



# Introduction

1. The very definition of the word “revelation” means something that is revealed, that was formerly hidden but now has become visible. The word can be translated “an uncovering,” “an unveiling,” or “a disclosure” (see also Romans 16:25; Galatians 1:12; Ephesians 1:17; 3:3). One might ask, “Why would God make clear the other teachings of the Bible and then be obscure about prophecy in Revelation?” The answer is: He didn’t!! Far from being the mysterious, incomprehensible book many imagine it to be, Revelation’s purpose is to reveal truth, not to obscure it. Revelation unveils truths about Jesus Christ and makes clear the features of prophetic truth only hinted at in the Old Testament and other New Testament books.
2. Revelation affirms the full deity of Jesus Christ. He possesses all the attributes of God, including sovereignty (1:5), eternity (1:17-18), the right to judge men (19:11), the right to decide who lives and who dies (1:18; 2:23). He receives worship (5:13) and rules from God’s throne (22:1, 3). Revelation applies Old Testament passages, that describe God, to Jesus (Deuteronomy 10:17 with 19:16; Proverbs 3:12 with 3:19; Daniel 7:9 with 1:14; Isaiah 44:6 with 1:17; etc.).
3. Revelation takes a high view of God’s Word. It claims divine inspiration for itself (1:2).
4. Revelation reveals God the Father in all His glory and majesty, describing Him as holy (4:8), true (6:10), omnipotent (4:11), wise (7:12), sovereign (4:11), and eternal (4:10).
5. Revelation describes the details and depths of the depravity of mankind. In spite of experiencing the final outpouring of God’s wrath and judgment on sinful mankind, people will still harden their hearts and refuse to repent (9:20-21; 16:9, 11).
6. There is no clearer statement of the doctrine of redemption than 1:5, Jesus Christ, *who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood*.
7. Angels are prominent in Revelation. The book contains one out of every four references to angels in Scripture.
8. Revelation warns believers of the dangers of compromise with the world (chapters 2–3).
9. Revelation contains more details about the end times than any other book of the Bible. It portrays Christ’s ultimate triumph over Satan, shows the final political setup of the world system, and describes the career of the most powerful dictator in human history—the final antichrist. It tells us how it all ends.
10. Revelation describes the seven-year Tribulation, the Second Coming of Christ, the thousand-year Millennial Kingdom of Christ on earth, the Great White Throne Judgment, and the final eternal state of the lake of fire for the wicked and the new heaven and new earth for the redeemed.
11. “Very prominent in the book of Revelation is the use of numbers, namely, 2; 3 1/2; 4; 5; 6; 7; 10; 12; 24; 42; 144; 666; 1,000; 1,260; 1,600; 7,000; 12,000; 144,000; 100,000,000; 200,000,000...The general rule should be followed to interpret numbers literally unless there is clear evidence to the contrary” (John Walvoord).

## Interpretations

1. The **preterist view** sees the book as a historical record of events in the first-century Roman Empire. They say the events were fulfilled in the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70, even though Jesus did not appear, and there is no persecution then that fits the horrible events described in Revelation. This view ignores Revelation’s claims to be prophecy (1:3).
2. The **historicist view** interprets the events of Revelation as having taken place in church history. This is the common amillennial view of the Roman Catholic church (Augustine, Calvin), the Orthodox church, and the Lutherans, Presbyterians, and Reformed. To do this, they need to allegorize (spiritualize) the text, which, of course, leads to many conflicting interpretations of the

actual events described in Revelation. This view ignores Revelation's claims to be prophecy (1:3).

3. The **idealist view** sees the events of Revelation as a timeless struggle between good and evil that is played out in every age. So the book is reduced to a collection of myths designed to explain spiritual truth, separating the book from any actual historical events, whether present or future. This view ignores Revelation's claims to be prophecy (1:3).
4. The **futurist view** sees chapters 4–22 as predictions of actual people and events yet to come in the future. Only this view allows Revelation to be interpreted in the same grammatical, historical, literal method by which non-prophetic portions of Scripture are interpreted. An earthquake is an earthquake. This view is faithful to Revelation's claim to be prophetic. [Although I have discovered, even within this view, many take the events as symbolic—for example, an earthquake is not literally an earthquake but a bad situation.] John Walvoord says, Much of the prophecy of the Bible deals with the distant future, including the Old Testament promises of the coming Messiah, the prophecies of Daniel concerning future world empires, the body of truth relating to the coming kingdom on earth, as well as countless other prophecies. If the events of chapters 4 through 19 are future, even from our viewpoint today, they teach the blessed truth of the ultimate supremacy of God and the triumph of righteousness ["The Revelation of Jesus Christ," p. 22].

## Author

Four times in Revelation the author identifies himself as John (1:1, 4, 9; 22:8). The writings of the early church fathers affirm that he was John, the son of Zebedee, one of the twelve apostles, and author of the fourth gospel and the epistles of John. There are parallels between Revelation and John's

other writings. For example, only the gospel of John and Revelation refer to Christ as "the Word" (John 1:1; Revelation 19:13). Revelation frequently describes Christ as the Lamb—a title elsewhere given to Him only in John's gospel. Revelation is a different kind of book (prophetic) than the gospel (historical) or epistles (letters), so one would expect some differences. But in Revelation, John is

closer in the Greek to his other books than to any other New Testament books.

John is the last living apostle. He is about 90 years old. He has been exiled on the small island of Patmos, a barren rock sticking out of the sea, 62 miles southwest of Ephesus. The Roman authorities have banished him there because of his preaching of the Gospel (1:9). It is on the island of Patmos that John received the Revelation.

## Date

The two main dates proposed have been during the reign of Nero (A.D. 68) or that of Domitian (A.D. 96). Of course, the earlier date is held by those of the preterist interpretation. However, the writings of the early church fathers claim that Revelation was written during Domitian's reign.

- Nero's persecution was mostly confined to Rome, whereas Domitian's persecution was throughout the Roman Empire, affecting the believers everywhere.
- The believers of Asia Minor were spiritually healthy in the 60s when Paul wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and 1 and 2 Timothy. But when Revelation was written, those believers were in serious spiritual decline (chapters 2–3), indicating time had passed.

- Also, Paul nowhere mentions the heretical sect known as the Nicolaitans, who were influential both in Ephesus and Pergamum (2:6, 15). John did not have to describe the Nicolaitans, just mention them, and the believers knew whom he meant.

The weight of the evidence (only some of which I've included here) clearly favors a date for the writing of Revelation in the mid-nineties, near the end of Domitian's reign. This is critically important because it eliminates the possibility that the prophecies in Revelation were fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (the preterist view).

## Outline

The outline is given in 1:19—

- I. Chapter 1—*the things which you have seen*
- II. Chapters 2–3—*the things which are*
- III. Chapters 4–22—*the things which shall take place after these things*
  - A. Chapters 4–18 the Tribulation
    1. Seven Seal Judgments
    2. Seven Trumpet Judgments
    3. Seven Bowl Judgments
    4. Three parentheses
      - a. chapter 7
      - b. chapters 10:1–11:14
      - c. chapters 12–14
  - B. Chapter 19 the Second Coming of Christ
  - C. Chapter 20 the Millennial Kingdom and Great White Throne Judgment
  - D. Chapters 21–22 the New Jerusalem

The Book of Revelation, instead of being a hopeless jumble of symbolic visions, is a carefully written record of what John saw and heard, with frequent explanations of its theological and practical meanings. Revelation, with assistance from such other symbolic books as Daniel and Ezekiel, was intended by God to be understood by careful students of the entire Word of God. Like the book of Daniel, it will be better understood as history unfolds. Though timeless in its truth and application, it is a special comfort to those who need guidance in the days leading up to Christ's Coming." [Walvoord]

## Chapter 1

**Verse 1—*The Revelation***—The Greek word *apokalupsis* appears 18 times in the New Testament. It reveals the ultimate victory of Jesus Christ over all human and demonic opposition. It reveals the majesty and glory of Jesus, things otherwise not known from the rest of the Bible. This word is different than *prophecy* in 1:3 and 22:18, which is *propheteia*, which is to tell the future. Nowhere does Revelation directly quote from the Old Testament, but 278 of its 404 verses refer or allude to Old Testament prophecies. Revelation fleshes out what was only initially suggested in both the Old and New Testaments.

**Application**—You may wonder what difference it makes. Well, it makes a lot of difference. It's the revelation of Jesus (*apokalupsis*), but it is prophetic (*propheteia*) literature. It is revealing real events

that will take place in the real future. It's not sensational or science fiction or disasters. It not only tells of the events but tells of God's purpose and power in causing the events.

- **of Jesus Christ**—The gospels are also about Jesus, but they present Him in His first coming in humiliation. The Revelation presents Him in His Second Coming with majesty, power, and glory. So far, the unbelieving world has just seen Jesus dying in shame on a cross. But one day, all men will look upon Him as He really is, *at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father* (Phil 2:10-11). Every vision and description of Jesus in Revelation is one of majesty, power, and glory.

Application—*For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy* (19:10). Everything you know about prophecy is about the testimony of Jesus—whether His first coming, His life, His Second Coming, His millennial reign, His judgment, His provisions, His gifts, His grace, His mercy...

- **which God gave Him**—The prepositions are interesting—revelation **of** Jesus which God showed **to** Jesus. Revelation is the Father's gift of exaltation **to** the Son as a reward for His faithfulness during His humiliation. *Jesus...humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore also God highly exalted Him...* (Phil 2:5-9).

- **to show to His bond-servants**—God's intention was to give us information (not to obscure it). God has graciously given a group of people the privilege of understanding and believing the truths found in this book. A bond-servant, in the Old Testament, was a servant who served out of love and devotion to his master (Exo 21:5-6).

Application—The book was not intended for unbelievers. Paul wrote, *a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised* (1 Cor 2:14).

- **the things**—The gospels focus primarily on the earthly ministry of Jesus at His first coming. The other New Testament books have references to the future, but Revelation is the only book whose whole emphasis is on future events, therefore, setting it apart from the other books. You could say the first 5 books of the New Testament are about the past, the next 21 books are about the present, and the final book is about the future. In addition to the exaltation of the Lamb that was slain, revelation is a book of judgments of the wrath of the Lamb. There is no weak tolerance of evil. Sin, rebellion, and non-repentance must be punished.

- **which must soon take place**—"soon" refers to the imminence or nearness of an event, not the speed at which it happens (see Matt 24:42; 2 Pet 3:14). Obviously, the imminence of the Rapture is tied to the Second Coming, being only about 7 years earlier.

- **and He sent and communicated it by His angel**—Revelation is unique in that it is the only book in the New Testament that was sent and communicated to its human author by angels (22:16). Six times (1:1; 19:9-10; 22:6, 7, 9, 16) this angel is mentioned, who seemed to remain with John and guide him through the revelation. Angels appear in every chapter except 4 and 13. The words *angel* or *angels* are used 71 times—more than any other book in the Bible.

Application—Angels have been used before to bring new revelation, such as to Daniel (Dan 9:20-23); to Mary (Luke 1:26-38), and the Mosaic Law (Acts 7:53). Communication often involves more than the initial words. For example, *Daniel approached...and began asking him the exact meaning of all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of these things* (Dan 7:19; see Rev 5:4-6).

• **to His bond-servant John**—Verse 9 tells us that the Apostle John was on the island called Patmos, a small island just off the shore from Ephesus, his home after the other apostles were killed in the 60s. As mentioned in the Introduction, this was the result of the persecution of the Roman emperor Diocletian in the mid-nineties.

**Verse 2—*who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw***—Just as John had loyally, via the Holy Spirit, recorded the events of the first coming of Christ in his gospel, *these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ...* (John 20:31), so he would now testify to the things which he will see regarding the Second Coming of Christ.

Application—John primarily makes observations (*to show...all that he saw*) and very few interpretations. When John says he saw a beast, he saw a beast, etc. John leaves it to us to interpret (if we even can) what he saw. Sometimes he does give interpretations (i.e., the dragon is Satan).

**Verse 3—*Blessed***—There are seven promises of “blessings” (divine favor) in the book:

1. ***Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it***—1:3
2. *Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!*... (14:13)
3. *Behold I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake...* (16:15)
4. *Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb* (19:9)
5. *Blessed and holy is the one who has part in the first resurrection* (20:6)
6. *Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book* (22:7) [This verse and 1:3 serve as sort of bookends for Revelation. It begins and ends with blessing for those believing the words of the prophecy of this book.]
7. *Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life* (22:14)

• ***is he who reads, ...hear, ...heed*** are all in the present tense, meaning “reading, hearing, and obeying” the truths taught in Revelation (as well as in the rest of the Bible). It’s to be our way of life! We need to read it more often!!

• ***reads***—Most likely, a reference to reading the Scripture out loud as copies were not readily available in John’s day—as this book was to be sent around to the seven churches. Obviously, the Scripture can only be known through reading. Jesus said, *Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words shall not pass away* (Matthew 24:35). *All Scripture is inspired by God...* (2 Timothy 3:16). Each word is an exact word from God and is eternal.

• ***and those who hear the words***—probably, those who heard the public reading of the Scripture. But the Greek word means “listen” and “understand,” not just let it go in your ears.

• ***of the prophecy*** [*propheteia*]—future events (also 22:18). This is prophetic revelation.

• ***and heed the things which are written in it***—to observe, that is, keeps, obeys

Application—How can you keep the things written in this book? One way is to understand and continually think of Jesus in His glorified state described in this chapter. His perfect life on this earth was instructive, His death on the cross provided our salvation—but Paul wrote, *...even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer* (2 Cor 5:16). Revelation 1 starts with a description of the glorified Christ and ends with His coming to earth as King of Kings, His millennial reign, His seat of judgment at the Great White Throne, and the eternal state. All this is as true as the history of Jesus presented in the Gospels of His first coming.

• ***for the time***—*chronos* is the Greek word for clock or calendar. But here “time” is the Greek word

*kairos*, which means seasons, epochs, or eras. So this is saying the next great era (dispensation) of God's redemptive history is imminent. There is no other dispensation between us (church age) and it (millennial kingdom).

- ***is near***—Imminent, “on the way,” “around the corner,” like in verse 1. John also wrote in 1 John 2:18, ...*it is the last hour*. The final rebellion, the Great White Throne, the New Jerusalem and New Earth are at least 1007 years away from John, but he still says they are on the way. For example, you may be going from Michigan to Florida, many miles away, but if you are already at Lansing, you are on the way!! So the cross is done, the resurrection is done, Jesus is glorified in heaven, so ***He is coming*** v. 7).

**Verse 4—John**—The second reference to the Apostle John as the human author of the book.

- ***to the seven churches that are in Asia***—These seven cities are mentioned in verse 11. They are described as all the believers in those cities.

- ***Grace to you and peace***—The standard greeting in New Testament books (Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3; etc.), but this greeting is unique in that it comes from the Trinity.

- ***from Him who is and who was and who is to come***—God the Father, although He is timeless, He is described in time terms we can understand—past, present, and future. He is “I AM” (Exodus 3:14). He is the source of all grace and peace.

- ***and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne***—Elsewhere (Isa 11:2; Zech 4:1-10), “seven” describes seven aspects of the Holy Spirit. Obviously, there is only one Holy Spirit, but here He is depicted in all His seven aspects, sending grace and peace to believers. It is the only mention of Him in the book.

**Verse 5—and from Jesus Christ**—Mentioned with a fuller description, as He is what the book is about.

- ***the faithful witness***—i.e., One who always tells the truth. Jesus said, “*I am...the truth*” (John 14:6). He also said of the Bible, “*Thy Word is truth*” (17:17). Jesus told Pilate, “*For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth*” (18:37). [As an assignment, read the gospel of John, underlining every time the word “truth” is used.]

- ***the firstborn of the dead***—This does not mean Jesus was the first one to be raised from the dead. He raised others in His earthly ministry (Matt 9:23-25; Luke 7:11-15; etc.), and there were resurrections in the Old Testament (1 Kings 17:17-23; 2 Kings 4:32-36; etc.). This Greek word *protokos* does not mean firstborn in time sequence but rather first in preeminence. Paul uses it in Romans 8:29, Colossians 1:15, 18; and it is also in Hebrews 1:6. From these verses we see that Christ was first in importance, and has supreme authority over the dead. Jesus said, “*I AM the resurrection and the life*” (John 11:25). John also wrote, *Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is* (1 John 3:2).

- ***and the ruler of the kings of the earth***—He is absolutely sovereign over everything of this world. He removes kings and establishes kings (Dan 2:21). *There is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God* (Rom 13:1).

- ***To Him who loves us***—...*nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord* (Rom 8:35-39).

- ***and released us from our sins by His blood***—We are set free from the penalty of our sins by the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus* (Rom 8:1).

**Verse 6—and He has made us to be a kingdom**—God's kingdom, under His rule, of believers in Christ vs. the kingdom of Satan, under his rule. (Revelation is the war between these two kingdoms.)

- **priests to His God and Father**—direct access to the presence of God (Heb 4:12; 1 Pet 2:9-10), for all believers, not just the clergy.
- **to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen**—The response we should all have in reading this book.

**Verse 7—BEHOLD**—a word that is meant to get your attention. It's used 25 times in Revelation.

- **HE IS COMING**—in the present tense, suggests that Christ is already on His way, so His coming is certain. Nine times in the book Christ is called the expected One. This truth appears in more than 500 verses throughout the Bible. It's estimated that 1 out of every 25 verses in the New Testament refer to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Application—Nine reasons why Jesus Christ must return:

1. The promises of God require that Jesus return (Gen 49:10; Psa 2:6-9; Isa 9:6-7; Jer 23:5-8; Dan 7:13-14, 18; Zech 14:4-9; Mal 4:1-4).
2. The promise of Jesus requires His return (John 14:2-3; Luke 19:11-27).
3. The guarantee of the Holy Spirit requires that Jesus return (John 15:26; 16:13; 1 Cor 1:4-8; Phil 3:20-21; Col 3:4; 1 Thess 2:19; James 5:8; 1 Pet 1:13).
4. God's program for the church demands that Jesus return (*...I will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world*—Rev 3:10; after the tribulation, the glorified church, the bride of Christ, will return with Him—19:7-9).
5. Christ's judgment for the unbelieving nations requires His return (Psa 2; Joel 3:1-2, 9-17; Isa 11:1-5; Mic 4:1-8; Zeph 3:8; Matt 25:31-46).
6. God's promises to Israel demands that Christ return (Rom 11:1-2; Jer 31:35-37; 33:24-26; Isaiah; Daniel; Ezekiel; Amos; Obadiah; Micah; Zechariah 13–14; etc.).
7. Christ's humiliation demands that He return. At His first coming, Jesus was treated and executed as a common criminal. But He will return as King of Kings.
8. The judgment of Satan demands that Christ return. Satan is the temporary ruler of this world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). But Jesus will send Satan to the lake of fire (Rev 20:10).
9. The expectation of believers demands that Christ return. Believers, those who are *looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus* (Tit 2:13). [MacArthur, Revelation]

- **WITH THE CLOUDS**—Clouds often symbolized the presence of God, such as with Israel in the wilderness wandering (Exo 13:21-22); on Mt. Sinai at the giving of the Law (Exo 19:16); when God communicated with Moses in the Tent of Meeting (Exo 33:9); both the tabernacle and the temple were filled with a cloud (Exo 40:34-38; 1 Kings 8:10-12); believers will ascend with clouds at the Rapture (1 Thess 4:17); and Christ will return with the clouds, *...they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight...This Jesus, ...will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven* (Acts 1:9-11).

- **and every eye will see Him**—Only Peter, James, and John got a glimpse of Christ's glory at the Mt. of Transfiguration, but at the Second Coming (not Rapture, which is not mentioned in Revelation), every single person will see Him.

- **even those who pierced Him**—i.e., the Jews. God says, *"...the house of David and...the inhabitants of Jerusalem...will look on Me whom they have pierced..."* (Zech 12:10). But we know that will result in much repentance (such as the 144,000, for example).

- **and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him**—i.e., the unbelieving Gentiles who mourn, not in repentance but in terror and anger. They will not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts (Rev 9:21).

- **So it is to be** (*nai*, in Greek) and **Amen** (*amen*) in Hebrew. John's affirmation. He agrees with it.

**Verse 8—“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God**—God’s omniscience. Using the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, it indicates that God is all knowing. Everything that has been written is between the first and last letters of the alphabet. He repeats this, “*I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end*”(22:13). *In the beginning was God... (Gen 1:1). By Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth...all things have been created by Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together (Col 1:16-17).*

- **who is and who was and who is to come**—God’s eternity. He is not confined by time or space.
- **the Almighty**—God’s omnipotence. Nothing can keep Him from carrying out His sovereign will. Therefore, nothing nor anyone can keep Jesus, in all of His glory, from returning to earth.

**Verse 9—I, John**—The third time John referred to himself by name, as the human author.

- **your brother**—John was an apostle, part of the inner circle of three among the disciples, the only apostle still alive for the last 30 years. He is now in his mid-nineties. Yet he humbly referred to himself as *your brother*, for as Jesus said, “*do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers...*” (Matthew 23:8).
- **and fellow partaker in the tribulation** [persecution] **and kingdom** [over which we will reign with Jesus in 20:4] **and perseverance** [“to remain under,” i.e., to endure] **which are in Jesus**—these things are specific to suffering as a believer in Christ.
- **was on the island called Patmos**—see next page. An early church writer named Eusebius mentions John was banished to the island by the Emperor Domitian in A.D. 95 and released 18 months later.
- **because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus**—his exile was for only this one reason. He wasn’t there to teach but because of opposition to his teaching.

**Verse 10—I was in the spirit**—not physically, but spiritually taken to another dimension, where he was supernaturally able to see things in the future. (Like Ezekiel was taken spiritually to Jerusalem while he was physically in Babylon—Ezekiel 8:1-4.)

- **on the Lord’s day**—This phrase only appears here in the New Testament. Probably a reference to Sunday, the day Christ rose from the dead (a different day than Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath).

Application—Even if this means Sunday, it does not “prove” the believers gathered for church services on Sunday because it was “the Lord’s day.” Others think this refers to Easter Sunday. Some think it refers to the prophecy as a whole as “the Lord’s day.” However, the future events are usually called “day of the Lord,” not “the Lord’s day.”

- **and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet**—Similar to Mt. Sinai, when the trumpet sounded at the giving of the Law (Exo 19:16). It gets your attention, to announce something important is about to occur or be said (even today it is used to announce the arrival of the king or the president).

**Verse 11**—*saying, “Write in a book what you see*—This would be a scroll. This is the first of 12 commands in Revelation for John to write what he saw (1:11, 19; 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14; 14:13; 19:9; 21:5), and one time, he was forbidden to write (10:4). He describes what he saw in his own words. He uses the word “like” many times in his descriptions.

• *and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea*—These cities were in Asia Minor (modern day Turkey). If a messenger landed at Ephesus and travelled north, then in a clockwise circle, this circular road would link these cities. It’s a geographical order of the cities.



**Verse 12**—In this chapter, Jesus is described in His current ministry to the believers of this age, as our High Priest. Then chapters 2–3 describe the condition of the seven churches. Then in chapters 4–5 we see Jesus take the scroll of the tribulation from God the Father, open the scroll and the tribulation begins.

• *Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands*—Verse 20 says the seven lampstands are the seven churches. Why seven? We can only speculate.

**Verse 13**—*and in the middle of the lampstands*—In 2:1, Jesus is the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, i.e., among the believers in each city. This is a description of Jesus today.

• *I saw one like a son of man*—Notice the word “like.” We’ll see that many times in Revelation, as John tries to describe what he is seeing. This expression refers to the Messiah in Daniel 7:13–14. It was one of Jesus’ favorite titles for Himself (Mark 13:26).

• *clothed in a robe reaching to the feet*—similar to the clothing of a priest (Exo 28:4; Lev 16:4). Jesus is the Apostle and High Priest of our confession (Heb 3:1; 2:17; 5).

• *and girded across His chest with a golden sash*—The priests in the Old Testament wore such a sash (Exo 28:4; Lev 16:4). See Hebrews 2:17–18; 3:1; 4:14; 7:25; 9:11–12.

**Verse 14**—*His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow*—“White” is literally “bright,” “blazing,” or “brilliant.” It’s pure and glorious.

• *and His eyes were like a flame of fire*—Again in 19:12. Used of judgment. Jesus said, “*There is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known*” (Matt 10:26). *There is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do* (Heb 4:13).

**Verse 15**—*His feet were like burnished [polished] bronze*—It’s interesting that the Greek is actually the same word twice, like “bronze bronze” (also in 2:18). Bronze is 88% copper and 12% tin. This was a much harder metal than many other metals, so very early in history it became valuable for weapons (Gen 4:22, etc.). Later, copper was mixed with other metals, such as zinc, which makes brass. Bronze was used for many things in the tabernacle, such as sockets for the curtains (Exo 26:11) and the laver for washing (Exo 30:18). Iron replaced bronze simply because it was more available and easier to use, but it was weaker than bronze. Burnished means to highly polish a metal. It seems like Jesus is walking among the churches with very hard feet, strength and stability—the judgment we see in chapters 2–3. It’s not a condemnation for sin (Rom 8:1) but there is definitely a loss of rewards and testimony, etc.

• *when it has been made to glow in a furnace*—So bright, you can hardly look at it. (Perhaps why the translators used “burnished” with “bronze” in the preceding phrase.)

• **and His voice was like the sound of many waters**—John started by saying Jesus’ voice was like a trumpet, it got his attention. Now it seems to John that the voice of Jesus is like the sound of many waters. Ever gone under the bottom of Niagara Falls (which they won’t let you do any more) and tried to talk? Even if the person yells just an inch from your ear, you cannot hear it. You cannot hear anything but the water!!! That’s the idea. Don’t hear anything except what Jesus says!!!

Application—Picture the new, white snow on a sunny day. Brighter than the sun in the summer. Christ’s eyes like a flame of fire, shining on the white hair, the golden sash, and the polished bronze feet must be almost blinding to see. The visual brighter than anything we know, and the sound louder than anything we know.

**Verse 16—In His right hand He held seven stars**—verse 20 tells us that the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches. So each city of believers has their own angel (2:1; 2:8; 2:12; 2:18; 3:1; 3:7; 3:14). The word *angel* is the same Greek word for “*angels*” used throughout the book and is the common New Testament word for *angels*. The message to each church begins with, *To the angel of the church in...* and names each of seven cities. Verse 1 told us, *...the things which must shortly take place; and He [God] sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John*. It seems to me, putting these together, that God is addressing the angel of the believers in each city, and communicating the message He wants John to write down. So God says, “*To the angel of the church in...*”, which the angel communicates to John, which John writes down and sends to those churches, for them to read, hear, and heed God’s message. This is similar to Daniel 8:16, where Jesus tells the angel Gabriel to give Daniel an understanding of the vision, which Daniel then wrote down, and we read. Or, it made each of the churches aware that an angel of their city was watching them and knew of the warning Jesus was giving them to repent and turn from their evil ways. Angels in the book brought judgment.

— The Greek word for *angel* is sometimes translated “messenger” (Luke 7:24; 9:52; James 2:25), but those, from their context, are obviously men. But Revelation uses the word angel 71 times, obviously as supernatural beings carrying out God’s commands. Why would John use the same word here, but mean something other than angel?

[The most common other interpretations of this phrase are:

- (1) John is referring to a human man/messenger who carried the book of Revelation to the believers in the seven cities.
- (2) The word means the elders or leaders/messengers of those churches.
- (3) The angel/messenger is the “pastor” of those churches.]

• **and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword**—This is an instrument of judgment. In the context of the believers in each city, it is a judgment against the enemies among the believers, who spread lies and otherwise harm His people, like the false prophets did in Israel. Jesus will judge those enemies (2 Thess 2:8). They are responsible for the apostasy in the institutional churches today. The New Testament repeatedly warns about false teachers among us.

• **and His face was like the sun shining in its strength**—We cannot even look directly at the sun, it’s light is so bright. But in the New Jerusalem, *they shall not have need of the...light of the sun, because the Lord God shall illumine them...* (Rev 22:5). That’s a bright light!!

**Verse 17—When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man**—like John, Peter, and James did at the Transfiguration, they fell face down to the ground and were terrified (Matt 17:6). Others had a similar experience when they saw Jesus in His glorified state (Dan 10:8-9, 17; Isa 6:5; Eze 1:28; 3:23; 9:8; 43:3; 44:4; Acts 26:13-14; even unbelievers in Rev 6:16-17). This, in contrast to the silly “visions” people claim to have of God today, as their “friend,” etc. Hebrews

12:28-29 says, *offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire.*” Walt Henrichsen said [and I paraphrase], “God is like a bonfire on a cold winter’s night.

At first you are drawn near it for comfort and warmth. But the closer you get to it, the more you realize the fire is a dangerous place.” The more you know God, the more fear you will have. Jesus said,

“*Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell*” (Matthew 10:28).

• ***And He placed His right hand on me, saying, “Do not be afraid,”*** literally, “stop being afraid.” The only reason we would not be afraid of Jesus is because He tells us to not be afraid, as He did at the Transfiguration. Jesus came to them and touched them and said, “*Get up, and do not be afraid*” (Matthew 17:7). For example, a small child might be afraid of something, but then the father comes to the child and says, “Don’t be afraid.” The child is comforted, but also afraid of the father who has the power over what was making the child fearful. As the children of God, He comforts us and tells us to not be afraid. But yet, we cannot not fear the One described in the next phrases—eternal God, power over death, keys of Hades. Let that soak into your mind!!! — Some will need to be afraid at His coming—such as the unbelievers in Revelation 6:16-17; 19:20-21.

• ***I am the first and the last***—Jesus has taken the eternal name of God, “I AM” (Exo 3:14; see also Isa 44:6; 48:12). Jesus said to them, “*Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I AM*” (John 8:58).

**Verse 18—*and the living One***—This is a title used throughout the Bible to describe God (Josh 3:10; 1 Sam 17:26; Psa 84:2; Hos 1:10; Matt 16:16; Acts 14:15; Rom 9:26; 2 Cor 3:3; 6:16; 1 Thess 1:9; 1 Tim 3:15; Heb 3:12; 9:14; 10:31; Rev 7:2). John 5:26 says, *Just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself.*

• ***and I was dead, and behold*** [a statement of amazement and wonder], ***I am alive forevermore***—The living One, the eternal God, who is the first and the last, who can never die, became a man and died. In His humanness, He died without ceasing to live as God. Now He is alive, as glorified humanity and deity. Hebrews 10:12 says that Jesus, *having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God.* He won’t die again. Did He die for the sins of Abraham? Yes. Did He die for the sins of David? Yes. Did he die for the sins of John? Yes. Did He die for the sins of Martin Luther? Yes. Did He die for your sins? Yes. For sins for all time!!! Now He can say, *I am alive forevermore!!* He’s the firstborn of the dead, the first human to have His glorified, resurrected body, for at least 2,000 years before we get our resurrected bodies. In His High Priestly Prayer, Jesus prayed, “*Now glorify Thou Me together with Thyself, Father, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was*” (John 17:5). This is who John saw here in chapter 1.

• ***and I have the keys of death***—Keys indicate access and authority. Jesus has the authority to decide who dies and who lives. He controls life and death. Jesus *Himself likewise also partook of the same (flesh and blood), that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives* (Heb 2:14-15). Now, for those who believe in Him, Jesus said, “*I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies ...because I live, you will live also*” (John 11:25).

