, given what is said in 21:7. “It is done” appears to refer to the consummation of the great plan of salvation accomplished through Christ. The plan has been designed, implemented and completed with the salvation of the faithful in heaven. Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well that He could give her living water, the gift of God, eternal life (John 4:10, 14). John was told that those who had come out of the great tribulation would be guided by the Lamb to springs of the water of life (7:14-17). Those who have been faithful might have paid a price for their faith on earth, but in heaven their access to the water of life will be endless and without cost.

**21:7** The eternal reward was promised to “he who overcomes” in the letters to each of the seven churches (2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21). He that overcomes shall “inherit” (Greek word – KLERONOMEO = to receive as one’s own, to obtain – Vine) the blessings described in the preceding verses. Paul describes salvation as the Christian’s inheritance (Ephesians 1:13-14). Paul spoke to the Ephesian elders about the inheritance that awaits all those who are sanctified (Acts 20:32). “I will be his God and he will be My son” indicates the closeness of the relationship that the saved will have with God in heaven.

**21:8** Contrasting with the inheritance enjoyed by the faithful, God says that the fate of evil people will be the lake that burns with fire and brimstone (i.e., the second death). The list includes the cowardly, the unbelieving, “abominable” (from the Greek BEDELUKTOS: deceivers who profess to know God, but deny Him by their works – Vine), murderers, “immoral persons” (“fornicators” - Berry), “sorcerers” (from the Greek: PHARMAKOS: devoted to magical arts, especially one who uses drugs, potions and enchantments – Vine) idolaters and liars.

**21:9** Earlier one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of plagues had spoken to John saying, “Come here, I will show you the judgement of the great harlot who made those who dwell on the earth drunk with the wine of her immorality” (17:1-2). One of those same angels spoke to John saying, “Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb” (21:9). The harlot and her destruction is contrasted with the holy bride of the Lamb.

**21:10** Earlier John was carried away in the Spirit into a wilderness where he saw a drunken harlot full of abominations and immorality (17:3-4). The harlot represented Babylon (17:5), which symbolized the Roman Empire. In 21:10 John was carried away in the Spirit to a high mountain where he saw the bride of the Lamb, but it was the holy city, Jerusalem (the church), coming down out of heaven from God. Contrast the harlot (Babylon symbolizing Rome), drunken and immoral, in the wilderness with the holy bride of the Lamb (new Jerusalem) on a high mountain.

**21:11** “Brilliance” is from the Greek word PHOSTER (translated “radiance” by Berry and “luminary, light or light-giver” by Vine). PHOSTER is used only one other time in the New Testament: children of God are to be blameless in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom they are to appear as lights (PHOSTER) in the world (Philippians 2:15). The brilliance of the city was because of the glory of God. The costly stone and crystal clear jasper represent the brilliance and purity of the city.

**21:12-13** The high wall was not needed for protection, but it symbolized the security of the inhabitants of the city (i.e., the church). The wall had 4 sides, with 3 gates on each side (east, north, south and west). On each gate (monitored by an angel) was written the name of one of the 12 tribes of Israel. The number 12 symbolizes completeness and indicates all of the tribes of Israel.

**21:14** On the foundation were the names of the 12 apostles. Twelve is a number of completeness and symbolizes all of the faithful apostles. The name of Judas Iscariot would be missing and the names of Mathias and Paul would be included. Saying there were 12 names of apostles is symbolic. God’s household (i.e., the church) was built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ being the corner stone (Ephesians 2:20). The inclusion of the tribes of Israel and the apostles indicates that all the saved under the Old Testament and the New Testament are included in one heavenly body. Those who were far off (the Gentiles) were brought near by the blood of Christ (Ephesians 2:13-17). Gentiles and Jews were reconciled into one body through the cross (Ephesians 2:16). Both have access in one Spirit to the Father and are built into a dwelling of God (Eph. 2:18-22).

**21:15** Earlier John was given a rod like a staff to measure the temple, the altar and those who worship in it (11:1). In 21:15 the angel uses a golden rod to measure the city, its gates and its wall.

**21:16** The city was a square of equal length, width and height. Each dimension measured 1,500 miles. Berry’s Greek translation gives the measure as 12,000 furlongs. The actual Greek measure is the STADION (one-eighth of a Roman mile or 600 Greek feet – Vine). Twelve thousand furlongs would be 12 (a perfect religious number – Hailey, p. 414) times 1,000 (a multiple of 10, indicating superlative completeness). The 1,500 miles of each dimension is symbolic of the greatness of the spiritual city. None of the measurements or descriptors are intended to be taken literally.

**21:17** The original Greek measurement of the wall was 144 cubits (Berry). 144 is equal to 12 x 12 (the perfect religious number). A cubit was equal to 18-21 inches. The actual length of a cubit varied because it was defined as the distance from a person’s elbow to the tip of the middle finger. The length would vary depending on the length of the arm of the person being measured. The wall measured about 72 yards or 216-218 feet. It is unknown if the measure was of the height or the thickness of the wall. “Human measurements, which are also angelic measurements” probably indicates that the angel used measurements that were understood by men.

**21:18** Symbolic imagery of precious stones was used to help humans imagine the splendor of the holy city. The wall was built of jasper and the city was pure gold, like clear (“pure”) glass.

**21:19-20** The foundation stones of the city were adorned with 12 precious stones. The names of some of the stones are unknown today. Jasper is thought to be a diamond. Precious stones have been valued by men and women for centuries. Adorning the foundation of a city that is 1,500 miles in length, width and height with precious stones would generate an image of awe in the minds of humans. Such appears to be the purpose of describing the glory of the city in this manner.