• ***and of Hades***—It is the temporary dwelling place of the souls of unbelievers when they die (Luke 16:19-31). Hades, and those souls in it, are cast into the lake of fire after the Great White Throne Judgment, of which Jesus is the Judge, with the keys of authority and access (Rev 20:11-15).

**Verse 19—“*Therefore write***—John was told in verse 11 to write what he saw, which was a vision of

Jesus Christ in His glorified state, and he was to send it to the seven churches. Now John is told again to write three things, which are a good outline of the book. Writing is getting to be a lost art. It's a good way to communicate with future generations (Psa 102:18). Peter, just before his death, wrote, *I consider it right, as long as I am in this earthly dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder...that at any time after my departure you may be able to call these things to mind* (2 Pet 1:12-15). So even we today know what Peter wanted to say, to remind us of.

- ***the things which you have seen***—Jesus in His glorified state (chapter 1)
- ***and the things which are***—The condition of the seven churches (chapters 2–3)
- ***and the things which will take place after these things*** (the tribulation, Second Coming, Millennial Kingdom, Great White Throne Judgment, and eternity for the unbelievers and the believers).

**Verse 20**—“*As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.*” In verse 12, we read about Jesus standing in the middle of the lampstands. At that point, we wonder what the lampstands represent. Now Jesus tells us exactly what they are. The lampstands are the seven churches (the believers in seven cities). And the seven stars (of verse 16) are the angels of the believers of those seven cities. So each city with believers had their own city-angel. Whether we have that now or not, we don't know. Is there an angel of the believers in Grand Rapids? Don't know.

Christians are fond of quoting Psalm 91:11-12, but that is not a promise to us. It reads, *For He will give His angels charge concerning you, to guard you in all your ways, ...lest you strike your foot against a stone.* There are many believers who have suffered. We give credit to our “guardian angel,” but it is Jesus who has the keys of life and death, not angels. Even John fell down to worship an angel, but *the angel said, “Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God!”* (Rev 19:10).

Application—We should not give credit to angels for what God is doing. They are His messengers, but the glory and worship goes to God, not them. The angel told John, “*I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren.*” If we are putting angels on our Christmas trees, we should also put pictures of our fellow believers on our trees! For example, if you see a beautiful, huge building, do you give the credit for the building to the man who nailed some boards, or to the master builder, who was the one to tell the man to nail the boards?

## Introduction to the Seven Churches of Revelation 2–3

These seven letters represent the last inspired epistles (letters) to the believers of the church age.

“The pointed message of Christ to each of these churches [groups of believers] is the capstone to New Testament Epistles dealing with the practical life of those committed to the Christian faith.” [Robertson]

These seven churches were not only in relative proximity to the island of Patmos, **they were addressed to believers**, many of whom had previous interaction with the apostles of Jesus.

The order of the churches from Ephesus to Laodicea fit a geographical outline, which John followed. Ephesus was on the coast, therefore, it was the closest to Patmos, so it makes sense that it is the first one.

Many interpreters, however, take a historical perspective, claiming that each church represents a different period of church history from the first century to the current generation of believers. For example,

“The seven lampstands are said to symbolize the seven churches of Asia, but there was a mystery connected with them (and there have been all kinds of efforts made to interpret this mystery). God has been pleased to give us here a prophetic history of the church for the entire dispensation. For myself, I have no question that this was in very truth the mind of the Lord in sending these letters to the seven churches. Take any good, reliable church history and see for yourself how perfectly the key fits the lock.” [Ironside]

Though many knowledgeable people have held this view, a geographical interpretation seems to better suit the text.

“There are some remarkable similarities in comparing these letters to the seven churches to the movement of church history since the beginning of the apostolic church. **However**, the Scriptures do not expressly authorize this interpretation.” [BK Commentary]

Four reasons why a historical interpretation should be doubted:

1. There is no mention of a historical comparison.
2. There is a logical geographical order.
3. Taking a historical view limits our current applications, warnings, and promises only to the last church of Laodicea, and ignores the applications, warnings, and promises made to the previous other six churches.
4. It is not consistent to say that Ephesus represented the first century of Christianity, since all seven churches existed in the first century. Therefore, they **all** epitomize the condition of the church in the first century, and every century since.

Therefore,

“Chapters 2–3 are especially important for they consist of messages to seven local [city] churches [groups of believers] which appropriately represent the entire church.” [BK Commentary]





# Chapters 2-3

## Christ's Messages to the Seven Churches of Asia Minor

### The Church in Ephesus — 2:1-7

**Verse 1**—***To the angel***—The revelation of Jesus was given by God to Jesus, *and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John* (1:1). The message to the churches was from God, given to Jesus, who communicated it by His angel (one of whom was over the group of believers in each city), who then communicated it to John, who wrote it to the churches. The word “angel” is used 71 times in Revelation. No one disputes who they are later in the book, and there is no reason to change the meaning of the word to something else in these chapters. [The angel of each church is not the “pastor.” There was no such thing in the New Testament church. That is to not only read our time but our American culture into the New Testament time.]

- ***of the church***—Paul wrote, *...the church, which is His body* (Eph 1:22-23). By definition, the church is believers in Jesus. The “local church” as we know it today is impossible because it is made up of both believers and unbelievers. Also, the church should not be defined as a “gathering.” Paul wrote *...if the whole church should assemble together* (1 Cor 14:23). Gathering is something the body of Christ **does**, it does not define who they **are**.
- **The City: *in Ephesus***—This letter is being sent to all the believers (the church) in the whole city of Ephesus. Ephesus was a seaport on the western coast of modern-day Turkey. Paul had visited Ephesus about 43 years before this letter was written to them. He remained there several years and preached the Gospel to them (Acts 19–20). After that, the Apostle John (who wrote the book of Revelation) lived in Ephesus before his exile to the island of Patmos, off the coast of Ephesus (Rev 1:9). It was from Ephesus *that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks* (Acts 19:10).
- ***Write***—John was commanded by Jesus to *write in a book what you see, and send it to the seven churches* (1:11).
- ***The One***—The glorified Jesus, as described in 1:13-16.
- ***who holds the seven stars in His right hand***—*the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches* (1:20).
- ***the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands***—*the seven lampstands are the seven churches* (1:20). Jesus is also described as *in the middle of the lampstands* (1:13). It is from this perspective that He is observing everything they do and do not do.
- ***says this***—Jesus is the author of this message. He alone is the authority in our lives. We are all accountable to Him.

**Verses 2-3—Their Commendation: *I know***—Gk. *oida*, lit. “complete and full knowledge.”

- ***your deeds and your toil***—their labor was to the point of exhaustion. They were hard workers.
- ***and perseverance***—emphasizes patience, a courageous acceptance of hardship and suffering
- ***and that you cannot tolerate evil men***—Paul had written to the Ephesians to not *give the devil an opportunity* (Eph 4:27), and they held to that standard. They had spiritual discernment.

Application—“Tolerance in personal opinions, tastes, and preferences is a virtue, but tolerance when dealing with the facts is ridiculous.” [DeWitt, “Why Christianity”]

- **and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false**—Paul had told them, *...after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse*



*things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert* (Acts 20:28-31). The Ephesian believers were doctrinally sound.

- **and you have perseverance and have endured**—They remained faithful to the Lord and loyal to His Word and to the work He wanted them to do.
- **for My name's sake**—*God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father* (Phil 2:9-11). Salvation comes by His name (John 1:12; Rom 10:13) and because of His name also comes persecution (Matt 10:22).
- **and have not grown weary**—It does not mean to become physically tired, but to not give up the fight. *Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary* (Gal 6:9). Remember the example of Jesus. *For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart* (Heb 12:3).

**Verse 4—Their Condemnation:** *‘But I have this against you* [i.e., the church, the believers], **that you have left your first love**—Paul wrote of the first generation of Ephesian believers, *...having heard of...your love for all the saints* (Eph 1:15) and *...that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able...to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge...* (Eph 3:17-19). Evidently, these second generation believers kept the doctrine that was taught them and had maintained a high level of service, but they were increasingly lacking in love for Christ and others.

Application—Jesus said, *“‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’”* (Matt 22:37-39). You can teach others doctrine, motivate them to service, but you cannot give them passion or love, they must decide that for themselves.

**Verse 5**—He urged them to do three things:

- **‘Therefore remember from where you** [believers] **have fallen**—lit. “keep on remembering,” recall and reflect on the past and the joy of the Lord they used to have.
- **and repent**—to change one’s mind or direction. It includes confession of sin with the view of stopping the bad behavior so it can be replaced with what is right.
- **and do the deeds you** [believers] **did at first**—i.e., repeat. This can’t mean Christian service because Jesus already said they did that well. So these deeds have to do with their first love from which they have fallen, i.e., the love and joy of fellowship with Jesus Christ, focusing our life on Him and who He is. Good doctrine and service for Christ is important, but it should be done because of our love of Christ and who He is.

- **Warning: or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place**—unless you repent—The lampstand is the light of a Christian witness, removing believers themselves out of the city.

This, of course, was tragically fulfilled ultimately. The city, now uninhabited, is one of the important ruins in that area, located seven miles from the sea due to accumulation of silt which has stopped up the harbor of this once important seaport (Walvoord).



Today, Ephesus is an Islamic area.

**Verse 6—‘Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate**—Also mentioned in the letter to Pergamum, it’s not clear exactly who they were. In the Pergamum letter, they are linked with Balaam’s false teaching that led Israel into sexual immorality. Clement of Alexandria wrote that the Nicolaitans “abandon themselves to pleasure like goats...leading a life of self-indulgence.” To hate something is to not choose it, to not love it (see Rom 9:11-13). The Ephesians believers did not choose a life of self-indulgence and sexual immorality.

**Application**—It’s good to hate what God hates. *Whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God* (James 4:4). *Hate evil, you who love the Lord* (Psa 97:10). *You hate all who do iniquity* (Psa 5:5). God said, *“I will repay those who hate Me”* (Deut 32:41).

**Verse 7—Appeal: ‘He who has an ear, ...**Although the letter is to the group of believers in Ephesus, it’s the individual who responds and can change. No group appears before Christ for judgment—only individuals (1 Cor 3; 2 Cor 5:9-10). The text says, *He who has an ear*, not “those who have ears.”

- **let him hear**—Hearing is not merely listening, or even agreeing with what is said. It is understanding and responding. Making a difference in your life.
- **what the Spirit says to the churches**—Here we see that the Holy Spirit overshadows the human authors so that what they write is without error. *For no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God* (2 Pet 1:21). So the path is: the message originates with God to Jesus to the angel to John, inspired by the Spirit to write it down.
- **To him who overcomes**—again, it is an appeal to the individual person. *Overcomes* what? The problem He addressed for the Ephesian believers, i.e., those who did not remember that Christ is the object of all doctrine and all Christian service. Overcoming is to grow in their love of Him. As Solomon wrote, *Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life* (Prov 4:23).

**Reward: I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God’**—This is a literal tree (Rev 22:1-22). This is not equivalent to salvation nor is it necessary for maintaining eternal life, because that comes from receiving Jesus Christ as your Savior. So it seems to mean a reward, a heavenly blessing for those who love Christ.

**Application**—Doctrinal knowledge and service for God are important, but loving God with all your heart, soul, and mind is first and foremost.

The Church in Smyrna — 2:8-11

**Verse 8—“And to the angel of the church—** see 2:1

- **The City: in Smyrna write**—Smyrna was a large and wealthy city, 35 miles north of Ephesus. It was, and still is, a seaport. Today it is called Izmir, with a population of about 200,000. This city is not mentioned anywhere else in Scripture. All that is known about the believers in Smyrna is contained in this letter. Smyrna is the Greek word for myrrh, often used in anointing the dead (John 19:39).
- **The first and the last**—With respect to time, Jesus was first in that He was the Creator and existed as God before creation (John 1:1-2; Col 1:16; Rev 1:8, 17; 21:6; 22:13). And He is the last because He is the Judge of the Great White Throne judgment, where the unbelieving dead will be judged at the end of time (Rev 20:11-15).
- **who was dead, and has come to life, says this**—These are descriptions of Christ taken from 1:17-18. Jesus, in His humanity, did die, but He rose from the dead, to never die again. He is alive forevermore. This should encourage the believers in Smyrna to have an eternal perspective.

**Verse 9—Their Commendation: ‘I know your tribulation**—Jesus knows when we suffer. It’s part of our age. Jesus said, ...*In the world you will have tribulation* (John 16:33). In the Millennial Kingdom, the believers will have peace in the world, but not now.

- **and your poverty**—Gk. lit. “extreme poverty,” what a contrast in a city that was known for its wealth.
- **(but you are rich)**—physically they were poor, but spiritually they were rich. A lack of material wealth does not prohibit spiritual wealth. James 2:5 says, ...*Did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith?* ...
- **and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not**—Paul wrote, *He is not a Jew who is one outwardly...but he is a Jew who is one inwardly* (Rom 2:28-29). So probably these were Jews by race but were spiritually pagan.
- **but are a synagogue of Satan**—Satan is mentioned in four of the seven letters (2:9, 13, 24; 3:9). Speaking of religions, especially of sacrifices, Paul said ...*they sacrifice to demons, and not to God* (1 Cor 10:20). To worship and believe in anything or anyone other than Jesus Christ, as described in the Bible, is blasphemy and of Satan.

Along with the church in Philadelphia, Smyrna did not receive a condemnation.

**Verse 10—Appeal: ‘Do not fear what you are about to suffer**—Already Jesus acknowledged their suffering and their faithfulness to Him, but He warned them that more suffering was coming. But they were not to be afraid. As David wrote, *In God I have put my trust, I shall not be afraid. What can man do to me?* (Psa 56:11).

- **Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you [believers] into prison**—God is allowing Satan to do this to the believers, similar to Job (Job 1–2) and the future tribulation saints.
- **so that you will be tested**—God’s purpose is to test their faith (James 1:1-8), to give greater glory to God. Satan’s purpose is to get them to curse God. As with Job, Satan thinks God is buying our faith, and if there is suffering, we will turn away from God.
- **and you will have tribulation for ten days**—evidently, for ten days the persecution will be very severe. We don’t know when that ten days was.
- **Be faithful**—Greek present tense, “continuous or repeated action.” Middle voice, the subject performs an action upon one’s self for their own benefit. Imperative mood, a command to make each attitude/action our habitual practice.

Application—“We may never be martyrs but we can die to self, die to sin, die to the world, die to our plans and ambitions. ...But do we consent to that? Are we willing to be God’s wheat to be planted where He wills? Can we honestly say, “Whatever the cost, by the grace of God, I will not fear but will be faithful to Christ, come what may”? [Vance Havner]

- **until death**—The most famous martyr from Smyrna was the early church father Polycarp, who was killed about 50 years after John:

“...when they were about also to fix him with nails, he said, “Leave me as I am; for He that giveth me strength to endure the fire, will also enable me, without your securing me by nails, to remain without moving in the pile [of wood].

Looking up to heaven, he said, ‘O Lord God Almighty, the Father of thy beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the knowledge of Thee...I give Thee thanks

that Thou hast counted me worthy of this day and this hour, that I should have a part in the number of Thy martyrs...Among whom may I be accepted this day before Thee as an acceptable sacrifice...I praise Thee for all things, I bless Thee, I glorify Thee, along with Thy beloved Son, with whom to Thee be glory both now and to all coming ages. Amen.’ When he had pronounced this amen, they kindled the fire and the flame blazed forth in great fury...”



that Thou hast counted me worthy of this day and this hour, that I should have a part in the number of Thy martyrs...Among whom may I be accepted this day before Thee as an acceptable sacrifice...I praise Thee for all things, I bless Thee, I glorify Thee, along with Thy beloved Son, with whom to Thee be glory both now and to all coming ages. Amen.’ When he had pronounced this amen, they kindled the fire and the flame blazed forth in great fury...”

- **Reward: and I will give you the crown of life**—the reward for faithfulness to Jesus, even in suffering. True Christians persevere (Matt 10:22; 24:13; Mark 4:13-20; John 8:31; Col 1:21-23; 1 John 2:19). James 1:12 says, *Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has passed the test, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.*

Application—“Salvation is a free gift, but rewards, for those who are saved, are earned. The **quality** of our service is the criterion. Rewards are often spoken of as crowns.” [Ryrie] *...each man’s work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the **quality** of each man’s work* (1 Cor 3:13).

**Verse 11—Appeal: ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches**

[believers]—The message is addressed to all the believers in Smyrna, but the response is individual.

- **Reward: He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death’**—...but for the unbelieving... *their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death* (Rev 21:8). It is conscious, eternal damnation in the lake of fire. *If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire* (Rev 20:14-15).

Application—The characteristic of our dispensation is suffering and persecution. But do not fear the persecution of the world. It is a test. Be faithful until death, and you will be rewarded in eternity.

## The Church in Pergamum — 2:12-17

**Verse 12—*And to the angel of the church***—see 2:1

- **The City: *in Pergamum write***—This city was located about 45 miles north of Smyrna. It was a wealthy and wicked city, with cults worshipping the Greek gods Athena, Dionysus, and Zeus. But it was most known for its several temples devoted to Roman emperor worship. It was also well known for its university, with a library of about 200,000 volumes, rivaling the library at Alexandria, Egypt (the largest in the known world). It was a very evil city, filled with idols.
- “Pergamum is credited with being the home and namesake of parchment. Prior to the creation of parchment, manuscripts were transcribed on papyrus, which was produced only in Alexandria. When the Ptolemies of Africa refused to export any more papyrus to Pergamum, King Eumenes II commanded that an alternative source be found. This led to the production of parchment, which is made out of a thin sheet of sheep or goat skin. Parchment reduced the Roman Empire’s dependency on Egyptian papyrus and allowed for the increased dissemination of knowledge throughout Europe and Asia. The introduction of parchment also greatly expanded the holdings of the Library of Pergamum” (*wikipedia*).
- ***The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this***—Jesus is describing Himself as the Judge (see v. 16). At His Second Coming, it says, *From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty* (Rev 19:15). This is the first negative introduction of Jesus. It is a warning of coming judgment for those who forsake God. “Here there is added emphasis by the repeated use of the article before the word sword and before each adjective. Christ is described as having *the sword, the two-edged one, the sharp one*” (Walvoord).



**Verse 13—Their Commendation: *I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is***—This could refer to the rampant idol worship in this city. For example, the “altar” of Zeus was a colonnaded court in the form of a horseshoe, 120 by 112 feet. The podium was 18 feet high. Many of these have been excavated. Another temple to Asklepios, the “god” of healing was full of snakes. People would lay in the temple, hoping to be touched (and healed) by one of the snakes. But the worst of them was the Roman emperor worship. Failure to worship the emperor frequently resulted in death. The word *throne* indicates a master or lord. Satan was ruling in Pergamum. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, German engineers dismantled the so-called “Throne of Satan” and it went on display in the city’s Pergamon Museum in 1930, just in time to inspire one of the most brutal dictators the world has ever seen (Robertson, “The Seat of Satan: Ancient Pergamum”).

- ***and you hold fast My name***—We are instructed to *hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end* (Hebrews 3:6); *hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end* (3:14); *let us hold fast our confession* (4:14). Cling to Christ’s name.
- ***and did not deny My faith***—The believers were faithful to Christ.
- ***even in the days of Antipas, My witness*** [Gk. *martus*, i.e., “martyr”], ***My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells***—Nothing else is known of him except he was martyred for his belief in Christ, and he was faithful to death. It was a time of great testing for the believers.

**Verse 14— Their Condemnation:** An Old Testament heresy—*‘But I have a few things against you [the church, i.e., believers], because you have there some [unbelievers] who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel—*

1. *to eat things sacrificed to idols and*
2. *to commit acts of immorality*

Numbers 22–25 and 31 tell us the story of Balaam. He was a non-Israelite prophet, whom the Moabite King Balak hired to curse the Israelites (who were on their way to the land of Israel from their Egyptian bondage). But on his way to curse the Israelites, an angel of the Lord used Balaam’s donkey to bar his way, and Balaam struck his donkey because it would not go forward. Then God caused the donkey to speak to Balaam. God kept Balaam from cursing the Israelites. But later, Balaam came up with another scheme where he sent Moabite women into the Israelite camp, and the *people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab. For they invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods.* As John wrote, there were some among the believers in Pergamum who were enticing the believers *to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality*, to abandon the teachings of Christ.

Application—“I have never gone out to mingle with the world without losing something of myself” (Albert the Great, friend and mentor of Thomas Aquinas). Someone has said, “You may wrestled with a skunk and win, but you will still come out of there covered in the smell.”

**Verse 15—A New Testament heresy—‘So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.** As mentioned in the letter to the church in Ephesus, Clement of Alexandria wrote that the Nicolaitans “abandon themselves to pleasure like goats...leading a life of self-indulgence.” To hate something is to not choose it, to not love it. Israel had false prophets and the church has false teachers—all with the goal of getting believers away from God and His Word.

**Verse 16—Appeal:** *‘Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth—*obviously, this is talking about unbelievers. John had written, *They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us* (1 John 2:19). The believers were allowing in their midst so-called believers who held to false teaching, who were encouraging the believers to live a self-indulgent lifestyle, even worshipping idols and committing acts of immorality. Paul wrote, *Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump...clean out the old leaven...I wrote to you...not to associate with immoral people; I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world,...for then you would have to go out of the world. But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person...—not even to eat with such a one* (1 Corinthians 5:6-11).

**Verse 17—Appeal:** *‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches* (believers)—Once again, the message is to the group but the response is by the individual person.

**Reward:** *To him who overcomes—*Christ promises three things to the faithful:

1. *to him I will give some of the hidden manna—*Perhaps this refers to Christ as the Bread from heaven, the believer’s spiritual food, as God provided the Israelites with physical manna for physical food.
2. *and I will give him a white stone—*It’s unclear what the *white stone* refers to. In the Bible, white usually means righteousness, so this somehow represents our salvation and the righteousness we receive from Christ.
3. *and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it’—*God

told the Israelites a similar thing, that the ... *foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord ... and choose[s] what pleases Me ... To them I will give ... a name better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name which will not be cut off* (Isaiah 56).

Application—The warning is clear: Do not tolerate false teaching that leads you *astray from the singleness and purity of devotion to Christ* (2 Corinthians 11:3).

## The Church in Thyatira — 2:18-29

**Verse 18—*And to the angel of the church***—see 2:1

- **The City: *in Thyatira write***: Thyatira was about 40 miles southeast of Pergamum. Unlike Smyrna or Pergamum, Thyatira was located in a river valley and lacked an acropolis, the usual site of temples to idols. It was known for its wool and purple dyeing industry (a dye taken from the madder root, a perennial climbing plant with evergreen leaves and small pale yellow flowers, the roots can be over three feet long, and are usually harvested in the second or third year of growth.



Considered an ancient or heirloom dye plant, madder has been used throughout history for the brilliant orange and red hues it can produce.) Lydia, *a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul*. She was from Thyatira, was converted by Paul when he was in Philippi, and he and those with him stayed in her house when they brought the Gospel to Thyatira (Acts 16:14-21). This is the smallest of the cities, yet it has the longest letter.

- ***The Son of God***—The only time this phrase appears in Revelation. Here the emphasis is especially on the deity of Christ.
- ***who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this***—The description of Christ in 1:14-15. Nothing can be hidden from His sight. *It is time for judgment to begin with the household of God* (1 Peter 4:17).

**Verse 19—Their Commendation: ‘*I know your deeds, and your love***—contrasted to those in Ephesus, Thyatira is the first group of believers to be commended for their love.

- ***and faith***—in Christ
- ***and service and perseverance***—Out of love and faith come service and perseverance.
- ***that your deeds of late are greater than at first***—In contrast to the believers in Ephesus, whose love now was less than before, the service for Christ by those in Thyatira were greater as time went on.

**Verse 20—Their Condemnation: ‘*But I have this against you, that you tolerate***—The Greek word *aphiemi*, which means “leave alone, or permit.” Tolerance of sin is sin. By permitting sin in the name of tolerance, you endorse the very thing you claim, by your allegiance to Christ, to hate.

- ***the woman Jezebel***—Probably not her real name, but she was like the wife of King Ahab, who was so evil, the Bible describes King Ahab’s marriage to her as the most wicked thing he did (1 Kings 16:30-31). Through her influence, Baal worship became widespread in Israel.
- ***who calls herself a prophetess***—claiming to receive new revelation from God.
- ***and she teaches and leads***—A violation of the clear biblical teaching that women are not to be teachers of men or leading men (1 Tim 2:12).
- ***My bond-servants astray***—she is leading the true believers away from God and His Word, condoning sin.

- ***so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols***—True Christians can fall into sexual immorality (1 Cor 6:15-20) and idolatry (1 Cor 10:21). But to lead other Christians into false doctrine or immoral living is a very serious sin (Matt 18:6-10).

**Verse 21—‘I gave her time to repent**—A gift of God’s grace

- ***and she does not want to repent of her immorality***—The Greek words are first aorist active indicative, indicating an action in past time. Probably this means there was a “definite visit or message of warning to this woman” (“Word Pictures in the New Testament”). But she loved darkness rather than the light (John 3:19). Peter described unrepentant sinners as, *They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are stains and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, as they carouse with you, having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children; forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having...loved the wages of unrighteousness* (2 Pet 2:13-15).

**Verse 22—‘Behold, I will throw her on a bed** [of sickness—not part of the Gk text]—more likely the *bed* is death and hell, for those who do not repent.

- ***and those who commit* [spiritual] *adultery with her into great tribulation* [distress, trouble], ***unless they repent of her deeds***—because they are believers who are committing the spiritual adultery, if they don’t repent, they are thrown into great tribulation, but not into hell, as she was.**

Application—The issue here is not the sin, although that is terrible. But it’s the fact that they will not repent. Jesus judges the evil, but he also offers deliverance to those who have fallen, if they repent.

**Verse 23—‘And I will kill her children with pestilence** [lit. “death”]—This could be this woman’s actual children born from the sexual sins or her spiritual children, who followed her into immorality. Paul wrote of the unsaved in the tribulation, *...for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved* (2 Thess 2:10).

- ***And all the churches* [believers] ***will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts***—An Old Testament reference to God (1 Chron 28:9; Psa 7:9; Prov 24:12; Jer 11:20; 17:10; 20:12). Nothing can be hidden from the eyes of God.**
- ***and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds***—What you do reveals what you believe!! (See Matt 7:16; 16:27; Rom 2:6; 2 Tim 4:14.) Works do not get you saved, but they are the basis for divine judgment. Works cannot save, but they do damn.

**Verse 24—‘But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching**—true believers, who kept the faith in Christ and His Word.

- ***who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them***—The believers in Smyrna faced hostility from the “synagogue of Satan” (unbelieving Jews), the believers in Pergamum existed at the site of Satan’s throne (2:13), but the believers in Thyatira were exposed to *the deep things of Satan*. Paul wrote, *...the schemes of the evil...our struggle is...against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places* (Eph 6:11-12).

— ***I place no other burden on you***—comfort and hope to those whose faith is genuine. The burden of being exposed to the *deep things of Satan* was enough burden to bear.

**Verse 25—Appeal: ‘Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come**—This is our encouragement even today. The Tribulation and antichrist will not be revealed until *the apostasy* [falling away from the faith] *comes first* (2 Thess 2:3). So we can expect to see this falling away even now, as we approach the End Times. That means we may feel alone as we see those around us

falling away from the faith. Believers will need to hold fast until the Second Coming of Jesus.

**Verse 26—Reward: ‘He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS—**Reigning in Christ’s earthly Millennial Kingdom.

**Verse 27—AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES—**Now, Jezebel’s rule is in the world of Satan’s domain, but in Christ’s kingdom, righteousness will rule. If humans break the rule of righteousness, they will be broken, like a piece of pottery.

- **as I also have received authority from My Father—**see John 5:22, 27.

**Verse 28—and I will give him the morning star—**Jesus Himself (Rev. 22:16). Christ promised believers Himself in all His fullness (1 Cor 13:12).

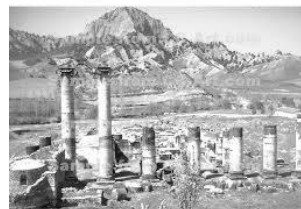
**Verse 29—Appeal: ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches’—**Again, the group gets the message, but it’s the individual person who can respond to the message.

Application—Hold fast to God and His Word. Don’t be led astray by false teachers claiming to be from God, especially if they are women who are leading and teaching men (already disobeying the Bible).

### The Church in Sardis — 3:1-6

**Verse 1—“To the angel of the church—**see 2:1

**The City—in Sardis write—**Sardis was about 50 miles southeast of Thyatira. “It was an important and wealthy city located on the commercial trade route running east and west through Lydia. Much of its wealth came from its textile manufacturing and dye industry and its jewelry trade. Most of the city practiced



pagan worship, and there were many mystery cults or secret religious societies. The magnificent Temple of Artemis dating from the fourth century B.C. was one of its points of interest and still exists as an important ruin. The church to which the letter was addressed continued its existence until the fourteenth century. Today only a small village known as Sart exists amid the ancient ruins.”

~Walvoord. Ancient Sardis was built on an acropolis with cliffs on three sides. They thought they were impregnable and didn’t even keep watch on the cliff sides, from which the armies came and defeated them. It came under Roman rule in 133 B.C., and was destroyed by an earthquake in A.D. 17. Emperor Tiberius rebuilt the city, and they made a temple in his honor, as well as a temple to Diana, but by John’s day, it was a decaying city.

- **He who has the seven Spirits of God—**mentioned in 1:4, it probably refers to the fullness of the Holy Spirit (see Isaiah 11:2).
- **and the seven stars—**The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches (1:20).
- **says this: ‘I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive—**They had a reputation that they were doing effective ministry. Men would commend them, but Christ did not.
- **but you are dead—**But God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart (1 Sam 16:7). And what Jesus saw in their hearts was—you are dead. It’s like a museum with stuffed animals in their natural habitats. They look alive, but they are actually dead.

- Some think these people are unbelievers, but, for several reasons, it seems to me that they are carnal believers. First, Jesus is addressing the believers in Sardis. And, Jesus tells them *remember what you have received and heard*, which indicates they are believers. It also seems like their reputation was based on religious deeds that impressed others. But Paul described these kinds of deeds as *wood, hay, and straw*, the kinds of works that don't impress God, that will be burned up at the Bema judgment, that will not be rewarded in heaven (1 Corinthians 3:11-15).

**Verse 2—‘Wake up**—do something. Are you a maturing Christian or a sleeping Christian?  
*...examine yourselves* (2 Cor 13:5).

- **and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die**—Hebrews 2:1 says, *we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it*. Do nothing to grow and mature, and you will drift away from what you already know of God and His Word. There is no standing still!! Strengthen what you do know before you drift away from that, too.
- **for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God**—mature. Hebrews 5:11–6:1 says, *...by this time you ought to be teachers, ...you have come to need milk and not solid food...but solid food is for the mature...let us press on to maturity*. There is unfulfilled potential.

**Verse 3—‘So remember what you have received and heard**—It reminds me of the parable of the soils (Matt 13:10-23). Maybe you hear the Word with joy and agree with it, but you go home and the things of life snatch it away, so you don't even remember what you heard. Or the worry of the world or the deceitfulness of riches choke out the Word. Paul talked about *weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth* (2 Tim 3:6-7).

- **and keep it**—*by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him* (1 John 2:3-4). You do not **know** Jesus unless you **obey** Jesus!
- **and repent**—have you ever repented for forgetting the Word? For not obeying the Word?
- **Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you**—We do not know how much time we have on the earth to prepare for eternity. At any moment, you could have a stroke, go blind, .....or die. And—Jesus said, *we will not know at what hour I will come to you*. Don't think you have lots of time and you'll repent and live right in God's eyes later. You may not have a “later.” There's an urgency to be obedient to God today (2 Cor 6:2).

**Verse 4—Their Commendation: ‘But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments**—they were obedient, repentant, mature believers.

- **and they will walk with Me in white**—*white garments* (v. 5). Those who refused to spiritually defile their garments on earth would have new white garments in heaven. *For the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints* (Rev 19:8).
- **for they are worthy**—salvation is not based on works, but rewards are based on works. Those who live in obedience to Christ, will be rewarded in eternity.

**Verse 5—‘He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments**—19:8

- **and I will not erase his name from the book of life**—Some say this implies that our names can be erased, but that is NOT what it says. [It might imply that if a human was saying it, but here it's Christ who is saying it—it's His promise to us, and God is able and does keep His promises!] It's a strong promise that those whose names are in the book of life, have eternal security. No one, not even Christ, will erase their names from that book. And it's the people whose names are

in the book of life, *from the foundation of the world* (Rev 13:8; 17:8), who have received Jesus as their personal Savior, who will go to heaven to be with Him. *And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire* (Rev 20:15).

- **and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels**—Jesus also said this during His earthly life: *Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven, and ... also before the angels of God* (Matt 10:32; Luke 12:8). This word “confess” is the Greek word *homologeō*, which means “to speak the same, to agree, to acknowledge.” It’s not about religious works that impress men, it’s about acknowledging Jesus as God and Savior and living a moral life that speaks the same as He does, to live in agreement with Him.

**Verse 6**—*‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches’*—Again, the message goes out to all believers, but the response is by individual believers.

Application—You spiritually snooze—you spiritually lose!!

### The Church in Philadelphia — 3:7-13

**Verse 7**—*“And to the angel of the church—see 2:1*

- **The City: in Philadelphia write**—This city was about 28 miles southeast of Sardis and 65 miles east of Ephesus. The king of Pergamum built the city in 189 B.C. and named it “Philadelphia,” the nickname of his brother, for whom he had great love and who became his successor because he had no children. It is similar to the Greek word meaning “brotherly love.” The city was destroyed in an earthquake in A.D. 37 and suffered many aftershocks. As with other Asia Minor cities, the Roman emperor helped them rebuild, and temples were made in honor of him and to worship him.
- **He who is holy**—Jesus is the righteous One, ... *who knew no sin* (2 Cor 5:21).
- **who is true**—*Jesus said..., “I AM...the truth”* (John 14:6). There are at least three important things about truth: (1) Truth is always absolute, not relative. True things are always true. (2) Truth always corresponds to reality. Truth is the way things actually are. (3) Truth is always non-contradictory. Truth is logical (a thing and its opposite cannot both be true).
- **who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this**—This is a quote of Isaiah 22:22. In that passage, the key of the house of David was given to Eliakim. He then had authority over all of the king’s treasure. It seems that Jesus is making a parallel—as Eliakim controlled the king’s treasure, so Jesus has the authority over our spiritual treasures. *He knows your deeds and I have put before you an open door which no one can shut*. As a believer, God has opened spiritual doors for us, and nothing man can do can close those. Jesus also said He has *the keys of death and Hades* (Rev 1:18) and the *key of the abyss*—the dwelling place of the worse of the demons and where Satan will be bound for 1000 years (Rev 9:1; 20:1-2). It indicates power and authority.

**Verse 8**—*I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut*—the emphasis is on Christ’s sovereign power. What is the “open door”? Possibly the open door for testimony and ministry, that cannot be shut by any persecution.

- **Their Commendation: ‘because you have a little power**—Perhaps this has to do with their impact on the culture around them, influencing people with the truth of Jesus.



- **and have kept My word**—Like Job, who said, *I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food* (Job 23:12).
- **and have not denied My name**—especially by martyrdom

**Verse 9**—*Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie*—As in Smyrna, Christians in Philadelphia faced hostility from unbelieving Jews. Racially and culturally they were Jews, but spiritually, they were not (see Romans 2:28-29).

- **I will make them come and bow down at your feet and make them know that I have loved you**—probably meaning at the Great Throne Judgment, where all unbelievers will bow before Jesus (Phil 2:9-11), and they will know that God loves His chosen people.

**Verse 10**—*Because you have kept the word of My perseverance*—They have persevered through many trials, but have kept God’s Word and have not denied His name. In our church age, Jesus said, *...In the world you will have tribulation* (John 16:33). But Jesus will keep the church age believers from the tribulation that will come on the **whole** world.

- **I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth**— This seems to refer to the testing John is about to describe in chapters 4 to 19. Jesus also referred to this as a tribulation that will come upon the whole earth before His Second Coming (Matt 24). To those who believe in Jesus, He promises, *I also will keep you from the hour of testing*. This cannot mean just the believers in Philadelphia because He said the testing is to come upon *the whole world*. So it must mean that those believers in Christ in the Church Age, who are alive when it is the time for this worldwide testing, will be **kept from** it.

“He could not have stated it more explicitly. If Christ had meant to say that they would be preserved **through** a time of trouble, or would be **taken out** from within the Tribulation, a different verb and a different preposition would have been required” (Walvoord, *Revelation*).

Believers are taken to heaven at the Rapture, thus **kept from** the Tribulation to come (see John 14:1-6; 1 Thess 4:13-18; 5:9).

— Also, significant is the Greek phrase *tereo ek* (**keep from**). Some think the English means that the church will go through the tribulation judgments and that God will preserve them in the midst of it. However, the meaning of *ek* is “from,” “out from,” or “away from.” If Jesus meant the church would be preserved through the tribulation, He would have used the words *en* (“in”) or *dia* (“through”). But *tereo ek* means just the opposite: continuous existence outside.

**Verse 11**—*I am coming quickly*—the Rapture, Jesus coming for His bride.

— **...hold fast what you have**—*Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful* (Heb 10:23). John also wrote, *Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward* (2 John 2:8).

— **so that no one will take your crown**—You can gain and lose crowns, or rewards, in heaven. 1 Corinthians 3:13-15 says, *each man’s work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work. If any man’s work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.*

**Verse 12**—*He who overcomes*—The true believer, who will be rewarded.

- **I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God**—a pillar is a stability, also a place of honor

“This perhaps had peculiar significance to those who were in Philadelphia because of their historic experiences with earthquakes which frequently had ruined their buildings and left only the pillars standing. They are assured of continuance throughout eternity because of their faith in Christ as the One who enables them to overcome the world” (Walvoord).

- **and he will not go out from it anymore**—security in heaven
- **and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name**—In the tribulation to come, the 144,000, ...*having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads* (Rev 14:1). Also, the antichrist has his name on the people who worship him (Rev 13:16-17). This is a sort of branding, indicating ownership and protection.

**Verse 13**—*‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches’*—Again, the message is to the group of believers, but the response is by the individual.

Application—Hold fast to God’s Word, persevere under trial, live like Jesus could return at any moment...

### The Church in Laodicea — 3:14-22

**Verse 14**—*“To the angel of the church*—see 2:1. There are some who say these people are unbelievers. But Jesus here calls them the “church” [*ekklesia* “called out ones”], by definition, the “body of Christ,” “those who believe” (Eph 1:19, 22-23). [The only way you can claim these are unbelievers is to have an institutional definition of the “church,” which does include believers and unbelievers. But that’s not the Bible’s definition of “church.”]



**The City: in Laodicea**—“This city founded by Antiochus II in the middle of the third century before Christ and named after his wife Laodice. It was situated about forty miles southeast of Philadelphia on the road to Colossae. It was located on a plateau several hundred feet high. Under Roman rule Laodicea had become wealthy and had a profitable business arising from the production of wool cloth, medicine, and banking. When destroyed by an earthquake about A.D. 60, it was able to rebuild without any outside help. Its economic sufficiency tended to lull the church to sleep spiritually; and though there is mention of the church as late as the fourteenth century, the city ... is now in complete ruins.” ~Walvoord

— The New Testament does not record the beginning of the believers at Laodicea. Paul wrote to the Colossians, *For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf, and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face* (2:1). Since Paul’s co-worker Epaphras evangelized the people in nearby Colossae (1:6-7), he may have done so in Laodicea also.

- **Write: The Amen**—This is the only place in Scripture that describes Jesus as “The Amen.” But in Isaiah 65:16, God is twice called the “God of truth [Heb. *amen*].” The Hebrew word means “truth,” “affirmation,” or “certainty.” That which is firm, fixed, and unchangeable. *Amen* is often used in the Bible to affirm the truthfulness of a statement. In 1 Corinthians 1:20, Paul writes concerning Jesus, *For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes [confirmed]; therefore also through Him is our Amen [certainty] to the glory of God through us.*
- **the faithful and true Witness**—He is completely trustworthy, perfectly accurate, and His testimony is always reliable.
- **the Beginning of the creation of God, says this**—In the Greek text, it is clear that Jesus was NOT the first person God created but rather that Christ Himself is the source or origin of creation (see also John 1:3; Col 1:15-17; Heb 1:2; Rev 22:13).

There is no commendation.

### **Their Condemnation**

**Verse 15—*I know your deeds***—works do not save you, but they do indicate your spiritual state. Jesus said, *You will know them by their fruits* (Matt 7:16; Rom 2:6-8; James 2:14f). As with the believers in the other six cities, Jesus knew exactly what they were doing.

- ***that you are neither cold nor hot***—“hot” people are those “on fire” for God. “Cold” would be believers who have no interest in Christ or His Word. From God’s perspective, they are saved and their names are written in the Book of Life. From our perspective, we might call them “carnal Christians” (from “carne” meaning “of the flesh,” i.e., they *participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness*—Eph 5:11) or we may have no assurance they are saved.
- ***I wish that you were cold or hot***—then there would be hope for their maturity

**Verse 16—*So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth***—This does not mean they lose their salvation. It’s a figure of speech, indicating the disgust Jesus has for them. “It is apparent that there is something about the immediate state that is utterly obnoxious to God” (Walvoord). Think of warm water on a hot day—not refreshing. Or warm coffee on a winter day. You want to spit it out.

**Verse 17—*Because you say, “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,” and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked***—They had a disastrously inaccurate self-assessment. They were deceived about their actual spiritual condition. They were materially wealthy, and they assumed that meant they were spiritually wealthy, too. But they were not spiritually wealthy, and every more sadly, they didn’t even know it. Paul speaks of this in 1 Corinthians 3:11-15. The foundation is Christ. *Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man’s work will become evident; ...because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man’s work. If any man’s work ...remains, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved.* It seems to me these believers in Laodicea were building with wood, hay, and straw. Rather than be rewarded in heaven, they will suffer loss.

**Verse 18—*I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich***—It’s not the desire for wealth that God is opposed to. It’s the desire for earthly wealth that He is against. We should want to be rich and *have treasure in heaven* (Matt 19:21). As mentioned in the previous paragraph, God will test our works with fire, and it’s the gold that will remain and be rewarded.

- ***and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed***—It seems like this is referring to the *fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints* (Rev 19:8). How sad it would be to be in heaven but be naked, with no rewards/clothes!! “Shame” is “a loss of respect or esteem; dishonor, a regrettable or unfortunate situation or action.”
- ***and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see***—Jesus compared “seeing” to “understanding.” *For the heart of this people has become dull, ...and they have closed their eyes lest they should see with their eyes...and understand with their heart* (Matt 13:10-17). David wrote, *Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your law* (Psa 119:18).

**Verse 19—*Those whom I love, I reprove* [expose, convict] ***and discipline***—Discipline is to steer in the right direction. It is not punishment for a wrong doing. Love (as defined in the Bible—doing the best good for the other person) requires discipline. Where there is no discipline of children, there is**

no love of children. For example, you shouldn't punish a child for doing drugs, but ask what you can do to steer them in the right direction—that's the goal. Jesus loves the believers in Laodicea, and He will discipline them to get them on the right track towards being pleasing to Him. Hebrews 12:5-11 speaks about discipline. *All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness* (v. 11).

- **therefore be zealous** [Gk. "to have a warmth of feeling toward or against"] **and repent**—This could refer to being against the way they were or it could mean to have the positive feeling toward Christ—but either way, they need to repent, that is, change direction.

**Verse 20—‘Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me**—This verse is so often taken out of context, usually used in an evangelistic sense. However, it is written to believers, who need to repent and turn back to Christ. He's waiting at the door of their hearts, but they have to open the door to Him, and He will come in and fellowship with that person.

O Jesus, Thou art standing Outside the fast-closed door,  
In lowly patience waiting To pass the threshold o'er.

Shame on us, Christian brothers, His name and sign who bear,

O shame, thrice shame upon us, To keep Him standing there. ~Vance Havner

*...walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God* (Col 1:10; see also Rom 8:4; Gal 5:16, 25; Eph 2:10; 4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15; 2 John 6). *Walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory* (1 Thess 2:12).

**Verse 21—‘He who overcomes**—As before, the condemnation is for all the believers in Laodicea, but only individuals can respond.

- **I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne**—This is part of the reward for believers—*If we endure, we will also reign with Him* (2 Tim 2:12).
- **as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne**—*let us lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God* (Heb 12:1-3).

**Verse 22—‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches’**

Application—Jesus said in Matthew 13:15, *For the heart of this people has become dull, and with their ears they scarcely hear*. Do His words go in one ear and out the other? Or do they actually make a change in you? *By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments* (1 John 2:3).

## Five Different Views of the Rapture

All five views of the Tribulation and the Rapture are within the premillennial camp.

### The Partial Rapture Position

Not all believers will be taken at the Rapture of the church but only those who are “watching” and “waiting” for that event, who have reached some degree of spiritual attainment that makes them worthy to be included (Luke 21:36; Phil 3:11; 2 Tim 4:8; Heb 9:28).

### **Problems with This Position:**

1. The result of salvation is that the sinner is justified, made acceptable to God (propitiation), placed in Christ positionally (reconciliation) and received by God as though he were the Son Himself (redemption). So there is no spiritual attainment beyond salvation that a person could possibly reach in order to be acceptable to God.
2. They must deny the New Testament teaching on the unity of the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12-13). If the Rapture only includes a portion of believers, it dismembers the body of which Christ is the head; the building of which Christ is the cornerstone; the priesthood of which Christ is the chief priest; and the bride of whom Christ is the bridegroom.
3. Nowhere in the teaching about rewards is the Rapture included as a reward for watching (Rev 2:10; James 1:12; 1 Thess 2:19; Phil 4:1; 1 Cor 9:25; 1 Pet 5:4; 2 Tim 4:8).
4. If this view is correct, the believer's position before God would depend on his works, not on grace.
5. They deny the distinction between Israel and the church. They use Scriptures applicable for Israel and apply them to the church (Luke 21:36; Matt 24:41-42).
6. They must place a portion of the believing church in the Tribulation. The church does not need such a purging judgment unless the death of Christ is ineffective.

**Therefore, the Partial Rapture position must be rejected.**

### **The Posttribulation Rapture Position**

The church will continue on the earth until the Second Coming of Christ when the church will be caught up into the clouds to meet the Lord who has come in the air on His way from heaven to earth for the Second Coming, to return immediately with Him.

### **Problems with This Position:**

1. They deny the distinctions between Israel and the church because the Tribulation is a Jewish event designed to prepare Israel for the Millennium.
2. They must deny the Scriptural teaching on the nature and purpose of the Tribulation, a time of wrath, judgment, trial, and a pouring out of judgment on sin. In what sense should the church go through that (1 Thess 1:10; 5:9 with Rev. 6:16-17)?
3. They deny all distinctions between the Rapture and the Second Coming, making them one and the same event.
4. They must deny the doctrine of imminence, which says that the Lord may come at any time, and substitute the teaching that a multitude of signs must be fulfilled before the Lord can come.
5. They deny any future fulfillment to the prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27, claiming for it an historical fulfillment.
6. They must apply major passages of Scripture that outline God's program for Israel (Matt 13; 24-25; Rev 4-19) to the church.
7. Since all unbelievers are killed at the Second Coming, if all believers are Raptured, then no one is left alive to populate the Millennial Kingdom.
8. The Posttribulation Rapture position rests essentially on a system of denials of the interpretations held by the Pretribulation Rapturist, rather than on a positive exposition of Scripture.

**Therefore, the Posttribulation Rapture position must be rejected.**

### **The Midtribulation Rapture Position**

The church will endure the events of the first half of the Tribulation (which are not manifestations of divine wrath) but will be Raptured before the last 3 1/2 years of the Tribulation (which contain all

the outpouring of the wrath of God).

### **Problems with This Position:**

1. They must either deny or at least weaken the pretribulation interpretation of Scripture.
2. They deny the strict distinctions between Israel and the church.
3. They divide the Tribulation into two separate and unrelated halves so that the church can go through the first half but have no part in the last half. No such separation is made in Scripture.
4. They must deny the doctrine of imminence because all the signs of the first half would apply to the church.
5. They must deny the concept of the church as a mystery (Ephesian 3) because if the church is involved in the Tribulation, then the church is part of God's program with Israel.
6. They must depend, to a certain extent, on the spiritualizing method of interpretation.

**Therefore, the Midtribulation Rapture position must be rejected.**

### **The Pre-Wrath Rapture Position**

This view is not mentioned anywhere in church history. It is a minor view, recently invented. It was first taught by Robert VanKampen (owner of the Scriptorium) in the 1970s. VanKampen was one of the most wealthy men in America, and he had the funds to popularize his views. If he were not a wealthy individual, then very few, if any, of us would have ever heard of his view. In the early 1990s, Marvin Rosenthal published a book entitled, "The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church," which popularized this view. VanKampen subsidized the publishing of the book by buying thousands of copies and sending them to ministers all over North America. This is how the new position was spread.

This views the trumpet and bowl judgments of Revelation 7–16 as the wrath of God, from which the church is exempted (1 Thess 5:9). The first six seal judgments of Revelation 6 are not considered the wrath of God but are viewed as "the wrath of Satan" or "the wrath of the antichrist." This is because there is no direct mention of God's wrath until after the sixth seal is broken (Rev 6:17). Therefore, the church will be present to experience the first six seals. This is sometimes called the "three quarters" view, the Rapture happening "three quarters" into the tribulation. It seems (to me) to be somewhat a combination of the "partial rapture" view and the "midtribulation" view.

### **Some Problems with This Position:**

1. It divides the scroll between the first five seals and the last two seals. That means the first five seals are not the wrath of God, further dividing Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week, which is the timetable of the tribulation (Dan 9:24-27), something the Bible does not do.
2. It has many of the same problems as the midtribulation rapture view has.
3. The first four seals are sword, famine, pestilence, and wild beasts. These same four things are described as judgments of God in Ezekiel 14:21, not judgments of man.
4. Second Thessalonians 2:4-7 states that the antichrist cannot come to power until the restraint on evil is removed, indicating the Holy Spirit's presence in believers. This happens at the Rapture. The antichrist cannot come to power while church-age believers are on earth.
5. Revelation 5 describes Jesus as the only One who can take the scroll and break its seals, and, in fact, He does that in 6:1, therefore, beginning the judgments. *No one in heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth, was able to open the book, or look into it* (Rev 5:3). The antichrist cannot break the first seals.
6. They say Revelation 6:9-11 are the church-age believers who have just been resurrected at the Rapture. (The passage clearly says they are only those who were *slain*). If this is correct, it would

mean believers who were alive at the Rapture and had not been martyred would still be on the earth and would have to go through the sixth seal judgment. But 1 Thessalonians 4:17 says those alive are caught up into the air to be with Christ at the Rapture. This has the same problems as the “partial rapture” view.

7. Writers who have taken up the pre-wrath view and have made great sums of money through their books. Also, this has been promoted as truth by those who oppose dispensationalism (which teaches God has a separate plan for Israel and for the Christians in this church age). Among these are the Covenant theologians who teach God has abandoned Israel and now “the church” has inherited the promises God made to His chosen nation. Whereas, the Bible clearly states that the tribulation is a time of purging of the nation of Israel (such as Matthew 24) and has nothing to do with the believers of the church age.
8. Nowhere in chapters 4 to 19:7 are the church age saints mentioned. Instead, we see tribulation saints, those saved during the tribulation.

**Therefore, the Pre-Wrath Rapture position must be rejected.**

### The Pretribulation Rapture Position

The church, the body of Christ in its entirety, will, by resurrection and translation, be removed from the earth. This is clearly taught in the Bible. What is not as clear is the **timing** of the Rapture. But the sum of the verses indicate that the Rapture of the whole church will be before any part of the Tribulation begins. [This is the position we hold and is covered in this material.]

## Chapter 4

### The Throne of God

In visions, two men in the New Testament were taken to heaven. Paul was not allowed to tell what he saw there (2 Cor 12:4), but John was permitted, in fact, commanded, to give the most complete and informative description of heaven in all of Scripture. His first vision, of our glorified Savior Jesus Christ, John recorded in chapter 1. His second vision begins in chapter 4.

**Verse 1—*After these things***—From John’s perspective, this would be after his vision of the risen, glorified Christ (1:9-20) and the letters to the seven churches (2:1–3:22). This phrase is used throughout Revelation to signify the beginning of a new vision (7:9; 15:5; 18:1; 19:1).

—From God’s perspective, this marks the transition from the church age, the *things which are* (described in chapters 2–3), to the third division of the book, the *things which will take place* (1:19), which are recorded in chapters 4–19. The church on earth is not mentioned in chapters 4–19, indicating the Rapture (1 Thess 4:13-18) will occur between chapters 3 and 4. At this point, the believers of the church age are in heaven, around the throne of God. This is in keeping with God’s promise from Revelation 3:10, *I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth*. See also 1 Thessalonians 1:10, *Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come* and 5:9, *For God has not destined us for wrath*. The tribulation is God’s wrath poured out on the earth.

—There is now a dramatic shift from the matters concerning the church on earth, to the scene in heaven around the throne of God, which forms the introduction to the future events of the tribulation, Millennial Kingdom, and eternal state.

- ***I looked***—Throughout the book, John is attempting to describe, as best he can, what he is seeing.
- ***and behold***—an exclamation of astonishment

- ***a door standing open in heaven***—Christ ascended to heaven after His resurrection and He has been seated at the right hand of the Father since then (John 14:2-3; Acts 1:9-11; 3:20-21; 7:55-56; Rom 10:6; Col 3:1; 1 Thess 4:16). Heaven became John’s vantage point for most of the remainder of the book of Revelation.
- ***and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me***—the glorified Christ whom John saw and heard in 1:10 in his first vision.
- ***said, “Come up here”***—Jesus ordered John to come up to heaven to receive new revelation. [I like to picture Jesus saying the same thing to us at the Rapture—“Come up here!” and up we go, whether dead or alive.]
- ***and I will show you what must take place after these things***—This is direct revelation from God about future prophecy. What will take place after the church age (of chapters 2–3).

**Verse 2—Immediately**—When God commands, it’s done immediately.

- ***I was in the Spirit***—Some say John was in heaven because of the Holy Spirit’s power (because “Spirit” is capitalized?). I think it means his physical body was not in heaven, but his spirit was, similar to Ezekiel, who, although physically in Babylon, in his spirit he was taken to Jerusalem to see what was happening there at the Temple (Ezekiel 8).
- ***and behold***—an exclamation of astonishment
- ***a throne was standing in heaven***—Eleven times in this chapter the throne of God is mentioned. Revelation could be called the “throne” book because the word is used 45 times, compared to only 15 other times in all the rest of the New Testament. Everything revolves around the throne of God. He is the center of everything, all glory goes to Him. Most people claiming to have a vision of heaven today focus on trivial or strange things. How many do you hear of who say they see the throne of God? This throne is not simply a piece of furniture. It represents sovereign rule and authority. *Standing* is “set” or “made for.” It’s the idea of permanent or fixed. It cannot be moved. It is continuously occupied. There is no throne anywhere else.
- ***and One sitting on the throne***—i.e., reigning, because judgment is about to take place. This is God the Father, *the Ancient of Days* (v. 8; Psa 47:8; Eze 1:26-28; Dan 7:9-10).

**Verse 3—And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone** [crystal clear, like a diamond—21:11] **and a sardius** [fiery, blood-red ruby] **in appearance**

- ***and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance***—evidently, green was the dominant color of the rainbow. This is not the rainbow sign of His promise to never flood the earth again (Gen 9:11-17), but it does represent His faithfulness to His promise to give Jesus His rightful inheritance of ruling over this earth (Psa 2:8-9; 110). Unlike the partial rainbows we see, this heavenly rainbow completely encircles the throne of God.

**Verse 4—Around the throne were twenty-four thrones and upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads.**

- The 24 elders are mentioned five times in Revelation (4:4, 10; 5:8; 11:16; and 19:4).
- Some think these are angels. But nowhere in Scripture are angels portrayed as sitting on thrones or wearing crowns. And John used the word “angel” 71 times in the book. If he meant angels, he would have said angels.
  - The Greek word *presbuteroi* (elder) is used in both Israel and the church age.
  - Some believe these represent Israel, but at this point in Revelation, the nation of Israel as a whole had not yet been redeemed. Their national judgment and salvation comes during the tribulation (Rom 11:26; Rev 6–19).
  - They cannot be tribulation saints because they have not yet been saved. And the elders are already in heaven when the tribulation saints arrive (Rev 7:11-14).

- The believers of our age are promised to reign with Christ (Rev 2:26-27; 3:21; 5:10; 20:4) and will be clothed in white garments (19:8).
- Believers in our age are also promised crowns (Rev 2:10; 1 Cor 9:25; 2 Tim 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Pet 5:4).
- In Israel, there were 24 divisions of singers in the Temple (1 Chron 25) and 24 divisions of Levitical priests, who represented all the priests in their turn (1 Chron 24:4-5, 7-18). So these 24 **could** be representative of a larger group. **Or** it could simply be 24 elders.
- These elders are dressed in white and on the thrones before the tribulation even begins.
- That leaves one possibility—they are the raptured, glorified believers of the church age, who have gone to be with Jesus (John 14:1-4), either as 24 elders or representing the larger group.
- **Thrones...twenty-four elders sitting...golden crowns on their heads**—The word *crowns* is used to describe believers' rewards in 1 Corinthians 9:25; 1 Thessalonians 2:19; 2 Timothy 4:8; James 1:12; and 1 Peter 5:4. Crowns are never promised to angels, indicating these elders are humans.
- **Clothed in white garments**—Saints wear these, not angels (Rev 3:5, 18). Revelation 19:8 says the bride of the Lamb (church age believers) is clothed in *fine linen, bright and clean, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints*. So, along with the crowns, it seems to indicate our rewards in heaven.

**Verse 5—Out from the throne come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder**—This is where the judgment comes from, that the angel throws upon the earth (Rev 8:5; 11:19; 16:18). It's like a really bad storm, where the thunder and lightning are way up high in the sky, and then it comes down to the earth with a vengeance.

- **And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God**—These are not lampstands, as referred to in chapter 1. These are torches, used by armies, associated with war (Judges 7:16, 20; Nahum 2:3-4).
  - Isaiah 11:2 spoke of the sevenfold fullness of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge, reverence, and deity. Here God is ready to make war on mankind, and the Holy Spirit is His war torch.
  - It shows that all three persons of the godhead are part of the wrath of God poured out on a sinful world.
  - And it shows the Holy Spirit has different functions in different ages and times. Some say the Holy Spirit is “removed” but it is His function as a restrainer of evil that is removed (2 Thess 2:7). The Holy Spirit is very active during the tribulation—for example, He also convicts people to receive Christ as their Savior, and there are many converts during this time (John 16:8-11).

**Verses 6-8—and before the throne there was something like a sea of glass, like crystal**—There is no actual sea in heaven (Rev 21:1). But John is saying here there is something **like** a sea of glass.

- **and in the center and around the throne**—they are closest to the throne of God.
- A description similar to what Ezekiel saw (Eze 1:4-25).
- **four living beings**—The Greek just has the word “living.” They are not creatures, i.e., animals. “Living beings” would be a better translation. Most think these beings are a subcategory of angels. So far, 23 different interpretations have been catalogued as to the identity of these beings.
- **full of eyes in front and behind. The first was like a lion, and the second like a calf, and the third had a face like that of a man, and the fourth was like a flying eagle. And the four living beings, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within**—Notice there are only 4 of them. When you consider the myriad of angels, all of mankind, so many animals,



yet only 4 of these living beings. Four times these beings are involved in the judgments of the tribulation (6:1-2, 6; 15:1, 7).

- **and day and night they do not cease to say, “HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME”**—There are five hymns of praise in chapters 4–5. During the singing, the size of the “choir” gradually increases. But it starts with just these four beings, a quartet. In verse 10, the 24 elders join in, in 5:8, harps are added to the voices, in 5:11, angels add their voices, and then in 5:13, all created beings in the universe join in the mighty chorus to praise God. In 1 Chronicles 17:20, David prayed, “*O Lord, there is none like You, nor is there any God besides You.*”
- Holiness describes God’s utter and complete separation from evil, unlike angels, some of who sinned, or humans, whom all have sinned. See also 1 Samuel 2:2; Exodus 15:11; Habakkuk 1:13; Psalm 47:8; 111:9; 1 Peter 1:16.
- It is, in fact, the very holiness of God that will not allow Him to look at sin and therefore to pour out His wrath on the world. When Isaiah had a vision of God, he cried out, “*Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips*” (Isa 6:5).
- They also say *the Almighty*, as God described Himself to Abraham (Gen 17:1). He is the strongest, most powerful Being, with absolutely NO weakness. Job said, “*If it is a matter of power, behold, He is the strong One!*” (Job 40:28). Even Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon said of God, “*...no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’*” (Dan 4:35). Jesus said, “*With God, all things are possible*” (Matt 19:26).
- As we are about to see, God’s almighty power will be demonstrated in His judgments.

**Verse 9—And when the living beings give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever**—God’s eternity. Animals have a beginning and an end. Angels and humans have a beginning but no end. God has no beginning and no end.

**Verse 10—the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever**—This is the first of six times the elders will fall down before the throne (5:8, 14; 7:11; 11:16; 19:4). We only **know** here that there are 24 elders doing this.

- **and will cast their crowns before the throne**—Possibly they represent all church age believers who will cast their crowns (their rewards) before God. What this demonstrates is that everything that we have and have accomplished as a redeemed people is a gift of His grace and according to the pleasure of His own will. In heaven, we will acknowledge this. (Too bad we don’t do it sooner.)

**Verse 11—saying, “Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created”**—God is presented as the Creator throughout Scripture (Gen 1:1; Exo 20:11; Isa 40:26, 28; Jer 10:10-12; 32:17; Col 1:16). As the Creator, He has the right to judge His creation and take it back from Satan, demons, and sinners (see Rom 8:19-22).