**21:21** Each of the 12 gates was a single pearl. Pearls have been valued for centuries. A pearl as big as a city gate would demand the admiration of humans. The street of the city was pure gold, but transparent like glass. No gold of that quality is known today. Precious stones, diamonds, pearls and gold symbolize the splendor of the city. John wrote about “the street of the city.” There is no reason to assume that a city of that size had only one street. John could be referring to the main street, to streets in general or to the composition (i.e., gold) of the material used to make the streets. The city is symbolic, the gates are symbolic and the street is symbolic. There is no reason to attempt to force a literal street into a symbolic vision.

**21:22** John saw no “temple” (from the Greek NA0S: sanctuary – Vine) within the city where God would dwell. In the Old Testament, the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle (Exodus 40:33-35). Only the high priest was allowed to enter the tabernacle (the Holy of Holies) once per year (Hebrews 9:3, 7) and the people were represented to God through priests. In heaven, the Lord God and the Lamb are its temple. Their glory fills the city; so, there is no need for men to enter a temple to communicate with God through a priest. The entire city is a sanctuary and the saved have constant access to God. Christians are described as a royal priesthood (I Peter 2:9).

**21:23** There is no need for light created by the sun or the moon to shine upon the city. The sun and the moon are part of the old world order that will pass away at the second coming (Matthew 24:35; II Peter 3:10). The glory of God illumines the city and its lamp is the Lamb.

**21:24** Isaiah prophesied that God’s glory would appear upon men “and nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising” (Isaiah 60:2-3). God’s glory and power will ultimately prevail and nations and kings will yield their glory to His. Those who are part of God’s people (21:3) will have yielded their earthly power to His through obedience if they are to be part of the kingdom of heaven.

**21:25** There will be no night in the city because the glory of God and the lamp of the Lamb constantly illumine it. The gates will never be closed because there is no danger. The devil and the evil people have been thrown into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone (20:10, 15). Isaiah prophesied that the gates of glorified Zion would not be closed day or night to men or kings who wanted to enter (Isaiah 60:11). But the nation and kingdom that refuses to serve will perish and be utterly ruined (Isaiah 60:12). In heaven, the gates to the city shall never be closed; but, after the final judgement, all evil men will have been destroyed in the lake of fire and brimstone and will not be able to enter the holy city.

**21:26** The gates will remain open so the glory and honor of the nations (i.e., the redeemed from all nations) can freely enter the holy city.

**21:27** No one who practiced uncleanness (possibly spiritual uncleanness as defined in the Old Testament), abomination (from the Greek BDELUGMA: frequently associated with idolatry in the scriptures – Vine) or lying while on earth shall ever come into the holy city. Only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life (i.e., the saved of all time) shall enter (21:12-14).

REVELATION CHAPTER 22

**22:1** John saw a river of the water of life that came from the throne of God and the Lamb (both on the throne). Coming from the throne of God and the Lamb indicates the divine nature of the water. Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well about living water that would spring up into eternal life and those who drink it would never thirst again (John 4:10, 13-14). The water was clear as crystal, indicating its purity. In Eden a river flowed to water the garden (Genesis 2:10).

**22:2** “The river flowed in the middle of its street” is probably best understood as the river flowed in the middle of the arrangement of the streets. On either side of the river was the tree of life. In Eden the tree of life was in the middle of the garden (Genesis 2:9) and, if man ate from it, he would live forever in his sinful condition (3:22); so, the Lord removed man’s access to the tree of life by removing man from the garden of Eden (3:23). The translation “Bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month” is best understood to be “twelve crops of fruit, yielding a new crop each month.” Twelve is a religious complete number, so the tree yields fruit perpetually. The leaves of the tree were for the “healing of the nations,” probably indicating the spiritual healing provided by God through Jesus.

**22:3** There will no longer be a curse. In Eden God cursed the serpent (Genesis 3:14), the ground (3:17), Eve (through the pain of childbirth - 3:16) and Adam (through having to toil through thorns and thistles to till the ground - 3:17-19). Because of their sin, Adam and Eve would also die physically (3:17-19). Man will no longer have to deal with a curse from sin in heaven because there will be no sin. There will only be the throne of God and the Lamb and those who serve Him (God). The spiritual perfection of the garden of Eden before the first sin was committed will be recreated in heaven.

**22:4** God’s servants will see His face and His name will be on their foreheads. In I John 3:2, John writes that, when He appears, children of God will be like God, because we shall see Him just as He is. He who overcomes is promised to have “the name of My God” written upon him (3:12). According to 14:1, the 144,000 had the name of the Lamb and the Father written on their foreheads. Apparently, both names (indicating ownership) will be written of the foreheads of the saved. There is no reason to take the names literally, as the names symbolize ownership by the Father and the Lamb.

**22:5** All secondary sources of light (a lamp or the sun) will no longer be needed (21:23) because God will illumine the servants in the city. The servants’ victorious reign will be eternal (“forever and ever”).

**22:6** Apparently, the speaker is an angel. It is difficult to determine if it is the angel who God sent to communicate with John (1:1; 22:16) or if it is the angel who speaks to John beginning in 21:9. “These words are faithful and true” is a confirmation by God that the words John heard in the visions are true. God is referred to as the “God of the spirits of the prophets.” God has revealed His will to mankind for centuries through the prophets of the Old Testament. David spoke through the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:16). The Old Testament prophets prophesied of the suffering of Christ through the Spirit of Christ that was in them (I Peter 1:10-11). After many centuries of inspiring the Old Testament and New Testament prophets, John’s book is apparently God’s last revelation to man through inspired prophecy. Now we have the written record of those revelations. God sent His message by the angel through John to His bondservants concerning the things which must shortly take place. “Shortly” is translated from the Greek EN TACHEI (quickly, speedily, shortly, with speed – Vine). There are several New Testament verses that contain the Greek word EN TACHEI in which the word indicates quick action. An angel told Peter to get up “quickly” (Acts 12:7). Jesus told Paul to get out of Jerusalem “quickly” (Acts 22:18). Festus said that he was about to leave Jerusalem “shortly” (Acts 25:4). The best translation of the word in Revelation 1:1 and 22:6 is probably “with speed” (Vine). The use of this word supports the conclusion that most of what John is writing about through Chapter 19 (i.e., the fall of the Roman Empire and the ultimate victory of God, Christ and His servants) was to happen soon.

**22:7** It is difficult to determine if the speaker is God, Christ or the angel who is quoting God or Christ. Jesus is described as “our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ” in Titus 2:13. When the speaker says, “I am coming quickly,” the word translated “quickly” comes from a variation (TACHU) of the Greek word EN TACHEI. TACHU is translated “swift, quick, quickly” – Vine). The word TACHU was used when the women at the tomb were told to go “quickly” and tell His disciples that Jesus had risen from the dead (Matthew 28:7), when the women departed “quickly” from the tomb with fear and joy (28:8), when the father of the prodigal son said to “quickly” bring out the best robe and put it on him (Luke 15:22) and when Mary, the sister of Lazarus, rose “quickly” to meet Jesus (John 11:29). Use of this word further supports the conclusion that Jesus was coming in judgement quickly against the Roman Empire and its idolatrous collaborators “Blessed is he who heeds (keeps) the words of the prophecy of this book” refers to the spiritual blessings to be enjoyed by those who remain faithful.

**22:8-9** John affirms the validity of what he has seen, heard and written. Apparently overcome by the power of the message, he fell down to worship the angel who showed him these things, as he did in 19:10. The angel gave John the same response that he gave him the first time. The angel said that he was a fellow servant of John’s, of John’s brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of the book. The angel said that God is the one who is to be worshipped. The angel referred to the prophets as John’s brethren. In heaven, all of God’s faithful will be brethren, whether from the Old Testament era or the New Testament era. Paul wrote that there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him; for whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved (Romans 10:12-13). Paul’s quote in v. 13 is taken from Joel 2:32 where Joel said, “And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be delivered.” Paul applied “calling on the name of the Lord” to people who lived under the Old Testament as well as to those who live under the New Testament. So, in heaven, Old Testament prophets and Christians will be brothers.

**22:10** When the seven peals of thunder spoke, John was about to write what was said, but a voice from heaven told him to “seal up the things which the seven peals of thunder have spoken, and do not write them” (10:4). Apparently “sealing up the words” meant that the message was not to be revealed. The things that were spoken by the seven peals of thunder were not to be known by the first century Christians nor by us. In 22:10 John is told not to seal up the words of the prophecy of the book. That means that what John has seen and heard should be made known to the first century Christians and has been preserved for us. The message was to be revealed to the Christians for “the time is near,” indicating that the events about which John wrote (i.e., the fall of the Roman Empire and the vindication of Christians) were to happen soon. John had been instructed to send what he had written to the seven churches (1:11). The content of the book would encourage Christians to remain faithful and would assure them of being avenged of the persecution against them and of their ultimate spiritual victory.

**22:11** The angel continued to speak. He divided people into two groups: (1) those who do wrong and are filthy (spiritually) and (2) those who are righteous and holy. The word “still” is translated from the Greek word ETI (indicates the permanent character, condition and destiny of the unrighteous and the filthy, and of the righteous and the holy – Vine). The angel spoke of two deeply rooted character traits: those who are spiritually filthy and choose to do wrong contrasted with those who are holy and choose to practice righteousness. The angel was not condoning those who continue in their chosen path. He was describing the willful choice of some to continue to do wrong and the willful choice of others to continue to practice righteousness. Each person makes his own choice of the group into which he falls.

**22:12** In the context of previous verses (“things which must shortly take place” – 22:6; “I am coming quickly” – 22:7; and “the time is near” – 22:10), the immediate application of this verse is that the Lord would soon be coming in judgment against the Roman Empire and its evil idolatrous collaborators. “Reward” comes from the Greek word MISTHOS (primarily refers to wages paid to one who has been hired – Vine). So, a reward is an earned consequence that can be pleasant or unpleasant. Each man will receive his wages according to what he has done. In other words, each man will reap the consequences of his deeds, a pleasant consequence for those who practice righteousness and an unpleasant consequence for those who do wrong. An obvious secondary application is that each person will give an account for his deeds at judgement (II Corinthians 5:10).

**22:13** This verse contains three descriptors of an eternal being. “The Alpha and the Omega” is a descriptor of God (1:8 and 21:6). “The first and the last” is a descriptor of Christ (1:17 and 2:8). “The beginning and the end” is a descriptor of God (21:6). Given that the speaker in 22:16 is Jesus, the speaker in 22:13 also appears to be Jesus. If so, then Jesus claims the same eternal nature and divine authority as God, the Father. In his gospel, John tells us that Jesus was with God in the beginning; He was God and all things came into being through Him (John 1:1-3). Jesus also has all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18). The obvious conclusion is that Jesus is eternal.