- **Because of Your will**—all things were created and exist because of the will of God. It was His idea. He desired it, and then He was the agent of it—*You created all things.*

## Chapter 5

### The Scroll

**Verse 1—I saw**—John is an eyewitness of what is taking place

- **in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne**—in the hand of God the Father



- **a book**—not a “book” as we understand it, but a scroll, a long piece of probably parchment (animal skin), unrolled from one end and rolled up on the other end. This is a scroll of doom and judgment, but it is also a scroll of redemption, telling how Christ will get the world back from Satan and those working with him.
- **written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals**—There’s a seal, then the scroll would be unrolled, then a seal, then unrolled some more, and another seal, etc. [It can’t be seven seals on the outside because there is new content as each seal is broken open.]

**Verse 2—*And I saw a strong angel***—don’t know his name. It’s interesting he is called a “strong” angel. Must be some are stronger than others. Three angels are described as “strong” (5:2; 10:1; 18:21). Here, he cannot open the scroll either.

—***proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?”***—Who has the power and right to defeat Satan and his demons, to wipe out sin and its effects, to reverse the curse on all creation, and redeem mankind?

**Verse 3—*And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the book or to look into it***—What a contrast. Silence. The angels, like Michael and Gabriel, don’t answer. The patriarchs, like Abraham, Jacob, and Isaac don’t answer. The kings, like David and Solomon, don’t answer. The apostles, like Peter and James, don’t answer. Missionaries, like Paul and Barnabas, don’t answer. The four living beings don’t answer. The elders don’t answer. Perhaps this point in time happened to show there is no one else, ever, who can redeem mankind or the earth from sin and the curse.

**Verse 4—*Then I [John] began to weep greatly*** [same word as used of Jesus weeping over Jerusalem and by Peter after his denial]. This is the only time we see weeping in heaven.

- ***because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it***—Believers from the beginning have wept because of the curse, as they have suffered persecution, as they have stood over graves, as they have cried out to God for deliverance from the evil of Satan and his world system. Creation groans (Rom 8:19-22). John himself was suffering isolation on an island. The apostles had all been martyred. Jerusalem had been destroyed. The Jews massacred and scattered. Not only was the church facing intense persecution, but as recorded in chapters 2–3, the church was so infected with sin. Will evil be victorious?!?!]

**Verse 5—*and one of the elders said to me, “Stop weeping”***—Weeping was inappropriate.

- ***behold***— an exclamation of astonishment and attention
- ***the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah***—From Genesis 49:8-10, *Judah is a lion’s whelp; ...The scepter shall not depart from Judah...until Shiloh comes, and to Him shall be the obedience of the peoples.* A strong, fierce, and deadly ruler. He will tear up and destroy His enemies, like a lion.
- ***the Root of David***—see Revelation 22:16; 2 Samuel 7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; 33:15-17; Matthew 1; 22:42-43; Luke 1:31-33; Romans 1:3. “Son of David” is a messianic title (Matt 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30-31; etc.).
- ***has overcome***—At the cross, He defeated sin (Romans 8:3); death (Hebrews 2:14-15), and all the forces of hell (Col 2:15; 1 Pet 3:19).
- ***so as to open the book and its seven seals***—Jesus is the Overcomer. He will open the book. The book and its seals are the tribulation.

**Verse 6—*And I saw between the throne (with the four living beings) and the elders***—Think of the beauty of the colors coming from the throne, the bright green rainbow around it, the glass sea in

front of it, the thunder, the living beings and elders—when John sees Jesus. Not the expected Lion of the tribe of Judah. Not the conquering Davidic king. But...

- **a Lamb**—“*the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29). The sacrificial Lamb. The Passover Lamb (John 1:29, 36; Acts 8:32; 1 Pet 1:19).
- **standing**—He is alive, on His feet, ready to complete His work, to receive the kingdom that is rightfully His.
- **as if slain**—It seems this is referring to His scars from His crucifixion. In His resurrected body, Jesus had told Thomas, “*Reach here with your finger, and see My hands, and reach here your hand and put it into My side...*” (John 20:27). Yet for us in heaven, *the first things have passed away* (Rev 21:4). It seems like the only one carrying physical scars into heaven is Jesus, to remind His people of the cost of their redemption.
- **having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God**—the Holy Spirit, who was also involved with Christ in His first coming (Matt 1:18, 20; 3:16; Mark 1:4; etc.).
- **sent out into all the earth**—There will be nothing hidden from Him, anywhere on the earth.

**Verse 7—And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne**—All the history of the earth is leading up to this very moment. Daniel also describes this in Daniel 7:13-14. The worthy One has arrived to take back what is rightfully His, to regain all that was lost.

**Verse 8—When He had taken the book, the four living beings and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb**—Worship turns toward Jesus.

- **each one** [the gender of the Greek shows that it’s the elders, not the 4 beings] **holding a harp**—In the Old Testament, harps were associated with worship (2 Sam 6:5; 1 Chron 15:16, 20, 28; 16:5; etc.). They were also closely linked to prophecy. Elisha said, “*Now bring me a harpist.*” *While the harpist was playing, the hand of the Lord came upon Elisha* (2 Kings 3:15; see 1 Sam 10:5; 1 Chron 25:1).
- **and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints**—see Psalm 141:2; Luke 1:9-10; Revelation 8:3-4; 6:9-10. Taken together, the harps are what the prophets have prophesied and the bowls of incense are what the saints have been praying for. It’s all about to be fulfilled.

**Verses 9-10—And they** [the elders] **sang a new song** [of redemption—Psa 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; etc.], **saying,**

- **Worthy are You**—because He is the Lion of Judah, the King of kings, and the slain Lamb
- **to take the book and to break its seals**—Jesus is in charge of the tribulation and when it happens
  1. **for You were slain**—Christ’s first coming and crucifixion
  2. **and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe** [descent] **and tongue** [language] **and people** [race] **and nation** [culture]—This verse is sometimes used to try to show that babies go to heaven. It seems to be the only way people from every race and language could be in heaven. If that’s right, it still shows that they are in heaven only because Jesus died for their sins.
  3. **You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God**—see 1:5-6; 20:6
  4. **and they will reign upon the earth**—in the Millennial Kingdom. At the Second Coming, the Old Testament saints are resurrected and rewarded, as well as the tribulation saints. The church age believers were resurrected and rewarded at the Rapture. So all these believers, in their eternal bodies, who make up the kingdom of God, will reign on the earth (i.e., reign over the humans still living on earth in the Millennial Kingdom).

**Verses 11-12**—*Then I looked* [for the fourth time in this chapter], *and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living beings and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands*—*myriad* is the largest Greek number. So *myriads of myriads* is an extremely large number.

- *saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing”*—victorious in the tribulation, defeating Satan and his followers, and the honor and glory of the coming Millennial Kingdom.

**Verse 13**—*And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying—“Let everything that has breath praise the Lord”* (see Psalm 150:6; 69:34).

—*“To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever”*—It’s an endless glory, an endless worship for the Father on the throne and Jesus, the Lamb.

**Verse 14**—*And the four living creatures kept saying, “Amen”*—“let or make it happen”—*And the elders fell down and worshiped*—again.

The stage is now set. In heaven, it’s a time of rejoicing. It’s the beginning of the reign of Jesus. It’s the beginning of the end of evil. All power belongs to God. **Let the tribulation begin!!**

## What Is the Tribulation?

It is impossible to set forth all the declarations of the Scripture on this subject. The line of revelation begins early in the Old Testament and continues through the New. The Apostle John summarizes this period when he writes, *And the kings of the earth and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?”* (Rev. 6:15-17; emphasis mine; see also Deut 4:30-31; Isa 2:19; 24:1, 3, 6, 19-21; 26:20-21; Jer 30:7; Dan 9:27; 12:1; Joel 1:15; 2:1-2; Amos 5:18, 20; Zeph 1:14-15, 18; Matt 24:21-22; Luke 21:25-26; 1 Thess 5:3; and Rev 3:10).

## The Nature of the Tribulation

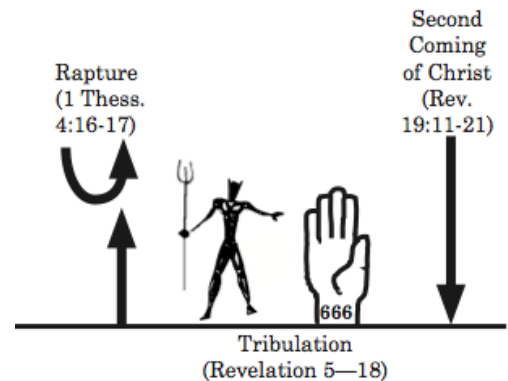
It is a time of: *wrath* (Zeph 1:15, 18; 1 Thess 1:10; 5:9; Rev 6:16-17; 11:18; 14:10, 19; 15:1, 7); *judgment* (Rev 14:7; 16:5, 7; 19:2); *trial* (Rev 3:10); *trouble* (Jer 30:7; Zeph 1:14-15; Dan 12:1); *destruction* (Joel 1:15; 1 Thess 5:3); *darkness* (Joel 2:2; Amos 5:18; Zeph 1:14-18); *desolation* (Dan 9:27; Zeph 1:14-15); *overturning* (Isa 24:1-4, 19-21); and *punishment* (Isa 24:20-21).

## The Source of the Tribulation

- (1) The wrath of Satan and his hatred for Israel (Rev 12:12-17).
- (2) The wrath of the Beast, Satan’s puppet (called the antichrist), against the saints (Rev 13:7).
- (3) Primarily the wrath and judgment of God Himself upon the earth (Isa 24:1; 26:21; Joel 1:15; Zeph 1:18; Rev 6:16-17; 11:18; 14:10, 19; 15:4, 7; 16:1, 7, 19; 19:1-2).

## The Purpose of the Tribulation

- (1) The first purpose is to prepare the nation Israel for her Messiah, to bring about the conversion of a multitude of Jews who will enter into the blessings of the Kingdom and experience the fulfillment of all Israel's covenants (Deut 4:30; Jer 30:7; Ezek 20:37; Dan 12:1; Zech 13:8-9; Matt 24:9-26; Rev 7:4-8; 12:1-2; 17). It is also God's purpose to populate the Millennium with a multitude of saved Gentiles, who are redeemed through the preaching of the believing remnant (Rev 7:9; Matt 25:31-46).
- (2) The second great purpose of the Tribulation is to pour out judgment on unbelieving men and nations (Rev 3:10). God is judging the nations of the earth because of their godlessness (Jer 25:32-33; 2 Thess 2:12). *For, behold, the Lord cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity* (Isa 26:21). They have been deceived by the false teaching of the harlot system (Rev 14:8), they have followed the false prophet in the worship of the beast (Rev 13:11-18) and have *blasphemed the name of God ... and they repented not to give Him glory* (Rev 16:9). Since the Kingdom to follow is a reign of righteousness, this judgment must be viewed as another step in the progress of God's program in dealing with sin so that the Messiah may reign.



## Chapter 6

### The Seals

The scene now shifts from heaven to the earth. **These 7 seals cover the whole tribulation.** The 7<sup>th</sup> seal contains the 7 trumpet judgments (8:1-11:19), and the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet (11:15) contains the 7 bowl judgments (16:1-21). So after the 7<sup>th</sup> seal is opened (and the trumpet and bowl judgments occur), Jesus returns. Each of these judgments intensify.



### First Seal



**Verses 1-2—Then I saw when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals**—From chapter 5, we know that Jesus, as the Lamb, took the scroll with the seven seals from the hands of the Father on the throne. Now He has broken open the first seal.

- **and I heard one of the four living beings** (who surround God’s throne—4:6-8) **saying as with a voice of thunder, “Come”**—the living being is speaking to John.
- **I looked**—John is trying to describe what he sees.
- **and behold** [astonishment] **a white horse**—the color of peace, which is taken away in the 2<sup>nd</sup> seal (see Daniel 9:27).
- **and he who sat on it had a bow** [but no arrows]; **and a crown** [Gk. *stephanos*, a crown won as a prize, not a Gk. *diademas*, royal crown].
- **was given to him**—given by whom? God. We’ll notice over and over that these powers and abilities are given to Satan and his followers. They would not have their power unless God enabled them to have it (Job 1:12). He is in sovereign control. Either He is sovereign over all, or He is not sovereign at all! God is using Satan and his followers to bring about God’s wrath on earth, though they are all still 100% responsible for their free will decisions to not choose God.
- **and he went out conquering and to conquer**—This is a bloodless victory. The world cries out for peace. Israel especially wants peace. But it’s a peace at all costs. Paul wrote, *While they are saying, “Peace and safety!” then destruction will come upon them suddenly...and they will not escape* (1 Thess 5:3).
- You’ve probably heard of the horses and riders of the first four seals called “The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.”
- Some say this is Jesus from 19:11 because He is riding a white horse in that passage. But obviously, Jesus cannot be opening the seal and riding the horse at the same time.
  - And this rider carries a bow, but in 19:15, Jesus is carrying a sword.
  - This rider wears a crown (Gk. *stephanos*, a crown won as a prize). In chapter 19, Jesus wears many crowns (Gk. *diademas*, royal crowns).
  - Finally, this rider is the first seal, the beginning of the tribulation, but Jesus comes again at the end of the tribulation (chapter 19). Therefore, this cannot be Jesus riding this white horse.
- Most say this is the antichrist. For sure, the antichrist plays a significant role in bringing about this world peace. The antichrist will make a peace covenant with the Jews for 7 years, but in the middle, he will break that covenant and set himself up as god, known as the Abomination of Desolation (Dan 9:27; Matt 24:15).

## Second Seal



**Verses 3-4—When He** [Jesus] **broke the second seal, I heard the second living being saying, “Come”**—to John

- **And another, a red horse, went out**—the color of blood
- **and to him who sat on it, it was granted to take peace from the earth**—So the first seal was a false peace, to help bring the antichrist to power in the world.
- **and that men would slay one another**—violent slaughter, like a holocaust
- **and a great sword was given to him**—*great sword* is Greek *machaira*, a short, stabbing sword used in wars and by assassins, describing massacre. *He will destroy to an extraordinary degree...he will destroy mighty men and holy people* (Dan 8:24). Wars continue throughout the tribulation.

## Third Seal



**Verses 5-6—When He** [Jesus] **broke the third seal, I heard the third living being saying, “Come”**—to John

- *I [John] looked, and behold [astonishment], a black horse*—the color of death. With worldwide war, famine increases as food supplies dwindle. Jesus said, ...*there will be famines* (Matt 24:7).
- *and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand*—indicating rationing in food lines
- *And I heard something like a voice in the center of the four living beings saying*—probably God the Father, as He was pictured in the center of the living beings
- *“A quart of wheat for a denarius*—a day’s wages for only enough to feed one person
- *and three quarts of barley for a denarius*—this much barley can feed a family, but it is of low nutritional value, usually fed to livestock. [Reminds me of the prodigal son, who was so starving because of a *severe* famine, he wanted to eat the pods the pigs were eating (Luke 15:14-16).]
- *and do not damage [waste] the [olive] oil and the wine [to purify water?]”*—used in food preparation

## Fourth Seal



**Verses 7-8**—*When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living being saying, “Come”*—to John

- *I [John] looked, and behold, an ashen horse*—from the Gk *chloros*, from which we get the word chlorophyll and chlorine, a pale, yellow-green color. The color of corpses.
- *and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him*—Hades, where unbelievers go after death (Luke 16:19f.).
- *Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth*—With the earth’s current population of about 6 billion people, 1/4 would be 1.5 billion deaths.
- “Pestilence” is the word for disease. More people in the world have died from disease than from wars. The flu epidemic of 1918-19 killed 3 times more people than the estimated 8.5 million soldiers who died in World War I.
- “Wild beasts” would include rats, which throughout history were carriers of diseases.

## Fifth Seal



**Verses 9-11**—*When the Lamb [Jesus] broke the fifth seal, I [John] saw underneath the altar [in heaven] the souls of those who had been slain*—martyrs, killed during the time of the first four seals. Jesus said in His Olivet Discourse, *“Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name”* (Matt 24:9). Persecution usually separates true believers from professing believers. Jesus also said, *“At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. ...most people’s love will grow cold”* (Matt 24:10-12). Yet *a great multitude which no one could count...are standing before the throne and before the lamb* (Rev 7:9).

- These believers are described as *souls* because they don’t yet have their resurrected bodies (see Rev. 20:4).
- *because of the word of God*—They will be trying to evangelize, proclaiming the judgments predicted in the Bible.
- *and because of the testimony which they had maintained*—They did not take the mark of the beast and did not abandon Christ, in spite of the persecution and martyrdom.
- *and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true*—“Lord” is Gk for “ruler.” Because God is “holy,” He must judge sin (Acts 10:42; 17:31; Rom 2:16; 3:6). And because He is “true,” He must be faithful to His Word (Luke 21:33).
- *How long will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”*—These are prayers for God’s vengeance on their murderers (Luke 18:7-8). As with

Abel (Gen 4:10), the very ground cries out for their blood to be required at the hands of their killers. There are many prayers like this in the Psalms. Very different from Stephen's prayer (Acts 7:60) in our age where we are to love our enemies.

- ***And there was given to each of them a white robe***—indicating God's righteousness, yet not the same as the white robe for their eternal bodies (Rev 20:4-5).
- ***and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer***—this is not a sin of impatience, as they are in heaven where there is no sin. But it is an invitation to for them to rest in heaven, the time of judgment will not be delayed much longer. Judgment will come, but in God's time. He has a plan. And that is...
- ***until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also***—God sovereignly determined the exact number of believers who would be saved after the Rapture, and who would be martyred.

## Sixth Seal



**Verses 12-17**—*I [John] looked when He [Jesus] broke the sixth seal*—this time, God acts alone. These events are so terrifying, the people know it has to be God causing them. (1) ***and there was a great earthquake***—"great" is "greatest," "fierce," "largest one."

Picture God shaking the whole earth. It sounds like all the unstable faults moving at the same time.

- (2) ***and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair***—what they used for mourner's robes. This massive earthquake will result in huge volcanic eruptions, spewing vast quantities of dust and steam into the air (see also Joel 2:10, 31; Isa 13:9-10).
  - (3) ***and the whole moon became like blood***—from the pollution in the air from volcanos.
  - (4) ***and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind***—"stars" describe any heavenly body other than the sun or moon. Most likely, these are meteor showers bombarding the earth, or even an asteroid. There will be so many hitting the earth, John describes it as when figs fall from a tree in a great wind.
  - (5) ***The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up***—see Isaiah 34:4. Don't have any idea what this means—but it sounds really bad!!
  - (6) ***and every mountain and island were moved out of their places***—similar to the "continental drift" which occurred at the Flood. All the earthquakes, and bombardments from space are going to make a major shift in the crust of the earth.
- The cumulative impact of all these will be far more destructive than anything the world has ever seen, yet there will be even more intense judgments yet to come.
  - *Then:*
    - (1) ***The kings of the earth***—heads of state in all countries
    - (2) ***and the great men***—Gk. *megistanes*, high-ranking officials in government
    - (3) ***and the commanders***—military leaders
    - (4) ***and the rich***—those who control commerce and business
    - (5) ***and the strong***—maybe the influential(?)
    - (6) ***and every slave***—lower classes of people
    - (7) ***and free man***—common classes of people
  - ***hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains***—they are trying to hide in the very places that are being shaken!
  - ***and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us"***—they don't necessarily want to be safe. They want to die and escape God's wrath. That's foolish, though, because death will provide no escape from God's judgment (Rev 20:11-15).

- **hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne** [God the Father], **and from the wrath of the Lamb** [Jesus]—Maybe they know this information from the testimony of the martyrs.
- **for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?**—*It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God* (Heb 10:30-31). No one is able to stand!! Nahum wrote, *Who can stand before His indignation? Who can endure the burning of His anger?* (1:6).

## Chapter 7

This chapter is like a parenthesis between the sixth and seventh seal, to tell what happens to two groups of people:

1. Jewish *bond-servants of our God* still living on the earth and unable to be killed by the Satan and the antichrist.
2. Believers who have died and their souls are in heaven. Some are martyrs (Rev 6:9-11), but others will surely die from the wars, famine, and “natural” disasters.

**Verses 1-3—After this**—after the vision of the 6 seals, this is now a new vision. The scene shifts from judgment on the ungodly to a special protection for the godly.

- **I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth** [the four directions on the compass—north, east, south, west] **holding back** [restraining] **the four winds of the earth so that no wind would blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree** [the winds are struggling to break free]. That means no waves, no wind, no breeze, no movement of the clouds. Everything will be deathly still. “These winds of the earth make life possible on earth through the hydro-logic cycle, transporting waters inland from the ocean with which to water the earth. Yet the angels—only four of them—had turned off this gigantic engine” (Morris, 126).
- **And I saw another angel**—Gk. “of the same kind” as the first four angels.
- **ascending from the rising of the sun**—coming from the east
- **having the seal of the living God**—used by kings, like a signet ring, guaranteeing the authenticity and security, thus the ownership and protection, of the king
- **and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea** [but at the moment, they are holding back from that destruction], **saying, “Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bond-servants** [they are already faithful believers] **of our God on their foreheads”** (see also Rev 14). God has marked believers before, to save them from judgment:
  - (1) Israel put blood on their doorposts to protect them from the angel of death.
  - (2) Rahab was marked with a scarlet cord let down from her window when the Israelites attacked Jericho.
  - (3) An angel put a mark on those who *sign and groan over all the abominations which are being committed in its* [Jerusalem’s] *midst* (Ezekiel 9:3-6) when Babylon attacked the city.

### Sealing the 144,000

God allows the nation of Israel to again be His light to the world, at its darkest hour. This time they will not fail (see verse 9; Isa 45:22; 52:10; Joel 2:28-32; Matt 24:14).

“Some people believe that the 144,000 will be evangelists in the Great Tribulation. But there is no indication that the 144,000 were preachers or prophets; their testimony was largely from their moral purity and the fact that they were not martyred like many others” (John Walvoord, “Bible Knowledge Commentary”).

**Verses 4-8—*And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel***—God knows who is in each tribe. There is no standard way to list the 12 tribes. There are at least 19 different ways of listing them in the Old Testament, and none of them agree with the list here. For example, sometimes the order of birth is followed (Gen 29:3–35:18); or the order by wives and concubines (1 Chron 2:1–8:40), etc.

- ***from the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand were sealed***—Judah replaced Reuben in the place of “first born” because of Reuben’s sexual misconduct with his father’s concubine (1 Chron 5:1).
- ***from the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand, from the tribe of Gad twelve thousand,***
- ***from the tribe of Asher twelve thousand, from the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand,***
- ***from the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand***—Manasseh and Ephraim, Joseph’s two sons, replaced the tribe of Joseph as a double blessing to Joseph (Gen 48:5).
- ***from the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand,***
- ***from the tribe of Levi twelve thousand***—the Levites did not get a tribal inheritance, though they did receive cities within the territories of each of the tribes. Their job was to work in the Tabernacle/Temple. Here, though, they seem to replace the tribe of Dan, which was known for its idolatry (Judges 18), though Dan will be in the Millennial Kingdom (Eze 48:1-2, 32).
- ***from the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand, from the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand,***
- ***from the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand***—This must be those of the tribe of Ephraim, Joseph’s son, because Manasseh was already named. Why not say “Ephraim”? Don’t know.
- ***from the tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand were sealed.***

**Verses 9-12—*After these things***—indicating a new vision, after the one about the 144,000

- ***I looked, and behold [astonishment], a great multitude which no one could count***—
- ***from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues***—Jews and Gentiles, saved after the Rapture, who have already died during the tribulation. Verse 14 identifies them.
- ***standing before the throne [of God the Father] and before the Lamb [Jesus]***—in heaven
- ***clothed in white robes***—These are the same robes as worn by the martyrs in heaven in 6:9-11, indicating these possibly include the same group, but this group is growing in size as believers continue to die in the tribulation. As mentioned in 6:6-11, these are not the white robes they will receive after their resurrected bodies, which happens at the end of the tribulation (Rev 20:4). White is the color of righteousness and holiness, indicating they are God’s people. ...*they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb* (v. 14).
- ***and palm branches were in their hands***—these were used in the celebration of the triumphal entry of Jesus in Jerusalem (John 12:13; see also Lev 23:40; Neh 8:15-17).
- ***and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation to our God [the Father] who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb [Jesus]”***—They **were** praying for vengeance (6:9-11), but **now** they are celebrating their salvation. This continues through Revelation (5:8-10; 12:10; 19:1).
- ***And all the angels were standing around the throne [myriads of myriads (the highest number in the Greek language), and thousands of thousands—5:11] and around the elders [24—representing the raptured church?] and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God.***
- ***“Amen [so let it be], blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen [so let it be]”***—This is a praise and worship of our God that will continue for eternity—*forever and ever*.

**Verses 13-17—*Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, “These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?”***

- The elder didn't ask the question because he didn't know the answer. He asked it to use a dialogue format to give an explanation of the vision, both to John and to his readers.
- ***I said to him, "My lord, you know"***—"lord" is a title of respect. John confessed to his ignorance and was requesting further revelation.
- ***And he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation"***—These people had turned away from God earlier in their lives, they missed the Rapture, and in the midst of the wrath of God being poured out on the earth, they believe in Jesus and become saved, and are martyred or otherwise die (possibly from the "natural" disasters of the first six seals) during the tribulation. These people are different from any other people in human history.
  - Jesus described the *great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now...* (Matt 24:21).
- ***and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb***—Salvation is still by the blood of the Lamb during the tribulation, though they are not part of the church age, which ended with the Rapture. They are the tribulation saints.
- ***"For this reason"***—because they were cleansed from their sins by the sacrifice of the Lamb of God on their behalf.
- word for "serve" was often used to describe priestly service of worship (Luke 2:37; Heb 8:5; 13:10).
- ***in His temple***—There is a temple in heaven (11:19; 14:15, 17; 15:5-8; 16:1, 17) and there will be one on earth during the Millennial Kingdom (Ezek 40–48). In the eternal state, however, there will no longer be a need for a temple, *for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple* (Rev 21:22). Right now, the temple is God's domain apart from the earth. But when there is a new earth, God will not be apart from it. [Of course, also, our age is unique as *your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you...* (1 Cor 6:19)].
  - Temple (presence of Jesus) in heaven—now and in tribulation
  - Church age—our bodies are a temple of Holy Spirit
  - Millennial Kingdom—temple (presence of Jesus) on earth
  - New Earth—no need for temple, Jesus will dwell among His people
- ***and He who sits on the throne*** [God the Father] ***will spread His tabernacle over them***—it's the protection, a shelter, of God spread over the martyrs, who experienced unspeakable suffering in the world.
- ***They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat***—This shows that they will suffer from the natural disasters that are poured out upon the earth. Famine, for example.
- ***for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes"***—God will comfort them. I think there will be tears in heaven, but God will wipe them away with His comfort. For example, the martyrs in heaven during the fifth seal were crying to God for vengeance on those who had persecuted, and even martyred, them. And Jesus comforted them by telling them they should rest and that judgment was coming, in His time. It's not until the eternal state that we read, *there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; for the first things have passed away* (Rev 21:4).

## Chapter 8

### Seventh Seal



**Verses 1-2**—***When the Lamb*** [Jesus] ***broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour***—Up to now, John has heard a lot of sound from heaven—singing, loud voices, harps, thunder, shouting, but now there is the silence of expectation.

There is no time in heaven, but John is a person alive on earth, and to him, it seemed to be about a half hour of silence. The final judgment has come—when Satan will be destroyed and Jesus will be exalted.

- ***And I saw the seven angels who stand before God***—The Gk tense indicates they were there for some time. This seems to be a specific group of angels, who some call “presence angels.” Gabriel may be one of these, for he identified himself as *Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God* (Luke 1:19). Evidently, there are just seven of them.
- ***and seven trumpets were given to them***—In the Old Testament, trumpets were used to summon the congregation (Num 10:2), sound the alarm in time of war (Num 10:9), at religious feasts (Num 10:10), to announce news (1 Sam 13:3), etc. Trumpets will announce the Rapture (1 Cor 15:52; 1 Thess 4:16), and here they are announcing judgment.

**Verses 3-5—*Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer [fire pan]; and much incense was given [by God?] to him***—This is the same altar of incense seen by Isaiah in his vision of heaven (Isa 6:6) and by Ezekiel (Ezek 10:2).

- ***so that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar which was before the throne*** [of God the Father]—The altar of incense in both the Tabernacle and Temple were the nearest thing to the Holy of Holies, where God’s glory dwelt (Ex 30:6).
- ***And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints [6:9-11], went up before God out of the angel’s hand***—[See Luke 1:8-10, where priest Zacharias offered incense, which represented the prayers of the people.] They prayed: *How long?* That prayer is about to be answered.
- ***Then the angel took the censer and filled it with the fire of the altar***—Their prayers and God’s wrath are connected.
- ***and threw it to the earth***—the burning coals from the altar make a massive fireball from the sky
- ***and there followed peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake.***

## First Trumpet



**Verse 6—*And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them.***

**Verse 7—*The first sounded, and there came hail and fire, mixed with blood; and they were thrown to the earth***—The thunderstorms and earthquake would trigger volcanic eruptions, which would trigger more violent thunderstorms, which would produce large hail. The blood of entrapped men and animals might be mingled with the water vapor and condense as hailstones with blood in them.

***and a third of the earth was burned up*** [making soil unusable], ***and a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up***—This results in destruction of crops, death of animals, loss of wood for heat and construction, etc. In the time before the fifth trumpet, the grass grew again to be destroyed again.

## Second Trumpet



**Verses 8-9—*The second angel sounded, and something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea*** [ocean]—most likely a giant meteorite or asteroid, surrounded by flaming gases set ablaze by the friction of the earth’s atmosphere. This would also produce huge tsunamis.

- *and a third of the sea became blood and a third of the creatures which were in the sea and had life, died*—imagine the stench from the blood, creatures and sea life dying and washing up on shore (remember the dead fish on Lake Michigan beaches?), and people dying from tidal waves
- *and a third of the ships were destroyed*—probably from the tsunamis, huge tidal waves capsizing ocean-going boats as well as swamping harbors full of boats

### Third Trumpet



**Verses 10-11—*The third angel sounded, and a great star [celestial body] fell from heaven, burning like a torch***—the previous trumpet was a “mountain,” i.e., in one piece. Now this celestial body is in many pieces because it falls on rivers which are spread out.

spread out.

- *and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of waters*—This is fresh water.
- *The name of the star is called Wormwood; and a third of the waters became wormwood*—“Wormwood” is mentioned 8 times in the Old Testament, always associated with bitterness, poison, and death (Deut 29:18; Prov 5:4; Jer 9:15; 23:15; Lam 3:15, 19; Amos 5:7; 6:12).
- *and many men died from the waters, because they were made bitter*—or poisoned. For sure, many people died from the first two trumpets, but they are not mentioned—and people can survive for a while with short food supply, but they can’t survive without fresh water.

### Fourth Trumpet



**Verse 12—*The fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were struck, so that a third of them would be darkened and the day would not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way***—I think this refers to what Jesus said, *unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days shall be cut short* (Matt 24:22). If 1/3 of the sun and moon are taken, that would be 8 hours of the day. So it would seem the days will be shortened to 16 hours (that means, of course, that the rotation of the earth is speeded up). And it’s for the sake of the elect, so they don’t have to suffer as long. Remember—there are many elect who will live through the suffering of the tribulation to be alive and go into the kingdom.