**22:14** Those who have washed their robes refers specifically to those who came out of the great tribulation and made their robes white by washing them in the blood of the Lamb (7:14). They came out of the persecution as martyrs for Christ and they were washed in the blood of the Lamb when they were baptized for the forgiveness of sins (Ephesians 5:25-26). They will have access to the healing tree of life (22:2) and will be allowed to enter the holy city’s gates (21:10-12, 25). Also allowed to enter will be those who were not martyrs, but who overcame because of their testimony (12:11) and refused to worship the beast or his image (20:4).

**22:15** Jesus contrasts the eternal destiny of those who enter the holy city with the eternal destiny of those who refused the blood of the Lamb and who practiced evil: dogs, sorcerers, immoral persons (literally “fornicators” – Berry), murderers, idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying. “Dog” comes from the Greek word KUON. The word can be understood literally, as in Matthew 7:6, and symbolically as an insult to identify those who were morally impure (Vine). Jews referred to Gentiles as dogs. Greeks also used the term as an insult. Paul referred to Judaizing teachers as evil workers, men of the false circumcision and dogs (Philippians 3:2). They are described as being outside the city, symbolically placing them eternally in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone (21:8).

**22:16** Based on 1:1, God gave the revelation to Jesus, who sent an angel to testify “these things” to John, who wrote them down in a book and sent it to the churches (1:11). Jesus describes Himself as the root and the offspring of David. Isaiah prophesied that Jesus would come from the root of Jesse, who was the father of David (Isaiah 11:10; Romans 15:12). Jesus was a descendant of David (Matthew 1:1). So, Jesus is the offspring of David. Those Christians in Thyatira who overcame were promised to be given the morning star (2:28) and will share authority with Jesus (2:26). The meaning of the morning star is not certain, but it could refer to the fact that the morning star rises in the east, symbolizing the beginning of a new eternal day (Haley, p. 431).

**22:17** The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” The Spirit refers to the Spirit through Whom the prophets, the apostles and John spoke (He who has an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches – 2:7). The bride symbolizes the church (21:2, 9). The church being made ready as a bride adorned for her husband is that to which Paul referred in Ephesians 5:25-27. “The one who hears” refers to those who hear the gospel and obey it. Each of the seven churches were given the same admonition, “he who hath an ear let him hear.” The invitation to come take the water of life is from the Spirit (the Holy Spirit), the church (the bride) and from individual Christians (those who hear). The water of life (7:17 and 22:1) is offered freely (“without cost”) to all who wish to take it. The thirsty one must want the water of life and do what Is necessary to drink it (22:11). This is the living water that leads to eternal life about which Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4:13.

**22:18** Jesus warns that no one is to alter the words of the prophecy of this book. This verse applies specifically to the Book of Revelation, but similar comments apply to the revealed gospel message (Galatians 1:6-9). If someone adds to the book something that was not contained in the original revelation, God will add to him the plagues in the book (e.g., the plagues poured out of the bowls of wrath in 16:2-4, 8-10, 17-21). The plagues are symbolic of God’s wrath, but the misery associated with them is not.

**22:19** If anyone removes words from the book of Revelation, God will take away his part from the spiritually healing tree of life (22:2) and from the holy city into which only those who have washed their robes may enter (22:14). This is a serious admonition to those who would tamper with or pervert the word or purposely abuse it to teach false doctrine. False teachers will pay a heavy price (Galatians 1:6-8; 2 Peter 2:1).

**22:20** “He who testifies of these things” is Jesus. He “testifies” (affirms the validity) of what has been revealed to John. He responds to the call of the Spirit, the bride and faithful Christians who want Him to come (22:17) by saying, “Yes, I am coming quickly.” His response applies specifically to His coming in judgement against the Roman Empire and its idolatrous collaborators. Nevertheless, He has come in judgement at other times as well when evil nations and evil doers have suffered for their evil deeds. God used Assyria to punish Israel and Judah (Isaiah 10:6), Babylon to punish Judah for idolatry (Jeremiah 25:8-11) and Cyrus (King of Persia) to punish Babylon (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1; Jeremiah 51:1-2, 11, 29). John approves of and adds his personal request for Jesus to come quickly to avenge the death of the saints by saying, “Amen. Come Lord Jesus.”

**22:21** The final verse of Revelation was apparently written by John through inspiration. It appears to be a prayerful request that the Lord’s grace be with the Christians who were being persecuted and who were reading the letter. The literal translation from the Greek text is “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all” (Berry). John did not specify how he was asking the Lord to show His grace, but, apparently, he asked God to show grace (unmerited favor) to persecuted Christians in whatever way God deemed appropriate. Paul ended most of his epistles with a similar prayer that the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ would be with those to whom he wrote the letters (Galatians 6:18; Ephesians 6:24; Philippians 4:23; Colossians 4:18).

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Outline of Revelation

God gave the revelation to Jesus who sent it to John through His angel about things which must

“shortly take place” (1:1).

Blessed is he who hears the words of the prophecy for “the time is near” (1:3).

The message is to the 7 churches from God, the Holy Spirit and Christ (1:4-5).

John was a brother and fellow-partaker of tribulation (he was exiled to Patmos) (1:9).

In the spirit on the Lord’s day a voice told John to write in a book what he sees (1:10-11).

John saw 7 golden lampstands with a Son of man standing in the middle (1:12-13).

Jesus had white hair, eyes like fire, face like the sun; out of his mouth came a sword (1:14-16).

Jesus told John to write what he had seen, things which are, and what will take place (1:19).

The stars are the angels of the 7 churches and the lampstands are the 7 churches (1:20).