**Verse 13—*Then I looked, and I heard an eagle flying in midheaven [our sky], saying with a loud voice, “Woe, woe, woe [one for each of the last 3 trumpets] to those who dwell on the earth [meaning unbelievers—6:10; 11:10; 13:8, 12, 14; 14:6; 17:1, 8], because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!*”**—“Woe” is an expression of grief or denunciation, great troubles or distress. The first seals were bad, the first four trumpets were worse, but much worse is still ahead with the remaining three trumpets. Each trumpet is also a woe.

## Chapter 9

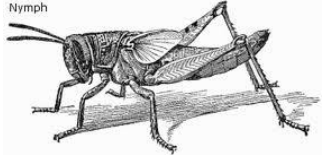

### Fifth Trumpet and First Woe



Demons from the Bottomless Pit

**Verses 1-6—*Then the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven which had fallen to the earth***—In this context, it seems the “star” is Satan (see Isa 14:12-15; Ezek 28:12-16; Luke 10:18). You would not say an angel has “fallen” from heaven to the earth. Satan did, however.



- **and the key of the bottomless pit**—appears 7 times in Revelation, always in reference to the dwelling place of imprisoned demons (9:2, 11; 11:7; 17:9).
  - This is the place where Satan himself will be imprisoned during the Millennium (20:1, 3).
  - 2 Peter 2:4 says that *God did not spare angels when they sinned, but ...committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment*. Certain demons are so awful, they have been imprisoned in this place and only allowed out for this short time during the tribulation (see also Jude 6-7). Can you even imagine the horror of such a thing!!
- **was given to him**—Notice—God is sovereign. Satan could not get those demons out until God gave him the key.
- **He opened the bottomless pit, and smoke went up out of the pit, like the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit**—blackness often refers to evil, here the evil is actually blackness that darkens the sun and the air.
- **Then out of the smoke came locusts upon the earth**—The destructive power of locusts in the Old Testament was familiar (Deut 28:38; 2 Chron 7:13; Joel 2:25; Nahum 3:15). Millions of locusts swarm so thickly, they can darken the sky. One swarm over the Red Sea in 1889 was reported to have covered 2,000 square miles. To John, the demons, as locusts do, brought destruction, and evidently, there were massive numbers of them.
 
- **and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power**—They are not like typical locusts which just eat crops. These locusts have power like scorpions, with venomous stingers, inflicting excruciating pain.
- **They were told [by God] not to hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree**—God set a limit or boundary on what they could do, as God did with Satan and his attack of Job (Job 1:12; 2:6).
- **but only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads**—Some say that all believers have a seal, or name of God, so the demons cannot hurt them. They use passages like 2 Timothy 2:19 (but that's about the church) and Revelation 22:4 (but that's about eternity future). Yet, Satan was able to physically hurt Job, control armies, send fire from heaven and wind, and kill his children. Here it specifically says those without the seal of the 144,000 (from chapter 7). We cannot use passages in other dispensations to show what happens to the other believers here. It simply does not say.
 
- **And they were not permitted to kill anyone**, another boundary put on them by God
- **but to torment for five months**, “torment” is elsewhere translated “pain”
- **and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings a man**, excruciating pain.
- **And in those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death flees from them**—another boundary put on men by God. Can you imagine—jumping off a tall building, but you don't die, you just break a lot of bones. Or you drink poison, only to get excruciating stomach pains. The only escape from the pain is death, but for the **first time in the history** of mankind, death is not an option!

Verses 7-11—**The appearance of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle**—warlike, powerful, straining at the bit, pawing the ground, eagerly want to charge forward

- **and on their heads appeared to be crowns like gold**—victor's crowns. Men cannot conquer them.
- **and their faces were like the faces of men**—intelligent beings, not insects
- **They had hair like the hair of women**—long and beautiful

- *and their teeth were like the teeth of lions*—for ripping and tearing apart their victims
- *They had breastplates like breastplates of iron*—protected so they cannot be hurt or destroyed
- *and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to battle*—a moving army, loud (imagine Pearl Harbor, hearing over 300 planes approaching)
- *They have tails like scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men*—Their sole purpose is to hurt mankind.
- *for five months*—I assume that at the end of the five months, they are again put into the abyss, awaiting the final judgment, where they will be cast into the *eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels* (Matt 25:43).
- *They have as king over them, the angel of the abyss; his name in Hebrew [Jewish language] is Abaddon, and in the Greek [Gentile language] he has the name Apollyon*—This would not be Satan because he is *the prince of the power of the air* (Eph 2:2; 6:12). He is the star from heaven, in verse 1, who is given the key to open the abyss. Other than that, he is not associated with the abyss until he is cast into it (Rev 20:1-3). Rather, this is a high-ranking demon from the abyss. Both names mean “destroyer.” Satan and devil mean “deceiver” (Rev 12:9).

**Verse 12—*The first woe is past; behold, two woes [the sixth and seventh trumpets] are still coming after these things.***

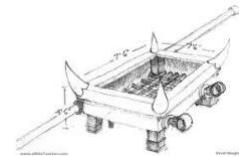
## Sixth Trumpet and Second Woe

Army of 200 Million Demons



**Verses 13-19—*Then the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a [lit. “one”] voice***—we don’t know who this voice is—probably Jesus, who commands the angel

- *from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God* [the Father]—The altars had “horns,” like an animal horn, on each corner.
- *one saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, “Release the four angels who are bound—* These four are demons. No angels are ever described as being “bound.” There is no need to restrain angels, who perfectly carry out God’s every command.
- *at the great river Euphrates*—The headwaters of the Euphrates River are near Mt. Ararat in Turkey. The river flows 1700 miles to the Persian Gulf. Both Turkey and Syria have 7 dams on the Euphrates, using the fresh water themselves. Consequently, today, the river in Iraq is almost dried up. Crops are down 90%. They are bringing bottled water in from Saudi Arabia for the people to drink. The Euphrates is mentioned a lot in the Old Testament, as the cities of Babel and Babylon were built on its shores.
- *And the four angels*—The definite article “the” indicates a specific group of demons
- *who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released*—just as the demons in the abyss were bound and released only for five months, these demons are bound and to be released only for this hour, day, month, and year. God has an exact moment in time for them, right down to the very hour.
- *so that they would kill a third of mankind*—their assignment. After the 4<sup>th</sup> seal, 1/4 of mankind was killed. Six billion today minus 1/4 (1.5 billion), equals about 4.5 billion. But so many have been gone from other things in the meantime (believers who have been Raptured and believers who have been martyred, as well as the other seals and trumpet devastations). But this additional



1/3 would be another 1.5 billion, meaning the population of the world is about cut in half at this point. Down to 3 billion, most likely, less.

— Think of the problem of disposing of the dead bodies. There's many fewer people to do the burying, yet many bodies to bury.

- ***The number of the armies***—because it is plural, maybe each one of the four demons had their own army
- ***of the horsemen was two hundred million***—that's a lot of demons prepared just for this purpose and time.
- ***I heard the number of them***—It's not just John's estimate. He actually hears how many there are.
- ***And this is how I saw in the vision the horses and those who sat on them:***
- ***the riders had breastplates the color of fire*** [red] ***and of hyacinth*** [dark blue or black like smoke] ***and of brimstone*** [sulfurous yellow]—reminding us of the destruction of Sodom
- ***and the heads of the horses are like the heads of lions*** [fierce, tearing apart]; ***and out of their mouths proceed fire and smoke and brimstone***—The destruction actually comes from the horses, not from those riding them.
- ***A third of mankind was killed by these three plagues*** [destructions], ***by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which proceeded out of their mouths. For the power of the horses is in their mouths***
- ***and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents*** [deadly venom] ***and have heads, and with them they do harm*** [injury].
- The previous demonic army from the abyss could torment but not kill. This army's task was to kill 1/3 of mankind.

**Verses 10-21**—***The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues*** [destructions], ***did not repent of the works of their hands***—the idols they made (see 2 Kings 19:18; 2 Chron 32:19; Jer 1:16; 25:6, 7, 14; Hosea 14:3; Acts 7:41).

- ***so as not to worship demons***—the very supernatural beings who were killing them, yet they worshipped them. Paul said, *the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons* (1 Cor 10:20). False religions are not void of the supernatural, they are full of it, because it's the best opportunities for Satan to capture their souls.
- ***and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk***—Throughout the Old Testament, the Living God called it “stupid” to worship idols which cannot see, hear, or walk (Jer 10:1-10).
- ***and they did not repent***—to turn to God from their wickedness, to change direction
- ***of their murders***—we know that the Jews and believers are murdered (even “beheaded”—Rev 20:4).
- ***nor of their sorceries***—Gk. *pharmakon*, a word from which we get “pharmacy” and “pharmaceuticals.” It can also mean poisons, amulets, charms, séances, incantations, magic spells, contacting mediums, witchcraft.
- ***nor of their immorality***—Gk. *porneia*, the root word of “pornography.” It usually describes every variety of sexual sin, including fornication, adultery, rape, homosexuality, and other sexual perversions.
- ***nor of their thefts***—I wonder if this refers to looting, which is so common after disasters. Also, as food, water, medicines, and other supplies become more scarce, people will steal to survive.

## The Little Book

Here we have another parenthesis. They are a pause in the horrors of the judgments on the earth, to remind us of heaven's perspective, that God is still in control. This parenthesis is between the sixth trumpet (and 2<sup>nd</sup> woe) and seventh trumpet (which is the 3<sup>rd</sup> woe and the seven bowls). Why tell about a book with a message hidden from us? Perhaps to give assurance to us that the events which follow are all planned by God, in His defeat of evil.

- **Verses 1-7**—*I saw another* [of the same kind] **strong angel**—different from the angels who blow the trumpets. Other “strong” angels are in Revelation 5:2 and 18:21.
- **coming down out of heaven**
- **clothed with a cloud**—coming from God, as Jesus Himself comes in the clouds
- **and the rainbow was upon his head**—reminds us of the rainbow, representing God's covenant, in Genesis 9.
- **and his face was like the sun**—brilliant, bright
- **and his feet like pillars of fire**—fire usually means judgment (Mal 4:1).
- **and he had in his hand a little book which was open**—some think this is the scroll, which with the seventh seal broken is now open. But it seems like a different one to me.
- **He placed his right foot on the sea and his left on the land**—probably representing all the earth, land and sea
- **and he cried out with a loud voice, as when a lion roars**—loud, but not like the many waters, when Jesus speaks (chapter 1).
- **and when he had cried out, the seven peals of thunder uttered their voices**—these voices were separate from the angel's voice. We know there's thunder around the throne of God (4:5). The Holy Spirit was described as “seven.” The Holy Spirit inspired the writing of Scripture.
- **When the seven peals of thunder had spoken**—we don't know what the voices said, but they were words that John understood.
- **I was about to write**—as John had been commanded to do in 1:10-11, 19. Later he was also commanded to write in 14:13; 19:9 and 21:5.
- **and I heard a voice** [Jesus?] **from heaven saying, “Seal up the things which the seven peals of thunder have spoken and do not write them”**—Any speculation as to the content of the message of the voices is pointless. If God wanted it to be known, He would not have forbidden John to write about it. Daniel was also forbidden to record certain things from his visions (Dan 8:26). Paul was also forbidden to write of his experience in heaven (2 Cor 12:4).
- **Then the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land lifted up his right hand to heaven**—the little book must have been in his left hand.
- **and swore by Him who lives forever and ever**—Jesus said to make no oaths (Matt 5:34-35) because you cannot control the future, but this angel was sent from God with the guarantee of the future because He lives forever and ever and....
- **WHO CREATED HEAVEN AND THE THINGS IN IT, AND THE EARTH AND THE THINGS IN IT, AND THE SEA AND THE THINGS IN IT**—As the Creator, God is the only One who can bring judgment against the sin that ruined His creation.
- **that there will be delay no longer**—Finally, the answer to the prayers of the martyrs, when they asked: *How long?* (6:10).
- **but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound**—that is, the seventh trumpet (which is the final woe and the seven bowls)
- **then the mystery of God**—things that were unknown in the past, which are now revealed

- ***is finished***—reminds me of Christ’s first coming, when on the cross, Jesus said, “*It is finished*” (John 19:30), He paid for the sins of the world with His shed blood. Now, with the bowls, the wrath of God against sin will be finished, and Jesus will inherit His kingdom.
- ***as He preached to His servants the prophets***—Both the Old Testament and the New Testament have prophecies of the end times, and those are fulfilled. But the mystery was in the details that are revealed to John in Revelation.

**Verses 8-11**—*Then the voice which I heard from heaven [Jesus?], I heard again speaking with me, and saying, “[1] Go, [2] take the book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the land”*

- ***So I went to the angel***—John is participating in this drama, obeying the first command
- ***telling him to give me the little book***—obeying the second command
- ***And he said to me, “Take it and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey.” I took the little book out of the angel’s hand and ate it, and in my mouth it was sweet as honey; and when I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter***—At first, as with John, [honey] we want God to be victorious and to defeat evil, but then we realize [bitter] that will involve a judgment in which unbelievers (most likely, some believers, too) will suffer and die.
- ***And they said to me, “You must prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings”***—John is once again assigned to write the prophecies, which will be much more devastating than anything he’s written so far. In his writing, John is warning the world of unbelievers, in all the nations. So we are to spread the word of the coming judgment and glorious return of Jesus Christ.

## Chapter 11

### The Two Witnesses

**Verses 1-6**—*Then there was given me a measuring rod like a staff*—John is once again involved in the very vision he is recording (see 1:17; 4:1; 5:4-5; 7:13-14; 10:8-10).

- ***And someone said, “Get up and measure the temple of God***—This would be the third temple.
  1. Solomon’s Temple is the first Temple, destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.
  2. Nehemiah’s Temple (which Herod beautified and existed at the time of Christ) is the second, destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70.
  3. The third Temple exists during the tribulation, in which the antichrist will take his seat, displaying himself as god (2 Thess 2:4), to be destroyed at the Second Coming of Christ.
  4. The fourth Temple will exist in the Millennial Kingdom. It will be built by Jesus (Eze 40—48).
- ***and the altar***—the brazen altar, which is outside of the Holy Place (where the altar of incense is and where only the priests can enter).
- ***and those who worship in it***—Jews
- ***Leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations***—Gentiles, similar to the Court of Gentiles in former temples.
- ***and they will tread under foot the holy city***—stomp on Jerusalem
- ***for forty-two months***—3 ½ years, half of the tribulation. I think it is the second half of the tribulation because in the first half the Jews establish worship in the temple in Jerusalem.
  - Jesus said when they see the antichrist take his seat in the temple (already built in the first half of the tribulation), then the Jews are to flee to the wilderness, don’t even stop to get a coat, because the antichrist will be trying to kill them (Matt 24:15-20).

- Zechariah 13:8-9 says 2/3 of the Jews will be purged in judgment and the remaining 1/3 will be saved and enter the Messiah’s kingdom.
- ***And I [Jesus?] will grant authority to my two witnesses***—Gk. *martus*, from which we get the word “martyr.”
- ***and they will prophesy***—Gk. *propheteuo*, the same word used in 1:3. They will be speaking about the disasters that are about to occur as the judgment of God.
- ***for twelve hundred and sixty days***—3 ½ years
- ***clothed in sackcloth***—coarse clothes, symbol of mourning
- ***These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands***—lampstands burned olive oil
- ***that stand before the Lord of the earth***—they are human witnesses with God’s message
  1. ***And if anyone wants to harm them, fire flows out of their mouth and devours their enemies; so if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this way***—destroying their enemies with fire, so they don’t have to be afraid of any harm someone may want to do to them.
  2. ***These have the power to shut up the sky, so that rain will not fall during the days of their prophesying***—the third trumpet poisoned 1/3 of the fresh water supply, and now 3 ½ years of drought—creating great loss of human and animal life from starvation and thirst.
  3. ***and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood,***
  4. ***and to strike the earth with every plague [disaster], as often as they desire***—it’s up to them

Who are these witnesses? We don’t know for sure, but there are some suggestions:

1. Moses and Elijah is the most common view—
  - They did similar miracles during their lives (Exo 7:17-21; 2 Kings 17:1; James 5:17).
  - Malachi 4:5 says that Elijah will return. Jesus said, “*Indeed, Elijah is coming and will restore all things*”(Matt 17:11).
  - Both Moses and Elijah appeared on the Mt. of Transfiguration with Christ. Here’s a thought—John was there at the Transfiguration and saw Moses and Elijah and heard their names. If the two witnesses were these two men, wouldn’t John have recognized them?
  - Both left the earth in unusual ways. Elijah in a fiery chariot (2 Kings 2:11-12) and Moses’ body in a secret location, buried by God (Deut 34:5-6).
2. Some think it will be Enoch and Elijah, because they didn’t die. This is a weak argument, though, because thousands from the Rapture will not have died.
3. Two unknown men.

When will these two witnesses minister?

Some think the first half of the tribulation, and they are killed when the antichrist comes to power. Sometimes I think that, but mostly I think they are the last half of the tribulation.

**Verses 7-10**—***When they have finished their testimony***—at the end of 1260 days. Yet Daniel 12 seems to say the tribulation is 1290 days. My thought—the witnesses were taken, leaving 30 days for the final bowls and Armageddon war. The bowl judgments seem to happen very fast, maybe in just a few weeks.

- ***the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them***—It’s not Satan, who is called a dragon (12:3, 9). It’s not Apollyon because he is out of the pit for only 5 months. Thirty-six times in Revelation, the “beast” is referred to, and he is the antichrist, who is empowered by Satan, and the demonic power coming from the abyss. The people will be so pleased that he can finally kill these two witnesses because they were tormented by the witnesses for 3 ½ years.

- ***And their dead bodies will lie in the street***—This was a defilement that was practiced by conquering armies. To display their victory.
- ***of the great city which mystically*** [lit. “spiritually”] ***is called Sodom and Egypt*** [due to its wickedness?], ***where also their Lord was crucified***—Jerusalem. As the evil people killed Jesus, so the evil people will kill His two witnesses—in the “holy” city, where God chose to put His name, but now overrun by evil and the antichrist.
- ***Those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations*** [Jews and Gentiles] ***will look at their dead bodies for three and a half days***—possibly via television or the Internet.
- ***and will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb.***
- ***And those who dwell on the earth***—a term used for unbelievers (6:10; 8:13; 13:8, 12, 14; 14:6)
- ***will rejoice over them and celebrate***—This is the only mention in Revelation of rejoicing.
- ***and they will send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth***—their response shows the finality of their rejection of God.

**Verses 11-13—*But after the three and a half days, the breath of life from God came into them, and they stood on their feet***—The dead, decomposing bodies came alive. We don’t know what shape their bodies are in at this moment. Lazarus was dead for 4 days before Jesus raised him. Martha even said, *Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been dead four days*” (John 11:40).

- ***and great fear fell upon those who were watching them***—Maybe they think the witnesses will resume their miracles, in which case, those who killed them and rejoiced over their deaths would be in deep trouble!!
- ***And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here.”***
- ***Then they went up into heaven in the cloud***—similar to those who are alive at the Rapture. They are physically taken (as Enoch and Elijah were). Whether they are men from the Old Testament or tribulation saints, they don’t get their eternal bodies until the Second Coming. ***and their enemies watched them***—but at the Rapture, no one will see us ascend into heaven. Here, everyone, all their enemies, watch them go up (as Elisha saw Elijah go into heaven—2 Kings 2:11-12).
- ***And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake***—that means there are 70,000 people living in Jerusalem at the time.
- ***and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven***—They acknowledge or accredit these things to God, but that doesn’t necessarily mean they were believers. For example, after God saved Daniel in the lions’ den, the Mede King Darius wrote, *“I make a decree that in all the dominion of my kingdom men are to fear and tremble before the God of Daniel”* (Dan 6:26). He gave glory to God for delivering Daniel, but that did not make him a believer, as Daniel was.

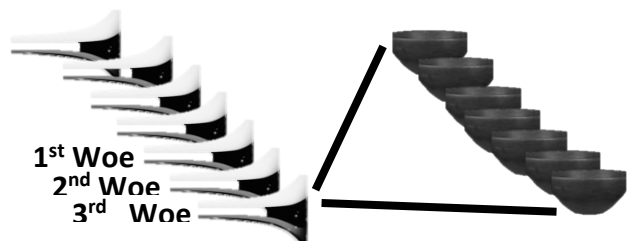
**Verse 14—*The second woe*** [6<sup>th</sup> trumpet] ***is past; behold, the third woe*** [7<sup>th</sup> trumpet and 7 bowls] ***is coming quickly.***

## Seventh Trumpet and Third Woe



12–13 are a digression, taking us, the readers, back

**Verses 15-18—*Then the seventh angel sounded***—The judgments associated with this trumpet are not described until chapter 15. Chapters



through the tribulation by a different path. They describe the tribulation, not from God's perspective but from Satan's.

- ***and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world [ruled by Satan] has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ;***—With the sounding of the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet, those in heaven rejoice. *Has become* is Gk. proleptic aorist, which means a future event that is so certain that it can be spoken of as if it has already taken place.
- ***and He will reign forever and ever***—the form of His reign will change (from a kingdom on earth to the eternal state), but it will never end or be interrupted.
- ***And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God [in heaven], fell on their faces and worshiped God***—representing the church age [?]
- ***saying, "We give You thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who are and who were, because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign***—This is a sure thing. With this final trumpet (3<sup>rd</sup> woe and 7 bowls), the end of Satan's rule is in sight.
- ***And the nations were enraged***—Gk. deep-seated, ongoing hostility, burning resentment against God. They have no desire to repent. Rather, they will gather at Armageddon to come against Christ in Jerusalem and try to destroy Him (a deception of Satan, to think this is possible!!!).
- ***and Your wrath came***—again, the Gk. proleptic aorist, which means a future event that is so certain that it can be spoken of as if it has already taken place.
- ***and the time [era, season] came for the dead to be judged***—It's NOT the Great White Throne Judgment being spoken of here. It's the judgment of the wrath of God in the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet (3<sup>rd</sup> woe, 6 bowls). It's against those who have taken the mark of the beast.
- ***and the time to reward Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name, the small and the great***—Throughout the Bible, those who put their trust in God are promised to be rewarded. At this point, I don't think it's specific rewards, which are associated with their resurrections (Rev 20:1-4, for example) but that the very destruction of the wicked is a reward promised to those who fear God. And the final moments of that destruction are about to begin.
- ***and to destroy those who destroy the earth***—those who pollute the earth with their sin (see Rev 17–18). The earth was cursed because of sin. It's not physical pollution that is destroying the earth, it's mankind's morality, their turning away from God.

**Verse 19—*And the temple of God which is in heaven was opened; and the ark of His covenant appeared in His temple***—This would never happen in the Old Testament Temple, where only the High Priest was allowed in the Holy of Holies, where the ark of the covenant was, and he only went in there once a year. But here it is open to all the saints. They are in the very presence of God. The veil that separated the Holy of Holies was torn in two when Jesus died (Matt 27:51; Heb 9).

- ***and there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and an earthquake and a great hailstorm.***

## Chapter 12

### Satan Thrown Out of Heaven

**Verses 1-6—*A great sign appeared in heaven***—This is the first of 7 signs in the last half of Revelation (v. 3; 13:13, 14; 15:1; 16:14; 19:20). *Great (mega)* appears in verses 1, 3, 9, 12, 14 in this chapter. Things were huge either in size or significance. *Sign* indicates it was not a literal woman but a symbol of a woman.

- ***a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars***—This is very close to the description of Joseph’s dream in Genesis 37:9-11. The sun was Jacob (re-named “Israel”), the moon was Rachel, and the 12 stars were the 12 tribes of Israel. So this is a picture of the twelve tribes of Israel. [There are other interpretations of this woman, most notably, the Roman Catholic church says it’s Mary, and you will often see “pictures” of Mary with a crown of 12 stars above her head.]
- ***and she was with child; and she cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth***—The child is the birth of Jesus Christ.
- ***Then another sign appeared in heaven and behold, a great red dragon***—again, these are signs or symbols, Satan is not actually a great red dragon. Verse 9 tells us this dragon represents Satan.
- ***having seven heads and ten horns***—the ten-nation confederacy ruled by the antichrist (17:12; 13:1; Dan 7:23-25).
- ***and on his heads were seven diadems***—royal crowns, indicating authority, namely, the seven great empires described in Daniel, that is, Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and the antichrist’s future revived Roman empire (Rev 17:9-10).
- ***And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth***—verses 7 and 9 indicate that these stars represent the angels who sided with Satan. So 1/3 of the angels who were created became demons and were cast out of heaven and onto the earth sometime in the past. Though Satan was cast from heaven as his dwelling place, he still has access to God’s presence (Job 1 and 2; Rev 12:10), even today.
  - Rev. 5:11 says around God’s throne are *myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands* of angels. Since 1/3 of the angels fell, and 9:16 says there was a demon army of 200 million, that would make **at least** 400 million holy angels. In addition to this demonic army, there were many thousands of other demons in the abyss (9:1-3), and possibly millions more roaming about on the earth. These increase the numbers of both the holy angels and the demons. The good angels outnumber the demons 2 to 1.
- ***And the dragon [Satan] stood before the woman [Israel] who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child [Jesus]***—The most obvious explanation would be Herod, who attempted to kill the baby Jesus when He was born (Matt 2:13, 16).
- ***rod of iron [cannot be broken]***—Still future rule during Christ’s Second Coming and earthly Millennial Kingdom (v. 10; 2:26-27; 11:15; 19:15).
- ***and her child was caught up to God and to His throne***—at Christ’s ascension (Heb 1:3).
- ***Then the woman [Israel] fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days***—Jesus predicted this in Matthew 24:15-21. *...those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains...* The exact hiding place is not known, but it must be in Jordan in the east, the only mountains, as the Mediterranean Sea is to the west. Some say it is Petra, but that’s pretty obvious, not *a place prepared by God*.
  - *Nourished*—Just as God nourished the Israelites in their 40 years of wandering in that same wilderness area.
  - The 1,260 days is 3 ½ years, when what Jesus called *the great tribulation* will occur. This begins at the mid-point of the tribulation, when the antichrist takes his seat as god in the Temple of the Jews (Matt 24:15; 2 Thess 2:4).
  - Possibly the same 1,260 days of the two witnesses.

One of the most popular myths about Satan pictures him as being in charge of hell. In reality, Satan is not in hell. He’s never even been there. He will not be sentenced to the lake of fire until after the

final rebellion is crushed at the end of the Millennium (20:7-10). And when he does enter hell, he will not be in charge. He will be the lowest inmate there, the one undergoing the most horrible punishment ever inflicted on any created being.

Far from hell, Satan currently divides his time between roaming the earth, *seeking someone to devour* (1 Pet 5:8, see 2 Cor 4:4; Eph 2:2; 6:12) and being in heaven, where he attempts to overthrow God's purposes and people. One way he does that is to constantly accuse believers before God's throne (12:10; Job 1:10-11). But his attempts to turn God against His children don't work. Nothing can separate us from the love of God (Rom 8:38-39).

If Satan cannot turn believers against God, then the next best thing would be to kill all the believers. He does not kill them all, but at the Rapture, indeed all the believers in the world do disappear and he gets full control of the world in the tribulation. But what happens? Thousands of people turn to Christ, but many of those are martyred. He kills them as he killed Christ. But that is not victory!

**Verses 7-9—*And there was war in heaven***—It seems this is near the midpoint of the tribulation on earth (vv. 13-14).

- ***Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon***—Michael and the dragon have known each other since they were created. They have been at war before (Dan 10; 12; Jude 9, with Deut 34:5-6).
- ***The dragon and his angels waged war***—notice, the demons are “his” angels, under the command of Satan (see Matt 25:41; ref. 9:13f. demon army).
  - “With what weapons and by what tactics this heavenly warfare will be waged is beyond our understanding. Angels cannot be injured or slain with earthly weapons, and such physical forces as we know about are not able to move spiritual beings. But these beings do operate in a physical universe, so there must exist powerful physico-spiritual energies of which we yet can have only vague intimations, energies which can propel angelic bodies...It is with such energies and powers that this heavenly battle will be waged and the spectators in heaven will watch in awe...” (Henry Morris, “The Revelation Record”).
- ***and they [demons] were not strong enough***—to defeat God, Michael, and the holy angels.
- ***and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven***—They will no longer have access to God's presence, Satan will no longer be able to accuse believers before God.
- ***And the great dragon was thrown down***—This is the second time he is cast out of heaven. The first time was when he sinned (Isa 14:12; Ezek 28: 16-17; Luke 10:18). Then heaven was no longer his dwelling place. But he still had access to it (Job 1 and 2; Rev 12:10).
- ***the serpent of old who is called the devil*** [Gk. diabolos, “slanderer,” “false accuser”] and ***Satan*** [lit. “adversary”], ***who deceives*** [Gk. *planao*, “to lead astray,” “to mislead”] ***the whole world***—This deception will dominate the world during the tribulation. At the end of the tribulation, he is thrown into the abyss, *so that he will not deceive the nations any longer* (20:3) until his final deception at the end of the Millennial Kingdom, and after that he is cast into the lake of fire (20:10).
- ***he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him***—What's good news for heaven is bad news for the earth. Because Satan has only a short time to function (v. 12), and he will take his anger out against God's people, especially the Jews (v. 17). So he, the demons who came out of the abyss for 5 months, the demon army of 200 million, and the demons who already roam about on the earth—unimaginable evil demonic activity!!

**Verses 10-12—*Then I heard a loud voice in heaven***—don't know whose voice this is, but it seems to be a collective voice (*our*).

- **saying, “Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come**—The first step is taken. Satan is thrown out of heaven—on his way to the lake of fire. It’s all “down” from here!!
- **for the accuser of our brethren**—not the angels speaking because they are never described as *brethren*, but as fellow servants (19:10; 22:8-9).
- **has been thrown down**—Satan has been thrown out of heaven, and soon he will be thrown off the earth.
- **he who accuses them before our God day and night**—like in Job, Satan said to God, “*Put forth Thy hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse Thee to Thy face*” (Job 1:11; Zechariah 3:1).
- **And they overcame him**—but not by using incantations, exorcisms, “binding” him, or rebuking him. It wasn’t through their personal power. But—
  1. **because of the blood of the Lamb**—the first way they overcame Satan was because *there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus* (Rom 8:1).
  2. **and because of the word of their testimony**—they remained faithful witnesses to Jesus, they did not believe Satan’s lies and deceptions.
  3. **and they did not love their life even when faced with death**—their faithfulness to Jesus extended all the way to their martyrdom.
- **For this reason**—because the believers overcame Satan
- **rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them**—The martyrs are in heaven, in the presence of God, other believers, and angels. All rejoicing in the victory that belongs to God.
- **Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath** [outburst of rage, emotional fury]—not only was he cast out of heaven, the very believers he was accusing and even martyred are up in heaven rejoicing!!
- **knowing that he has only a short time**—the remainder of the tribulation. It may be at this point that he enables the antichrist to come to power, to take his seat as god in the Jewish temple, the very sin Satan himself did, *I will be like the Most High* (Isa 14:13-14).