Letter to the church in Ephesus that had left its first love (2:1, 4).

He who overcomes will eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God (2:7).

Letter to the church in Smyrna which will suffer tribulation and poverty, but they are rich (2:9).

He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death (2:11).

Letter to the church in Pergamum who held fast His name, but tolerated the Nicolaitans (2:15).

He who overcomes will get hidden manna, a white stone and a new name (2:17).

Letter to the church in Thyatira that had perseverance but tolerated Jezebel’s idolatry (2:20).

Jesus gave Jezebel time to repent, but she refused, so He will punish her with great tribulation (2:22).

He who overcomes will be given authority over the nations and the morning star (2:26, 28).

Letter to the church in Sardis that had a name that it was alive, but it was dead (3:1).

He who overcomes will have his name in the book of life and Jesus will confess his name to God (3:5).

Letter to the church in Philadelphia that kept His word and did not deny His name (3:8).

He who overcomes will be a pillar in the temple of God and will have God’s name written on him (3:12).

Letter to the church in Laodicea that was neither hot/cold and would be spit out of Jesus’ mouth (3:16).

They claimed to be rich, but they were wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked (3:17).

He who overcomes will sit with Jesus on His throne (3:21).

A door opens giving a view into heaven (4:1).

John sees God sitting on the throne (4:2).

24 elders wear crowns and worship God (4:4).

John sees 4 living creatures full of eyes (4:6).

In God’s hand is a book with 7 seals (5:1).

Jesus appears with 7 horns; He broke the seals and opened the book (5:6).

The 24 elders and 4 creatures worship the Lamb and the Father (5:8, 13).

The Lamb breaks the first of 7 seals (6:1).

A rider (Jesus) on a white horse went out conquering (6:2). Jesus’ spiritual conquests.

Jesus breaks the second seal (6:3).

A rider on red horse signifies blood, warfare, persecution (6:4)

Jesus breaks third seal. A rider on black horse signifies mourning and food scarcity (6:5-6).

Jesus breaks fourth seal (6:7).

An ashen horse named Death killed one-fourth of the earth (6:8).

Jesus breaks fifth seal. Martyred souls under the altar cry, “How long?” (6:9-10).

Jesus breaks sixth seal. Earthquake and darkness indicate judgement on Roman Empire (6:12).

4 angels held back 4 winds from causing destruction on the earth (7:1).

Another angel said not to harm anything until a seal was placed on the bondservants (7:3).

144,000 were sealed. Those sealed had the name of the Lamb and the Father on their foreheads (7:4).

A multitude in heaven praises God and the Lamb (7:9-10).

The multitude is martyred Christians (7:14).

The multitude is with God in His temple (sanctuary) (7:15).

Jesus breaks the seventh seal. There is silence for ½ hour (8:1).

7 angels were handed 7 trumpets (8:2).

Prayers of saints were on the golden altar in the tabernacle (8:3).

In response to the prayers of the saints, an angel throws fire from the altar to earth (8:5).

The first angel sounded his trumpet. Hail, fire & blood thrown to earth. God destroyed 1/3 of the earth.

Judgement of wicked men (8:7).

The second angel sounded his trumpet. A burning mountain was thrown into the sea.

The mountain is Babylon or a world empire (8:8-9).

The third angel sounded his trumpet. A star fell from heaven. The star is an evil ruler (8:10).

The fourth angel sounded his trumpet. 1/3 of sun, moon and stars were darkened.

God’s judgement against evil men (8:12).

3 woes to those who dwell on earth are coming (8:13).

First woe (9:1-12):

The fifth angel sounded his trumpet. A star (Satan) fell from heaven to earth; given key to abyss (9:1).

Evil smoke from the abyss darkened the sun and the air (9:2).

Locusts inflict pain on all men except the 144,000. Symbolizes Satan’s harmful effect on the world (9:3).

Ferocious locusts attacked men and scorpions stung men, but did not kill (9:7).

The first woe is harm caused by the devil and his agents (9:12).

Second woe (9:13 – 10:10):

The sixth angel sounded his trumpet (9:13).

4 angels killed 1/3 of mankind who practice idolatry (9:20).

Those who were not killed did not repent (9:21).

A strong angel had a little book in his and which was open (10:2).

An angel accompanied by 7 peals of thunder appeared with a message (10:3).

John was told not to write what the thunder said (10:4).

The angel spoke of the mystery of God revealed during the apostolic age (10:7).

The angel told John to eat the book which will be sweet in your mouth and bitter in your stomach (10:9).

John ate the book. It was sweet at first (salvation) before becoming bitter (judgement) (10:10).

John is told to measure the temple (the church) with a measuring rod (the word of God) (11:1).

Those outside the temple (the church) will persecute Christians for 3 ½ years (11:2).

Two witnesses (the apostles and N.T. prophets) will mourn the persecution for 3 1/2 years (11:3).

The apostles and prophets will deliver their testimony until they are killed (11:6-7).

The evil people rejoiced at the death, assuming that they had eliminated Christianity (11:10).

God brought the two witnesses to life, symbolizing that the power of their testimony continued (11:11).

The two witnesses were called to heaven (11:12).

A great earthquake killed 7,000 people (1/10 of the city) and the rest glorified God (11:13).

Third woe (11:15-19)

The seventh angel sounded his trumpet (11:15).

Loud voices say, “The kingdom of our Lord and His Christ have conquered.”

This happened when Jesus was resurrected from the dead (11:15).

The 24 elders are the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 apostles who sit on their thrones (11:16).

The sanctuary of God in heaven was opened and the ark was visible (11:19).

The scene changes to a great sign: a woman with the sun, moon and a crown of 12 stars (12:1).

The woman was in labor (12:2).

Satan appears as a red dragon with 7 heads and 10 horns.

The heads symbolize emperors and horns symbolize power over the realm of evil (12:3).

Satan wanted to kill the child at birth (12:4).

The woman gave birth to Jesus. Woman = all of God’s redeemed people in O.T. & N.T. (12:5).

The first century version of the woman is the church.

She fled into the wilderness to be protected for 3 ½ years (12:6).

Michael and his angels defeated Satan and his angels (12:7-8).

Satan and his angels were thrown out of heaven down to earth (12:9).

Christians overcame Satan because of: (1) blood of the Lamb (2) their testimony of faith and

(3) their faith unto death (12:11).

When Satan was unable to defeat Jesus, Satan attacked the woman (the church) (12:13).

Satan tried to drown the woman (the church) in a river of lies (12:15).

Satan was unsuccessful in drowning the church, so he attacked individual Christians (12:17).

John stood on the sand of the seashore and saw a sea beast emerge with 7 horns & 10 heads.

The sea beast blasphemed God (13:1).

The sea beast = the Roman Empire (the culmination of Daniel’s vision about empires).

The dragon (Satan) gave evil power to the sea beast (13:2).

One of the heads of the sea beast was slain, but healed (13:3).

The masses of people worshipped the sea beast (the Roman Empire) (13:4).

The sea beast was given authority to persecute Christians for 3 ½ years (13:5).

The sea beast (Roman Empire) temporarily overcame Christians (13:7).

The earth beast appears with horns like a lamb (deceptive). He spoke like a dragon (evil).

The earth beast = pagan idolatry of the day (13:11).

The earth beast deceived the masses of people with fake signs (13:14).

Roman pagans forced Christians to recant their faith in Christ or die (13:15).

The earth beast put a mark (666) on the forehead of the citizens (13:16, 18).

Scene changes from earth to a victory scene in heaven.

Zion = spiritual Israel (the church) on earth (14:1).

A multitude in heaven sang a new song of salvation (14:3).

3 angels make announcements (14:6-12).

The first angel has an eternal gospel and says, “fear God and worship the Creator” (14:7).

The second angel prophesies of the fall of Babylon (the Roman Empire) (14:8).

The third angel says those who worship emperor will be eternally punished (fire & brimstone) (14:10).

A voice says those who die in the Lord will receive eternal rest (14:13).

The scene changes. Jesus is on a cloud wearing a crown of victory (14:14).

Jesus swung his sickle and reaped the earth (14:16).

An angel swung his sickle, gathered clusters of evil men and threw them into the winepress (14:19).

The winepress was trodden outside the city. Blood came out of the winepress & flooded for 200 miles.

This shows the severity of God’s judgement against the Roman Empire (14:20).

John saw another great sign in heaven: 7 angels had 7 plagues (punishment) (15:1).

Those victorious over the beast sang the song of Moses and the Lamb.

This group included God’s people from the Old Testament and the New Testament (15:2-3).

John saw the temple of the tabernacle opened in heaven (15:5).

The 7 angels and the 7 plagues came out of the temple. Plagues were judgement from God (15:6).

One of the 4 living creatures gave 7 bowls of wrath to the 7 angels (15:7).

The first angel poured his bowl of wrath into the earth.

It caused malignant sores on emperor worshippers (16:2).

The second angel poured his bowl into the sea.

The sea became blood and everything in the sea died (16:3).

The third angel poured his bowl into the rivers and springs and they became blood (16:4).

Those who persecuted Christians were forced to drink blood (16:6).

The fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun (16:8).

Men were scorched with fierce heat and blasphemed God. None repented.

This is not the final judgement because men had a chance to repent (16: 9).

The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast (Roman Empire).

The kingdom was darkened (lost political power).

Inhabitants gnawed their tongues in pain, but refused to repent (16:10).

The sixth angel poured out wrath upon the Euphrates River.

The Euphrates dried up, making Rome vulnerable from the east (16:12).

John saw unclean spirits like frogs from the mouths of the dragon (Satan), the

sea beast (Roman Empire) and the false prophet (the earth beast).

Unclean spirits were lies, blasphemy and deception of men (16:13).

The mission of the evil spirits was to gather kings for a war against God (16:14).

The kings gathered for battle at Harmageddon (16:16).

The seventh angel poured out his bowl upon the air. Air is needed for life.

God contaminated the air with His impending judgement against Rome (16:17).

Lightning, thunder and earthquake symbolized God’s judgement against the Roman Empire (16:18).

Babylon (Rome), her cities and nations fell under God’s wrath (16:19).

God’s judgement (destruction) was severe. 100-pound hailstones fell, but men did not repent (16:20).

An angel said he would show John the judgement of the harlot (Roman Empire) (17:1).

Kings of the earth committed fornication with the harlot (Roman Empire) (17:2).

The harlot was sitting on a scarlet beast (Roman Empire) in the wilderness (17:3).

The harlot was drunk with the blood of the saints (17:6).

The harlot had 7 heads and sat on 7 mountains (i.e., Rome) (17:9).

The beast = world powers (including Rome) that oppose Christ (17:12).

The kings’ only purpose was to oppose Christ and His people (17:13).

The kings waged war against the Lamb and the Lamb overcame them (17:14).

The beast symbolizes all world powers (past and future) that oppose Christ.

The harlot (Rome) would be replaced by other harlots in the future (17:16).