**Verses 13-17**—*And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted* [lit. “to pursue,” “to hunt”] *the woman* [Jews] *who gave birth to the male child* [Jesus]—Satan will attempt to martyr those Jews who have accepted Jesus as their Savior and will also go after those Jews who still might believe. Jesus said to flee to the mountains, to not even go in their houses to get their coats, and that pregnant and those nursing infants will be especially vulnerable because they cannot flee fast enough (Matthew 24:15-22).

- **But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent**—It seems that some unbelievers will help the Jews to survive (Matt 25:31-40), much like some Germans hid Jews from the Nazi soldiers. And God will supernaturally protect the Jews as they escape to the place He has prepared for them (12:6).
- **And the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood**—Just as these have been signs and symbols, the river could be a symbol of some destructive force Satan brings against the Jews, most likely an army of some kind.
- **But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth**—The earth opening and swallowing people has been seen before (Ex 15:12; Num 16:28-22). It could be an earthquake, one of many during the tribulation.

- *So the dragon* [Satan] *was enraged with the woman* [Jews], *and went off to make war with the rest of her children* [who did not flee to the mountains], *who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus*—Jewish believers, maybe Gentile believers, too.

## Chapter 13

### The Antichrist

**Verse 1**—*And the dragon* [Satan] *stood on the sand of the seashore*—[this should be the last verse of the previous chapter] *The sand of the seashore* depicts the nations of the world (Rev 20:8). Satan has been cast out of heaven and down to earth, he is furious and knows he has a short time. He goes after the Jews, but God protects them. So he achieves worldwide power and worship through the man he controls, called the antichrist.

**Verses 1-6**—*Then I saw a beast* [wild, vicious monster] *coming up out of the sea*—this beast is called the “antichrist.” He is described in great detail in Daniel 7; 8:23-25; 9:26-27; 11:31-45; Matthew 24:15-16; and 2 Thessalonians 2:3-10. Different than past dictators, this man will rule the entire world. He was described in Revelation 11:7 as the beast who will kill God’s two witnesses.

- *The sea* is the abyss. (See 11:7 and 17:8 which state he comes from the abyss, i.e., he is possessed by the demon[s] from the abyss.) Obviously, God has released this demon from the abyss to possess this man.
- The antichrist is a man, but at some point in his life, he becomes possessed by a powerful demon.
- He will be a gifted orator, an intellectual genius, will possess great charm and charisma, and have immense leadership power. He is attractive to the world, not hated. Because Satan controls his world system, he will easily bring the antichrist to world-wide authority.
- *having ten horns* with *ten diadems* describe the ten nations by which he comes to power. These are often called the ten nations of the revived Roman Empire, the ten toes of the statue in Daniel (Dan 2:41-44; 7:7, 24).
- *Having...seven heads*, which represent seven successive world empires: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and the revived Roman Empire, ruled by the antichrist (see chapter 17). Remember, it’s all about Israel, and these are the empires who have ruled Israel.
- *And on his heads were blasphemous names*—divine names, titles which dishonor the true and living God. *He takes his place in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God* (2 Thessalonians 2:4).
- *And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion*—These are the four beasts described in Daniel 7:3-7, but John lists them in reverse order. The lion was Babylon. The bear was the Medo-Persian empire. The leopard was the Greek empire of Alexander the Great. Then Daniel said, *After this I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong* [the antichrist]; *and it had large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed, and trampled down the remainder with its feet; and it was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns...* (Daniel 7:7-8).
- *And the dragon* [Satan] *gave him his power and his throne and great authority*—so no human can stand against him. Angels will not intervene either. God’s supernatural restraint has been removed (2 Thess 2:7) to allow the antichrist to come to power. He will share Satan’s throne (Rev 2:13). He will have “mega” authority over the whole world. He answers to no one. Similar to the absolute power Hitler gained in Germany after WWI. But antichrist’s power will be

worldwide. With all the natural disasters and upheaval of the world during the tribulation, people will cry out for help and peace. They will believe his deception that he cares for them.

- ***I saw one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed***—In a counterfeit of Christ’s death and resurrection, where Christ really died, the antichrist may receive a wound that the world will think is fatal, yet he recovers. Or the whole thing could be staged. He looks ***as if*** he had been slain and healed. [In the 1960s, many thought John Kennedy was the antichrist, having received a fatal wound—but he didn’t recover!]
- ***And the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast***—Since the tribulation is a time where the world will experience death on a scale never before in human history, the antichrist seeming to “conquer” death gives him even more worship.
- ***they worshiped the dragon because he gave his authority to the beast***—by worshipping the antichrist, unbelievers will actually be worshipping Satan, the real power behind the beast.
- ***and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?”***—language to describe the power of God.
- ***There was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies***—taking his seat in the temple, displaying himself as god is the ultimate blasphemy (Dan 7:8, 20, 25; 11:36).
- ***and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him***—The last 3 ½ years of the tribulation. God set time limits on him.
- ***And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven***—blasphemous words against God’s Person, His dwelling place, and His people, both the redeemed saints and the holy angels.

**Verses 7-10**—***It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them***—i.e., physically martyr them, that is, a world-wide slaughter of God’s people (Dan 7:25).

- ***and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him***—over the unbelievers (vv. 12, 14; 3:10; 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 17:2, 8).
- ***All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain***—
  - Seven times in the New Testament believers are identified as those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life (Rev 3:5; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27; Phil 4:3). This is a registry in which God wrote the names of those chosen for salvation before the foundation of the world (Matt 13:35; 25:34; Luke 11:50; Eph 1:4; Heb 9:26; 1 Pet 1:20).
  - The elect are saved through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (John 3:16; 5:24; Acts 13:39; etc.). The non-elect will be judged because they *did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness* (2 Thess 2:12). Unbelief and rejection always indicate those persons whose names were not written in the book of life.
  - The elect will not be deceived by the antichrist (Matt 24:24), and they will not worship him, nor take his number 666 (Rev 20:4).
- ***If anyone has an ear, let him hear***—A call for spiritual understanding. This phrase is used 16 times in the New Testament (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 13:9; Matt 11:15; 13:9, 43; Mark 4:9, 23; 7:16; Luke 8:8; 14:35). Notice the invitation goes out to the individual person. There is no “group” salvation. Chapters 2–3 contain the phrase *what the Spirit says to the churches*. The fact that phrase is omitted here seems to indicate the church is not here. It was Raptured before the tribulation began.
- ***If anyone is destined for captivity, to captivity he goes; if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed***—These situations have been pre-determined by God.
- ***Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints***—That they endure, are steadfast, in spite of the persecution, even martyrdom, that the antichrist brings against the believers.

The following additional information on the antichrist is from page 18 of the “Overview of Prophecy” book.

- The Antichrist—His person and work are presented in Ezekiel 28:1-10; Daniel 7:7-8, 20-26; 8:23-25; 9:26-27; 11:36-45; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-10; Revelation 13:1-10; 17:8-14.
- He will appear in the latter times of Israel’s history (Dan 8:23).
- His being revealed is hindered by the Restrainer (2 Thess 2:6-7).
- He comes from the Roman European Empire, the people who destroyed Jerusalem (Dan 9:26).
- He is the head of this Roman European Empire (Rev 13:1), so he is a political leader.
- His influence is world-wide (Rev 13:8).
- This influence comes from the alliance he makes with other nations (Dan 8:24; Rev 17:12).
- He has eliminated three rulers in his rise to power (Dan 7:8, 24).
- His rise to power comes through his peace program (Dan 8:25), with an attempt to solve the world’s economic problems (Rev 13:16-18).
- He personally is marked by his intelligence and persuasiveness (Dan 7:8, 20; 8:23).
- He rules over the nations with absolute authority (Dan 11:36).
- He changes the laws and customs (Dan 7:25).
- His chief interest is in might and power (Dan 11:38).
- As the head of the empire, he makes a seven-year covenant with Israel (Dan 9:27), which he breaks after 3 1/2 years (Dan 9:27).
- He introduces idolatrous worship where he sets himself up as god (Dan 11:36-37; 2 Thess 2:4).
- He gets his authority and power from Satan (Ezek 28:9-12; Rev 13:4), is the head of Satan’s lawless system (2 Thess 2:3), and proves his deity by signs done with Satanic power (2 Thess 2:9-19).
- He becomes the enemy of Israel (Dan 7:21, 25; 8:24; Rev 13:7).
- He makes his headquarters in Jerusalem (Dan 11:45).
- He becomes the enemy of Christ (Dan 8:25), Christ’s program (2 Thess 2:4; Rev 17:14), and Christ’s people (Dan 7:21, 25; 8:24; Rev 13:7).
- His rule will end by a direct judgment from God (Dan 7:22, 26; 9:27; 11:45; Rev 19:19-20).
- This judgment will take place when he has the armies of the earth gathered together in the valley called Armageddon (Rev 16:13-16; 19:11-21) and attacks Jerusalem. There are five armies: (1) the ten nation empire under the Antichrist, (2) the northern army of Russia, (3) the kings of the East, the Asiatic people from beyond the Euphrates River, (4) the king of the South, a north African power, and (5) the Lord and His armies from heaven (Dan 11:40; Ezek 38–39).
- This judgment will take place at the Second Coming of Christ (Rev 19:11-21).
- Christ casts the Antichrist directly into the Lake of Fire for eternity (Rev 19:20), where he will be for 1000 years before Satan even gets there (Rev 20:10).

## The False Prophet

**Verses 11-18**—*Then I saw another* [of the same kind] *beast coming up out of the earth*—usually called the “false prophet.” He will be able to deceive the unbelieving world because the power of religion over people’s minds is so great. He will convince the world to worship the antichrist. He will bend, twist, and distort the truth.

- *and he had two horns*—not scary like the first beast.

- ***like a lamb and he spoke as a dragon***—like a wolf in sheep’s clothing. He will appear like a lamb, deceptively mild and gentle, yet his message is straight from the dragon (Satan).
- ***He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence***—perhaps meaning he gets his authority to act from the antichrist, in his presence.
- ***And he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed***—a worldwide antichrist cult. The world will accept the antichrist’s “resurrection” as real, and that will encourage the worship of the antichrist.
- ***He performs great [mega] signs***—These signs will mimic the miracles Jesus did as well as what the two witnesses did. Jesus said this will happen, with the purpose to mislead, if possible, even the elect (Matt 24:24). As we get closer to the tribulation time, it’s the satanic false prophets that Jesus said will be doing the miracles, not the believers. The only believers doing miracles at that time are the two witnesses.
- ***so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men***—impressive! As the two witnesses do (Rev 11:5). Reminds me of the magicians in Egypt who could do some of the same miracles Moses did (Exo 7:11).
- ***And he deceives those who dwell on the earth***—The purpose of all he does is to deceive the unbelievers. He is from Satan, *the father of lies* (John 8:44).
- ***because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast***—God enables him to have the power to do these things. Why would God do that? 2 Thess 2:9-12 says: *the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.*
- ***telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and has come to life***—Reminding us of Nebuchadnezzar who did the same thing (Dan 3), but this is on a world-wide scale. Mega-idolatry!
- ***And it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast would even speak***—This could happen through technical robotics (much like figures in amusement parks seem to talk) or it could even be a clone. This again is a deception and mock of Jesus. Jesus said, *the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also have life in Himself* (John 5:26). But God here gives the false prophet to *give breath to the image*. No wonder people are deceived. For sure, this is part of the *deluding influence* God will send on mankind so they will not *receive the love of the truth so as to be saved*.
- ***and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed***—Just like Nebuchadnezzar did (Dan 3:6). In spite of all of Satan’s tactics, he is not able to kill all the believers. Some will survive and enter the Kingdom as living people (Isa 65:20-23).
- ***And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark [engraving] on their right hand or on their forehead***—The mark will show that the person is a worshiper and loyal follower of the antichrist, and therefore, will escape the wrath of the antichrist.
- ***and he provides that no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark***—strict economic control of the world. Food, clothing, medical supplies, all cannot be bought unless one has the mark. It is similar to ration cards during WWII. If they please, you can be starved or everything taken from you. You cannot do anything without their permission. Already we are forced to do Medicare. We’re forced to not smoke in certain areas, can’t drink a big glass of Coke—We see in our time how the government can control our lives—for seemingly our “best” interests at heart. Yeah, right!!

- ***either the name of the beast or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six***— Don't know the significance of his number. For some reason, he makes that his number. It's a famous number even now. Many people know the number and that it is somehow satanic. It's even the object of jokes and movies. I'm often asked, "What about credit cards, or ID cards, or some other identification on our person." For me, I think it is no problem. It's obviously not the 666 of the antichrist, and we will be Raptured, so it won't be an issue for us. Throughout recent history, Christians have worried about steps leading to that—checking accounts instead of cash, credit cards, etc. I'm sure there will be more steps probably in our lifetime.
  - Revelation 20:4 tells us, *I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had **not** worshipped the beast or his image, and had **not** received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ...* It seems clear that a believer would not get the 666 mark, and anyone who does receive the 666 will not become a believer. By getting the mark, they seal their fate.

The following additional information on the false prophet is from page 18 of the "Overview of Prophecy" book.

- He is called the second beast in Revelation 13:11-17.
- He is possibly a Jew because he arises out of the earth, or land, that is, Palestine (Rev 13:11). Or possibly he could also come from the revived Roman Empire.
- He is influential in religious affairs (Rev 13:12).
- He is motivated by Satan, just as the antichrist will be (Rev 13:11).
- He has the authority and power of the antichrist (Rev 13:13).
- He promotes worship of the antichrist and forces the earth to worship the antichrist as god (Rev 13:14).
- His ministry is authenticated by signs and miracles (Rev 13:13-14).
- He is successful in deceiving the unbelieving world (Rev 13:14).
- He has authority to control all economic commerce (Rev 13:16-17).
- He causes the mark 666 to be put on men as an identification with the antichrist in order to buy and sell (Rev 13:16-18).
- He is called the false prophet (Rev 16:13; 19:20; 20:10) and together with the dragon (Satan) and the antichrist, he makes up an unholy trinity, or the trinity of hell.
- He is judged by Christ at His Second Coming (Rev 19:11-21) and is cast directly into the lake of fire for eternity (Rev 19:20). He will be there for 1,000 years before Satan will be there (Rev 20:10).

These two men (the antichrist and false prophet) are the only two humans who do not go before the Great White Throne Judgment of Christ, indicating there is absolutely no good in them. They are

completely 100% evil. They will be the first to inhabit the lake of fire, and they will be there for 1,000 years before Satan, demons, or other unbelievers are sent there by Christ.

John also wrote, *...it is the last hour...antichrist is coming, many antichrists have arisen...This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son (1 John 2:18, 22). ...every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; and this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world (4:1-4).*

1. Satan does not know when the Rapture will happen. He has had a man ready to step into the role of antichrist ever since Christ's first coming. There have been many potential antichrists.
2. There is a *spirit of the antichrist* which is also already in the world. That's those who do not believe that Jesus is God, who deny the Father and Son. These are people who are living already as if they were in the darkness of the domain of the antichrist. Of course, many of these will be saved after the Rapture, possibly even be martyred for their faith in Christ.
3. Thank God, *He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son* (Col 1:13).

## Chapter 14

### Angels Announce the Judgments

This chapter is a contrast to chapters 12-13, which were from Satan's perspective. They gave the details of Satan's men—the antichrist and false prophet. Now chapter 14 returns to what God is doing. In contrast to the darkness of Satan and his men, chapter 14 describes the Lamb, angels, redeemed saints, worship, and those sealed by God.

**Verses 1-5**—*Then I looked* (John's observation), *and behold* (astonishment)

- *the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion*—in Jerusalem. In this vision, John is seeing a victorious Jesus Christ in Jerusalem, at His Second Coming. This was prophesied in Psalm 2:6-9 (see also Isa 11:9-12; 24:23; Joel 2:32; Zech 14:4).
- *and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand*—These are the 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes, already described in 7:4-8. They are alive and on the earth, in Jerusalem. They survived the tribulation and all the horror Satan and the antichrist threw at them.
- *having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads*—for their protection from the antichrist (7:3). Just as the unbelievers tried to kill the two witnesses and were not able to do so, they will not be able to kill these 144,000.
- *And I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps* (it was musical)—the multitudes in heaven, giving praise to Jesus (19:6).
- *And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders*—The song begins in heaven.
- *and no one could learn the song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand who had been purchased from the earth*—and the song continues on the earth. Some words of the song are in 15:3-4.
- *These are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they have kept themselves chaste* [sometimes translated “virgin”]—they will be sexually pure. Paul said that *One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord, but one who is married...his interests are divided* (1 Cor 7:33-34). It seems to me **if** they had wives and children, who are not sealed by God, they would very much have their interests divided.
  - In the midst of tremendous sexual perversion during the tribulation, even Jerusalem is said to be a spiritual Sodom (Rev 11:8). With no restraint (2 Thess 2:6-7), there will be unlimited pornography, sodomy, homosexuality, all the immorality Satan can think of and use to lure people into sin against God.
- *These [144,000] are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes*—They will be completely loyal to the Lamb, no matter what the cost.
- *These have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb*—They may be the first fruits in the sense of those who are saved through the tribulation and who enter

the millennial kingdom. The 144,000 are not the only ones saved through it, but are illustrative of those who are, those who have dedicated their lives to following the Lamb, and survived.

- ***And no lie was found in their mouth***—Jesus is *the* truth (John 14:6). Lies are from Satan, ...*the father of lies* (John 8:44).
- ***they are blameless***—not sinless, but no one can bring charges against them. They lead godly lives—like Noah (Gen 6:9), Job (Job 1:8), and Daniel—and us?

#### Verses 6-7—

These three angels do not bring judgment. Rather, they bring announcements from God concerning the coming judgments of the seventh trumpet (i.e, the seven bowls).

- ***And I saw another angel flying in midheaven***—i.e., where the planes fly
- ***having an eternal gospel to preach***—Many say this is the Gospel, as we know it. However, the message is in verse 7, and it is not Gospel of saving faith through Jesus Christ. It is a warning of coming judgment. [This is an example of how we must get the meaning of a word from the context, not from what we think the word means, especially if our definition is from a different dispensation.]
- ***to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people***—to all the unbelievers (see 5:9; 7:9; 11:9; 13:7). Evidently, these 3 angels will be heard all over the earth, by all the people, and understood by *every...tongue*. Probably not at the same time. They are flying around the world. Yet it seems like everyone will understand the message. Similar to Peter's speech in Acts 2:5-6, ...*men, from very nation under heaven, ...they were each one hearing them* [the disciples] *speak in his own language*.
- ***and he said with a loud voice, "Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come"***—this is the first mention of the word *krisis* (judgment) in Revelation ( other times are in 16:7; 18:10; 19:2). Up to now, the word *wrath* has been used. But the words are used interchangeably.
- ***worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters***—the Creator can do to His creation whatever He desires. But those with the mark of the beast do not worship God, instead they blaspheme God, and refuse to repent (16:9, 11).

Verse 8—***And another angel, a second one followed***—more detailed information regarding the judgment

- ***saying, "Fallen, fallen"***—double emphasis
- ***is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion*** [lit. "strong, consuming lusts"] ***of her immorality***—Babylon is the capital city of the antichrist and is also his worldwide political, economic, and religious empire. The world will be drunk, deceived, and seduced by the antichrist. But it all is destined to fall when Jesus comes.

Verses 9-12—***Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand—***the 666 required if one is to buy or sell during the tribulation.

- ***he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God***—everyone who receives the mark of the beast will also reject God and receive the wrath of God during the tribulation.
- ***which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger***—undiluted vengeance, no mercy
- ***and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone***—unbearable pain, like what God used to destroy Sodom (Genesis 19:24-25). This is the lake of fire.

- ***in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb***—They will be relationally away from Jesus, but not from His omnipresence and sovereignty. David wrote, *Where can I flee from Your presence...if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there* (Psa 139:7-8).
- ***“And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night***—it is an eternal punishment. Jesus talked about the lake of fire (hell) more than anyone else. He’s the One who is *able to destroy both soul and body in hell* (Matt 10:28; see also Isa 66:24; Dan 12:2; Matt 3:12; 2 Thess 1:9; Mark 9:43).
- ***those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name***—This is the second time he mentions this condition. The first in verse 9 was the wrath of the tribulation, but now it says they will also receive the *full strength in the cup of His anger...where their torment goes up forever and ever*, eternally in the lake of fire.

**Verses 12-13—*Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus***—No group of believers ever has faced or ever will face stronger attacks on their faith than the tribulation saints have to endure. These are in contrast to the judgment, announced by the previous three angels, for those who receive the mark of the beast.

- ***And I heard a voice from heaven*** [the 6<sup>th</sup> time this voice is heard—10:4, 8; 11:12], ***saying***,
- ***“Write*** [12 times John is told to write—1:11, 19: 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14; 19:9; 21:5]
- ***‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!’***—  
 “This passage is often quoted in regard to God’s general blessings on all Christians, but the context indicates that the blessing is especially for those who die in the Great Tribulation. For them it is a blessed release from persecution, torture, and trial and a deliverance into the glorious presence of the Lord” (Walvoord, BKC).
- “Yes,” says the Spirit, “so that they may rest from their labors [lit. difficult, exhausting toil, or trouble]—for example, they will experience much sorrow as they watch those they love (children, parents, spouses, friends) suffer torment and death at the hands of the antichrist. Without the mark of the beast, they will be excluded from society, unable to buy and sell, and hunted like fugitives. Death will be a welcome relief.
- ***for their deeds follow with them***—What do they for Jesus will result in rewards for them in heaven (2 Tim 4:7-8). Jesus won’t forget.

**Verses 14-16—*Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting*** [like “enthroned”] ***on the cloud was one like a son of man***— This is Jesus, called the Son of Man by John and 25 times in Matthew.

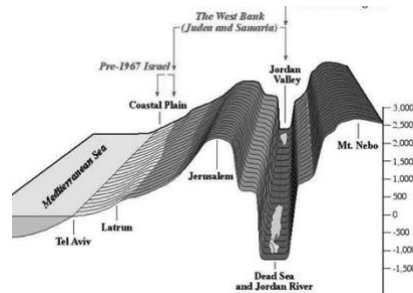
- ***having a golden crown*** [*stephanos*, victor’s crown of triumph] ***on His head***
- ***and a sharp sickle in His hand***—a razor-sharp blade attached to a wooden handle, held in both hands, used to harvest grain.
- ***And another angel*** [4<sup>th</sup> one in this chapter] ***came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat*** [enthroned] ***on the cloud, “Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come***—This angel calls to Jesus to begin executing the judgments the other three angels announced on the earth, i.e., the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet (3<sup>rd</sup> woe and 7 bowls).
- ***because the harvest of the earth is ripe***—lit. “dried up,” “withered,” “overripe,” or “rotten.” The “grain” has passed the point of any usefulness and is fit only to be gathered up and burned with fire (Matt 13:40).
- ***Then He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped***— This reaping is described in detail in chapter 16.



**Verses 17-20**—*And another angel* [5<sup>th</sup> one in this chapter] *came out of the temple which is in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle*—This time it is an angel with the sickle, not Jesus.

- *Then another angel* [6<sup>th</sup> angel], *the one who has power over* [the] *fire, came out from the altar*—mentioned in 6:9-11 and 8:3-5. This is the altar associated with the prayers of the saints. So now the time has come for those prayers to be answered, when they prayed, **“How long?”**
- *and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, “Put in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters* [unbelievers] *from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe”*—Here is a different word used for “ripe,” meaning “to be fully grown” or “in prime condition.”
- *So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth*—i.e., from earthly existence.
- *and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God*—A wine press was two stone basins, connected by a trough. Grapes were trampled in the upper basin and the juice would run down the trough to the second basin. The splattering of the juice is a vivid picture of the blood of those who will be killed.
- *And the wine press was trodden outside the city*—in the Jordan River valley [?]
- *and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses’ bridles* [about four feet deep], *for a distance of two hundred miles*—about the distance down the Jordan River valley from the Sea of Galilee in the north to the Red Sea in the south. This valley is about 5 miles wide. This is most likely a reference to what’s commonly called the Battle of Armageddon (6<sup>th</sup> bowl). The armies of the

antichrist gather in the Jezreel Valley near Meggido, in its center, and then march east out the valley (near the Sea of



Galilee) and south down the Jordan Valley towards Jerusalem. They could also possibly come by ship from the Mediterranean Sea, through the Suez Canal into the Red Sea, and up to Eilat, then enter the southern end of the Jordan River valley and march north toward Jerusalem.



## Chapter 15

### The Victory Song of the Lamb

Chapters 4–5 showed the scene in heaven before the seal judgments began. In 8:2-6, again we see into heaven before the trumpet judgments began. And now we see into heaven before the bowl judgments begin.

**Verse 1**—*Then I saw another sign in heaven*—This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> heavenly sign. In 12:1, John saw the woman, depicting Israel. In 12:3, he saw the red dragon, depicting Satan.

- *great and marvelous*—something of enormous importance
- *seven angels who had seven plagues* [Gk. *plege*, meaning “a blow” or “wound”—these are not diseases or epidemics but powerful, deadly blows]. These are the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet (3<sup>rd</sup> woe, 7 bowls).
- *which are the last*—after the seals and trumpets

- **because in them the wrath** [Gk. *thumos*, “rage”] **of God is finished.**

**Verses 2-3—And I saw something like a sea of glass mixed with fire**—In 4:6, John already saw *before the throne* [of God] ...*a sea of glass like crystal*. Now it is mixed with the fire of the judgments of God (Heb 10:27; 12:29; 2 Thess 1:7-9; 2 Pet 3:7).

- **and those who had been victorious**—because they did not bow down to the antichrist
- **over the beast** [the antichrist]—these are believers who were saved and killed during the tribulation (they are not resurrected and rewarded until 20:4-6).
- **and his image**—that came to life, before whom everyone was to worship, but these believers did not do that
- **and the number of his name**—666, without which, no one can buy or sell, but these believers did not receive that mark
- **standing on the sea of glass**—they are in heaven, before the throne of God.
- **holding harps of God**—rejoicing and singing praise to God (5:8; 14:2).
- **And they sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God**—sung at the Red Sea, when the Israelites were safely out of Egypt and across the Red Sea (Exo 15:1-18). It was a song of victory for God’s people and a song of judgment and wrath on God’s enemies.
- **and the song of the Lamb**—sung at the crystal sea (Rev 5:8-14). The words of the song do not match exactly, but the themes and many of the key words are similar.

**Verses 3-4—saying, “Great and marvelous are Your works**—(Psa 139:14)

**O Lord God, the Almighty**—(Rev 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; 21:22)

**Righteous and true are Your ways**—(Dan 4:37; Hosea 14:9)

**King of the nations!**—(Jer 10:7)

**“Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name?”**—(Jer 10:7; Psa 86:9)

**For You alone are holy**—(1 Sam 2:2; Psa 22:3; 99:5, 9; 111:9; Isa 6:3; 57:15)

**For ALL THE NATIONS WILL COME AND WORSHIP BEFORE YOU**—(Psa 86:9)

**FOR YOUR RIGHTEOUS ACTS HAVE BEEN REVEALED**—(Judges 5:11; 1 Sam 12:7; Psa 103:6; Dan 9:16; Micah 6:5)

**Verses 5-8—After these things I looked**—means a new vision

- **and the temple** [Gk. *naos*—Holy of Holies] **of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened**—This phrase was used before, when *the temple of God which is in heaven was opened; and the ark of His covenant appeared* (Rev 11:19). That time, it was so John could see into the temple. But now, the angels are coming out of the temple.
  - **and the seven angels who had the seven plagues** [“blows”—v. 1] **came out of the temple,**
  - **clothed in linen, clean and bright, and girded around their chests with golden sashes**—indicating the righteousness and holiness of God. It’s because of God’s holiness that sin must be punished.
- Then one of the four living beings gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever—At His first coming, the wrath of God was poured out on Jesus when He died for sinners. Now the wrath of God will be poured out on sinners because of what they did to Jesus Christ. Unbelievers have been warned repeatedly to repent—there will be the testimony of the two witnesses, testimonies of the believers (who live and who die)—many even acknowledge the judgments as having come from God, yet they refuse to repent, and instead they blaspheme (Rev 16:9, 11).

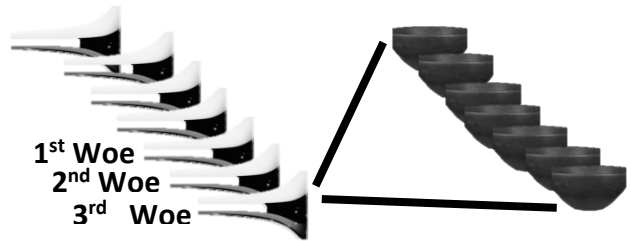
- *And the temple* [in heaven] *was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power; and no one was able to enter the temple* [where God is] *until the seven plagues* [“blows”] *of the seven angels* [the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet, which are the 7 bowls] *were finished.*

## Chapter 16

### Seven Bowls

**Verse 1**—*Then I heard a loud* [“great”—appears 6 times in this chapter] *voice*—Twenty times in Revelation, loud voices from heaven are heard.

- *from the temple*—God the Father, He’s the only One in the temple. His loud voice is heard again after the 7<sup>th</sup> bowl is poured out (v. 17).
- *saying to the seven angels, “Go and pour out on the earth* [worldwide] *the seven bowls of the wrath of God.”*



### First Bowl



**Verse 2**—*So the first angel went* [immediately] *and poured out* [quickly dumped out all at once] *his bowl on the earth* [worldwide]

- *and it became a loathsome and malignant sore*—Gk. festering, painful, incurable—English word “ulcer,” inflamed, oozing, ulcerous sores to bring unrelieved physical torment. This may be what Zechariah described in 14:12, *Now this will be the plague with which the Lord will strike all the peoples who have gone to war against Jerusalem; their flesh will rot while they stand on their feet, and their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongue will rot in their mouth.*
- *on the people who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image*—these sores will not affect the believers in Jesus. It’s only on unbelievers who have the 666 mark and who worshipped the antichrist.

### Second Bowl



**Verse 3**—*The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea*—This is similar to the 2<sup>nd</sup> trumpet, but the trumpet only affected 1/3 of the sea and 1/3 of its creatures died. The 2<sup>nd</sup> bowl affects ALL the sea, which covers approximately 70% of the earth’s surface.

- *and it became blood like that of a dead man*—Thick, dark, and coagulated, like the puddle of blood from someone who has been stabbed to death.
- *and every living thing in the sea died*—The smell from the dead, decaying bodies will be unimaginable. Henry Morris writes (“The Revelation Record”):  
 “In this toxic ocean nothing can survive, and soon all the billions of fishes and marine mammals and marine reptiles and the innumerable varieties of marine invertebrates will perish, thus still further poisoning the oceans and contaminating the sea shores of the world.”

### Third Bowl



**Verses 4-7—Then the third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of waters; and they became blood**—like the blood of the ocean from the second bowl judgment. The third trumpet poisoned 1/3 of the fresh water, but with the third bowl, ALL the fresh water becomes blood. This will cause unthinkable hardship and suffering. No water to drink. No water to wash the oozing sores of the first bowl judgment. No water to bring relief from the scorching heat of the coming fourth bowl judgment.