The harlot is the Roman Empire (17:18).

An angel foretold the fall of Babylon (Rome) and it would become a nasty place (18:2).

Those who wouldl suffer from Rome’s fall are nations, kings and merchants (18:3).

Christians are encouraged to avoid the sins of Rome that pile up to heaven (18:4-5).

Rome will fall quickly and suffer pestilence and mourning (18:8).

Merchants and shipmasters will mourn after Rome’s fall (18:16-18).

Christians, apostles and prophets in heaven rejoice because the martyrs’ death is avenged (18:20).

An angel threw a stone in the sea and it sank (Roman Empire is gone for good) (18:21).

In the harlot (Rome) flowed the blood of prophets, saints and all martyrs on earth (18:24).

A great multitude in heaven shouted, “Hallelujah” (19:1).

The smoke of the destroyed Roman Empire rose up (19:3).

The voice of the multitude announced that the time for the marriage of the Lamb has come (19:7).

The bride (the church) was adorned in fine, bright linen (19:8).

The wedding (supper) took place (19:9).

Heaven is opened and Jesus appears on a horse and wages war (19:11).

An army clothed in white follows Jesus in heaven (19:14).

Jesus smites the nations with a weapon of vengeance and destruction (19:15).

Probably refers to the coming battle described in 16:13-16 (19:15).

An angel invites vultures to feast on the carcasses of the defeated evil ones (19:17-18).

The sea beast (Roman Empire) and the false prophet (earth beast: paganism) and their armies

are thrown into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone (19:18-19).

The rest of the evil followers are killed by Jesus (19:20).

An angel came down from heaven with a chain and a key to the abyss (20:1).

The angel bound Satan for 1,000 years (20:2).

The angel threw Satan into the abyss for 1,000 years and the 3 ½ years of persecution ended (20:3).

In heaven, martyrs and other faithful ones sat upon thrones and came to life (first resurrection) (20:4).

The rest of the dead (who were evil) did not come to life (20:5).

The second death is the lake of fire and brimstone, and it occurs after Judgement Day (20:6).

When the 1,000 years are over, Satan will be released for a short time (20:7).

When Satan is released, he and his allies will do battle against God.

This is a different battle from the battle against Rome and its allies in 16:13.

Gog and Magog symbolize all allies of Satan who wage war against the church (20:8).

God defeats Gog (20:9).

Satan is thrown into the lake of fire where he is tormented eternally (20:10).

The scene shifts to the final judgement with Jesus on the throne. The elements pass away (20:11).

All the dead stand before the throne. The books of judgement are opened.

The book of life is also opened (20:12).

Death and hades give up the dead in them (20:13).

Death and hades are thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death (20:14).

Those not in the book of life are thrown into the lake of fire (20:15).

The scene changes to heaven after the final judgement. John sees a new heaven and new earth (21:1).

John sees the church (i.e., the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, the bride).

The Holy City = all saved people since Adam. (21:2).

God dwells in the tabernacle with men (21:3).

There are no unpleasant things in heaven (21:4).

The saved have access to the water of life (21:6).

Contrast of the inheritance of the faithful with the fire and brimstone (second death) for the evil (21:8).

John sees the holy bride of the Lamb (the Holy City) on a high mountain.

The bride of the Lamb = the Holy City = the church (21:10).

The names of the 12 tribes of Israel are written on the gates (21:12-13).

The names of the 12 apostles are written on the foundation (21:14).

The names in verses 12-14 include all the saved who have lived on the earth.

An angel measures the city to be 1,500 miles in each dimension (length, breadth, height) (21:16).

The city is adorned with precious stones, gates of pearls and golden streets (21:19-21).

There is no temple in the city. God is throughout the entire city (21:22).

God illumines the city. No light from the sun or moon is needed (21:23).

The gates of the city are always open (21:25-26).

Only those with their names in the book of life are allowed to enter the city – no evil people (21:27).

The water of life flows (22:1) and the tree of life bears fruit continuously (22:2).

There is no curse because there is no sin to cause a curse (22:3).

The names of God and the Lamb are on the foreheads of the servants (22:4).

An angel says that the things described must shortly take place (22:6).

Jesus says, “I am coming quickly,” referring to destruction of the Roman Empire (22:7).

The Old Testament faithful and the New Testament faithful will all be in heaven (22:9).

Those who do wrong are contrasted with those who are righteous and holy (22:11).

Jesus is the root/offspring of David (22:16).

The Spirit (Holy Spirit) and bride (the church) say, “Come.”

The ones who hear (Christians) say, “Come” (22:17).

Warning not to alter (misuse) the words of the prophecy of the book.

If anyone adds to the book, God will add the plagues in the book to him (22:18).

If anyone removes words, God will remove him from the tree of life and from the holy city (22:19).

Jesus says, “I am coming quickly” in judgement against the Roman Empire.

John says, “Amen. Come Lord Jesus” (22:20).

The Visions of Revelation

Divided Into Logical Units by Topic

(1:12 – 1:20)

John sees 7 golden lampstands (churches) and the 7 stars (angels) with a Son of man in the middle.

(2:1 – 3:22)

Letters to the 7 churches of Asia.

(4:1 – 5:14)

John sees God in heaven holding a book with 7 seals. Jesus opens the book revealing the future.

(6:1 – 7:17)

General summary of what is to come. Jesus conquers death. Christians are persecuted and killed, causing mourning and hunger. Many nonbelievers are killed. Martyred souls cry “how long?” Judgement falls on the Roman Empire. 144,000 are sealed/protected on earth. A multitude of martyred Christians is safe and comforted in heaven.

(8:1 – 8:12)

Prayers of saints are heard. God will destroy 1/3 of the wicked men with hail and fire. Rome will fall. An evil ruler will fall. Sun, moon and stars are darkened as God renders judgement against evil men.

(8:13 – 10:11)

Satan falls from heaven and is given the key to the abyss. Satan and his evil agents harm the sinful world, but do not kill them. 4 angels kill 1/3 of idolaters, but they do not repent. The angel speaks of the gospel message revealed in the first century. It was sweet (salvation) and bitter (judgement).

(11:1 – 11:14)

The apostles and N.T. prophets witness the persecution and continue to preach until they are killed. Evil men assume Christianity has been eliminated, but God brings the witnesses to life, symbolizing that the power of their message continues. The apostles and prophets go to heaven. An earthquake kills 1/10 of the city (7,000 people).

(11:15 – 19)

Loud voices say, “The kingdom of Christ has conquered” (Jesus was raised from the dead). Elders from the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 apostles sit on their thrones. The sanctuary of God in heaven is opened and the ark is visible.

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(12:1 – 12:17)

Satan tries, but fails, to kill Jesus. Satan persecutes the church, but the church is protected from being destroyed for 3 ½ years. Michael defeats Satan and he is thrown down to the earth. Satan tries to destroy the church with lies, but fails, so Satan attacks individual Christians.

(13:1 – 13:18)

Vision of the sea beast (Roman Empire) empowered by Satan. Masses of people worship the empire. The empire persecutes Christians for 3 ½ years. The earth beast (pagan idolatry) deceives men with fake signs. The earth beast puts the mark 666 on the foreheads of citizens.

(14:1 – 14:5)

John sees the Lamb standing on Mount Zion (among Christians). A multitude sing the new song of salvation in heaven. The 144,000 (still on earth) learn the new song, but cannot fully learn it until they are in heaven.

(14:6 – 14:13)

3 angels make announcements: (1) fear God and worship the Creator, (2) the Roman Empire will fall, and (3) those who worship the emperor will be eternally punished. Those who die in the Lord will receive eternal rest.

(14:14 – 14:20)

Jesus reaps the righteous from the earth. An angel gathers clusters of evil men and throws them into the winepress outside the city. Blood pours from the winepress (God’s judgement against Rome).

(15:1 – 16:17)

7 angels have 7 plagues (punishment). The victorious sing the song of Moses and the Lamb. The plagues were: malignant sores on emperor worshippers, sea turned to blood killing everything in it, rivers and springs became blood, persecutors had to drink blood, the sun scorched the evil men who did not repent, Roman Empire lost political power, inhabitants were in pain, Euphrates dried up on the east, the air became a hostile atmosphere. Rome and kings gathered for battle against God at Harmageddon.

(16:18 – 16:21)

Prophecy of God’s judgement against the Roman Empire, her cities and nations. Judgement was severe, but men did not repent.

(17:1 – 19-6)

The harlot (Roman Empire, drunk with the blood of saints) sat on a scarlet beast that opposed Christ. The Roman Empire and those aligned with it fought against Jesus, but Jesus overcame them. Prophesy that Rome will fall along with nations, kings and merchants. Merchants and shipmasters will mourn because of their loss of revenue. The Roman Empire will be destroyed forever and the multitude in heaven shouts, “Hallelujah!”

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(19:7 – 19:10)

The marriage of the Lamb (Jesus) and the bride (the church) takes place. Those who accepted the invitation attend the wedding.

(19:11 – 19:21)

Jesus appears in heaven on a horse followed by a multitude in white. Jesus destroys the evil nations with vengeance. Vultures are invited to feed on the carcasses of the evil ones. The sea beast (Roman Empire) and the false prophet (earth beast: pagan idolatry) and their armies are thrown into the lake of fire. The rest of the evil ones are killed by Jesus.

(20:1 – 20:6)

An angel binds Satan in the abyss for 1,000 years. The 3 ½ years of persecution end. In heaven, martyrs and other faithful ones come to life (the first resurrection). The evil dead do not come to life. The second death is the lake of fire and brimstone after judgement.

(20:7 – 20:10)

When the 1,000 years are ended, Satan will be released. Satan and his allies (Gog and Magog) will wage one last war against the church. God will defeat Gog. Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire and will be tormented eternally.

(20:11 – 20-15)

Final judgement scene. All the dead are before the throne. The books of judgement are opened. The book of life is opened. Death and hades are thrown into the lake of fire (the second death). Those whose names are not in the book of life are thrown into the lake of fire.

(21:1 – 22:5)

Vision of heaven after the final judgement. All the saved since Adam are present. God dwells throughout the Holy City with the saved. The names of the 12 tribes and the 12 apostles are written. The city has precious stones and golden streets. God illuminates the city. The gates are always open. No evil people are allowed to enter. The water of life and the tree of life flourish. There is no curse because there is no sin. The names of God and the Lamb are on the foreheads of the servants.

(22:6 – 22:12)

An angel tells John that these things must shortly take place. Jesus says, “I am coming quickly.”

(22:13 – 22:17)

Jesus is the Alpha and Omega. Blessed are those who wash their robes. Outside are the dogs and sorcerers, immoral persons and murderers. Jesus Is the root/offspring of David. The Holy Spirit, the church and the ones who hear (individual Christians) say, “Come.”

(22:18 – 22:21)

John is told that no one is to add or take away from the words of the prophecy of the book. Jesus says he is coming quickly. John says, “Amen. Come Lord Jesus.” RGS