- **And I heard the angel of the waters saying, “Righteous are You, who are and who were, O Holy One, because You judged these things**—The unbelievers on earth are blaspheming God who has the power to do these things (vv. 9, 11), but this angel says that God is righteous in doing this judgment.
- **for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets**—these are the unbelievers who were merciless in their beheading the believers during the tribulation (Rev 20:4). The two witnesses were martyred, as well as many other saints. These unbelievers *were drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus* (17:6).
- **and You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it**—God will give vengeance for His people. He said, “*Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,*” says the Lord (Rom 12:19).
- **And I heard the altar saying** [probably the altar where the saints were earlier praying for vengeance in 6:9-11].
- **“Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments”**—The answer to those prayers. His judgments are against the horrible evil in the world, for those who reject Jesus, for those who kill those who follow Jesus. (See Psa 19:9; 119:75; Rom 2:5; Rev 19:1-2.)

## Fourth Bowl



**Verses 8-9—The fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun**—not on the earth, as the previous 3 bowls were.

- **and it was given to it to scorch men with fire**—Since the fourth day of creation, the sun has been dependable in giving the world light, warmth, energy—but now it becomes a deadly killer.
- **Men were scorched with fierce heat**—To scorch is to burn the surface. It will seem like the air itself is on fire. Like they are breathing fire, even scorching their lungs.  
— No doubt this heat will also melt the polar ice caps, causing terrible flooding of the blood/water. And what about the stench of heat on blood/water and dead sea carcasses!
- **and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues**—Like Pharaoh, these unbelievers (who take the mark of the beast and worship his image) will harden their hearts.
- **and they did not repent so as to give Him glory**—Even though they know these judgments are from God, like their evil leader, antichrist, they will continue to hate God and refuse to repent.

## Fifth Bowl



**Verses 10-11—Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom** [not where the believers are] **became darkened**—worldwide darkness. When God brought darkness on Egypt, it says, *even a darkness which may be felt* (Exo 10:21).

- **and they gnawed** [lit. “kept on chewing”] **their tongues because of pain**—the oozing sores, the fierce heat, no water, the stench of the oceans—all in darkness (no stars, no moon, no light from the sun)
- **and they blasphemed the God of heaven**—yet with those same tongues, they cursed God

- **because of their pains and their sores**—Unbelievers think they deserve the freedom to do whatever they want. How dare God give them pains for doing what they want to do. What a deception of Satan—you can be your own god and decide what is best for yourself.
- **and they did not repent of their deeds**—This is the last mention of their unwillingness to repent.

## Sixth Bowl



**Verses 12-16—The sixth angel poured out his bowl**—This is not a specific judgment on mankind but a preparation for what is to come.

- **on the great river, the Euphrates**—At the 6<sup>th</sup> trumpet, 200 million demons who were bound at the Euphrates were released.
- **and its water was dried up**—Although today the waters are low because of the dams in Turkey and Syria, when the heat of the fourth bowl melts the ice cap on top of Mt. Ararat, the river will most likely flood. So this angel must dry up the river.
- **so that the way would be prepared for the kings from the east**—This is not a gift from God. It’s a trap, much like the drying up of the Red Sea was a trap used to kill Pharaoh’s army.
- **And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon [Satan] and out of the mouth of the beast [antichrist] and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs**—slimy, cold-blooded—yuck!!
- **for they are spirits of demons**—other demons were like locusts and scorpions. These are like frogs.
- **performing signs**—supernatural signs, to deceive the kings to attack God’s people in Jerusalem
- **which go out to the kings of the whole world**—According to Rev 17:12-14, ten nations are involved. (See Joel 3:2, 9-12; Zech 14:2-3; Psa 2:1-3).
- **to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty**—The final battle of the tribulation. Satan has the armies there to fight against God and His people in Jerusalem. But Jesus will come and put an end to those armies (Rev 19:17-19).
- **(“Behold, I am coming like a thief**—quickly and unexpectedly. However, He’s not coming to steal but to take what is rightfully His.
- **Blessed** [the third of seven “blessings” in Revelation] **is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.**—the garments of salvation (Isa 61:10; Rom 13:14; 1 John 2:28). Those who are God’s people are the blessed ones.
- **And they** (the kings of the world) **gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-magedon**—*Har* means “hill” and *magedon* is Megiddo. There’s a Tel of Megiddo [a hill made up of some 26 layers of city ruins] in the middle of the Jezreel Valley, about 60 miles north of Jerusalem. More than 200 battles have been fought there because it is a flat valley about 15 miles long and 8 miles wide. Often mistakenly this is called the “battle of Armagedon,” but it says the armies are “gathered” there. They then march east out the Jezreel Valley and turn south down the Jordan River valley, to attack Jerusalem. *And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies, assembled to make war against Him who sat upon the horse, and against His army* (Rev 19:19). (See the maps below, also refer to the end of chapter 14.) It’s in Jerusalem, on the Mt. of Olives, that the feet of Jesus will touch when He comes again, **and all His holy ones with Him!** (Zech 14:4-5).



## Seventh Bowl



**Verses 17-21—Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl upon the air**—The judgments were poured out on the people, the sea, the fresh water, the sun, the light, and now the air.

- **and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, “It is done”**—Gk. tense describes a completed action with ongoing results. Jesus said the same thing on the cross (John 19:30). Now God the Father says it about His wrath.
- **And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder**—violent thunderstorm
- **and there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake was it, and so mighty**—there are have been local earthquakes, but the shaking of this earthquake is so mighty, it actually re-orders the earth. John says, “great,” “so great” and “so mighty” and never one so great since the creation—that would even include the Flood, which, so far, is the most mighty thing to happen to the earth.
- **The great city was split into three parts**—Jerusalem, *where also the Lord was crucified* (11:8). Jesus will continue to make geographical changes to Jerusalem when He returns and sets up His kingdom (Zech 14:4-10).
- **and the cities of the nations fell**—even though the armies gather to fight in Israel, the judgment is in the whole world.
- **Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath**—as the capital city of antichrist’s empire, Babylon will especially be made to drink God’s cup of wrath (described in more detail in chapters 17 and 18).
- **And every island [tops of undersea mountains] fled away, and the mountains were not found**—this seems to be a restoration of the pre-Flood world. The mountains came into existence at the Flood. The result would be no more inaccessible and uninhabitable mountain ranges or deserts or ice caps. It seems that leaves Jerusalem as the highest point on the earth, ready for the King who will rule there during the Millennial Kingdom (Jer 3:17).
- **And huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds each came down from heaven upon men** — The heaviest ever recorded hailstone weighed about 2 pounds. The Greek term translated “one hundred pounds” described the most weight a normal man could carry, from 90 to 135 pounds. With the devastation of the previous bowl, there are no caves to hide in. It’s common today to have hail destroy cars and house roofs. And that’s small hail. Where can people go to escape this hail? Nowhere.
- **and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague was extremely severe**—Unbelievers remain hardened and continue to curse God. Miracles do not produce faith.



Hail damage in  
Nebraska on  
May 24, 2010



Hail bigger than an egg

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## Chapter 17

### Fallen Is the One World Religion

The chronology has stopped, and in chapters 17 and 18, the scene shifts from God's judgments to the target of those judgments, the antichrist's world empire.

**Verses 1-7—Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me [John], saying, “Come here, I will show you the judgment [by God] of the great [spiritual] harlot**

- **who sits on many waters**—verse 15 tells us, *The waters which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues*, i.e., all the unbelievers of the world, who follow this false one-world religion.
- **with whom the kings of the earth committed acts of [spiritual—and physical] immorality**—These are probably the ten kings referred to in verse 12, *ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour*.
- **and those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her immorality**—Jeremiah 51:7 says a similar thing of ancient Babylon, *Babylon has been a golden cup...intoxicating all the earth. The nations have drunk of her wine; therefore the nations are going mad*.
- **And he [angel] carried me [John] away in the spirit [John's spirit, not the Holy Spirit] into a wilderness; and I saw a woman [the Babylonian harlot the angel described in verses 1-2] sitting on a scarlet beast [the antichrist]**.
- **full of blasphemous names**—taking for himself the names and titles that belong only to God. He *will speak out against the Most High...and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods* (Dan 7:25; 11:36).
- **having seven heads and ten horns**—see verses 9-10 for their description.
- **The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls**—This religion has become extremely wealthy.
- **having in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality**—the people spiritually drink from this cup (v. 2), so the abominations and immoralities become one with them. [You are what you eat—especially what you spiritually eat!]
- **and on her forehead a name was written, a mystery [previously unknown], “BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH”**—As the *mother*, this false religion is the source of all the false, idolatrous, blasphemous worship in all the earth. False religion began with Satan, who wanted to be like God. When he failed, he spread his poison among mankind. All false religions claim you can be your own god. You can determine your own destiny and beliefs.
- **And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus**—This could refer to the saints of all history. The people of false religions have killed God's people in all the dispensations, starting with Cain, whose false religion of *the fruit of the ground*, caused him to murder Abel, the true believer in God. God told Cain, *“The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground”* (Gen 4:1-12).
- **When I saw her, I wondered greatly**—shocked, confused, astonished. It was a beautiful woman but with a very deadly agenda. False religions, even today, appear good and desirable, but we would be shocked at their deadly agenda. They want to spiritually kill you—to take you away from Jesus Christ, the source of eternal life.
- **And the angel said to me, “Why do you wonder? I will tell you the mystery of the woman [false religion of the false prophet] and of the beast [antichrist] that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns**—The angel will explain the vision to John.

**Verses 8-14**—*The beast* [antichrist] *that you saw was, and is not* [his fake death and “resurrection”], *and is about to come up out of the abyss* [indwelt by the awful “frog” demons of 16:13-14] *and go to destruction* [in the lake of fire, at Christ’s coming—Rev 19:20].

- *And those who dwell on the earth, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world*—the unbelievers, who have the mark of the beast
- *will wonder when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come*—They are amazed at his seemingly miraculous return to life after receiving an apparently fatal wound (Rev 13:3-4). He uses that to get them to worship him as god.
- *Here is the mind which has wisdom*—This is going to be difficult to understand.  
*The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits, and they are seven kings* [not actual mountains—as some commentaries think this refers to the actual seven hills of Rome];
- *five have fallen*—I think these are the five Gentile world empires that had fallen by the time of John’s vision—Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece. None of these ruled the entire world, but each was the greatest empire of its own time, especially with respect to Israel. These are also consistent with the visions of the seven empires in Daniel 2; 7–8; 10–11.
- *one is* [Rome—who exiled John to Patmos], *the other has not yet come* [antichrist’s final world empire, sometimes called the “revived Roman empire”]; *and when he comes, he must remain a little while*—Antichrist’s empire has been given *authority to act for forty-two months*, i.e., the second half of the tribulation (Rev 13:5).
- *The beast which was and is not* [the antichrist], *is himself also an eighth* [after his “resurrection” he becomes the world ruler, the 8<sup>th</sup> emperor, in the second half of the tribulation] *and is one of the seven* [comes to power as the 7<sup>th</sup> king of the revived Roman empire, during the first half of the tribulation], *and he goes to destruction*—at the Second Coming of Jesus (Rev 19:20).
- *The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour*—the antichrist gives these ten kings their authority to be kings, but it will be for only a short time, as the antichrist himself (as well as they) will be destroyed after the 42 months. This is also referred to in Daniel 2:40-45 as the ten toes of the statue. They are mixed iron and clay. And a mountain, representing Christ, will hit the toes, and that empire and all previous empires will be destroyed, as Christ sets up His eternal kingdom.
- *These have one purpose, and they give their power and authority to the beast*—They are completely under his authority
- *These will wage war against the Lamb*—gather at Armageddon and march into Jerusalem
- *and the Lamb will overcome them*—at the Second Coming (Rev. 19:18-19).
- *because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him* [that’s us, in Christ’s army—Rev 19:14] *are the called* [to salvation] *and chosen* [in the Lamb’s book of life, chosen before the foundation of the world] *and faithful* [have not worshipped Satan].

**Verses 15-18**—*And he said to me, “The waters which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues*—the unbelievers who take the mark of the beast

- *And the ten horns which you saw* [the kings appointed by the antichrist], *and the beast* [the antichrist], *these will hate the harlot* [false religion, headed by the false prophet] *and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire*—he will destroy, with extreme violence, the false religious system. He probably covets its great wealth. Religion will not cease to exist, but it will be restricted to the worship of the antichrist, who has set himself up as god at the mid-point of the tribulation (Matthew 24:15).

- ***For God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the beast***—God’s purpose is to bring His wrath upon the evil on the earth, on those *who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness* (1 Thess 2:12), to have revenge on all the blood of saints whom Satan and his people have shed, to clean the earth in preparation for the coming of Christ and His kingdom.
- ***until the words of God will be fulfilled***—All this prophecy of Revelation must come true exactly as it has been written and we have read.
- ***The woman whom you saw is the great city*** [Babylon, on the Euphrates River], ***which reigns over the kings of the earth***—Babylon is the religious, economic, and political center of the antichrist’s earthly kingdom.
  - Babylon is older than Jerusalem. It started with the evil of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11), after the Flood. The pages of Scripture describe the war between Babylon and God’s city of Jerusalem. [Charlie Dyer spoke at our Bible conference on this topic, and he called it, “The Tale of Two Cities.”] At the end of the tribulation, God will destroy Babylon, never to be rebuilt again. But Jerusalem will be rebuilt and be the headquarters of Jesus in His Millennial Kingdom.

## Chapter 18

### Fallen Is Babylon

**Verses 1-3**—*After these things* [a new vision] ***I saw another*** [of the same kind as 17:1] ***angel***

- ***coming down from heaven***—came from the presence of God and His throne
- ***having great authority***—from God Himself, only God can give this power and authority, as we’ve seen over and over in the book.
- ***and the earth was illumined with his glory***—Especially brilliant as the 5<sup>th</sup> bowl had thrown the earth into complete darkness (16:10). Everyone will see him.
- ***And he cried out with a mighty voice***—Everyone will hear him.
- ***saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!”***—called a *city* five times in this chapter (vv. 10, 16, 18, 19, 21). An angel predicted this in 14:8. This happens when the 7<sup>th</sup> angel pours out the 7<sup>th</sup> bowl of wrath. *Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath* (16:19).
- ***She has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit*** (i.e., demons)—before (9:13-16), 200 million demons were bound at the Euphrates, near Babylon. Now, Babylon becomes *a prison* for *every unclean spirit*. They are all gathered in one place. Satan and antichrist have them there to fight the forces of God, but God has them there to destroy them.
- ***and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird***—In Leviticus 11:13-19, under the Law, the carrion birds, like the vulture and buzzard, were considered unclean. Perhaps these are the birds God has gathered into Babylon to eat the bodies of the dead (see Rev. 19:17-18).
- ***For all the nations of the whole earth have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality,***
- ***and the kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her,***
- ***and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality.***”

**Verses 4-8**—***I heard another*** [of the same kind as the voice in verse 1] ***voice from heaven, saying, “Come out of her***—It’s a mystery to me why God’s people would be in Babylon. But then, why was Lot in Sodom (see 2 Peter 2:7)? Just as the angels told Lot to get out of Sodom before God destroyed it (Gen 19:12-13), so God’s people are to get out of Babylon before God destroys it.

- **my people**—It seems this is Christ’s voice speaking now. However, in the next verses, God is referred to, not the one doing the speaking. So don’t know if this is God, Christ, or an angel speaking here.
- **so that you will not participate in her sins**—Flee, as Joseph fled Potiphar’s wife’s temptations (Gen 39:12; see also 1 Cor 10:14; 1 Tim 6:11; 2 Tim 2:22). Paul wrote, *Do not be deceived: “Bad company corrupts good morals”* (1 Cor 15:33).
- **and receive of her plagues**—destruction coming on Babylon
- **for her sins have piled up as high as heaven**—It’s interesting—the people built the tower of Babel *whose top will reach into heaven* (Gen 11:4). But now, what’s reached as high as heaven is her sins. Of course, sin doesn’t enter heaven. But it’s the knowledge of Babylon’s sins that has reached heaven. It’s an hyperbole, to communicate how great the sin is.
- **and God has remembered her iniquities**—At the tower, *the Lord came down to see the city and tower*, and God has seen the sin here in Babylon. Thankfully, for believers, God has said, *I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more* (Isa 43:25; Jer 31:34).
- **Pay her back even as she has paid, and give back to her double according to her deeds; in the cup which she has mixed, mix twice as much for her**—Under the Mosaic Law, wrongdoers were required to pay back double for their crimes (see Exo 22:4, 7, 9; Isa 40:1-2; Jer 16:18). Her sins were mixed in a cup, now she will receive the cup of God’s wrath (14:8; 17:2, 4).
- **To the degree that she glorified herself**—her pride. The Bible warns over and over about the sin of pride. It’s value apart from God (Isa 42:8; Prov 6:16-17; James 4:6).
- **and lived sensuously**—*But she who gives herself to wanton pleasure* [sexually immodest or promiscuous] *is dead even while she lives*—1 Tim 5:6].
- **to the same degree give her torment** [torture] **and mourning** [grief from the torture]—
- **for she says in her heart, ‘I SIT as A QUEEN AND I AM NOT A WIDOW, and will never see mourning’**—She was so prideful, the very thing she was sure couldn’t happen to her, will happen to her.
- **For this reason**—because of these sins
- **in one day**—suddenly and completely, much like Sodom was, like Babylon fell the very night God wrote of it on the wall of the king’s palace (Dan 5:30).
- **her plagues** [i.e., “blows” of destruction] **will come, pestilence and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire**—so nothing is left, complete destruction
- **for the Lord God who judges her is strong**—As Job said of God, *“I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted* (Job 42:2). God said, *“There is none who can deliver out of My hand; I act and who can reverse it?...My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure* (Isa 43:13; 46:10; see also Isa 14:27; Dan 4:35).

**Verses 9-10**—***And the kings of the earth*** [especially the ten kings who got power from the antichrist—17:12], ***who committed acts of immorality and lived sensuously with her, will weep and lament over her***—They don’t have sorrow over their sin. Even after all the suffering from the seals, trumpets, and bowls, what they cry over is the destruction of antichrist’s (and Satan’s) kingdom.

- **when they see the smoke of her burning, standing at a distance because of the fear of her torment**—they will see the smoke as the city burns, but they will see it from a distance because they don’t want to also burn.
- **saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour your judgment has come’**—So far, it has withstood the judgments poured out on the world, the earthquakes, hail, etc. But now in one hour, it’s destroyed.

**Verses 11-20**—*And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, because no one buys their cargoes any more*—Economic destruction. Only those with the 666 could do business, but that is now destroyed.

- Here are 28 items no longer available: *cargoes of gold and silver and precious stones and pearls and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet, and every kind of citron [lemon] wood and every article of ivory and every article made from very costly wood and bronze and iron and marble, and cinnamon and spice and incense and perfume and frankincense and wine and olive oil and fine flour and wheat and cattle and sheep, and cargoes of horses and chariots and slaves and human lives* [lit. “bodies and souls of men”].
- *The fruit you long for has gone from you, and all things that were luxurious and splendid have passed away from you and men will no longer* [Gk. double negative] *find them*—Babylon will never again be a source of all these luxuries.
- *The merchants of these things, who became rich from her*—their financial resource is gone
- *will stand at a distance because of the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning*—not wanting to suffer the fate of the city, yet crying over its destruction.
- *saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, she who was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls; for in one hour such great wealth has been laid waste!’*—The city seemed indestructible, but it was not.
- *And every shipmaster and every passenger and sailor, and as many as make their living by the sea, stood at a distance*—perhaps from the Persian Gulf, or maybe a harbor was made on the Euphrates, closer to the city.
- *and were crying out as they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, ‘What city is like the great city?’*—Beyond any riches we could imagine. The economic center of the world.
- *And they threw dust on their heads and were crying out, weeping and mourning, saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, in which all who had ships at sea became rich by her wealth, for in one hour she has been laid waste!’*—weeping, not in repentance but because their source of wealth was destroyed.
- *Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, because God has pronounced judgment for you against her*—Quite the opposite scene in heaven, where they are told to rejoice over the destruction of Babylon. This judgment is *for you*. It’s because of the blood of God’s people that has been shed (v. 24). Finally, vengeance (6:9-10). The enemy has been destroyed. Righteousness has triumphed.

**Verses 21-24**—*Then a strong angel* [like “strong” angels we’ve already seen in 5:2; 10:1] *took up a stone like a great* [mega] *millstone* [very heavy stone, used to grind grain, but this one is even heavier] *and threw it into the sea* [where it very quickly sunk and disappeared], *saying, “So will Babylon, the great city, be thrown down with violence, and will not be found any longer.*

— *And the sound of harpists and musicians and flute-players and trumpeters will not be heard in you any longer*—no more music, usually associated with happiness

— *and no craftsman of any craft will be found in you any longer*—no one working

— *and the sound of a mill will not be heard in you any longer*—no preparing food

— *and the light of a lamp will not shine in you any longer*—

— *and the voice of the bridegroom and bride will not be heard in you any longer*—no one falling in love, getting married

- *for your merchants were the great men of the earth*—they used their wealth to become the prominent men of the earth, they were prideful, used their wealth to prey upon others
- *because all the nations were deceived by your sorcery* [Gk. *pharmakeia*]—Where we get the English word “pharmaceuticals.” They used magic, drugs, the occult to deceive people.

- *And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all who have been slain on the earth*—see 6:10; 11:7; 13:7, 15; 16:6; 17:6. Antichrist was out to kill as many of God’s people as he could. In heaven, they cried out for vengeance. And God gave it to them.

## Chapter 19

### The Second Coming of Jesus Christ

Verse 1—*After these things*—The beginning of a new vision.

- The bowl judgments are finished, the fall of Babylon’s religious, economic, and political system, as well as the destruction of the city of Babylon, have all happened.
  - **The sinners at the time of the tribulation will have the greatest opportunity to repent of any people who have ever lived.** They will have experienced the judgments, which they acknowledge come from God (6:17), they will hear the preaching of the two witnesses for 3½ years and hear many believers who hold to the testimony of Jesus, even to giving their lives for Him... Yet these people are hardened, they take the mark of the beast, and have defiant hatred of God. They were warned over and over, but they refuse to repent.
  - *I heard something like a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying*—probably just the angels here as the believers join in the praise in verses 5-8.
  - *“Hallelujah! —halal (“to praise”) Yah (“God”).* This phrase appears only here in the New Testament (vv. 3-4, 6).
1. **Salvation**—Not meaning our justification but the final aspect of salvation, the glorification of the saints in the kingdom of Christ.
    - *and glory and power belong to our God*—On earth the **unbelievers were crying out, weeping and mourning** as their evil system was destroyed. In heaven, they are not rejoicing over the damnation of the sinners but because Jesus will soon remove these sinners from the world. God will then be honored. Jesus will be put on the throne. And the curse will be lifted from the earth (Zech 14:11).
  2. **Verses 2-8—BECAUSE HIS JUDGMENTS ARE TRUE AND RIGHTEOUS**—Righteousness has characterized God throughout the Bible ((Isa 9:6-7; Jer 23:5; Rev 6:10).
    - *for He has judged the great [spiritual] harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality*—Satan and the antichrist deceived the unbelieving world to believe the lies of Satan. This was a worldwide deception.
  3. *and HE HAS AVENGED THE BLOOD OF HIS BOND-SERVANTS ON HER*—Vengeance belongs to God, and He will repay (Deut 32:42-43; 2 Thess 1:6-8; Rev 18:20).
    - *And a second time they said, “Hallelujah! HER SMOKE RISES UP FOREVER AND EVER”*—This is final, permanent and irreversible. Also used of God’s destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:28). This ends the rebellion which began in the garden of Eden. There will no longer be a false religion, worldly philosophy, injustice, unrighteousness, or any of the other results of human depravity. **It’s the end of man’s reign on earth.**
    - *And the twenty-four elders [church age believers in their resurrected bodies] and the four living beings fell down and worshiped God who sits on the throne saying, “Amen. Hallelujah!”*—They are all in agreement and praising God.
    - *And a voice came from the throne, saying, “Give praise to our God, all you His bond-servants, you who fear Him, the small and the great”*—Because he says *our God*, this voice is most likely an angel. *All...who fear Him*—everyone, no distinctions or categories.

- ***Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, “Hallelujah!”***—This fourth *Hallelujah* is so loud, it’s like thunder or many waters. It’s all John can hear.
4. ***For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns***—*Almighty* is used nine times in Revelation (v. 15; 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 21:22). Now He will destroy all evil and visibly reign.
5. ***Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready***—A wedding was used to picture Christ’s relationship with the church (2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:25-27; John 14:2-3). They are now in their resurrected, rewarded bodies in heaven. [The wedding parables of Matthew 25 describe Israel’s apostasy and rejection of God.] This marriage supper seems to be celebrated during the whole millennial kingdom.
- ***It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean***—expensive, beautiful cloth, worn by Joseph (Gen 41:42), David (1 Chron 15:27), and Mordecai (Esther 8:15). It means shining, radiant. They are worn by the angels (Rev 15:6) and by the armies (made up of both angels and saints) who come with Christ when He returns (v. 14).
  - ***for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints***—Paul wrote that *it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure* (Phil 2:12-13; see also Col 1:29; 1 Cor 3:12-15). It is our righteous acts, but it is God who works in us to produce those righteous acts.

**Verses 9-10**—***Then he said to me, “Write, ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb’”***—These can’t be the church, as they are the bride. So these people are the souls of Old Testament saints (such as Abraham, Moses, and David) as well as the souls of tribulation saints, and the believers who go into the kingdom.

- ***And he said to me, “These are true words of God”***—God’s redemptive plan cannot be stopped
  - ***Then I fell at his feet to worship him***—The angel who had God’s message.
- Application—How often people today seem to fall in worship of the messenger—the pastor or preacher—who is just a servant. They themselves often travel with bodyguards, etc. They become “untouchable,” fostering the belief that they are MORE than just fellow servants of God.

- ***But he said to me, “Do not do that***—Do not worship angels, or attribute deity to them.
- ***I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus***—Both angels and believers serve God.
- ***worship God***—He alone is worthy of worship (see chapters 4–5).
- ***For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy***—The nature and purpose of prophecy is to give glory to Jesus Christ.

**Verses 11-16**—***And I saw heaven opened***—as John saw in 4:1, where John was let into heaven, but here heaven opens to let Jesus out. This is the time to which all of Revelation, as well as all redemptive history, has been pointing. Jesus spoke of it in Matthew 24:27-31.

- ***and behold, a white horse***—instead of humble, riding on a donkey, here is the King of Kings
- ***and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True***—Jesus was already called the *faithful and true witness* (3:14). He is faithful to His promises and what He speaks is always the truth. This is contrasted to the unfaithfulness and lies of Satan and the antichrist.
- ***and in righteousness He judges and wages war***—His holy nature demands a righteous judgment. He came the first time as a Savior, and now He comes as the Judge.

- ***His eyes are a flame of fire—all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom was have to do*** (Heb 4:13).
- ***and on His head are many diadems***—ruler’s crowns, all authority. *Many* probably means the collective crowns from all former authorities on the earth, defeated by Christ. At His first coming, Jesus wore a crown of thorns. Now He wears a ruler’s crown.
- ***and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself***—We cannot even speculate what this name will be as the text says **no one** knows it except Jesus. John does not know it.
- ***He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood***—This is not the redemptive blood of the cross. This is the blood of war, of His slaughtered enemies. This is not Jesus’ first war, it’s His last war. His robe has been dipped in blood before He ever got to this war.
- ***and His name is called The Word of God***—A name used of Jesus only by John (John 1:1, 14; 1 John 1:1). He is *the radiance of His* [God the Father] *glory and the exact representation of His nature* (Heb 1:3).
- ***And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean***—believers from the church age (19:7-8) and ***all the angels with Him*** (Matt 25:31). They (we) come with Jesus, not to fight, but to reign with Him. He will do the fighting.

Application—It seems to me that these armies are only church age believers because they are *clothed in fine linen*, which are *is the righteous acts of the saints* (v. 8), i.e., they are already rewarded and in their resurrected bodies. The Old Testament saints (Dan 12:1-2) and the tribulation saints (Rev 20:4-6) receive their resurrected bodies and rewards at the Second Coming, but the armies are accompanying Christ as He comes. In this context, the Old Testament and tribulation saints would be “unclothed,” i.e., souls, not yet rewarded and resurrected.

- ***were following Him on white horses***—in chapter 6, the antichrist was riding on a white horse, of false worldwide peace. Now Jesus brings true peace because He destroys the evil world system. Are we really riding horses? John described what he saw.

Application—There is nothing in this chapter about the translation (rapture) of living saints. The unbelievers are killed. And the living human believers are left alive to go into the Millennial Kingdom.

- ***From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations***—coming from His mouth are the words of death. Notice the armies who accompany Christ have no weapons. Jesus is the only One with a weapon. But it is enough to strike down the nations of unbelievers and those armies who gathered at Armageddon to march against the saints in Jerusalem.
- ***and He will rule them with a rod of iron***—This is the pattern of Christ’s rule throughout the Millennium (Psa 2:8-9). He will quickly judge all sin and instantly stop any rebellion. All people will be required to obey His law and be immediately judged if they don’t. Jesus said the believers would rule under Him (Rev 2:26-27).
- ***and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty***—This is a picture of the practice of stomping grapes in a wine press, with the juice running off. It’s also a picture of the blood of the armies as Christ stomps on them (see Isa 63:1-3; Joel 3:12-14).
- ***And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS”***—This is the third name given to Jesus in this passage. There is the unknown name in verse 12, the Word of God in verse 13, expressing His deity, and now the name expressing His

sovereign triumph over all His enemies and His absolute rule soon to be established in His kingdom.

**Verses 17-18**—*Then I saw an angel standing in the sun*—a prominent place, to be seen, maybe even partially eclipsing it. Evidently the worldwide darkness of the fifth bowl (16:10) has been lifted because the sun is again seen.

- *and he cried out with a loud voice*—heard by all the birds, commanding them
- *saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven*, i.e., our atmosphere.

Application—It’s interesting that Israel, with the Mediterranean Sea on the west and the desert on the east, is already the natural path of millions of birds which migrate from Europe to Africa. Currently, these birds have been the object of study by the Israeli government because of the threat they pose to aircraft.

- **“Come, assemble for the great supper of God**—the birds feasted on the remains of dead humans before, at the judgment of Cush (Isa 18:6) and after the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon (Jer 7:33). Jesus referred to this in Matthew 24:27-28 and Luke 17:37.
- **so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great.**” It seems this is what Revelation 14:19-20 is talking about—... *the great wine press of the wrath of God, and the wine press was trodden outside the city, and the blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses’ bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles*. This 200 miles is approximately the distance from the Sea of Galilee to the Red Sea, down the Jordan Valley (about 5 miles wide). It is the “Battle of Armageddon” at the end of the tribulation, when the armies come from the Jezreel Valley, march down the Jordan Valley, and up to attack Jerusalem (probably up Highway 1, if it still exists). *I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle... Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle. In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south... Then the Lord, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him!* (Zech 14:1-5). See also Zeph 1:14-18.

### Resurrections at the Time of the Second Coming of Christ

- **Old Testament Saints**—These saints will be resurrected and given their eternal bodies at the Second Coming of Christ. *And as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth. Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God* (Job 19:25; read Dan 12:1-3; Isa 26:19-21).
- **Tribulation Saints**—These saints will be resurrected and given their eternal bodies at the Second Coming of Christ. *And I saw the souls of those who...had not worshipped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead...and they came to life* (Rev 20:4).

### Judgments

- **Old Testament Saints**—...*and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord... “They will be Mine,” says the Lord of hosts, “on the day that I prepare My own possession...so you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked...”* (Mal 3:16-18; Dan 12:1).

- **Tribulation Saints**—*and they reigned with Christ for a thousand years* (Rev 20:4). Reigning with Christ in His Millennial Kingdom is part of the reward for church saints, Old Testament saints, and tribulation saints.

Application—Once resurrected and rewarded, it seems that the dispensational distinctions are eliminated. We are all reign together as God’s people during the Kingdom. There is no longer “church,” “Old Testament,” or “tribulation” saints. We are all just saints.

- **Israelites and Gentiles Living at the End of the Tribulation**—The living Israelites will pass through a judgment of God. Those who are believers will go on into the blessings of the Millennial Kingdom on the earth. And *I shall purge from you the rebels and those who transgress against Me; ...they will not enter the land of Israel* (Ezek 20:35-38). The Gentiles are also judged at this time, as a separation of the sheep and from the goats (Matt 25:31-46). Those Gentiles who are believers will enter the Millennial Kingdom on earth with the believing Jews.

### The Judgment of the Antichrist and False Prophet

**Verses 19-21**—*And I saw the beast* [antichrist—11:7; 13:1-8] *and the kings of the earth* [the kings of antichrist’s empire—17:12-14] *and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army*—the antichrist has them there to wage war against the Jews and saints in Jerusalem. Before Christ returns, the battle is fierce. *For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city. Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle* (Zech 14:1-3).

- *And the beast* [antichrist] *was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence* (Rev 13). Supernatural signs are performed to lead people away from God (Matt 24:24). It’s a false belief that all supernatural things are from God. Even today, leading up to the tribulation, supernatural things can and will be performed by Satan.
- *by which he deceived*—Supernatural signs are performed to lead people away from God (Matt 24:24). That’s their objective!! People are still held accountable even if they are deceived. We are warned over and over to not be deceived (1 Cor 6:9; 15:33; Gal 6:7; James 1:16).
- *those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image*—Those who receive the mark of the beast do not believe in God. They cannot become saved. Getting the mark of the beast shows their hardened hearts.
- *these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone*—
  - *brimstone* [burn-stone, usually sulfur, a key ingredient in the best gun powder. Today natural gas and petroleum removes sulfur. Matches are made from sulfur. The smell of skunks and garlic are from sulfur compounds. Sulfuric acid is a highly corrosive chemical.] It is often associated with judgment (9:17; 14:10; 20:10; Gen 19:24; Luke 17:29).
  - The lake of fire, Jesus said, was created for Satan and his angels (Matt 25:41). Although it also becomes the eternal dwelling place of unbelieving mankind.
  - These two men are thrown there alive. There are many believers who are taken alive to heaven at the Rapture (1 Thess 4:13-18). As far as I know, these are the only **unbelievers** to not die but be translated (changed) into their eternal bodies, that will live forever. The armies that are gathered here are killed (and their souls go to Hades).
  - These two do **not** go to the Great White Throne Judgment. They are so evil, there is not any good work to judge them for.
  - They are in the lake of fire for 1,000 years before even Satan gets there. Or before anyone else gets there.

— There are still there when Satan is cast there (Rev 20:10), 1,000 years later. This seems to refute the teaching of annihilationism (that the souls of unbelievers are annihilated). The New Testament clearly teaches that punishment is eternal (Rev 14:10-11; Matt 13:40-42; 25:41; Mark 9:43-48; Luke 3:17; 12:47-48).

- ***And the rest were killed***—As I just mentioned, the people of these armies are killed, their souls going to Hades. Zechariah says, *Now this will be the plague with which the Lord will strike all the peoples who have gone to war against Jerusalem their flesh will rot while they stand on their feet, and their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongue will rot in their mouth....and the hand of one will be lifted against the hand of another* (Zech 14:12-13). Jesus also told about this event as the separation of the sheep and goats. The sheep are believers who go into the kingdom. Of the goats, He says, “...*Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels*” (Matt 25:31-45). At this point, they go to Hades, but they are headed for the Great White Throne Judgment—and the Lake of Fire (as Satan and his angels are).
- ***with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse***—the same One whose words created the world, now kills all the unbelievers. Remember, Revelation 1:18 says Jesus has the keys of death.
- ***and all the birds were filled*** [gorged] ***with their flesh***.

And the earth is now left with only humans who are believers, to go into the Millennium.

## Chapter 20

### Satan Bound

**Verses 1-3**—***Then I saw***—chronological order **after** chapter 19. **Before** the kingdom begins, Jesus must return, and the enemy must be removed. The human rebels who survived the tribulation were executed at the “Battle of Armageddon” (19:11-21) or the goat judgment (Matt 25:31-45). The leaders of the worldwide rebellion, the antichrist and false prophet, have been thrown into the lake of fire (19:20). Now the final ones to be removed are Satan and his demons.

- ***an angel coming down from heaven***—we don’t know which angel, but he has **great** power and a specific assignment—to seize Satan, bind him, cast him into the abyss and seal it, and release Satan after the 1000 years are completed.
- ***holding the key***—The *key* given to the angel by God indicates authority and access. We read that Jesus has the *key of death* and the *key of Hades* (Rev 1:18). Here the angel can open the abyss, and shut it after Satan is cast inside. Neither Satan nor the demons are able to do that.
- ***of the abyss***—The word *abyss* occurs 7 times in Revelation (9:1, 2, 11:11:7; 17:8), always in reference to the temporary place of imprisonment for certain demons. Their final place of punishment is the lake of fire (Matt 25:41). But this abyss is a place of torment, and demons don’t want to go there (Luke 8:31). Demons from the abyss were released onto the earth for five months to torment mankind during the fifth trumpet (Rev 9:1-12).
- ***and a great chain in his hand***—*great* is the word *mega*—a very great big chain, big enough to bind Satan.
- ***And he laid hold of the dragon***—a name for Satan used 12 times in Revelation (12:3, 4, 7, 9, 13, 16, 17; 13:1, 2, 4; 16:13). It emphasizes his beastlike nature, cruel, ferocious.
- ***the serpent of old***—He is also the serpent who tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:1-6; 2 Cor 11:3).
- ***who is the devil***—Gk. *diabolos*, means “slanderer,” the accuser of our brethren (1 Tim 3:11; 2 Tim 3:3; Tit 2:3). He is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44).

- **and Satan**—This word is used 53 times in the Bible. He is the one who opposes God, Christ, and all believers.
- **and bound him for a thousand years**—This is the first of six references to the thousand years (verses 3, 4, 5, 6, 7). Satan is not just restricted, he is totally imprisoned, so he cannot have any influence in the world at all for the whole thousand years. A person will not be able to say, “The devil made me do it.” Also, Satan’s world system will be gone, replaced by Christ’s world system of righteousness.
  - Just because Satan is bound for a thousand years does not mean people will not sin during the thousand years. In fact, that may be the point. Humans alive during the Millennium will continue to sin because of their sin nature. They don’t need Satan or his evil world system to sin. It’s hard to even imagine a world where wickedness does not rule—no pornography, no corrupt politicians, no stealing, no murders. James says, *But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death* (James 1:14-15).
  - Although the Millennium begins with all humans being believers, as new humans are born, they need to become believers. Outwardly, it will be a kingdom rule of righteousness, they will be judged with a rod of iron (Rev 2:27; 12:5), but inwardly, many will be in rebellion to God, as is evidenced by the final revolt when Satan is released (vv. 7-10).
- **and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time**—God planned for the final rebellion in order to expose the unbelievers, who do not love the truth so as to be saved. Those who love wickedness.

## Resurrected Saints

**Verses 4-6—Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them**—These are resurrected saints, from both the Old Testament and church age, reigning from thrones.

- Daniel 2:27 says, *Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.*
- Jesus told the apostles, *You who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel* (Matt 19:28).
- Paul wrote, *Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?* 2 Timothy 2:12 says, *If we endure, we will also reign with Him.* Revelation 2:26 says, *...he who keeps My deeds until the end, I will give authority over the nations.* Revelation 5:10 says, *You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.*
- **and judgment was given to them**—We don’t know exactly what it means to “judge” and “reign.”
- **And I saw the souls**—These are the martyred believers from the tribulation (6:9; 7:9-17; 12:11). When they died, their souls went immediately to heaven. *...to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord* (2 Cor 5:8).
- **of those who had been beheaded**—lit. “to cut off with an axe,” to execute, or put to death.
  1. **because of their testimony of Jesus**—they confessed they were followers of Jesus. They didn’t deny Him (as Peter did). See 1:9; 12:17; 19:10.
  2. **and because of the Word of God**—they faithfully proclaimed the Word of God (1:2; 6:9), probably that these tribulation judgments were coming from God, according to His Word.
  3. **and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image**—13:16-17; 14:9-11; 16:2; 19:20
  4. **and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand**—So no believer has the mark of the beast, and those with the mark of the beast do not become believers.

- **and they came to life**—i.e., they receive their resurrected bodies
- **and reigned with Christ for a thousand years**—they join the Old Testament and church age saints, having their resurrected, eternal bodies, reigning with Christ in the Millennial Kingdom, over the humans who are alive on the earth.
- **The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed**—that is, the unbelieving dead are not resurrected until after the Millennium (vv. 11-15).
- **This is the first resurrection**—the saints who are resurrected, the resurrection of the righteous (Luke 14:14; Acts 24:15).
- **Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection**—i.e. the believing saints, from the Old Testament, church age, and tribulation.
- **over these the second death has no power**—defined in verse 14 as the lake of fire, hell. Believing saints **will not** go to the lake of fire!!
- **but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years**—It’s interesting that the Old Testament, for example, is full of information about the Millennial Kingdom, but only here do we find out it is for 1,000 years and that Satan is bound during that time. Except for the brief mention that saints will reign, there is very little other information about the kingdom here.

## The Millennial Kingdom and Israel’s Covenants

**The Abrahamic Covenant**—The believing remnant of Israel who lived through the Tribulation will have possession of the land, will multiply, and be blessed by God. *Behold, I will gather them out of all the lands to which I have driven them...; and I will bring them back to this place and make them dwell in safety. They shall be My people, and I will be their God* (Jer 32:37-38; Isa 10:21-22; 43:1; 65:8-9; Jer 30:22; Mic 7:19-20; Zech 13:9; Mal 3:16-18).

**The Palestinian Covenant**—The Israelites will live in the land of Israel, *and you will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers* (Ezek 36:28-29; Isa 11:1-12; 65:9; Ezek 16:60-63; 39:28; Hos 1:10–2:1).

**The Davidic Covenant**—“*Behold, days are coming,*” declares the Lord, “*when I shall raise up for David a righteous Branch; and He will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely; and this is His name by which He will be called, ‘The Lord our righteousness’*” (Jer 23:5-8; 33:20-26; Isa 11:1-2; 55:3, 11; Ezek 34:23-25; 37:23-24; Hos 3:5; 2 Sam 7:12).

**The New Covenant**—“*But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,*” declares the Lord, “*I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,*” declares the Lord, “*for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more*” (Jer 31:31-34; 32:35-39; Ezek 11:18-20; 16:60-63; 37:26; Rom 11:26-29).

**The Millennial Kingdom will be the complete fulfillment of all that God promised to the nation Israel.**

## The Relation of Satan to the Millennium

***And I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he should not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed*** (Rev 20:1-3). The millennial age is a rule of divine righteousness (Isa 11:5; 32:1; Jer 23:6; Dan 9:24). It is also God's final test of fallen humanity under the most ideal circumstances. So all outward sources of temptation must be removed so that man can show what he is apart from Satanic influence. Therefore, at the Second Coming, Satan will be bound and removed from the earth for the entire 1,000 years.

## The Relation of Christ to the Millennium

Through Jesus Christ, the King, mankind will see all the attributes of God so that Christ might be glorified as God. Each of the names given to Christ during this time describe some aspect of His person and work. Here are just a few of those: *son of Abraham* (Gen 17:8; Gal 3:16); *son of David* (Isa 9:7); *son of man* (John 5:27); *King* (Isa 32:1; Rev 19:16); *God the Son* (Isa 9:6; Heb 1:8-10); *Redeemer* (Isa 59:20-21); *Judge* (Isa 61:2; 62:11); *Rewarder of the Saints* (Isa 62:11); *Teacher* (Isa 2:3; Zech 8:22); *Prophet* (Deut 18:15, 18); *Lawgiver* (Isa 33:22); *Shepherd* (Isa 40:10-11); *the Lord our righteousness* (Jer 23:6; 33:16); *the Stone* (Isa 28:16; Zech 3:9); *the Light* (Isa 60:1-3).

## The Spiritual Character of the Millennium

- It will be a kingdom of righteousness. Jehovah reigneth! He shall judge the people righteously (Psa 96:10; Isa 11:4-5; 16:5; 32:1).
- It will be a kingdom of complete obedience to God (Jer 31:33; Psa 37:9-10; Psa 22:27-28).
- It will be a kingdom of holiness (Isa 4:3-4; Psa 60:6; Joel 3:17; Ezek 43:7, 12; Psa 47:8-9; Zech 14:20).
- It will be a kingdom of truth (Psa 45:4; Zech 8:3, 8; Isa 65:16; Jer 33:6).
- It will be a kingdom characterized by the fullness of the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28-29; Ezek 36:27; 37:14; 39:29; Isa 32:15; 44:3).

## Conditions Existing within the Millennium

- *Peace*—With the end of war and all the kingdoms of the world under the reign of Christ, there is national and individual peace (Isa 2:4; 9:4-7; 11:6-9; 32:17-18; Ezek 28:26; Hosea 2:18; Mic 4:2-3).
- *Joy*—(Isa 9:3-4; 12:3-6; Jer 30:18-19; 31:13-14; Zeph 3:14-17; Zech 8:18-19; 10:6-7).
- *Holiness*—The land will be holy, the city of Jerusalem will be holy, the Temple will be holy, and the people will be holy unto the Lord (Isa 1:26-27; Ezek 36:24-31; Joel 3:21; Zeph 3:11, 13; Zech 8:3).
- *Glory*—The full glory of God will be seen (Isa 4:2; 24:23; 35:2; 40:4; 60:1-9).
- *Comfort*—The king will personally minister to every need, so there will be comfort (Isa 12:1-2; 30:26; 40:1-2; 49:13; Jer 31:23-25; Zeph 3:18-20; Zech 9:11-12; Rev 21:4).
- *Justice*—There will be perfect justice to every individual (Isa 9:7; 11:5; 32:16; Jer 23:5; 31:23, 29-30).
- *Full Knowledge*—*For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord* (Isa 11:1-2, 9; 41:19-20).
- *Instruction*—This knowledge will come about through instructions from the King (Isa 2:2-3; 12:3-6; 25:9; 29:17-24; 30:20-21; 32:3-4; 49:10; 52:8; Jer 3:14-15; 23:1-4; Mic 4:2).
- *Modifying the Curse*—The original curse placed upon creation (Gen 3:17-19) will be modified

so that there will be abundant productivity on the earth, and animal creation will be changed so it loses its venom and fierceness (Isa 11:6-9; 35:9; 65:25).

- *Sickness Removed*—The King will be a healer (Isa 33:24; Jer 30:17; Ezek 34:16).
- *Healing of the Deformed*—Isa 29:17-19; 35:3-6; 61:1-2; Jer 31:8; Mic 4:6-7; Zech 3:9).
- *Protection*—There will be a supernatural preservation of life through the King (Isa 41:8-14; 62:8-9; Jer 23:6; 32:27; Ezek 34:27; Joel 3:16-17; Amos 9:15; Zech 8:14-15; 9:8; 14:10-11).
- *Freedom from Oppression*—There will be no social, political, or religious oppression (Isa 14:3-6; 42:6-7; 49:8-9; Zech 9:11-12).
- *Longevity Will Be Restored*—*No longer will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, ... the one who does not reach the age of one hundred shall be thought accursed* (Isa 65:20).
- *Reproduction by the Living People*—The living saints who go into the Millennium in their natural bodies will have children throughout the age. The earth's population will soar. They will be born with a sin nature so they will need to be saved (Jer 30:20; 31:29; Ezek 47:22; Zech 10:8).
- *Labor*—The people will not be idle. Agriculture as well as manufacturing will provide employment (Isa 62:8-9; 65:21-23; Jer 31:5; Ezek 48:18-19).
- *Economic Prosperity*—The perfect labor situation will produce economic abundance, so there will be no want (Isa 4:1; 35:1-2, 7; 30:23-25; 62:8-9; 65:21-23; Jer 31:5, 12; Ezek 34:26; Mic 4:1, 4; Zech 8:11-12; 9:16-17; Ezek 36:29-30; Joel 2:21-27; Amos 9:13-14).
- *Increase of Light*—There is an increase of sunlight and moonlight. This increased light is probably a major cause of increased productivity on the earth (Isa 4:5; 30:26; 60:19-20; Zech 2:5).
- *Unified Worship*—All the world will unite in the worship of God and God's Messiah (Isa 45:23; 52:1, 7-10; 66:17-23; Zech 8:23; 13:2; 14:16; Zeph 3:9; Mal 1:11; Rev 5:9-14).
- *Presence of God*—God's presence will be fully recognized and fellowship with God will be experienced as never before (Ezek 37:27-28; Zech 2:2, 10-13; Rev 21:3).
- *Fullness of the Spirit*—(Isa 32:13-15; 44:3; 59:19, 21; 61:1; Ezek 36:26-27; 37:14; 39:29; Joel 2:28-29; Ezek 11:19-20).
- *Restoration of Animal Sacrifices*—(Ezek 45:18-25).
- A river flows out of Jerusalem and freshens the Dead Sea (Ezek 47:1-11).

## The Duration of the Millennium

The Millennium will last 1000 years (Rev 20:1-6).

## The Government of the Millennium

- The government will be a theocracy. It will be a monarchy under divine direction, hence infallible.
- The Messiah, Jesus Christ, is the King (Isa 2:2-4; 9:3-7; 11:1-10; 16:5; 24:21-23; 31:4-32:2; 42:1-7, 13; 49:1-7; Dan 2:44; 7:15-28; Obad 17-21; Mic 4:1-8; 5:2-5; Zeph 3:9-10; Zech 9:10-15; 14:16-17).
- The historical David will be appointed regent over Palestine and will rule over that land as prince, ministering under the authority of Jesus Christ, the King (Isa 55:3-4; Jer 30:9; 33:15, 17, 20-21; Ezek 34:23-24; 37:24-25; Hos 3:5; Amos 9:11).
- Nobles and governors will reign under David (Jer 30:21; Isa 32:1; Ezek 45:8-9; Matt 19:28).
- Many lesser authorities will rule (Luke 19:12-28; Isa 40:10; Zech 3:7; Rev 20:4, 6).
- There will be judges (Zech 3:7; Isa 1:26).
- Any open acts against the authority of the King will be punished with physical death (Psa 2:9;

72:1-4; Isa 29:20-21; 65:20; 66:24; Zech 14:16-21; Jer 31:29-30).

## The People in the Millennium

Saved Israelites and saved Gentiles who are living at the time of Christ's Second Coming will enter the Millennium. All unbelievers will be killed (Isa 1:19-31; 65:11-16; 66:15-18; Jer 25:27-33; 30:23-24; Ezek 11:21; 20:33-44; Mic 5:9-15; Zech 13:9; Mal 3:2-6; 3:18; 4:3; Matt 13:30-31, 49-50; Dan 7:18).

## Jerusalem and Palestine in the Millennium

Jerusalem will become the center of the millennial earth (Isa 2:2-4; Jer 31:6; Mic 4:1; Zech 2:10-11). It will be the center of the kingdom rule (Jer 3:17; 30:16-17). The city will become a glorious city, bringing honor to Jehovah (Isa 52:1-12; 60:14-21; Joel 3:17; Zech 2:1-13). The city will be protected by the power of the King (Isa 14:32; 25:1-4). It will be greatly enlarged over its former area (Jer 31:38-40; Ezek 48:30-35; Zech 14:10). It will also be the center of worship (Jer 30:16-21; 31:6, 23; Zech 8:8, 20-23).

Palestine will be the particular inheritance of Israel (Ezek 36:8, 12). The land will be greatly enlarged (Isa 26:15; 33:17; Obad 17-21). For the first time, Israel will possess all the land promised to Abraham (Gen 15:18-21). Instead of the mountains of today, a great fertile plain will come into existence at the Second Coming (Zech 14:4). This will permit the river to flow out from Jerusalem (Ezek 47:1-12). There will be renewed fertility and productivity in the land (Isa 29:17; 32:15; 35:1-7; 51:3; 55:13; 62:8-9; Jer 31:27-28; Joel 3:18; Amos 9:13). There will be an abundance of rainfall, a sign of God's blessing (Isa 29:17; 32:15; 35:1-7; 51:3; 55:13; Jer 31:27-28; Ezek 34:27; Joel 3:18; Amos 9:13). Palestine will be redistributed among the twelve tribes of Israel (Ezek 48:1-29).

## Worship in the Millennium

- *The Temple*—From Ezekiel 40:1—46:24 we learn that the Temple is a literal place. There is a lot of details describing the Temple measurements, etc. But there is no mention of an ark, mercy seat, veil, or cherubim above the mercy seat, or tables of stone. The only furniture is the altar of wood, which represents communion with God. The altar is described (43:12-18), the offerings which will be made are described (43:19-27), and the priests' ministry outlined (44:9-31), and the whole worship ritual is described (45:13—46:18). The description ends telling of the river that flows from the Temple south through Jerusalem and then divides to flow into the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean Sea, giving life along its banks.
- *The Purpose of the Temple*—It provides a dwelling-place for the Divine Glory (43:7). It uses sacrifices as a memorial to salvation (similar to what Communion is to us today). It is the place of Christ's throne (43:7), and it is from the Temple that the stream flows with life-giving water.

## Salvation in the Millennium

Although the Millennium begins with all believers, people who are born will need salvation. They will receive a new heart (Jer 31:33), the forgiveness of sins (Jer 31:34), and the fulness of the Spirit (Joel 2:28-29). This is based on the blood of Jesus Christ (Heb 8:6; 10:12-18; Matt 26:28) and received by faith (Heb 11:6). The expressions of this faith will be different from the expressions of today, but the sacrifices are expressions of the faith and not the means of salvation.

## The Object of the Thousand Years' Reign

- *Looked at from God the Father's side:*
  - It will be the public earthly honoring of His Son just where men dishonored Him on this earth.

- It will be the carrying out of God’s promises to His Son, *to give Him the throne of...David*.
  - It is the final divine trial of sinful man on earth before the earth is destroyed.
  - It will be God’s answer (before the *new earth*) of the prayer of His saints: *Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*.
- *Looked at from Christ’s side:*
    - He receives the kingdom of this world which He has been expecting.
    - He will reign in righteousness.
    - He will share all His kingly honors with His saints.
- *Looked at from the saints’ side:*
    - The Millennium brings the three classes of saints (Old Testament, Church Age, and Tribulation) and earthly Israel into a state of blessedness.
    - The physical changes made in the earth reveal some of the loving care God has for His saints.
- *Looked at from the side of the nations of the earth:*
    - It will be a thousand years under the iron-rod scepter.
    - But there will be peace at last among the nations, enforced peace, but real peace.
    - All the nations will be made to go up from year-to-year to worship the King, Jehovah, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.’
- *Looked at from the side of “creation”:*
    - *...the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God (Rom 8:20-22)*. At the revealing of the sons of God at Christ’s coming back to earth, this deliverance will come.

There are three sequence passages where the chronological order of events are laid out: (1) Dan 2; 7; and 9:24-27; (2) Matt 24 and 25; and (3) Rev 6—22.

## Three Views of the Millennium

### Postmillennialism

This is the view which holds that the present age will end in a period of great spiritual blessing. The whole world will be Christianized, that is, adopt Christian principles, before Christ returns. This is often referred to as a “restoration” of the earth to its status in the Garden of Eden. Genesis 1:28 is used as a cultural mandate to “Christianize” the world. This time of blessing is called the “kingdom” and is of an indeterminate time (which the Bible calls the 1000-year Millennium of Revelation 20). Christ’s Second Coming is after (post) this period, and He takes all believers to heaven. He does not come to reign.

### Some Aspects of Postmillennialism:

1. Postmillennialism as a system is the most recent of the views and most popular today—it began with Daniel Whitby (1638-1725). In a sense, Augustine can be called a postmillennialist because he did believe that Christ would return after the Millennium, which he saw as the last 1000 years of the church. Actually, though, Augustine is more accurately labeled as an amil not a postmil, but we shall consider that under Amillennialism.
2. Augustine believed Revelation 20 was a review of the previous chapters of Revelation. Whitby, however, promoted the idea that Revelation 20 chronologically followed the rest of the book, but it described a time of the church yet future (possibly distant future) where the church would form

a Kingdom on earth followed by Christ's Second Coming.

3. Postmillennialism teaches that Christ is now on a throne in heaven, and He will never have an earthly throne over an earthly kingdom.
4. This view is optimistic with regard to the future of the earth. Via conversion of sinners to Christ, individuals will change and those personal changes will result in social and political changes that extend eventually to the whole earth. The parables of Matthew 13 refer to the progress of the Gospel over the present age. (For example, a mustard seed becomes a huge tree means first century Christianity spreads over the whole earth.)
5. They believe that the Kingdom will begin not with a bang but with a whimper. It starts not with the Second Coming of Christ but slowly by a gradual preaching of the Gospel followed by conversions of individuals and changing society.
6. Postmillennialism nearly died out after World War II. But the spirit of the view has returned in the twenty-first century in the form of kingdom-age theology. Many of these people (like Pat Robertson of the "700 Club") are not strictly postmils since they don't talk much about the Millennium, but they have the same view of the future. There are many evangelicals who today believe we should be involved in making the world better and that Christ will return to a better world which is improved due to a gradual influence of the church. That is the essence of the old Postmillennialism.

#### **Problems with This Position:**

1. It doesn't fit the order of events outlined in the Scripture. The outline given in Daniel, Matthew, and Revelation mention no millennial improvement on the earth prior to the Second Coming. Consider, for example, Matthew 24 which describes an earth that gets worse and worse and worse, then suddenly Christ returns.
2. This view forces some sort of spiritualization of certain passages. For example:
  - The fact that the Old Testament prophets picture the Kingdom as a blessing for Israel, not the church, must be overlooked.
  - The fact that the Millennial Kingdom begins with the judgments that kill all unbelievers (Matt 25:31-46; Rev 19:17-21) must be neglected.
  - The fact that many in the Millennium are those who refuse the mark of the beast (Rev 20:4), i.e., the Antichrist, must be ignored.
3. Postmillennialism doesn't fit the trend of history. The world doesn't appear to be getting better. Islam, not Christianity, is the fastest growing religion. The Mormons and other false cults are growing faster than Christian denominations. Families are disintegrating, marriages are failing, crime and immorality are not declining. Even within Christianity, the trend is away from biblical morals and godly living. The church is increasingly similar to the rest of the world.

#### **Amillennialism**

This is the view that holds to no literal Millennial [1000 year] Kingdom on earth. Some feel Revelation 20 refers to the church, others to our place in heaven, but none believe it is a literal earthly Millennial Kingdom of Christ reigning on the earth.

#### **Some Aspects of Amillennialism:**

1. Amils generally trace their roots to Augustine (in the third century). It's hard to overstate the importance of Augustine in the history of theology. He not only crystallized the theology that preceded him, but he laid the foundation for both Roman Catholic and Protestant theology after him. His ideas about Millennialism provided the basis of Roman Catholic eschatology (the study of last things). Augustine believed this present age was the Millennium, that Satan was bound at

the beginning of it (during Christ’s lifetime), and it would end with the Second Coming of Christ around the year A.D. 650. He saw this age as a struggle between the city of God (the church) and the city of Satan (the world). His only reason for rejecting a literal view, however, was that some cult groups claimed a literal Millennium meant a future big self-indulging party. Augustine wrote:

This opinion [of future literal Millennium after the resurrection] might be allowed, if it proposed only spiritual delight unto the saints during this space (and we were once of the same opinion ourselves); but seeing the avouchers hereof affirm that the saints after this resurrection shall do nothing but revel in fleshly banquets, where the cheer shall exceed both modesty and measure, this is gross and fit for none but carnal men to believe. [Augustine, “City of God,” XX, 7]

2. Modern Amillennialism is of two types. One sees the Millennium as the present-age on earth in the church and is very similar in results to Postmillennialism and its modern brother, the kingdom-age movement. The second sees the Millennium in heaven as the spiritual state of believers. Both amil groups (1) do not believe in a literal 1000-year Millennial Kingdom, (2) see the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises to Israel in the church, and (3) use a spiritualization rather than a literal historical method of interpretation. [There are covenant premils and dispensational amils, but both are rare.]
3. The most basic difference between Amillennialism and Premillennialism is their method of interpretation. The amils’ spiritualized interpretation is as follows:
  - a) It comes from the Alexandrian school of theology (third century) which saw prophetic Scripture as allegory, which was not to be taken at face value.
  - b) It allows for a flexible view of Scripture since the reader can adjust the meaning of what be seems to fit his present age.
  - c) It gets its best proof from the fact that New Testament authors sometimes used Old Testament passages in a non-literal way.
4. Amillennialism is usually (although not exclusively) connected to covenant theology (the basic view of reformed theology and Roman Catholic doctrine). Covenant theology teaches that the promises to Abraham were/are spiritually fulfilled in the church.

<b>In Israel</b>	<b>In General:</b>	<b>In the Church</b>
The land	becomes	heaven or the earth
The seed	becomes	Christians
The blessing	becomes	the spiritual life
	<b>In Particular:</b>	
Tithing	becomes	10% giving
The priesthood	becomes	the clergy
The Temple	becomes	the sanctuary (building)
Circumcision	becomes	baptism
The nation Israel	becomes	the New Testament church

**Problems with Amillennialism:**

The biggest objection to Amillennialism is its non-literal or spiritualized method of interpreting Scripture. “Israel” is not Israel, the “land” is not the land, the “blessing” on the Jews is not a blessing

on the Jews.

1. To be non-literal is to have no basis or standard outside ourselves for determining the meaning of a text. The correct meaning of a text must be that of the author, but spiritualization puts the meaning on the reader instead of the writer, thus violating the most basic rule of interpretation.
2. Non-literal interpretation would be utterly destructive to Christianity if it were applied generally to the Bible. The only thing that keeps the amils from being labeled “false teachers” or “heretics” is that they restrict their spiritualization to areas of prophecy. They take the Bible literally when it comes to salvation, sanctification, the character of God, the nature of the Trinity, the person and work of the Holy Spirit, the deity and humanity of Jesus Christ, and so on. Only in the areas of prophecy, when needed to support Amillennialism, do they use spiritualization.
3. It’s true that there are some New Testament passages that use Old Testament verses in a non-literal way. [By “literal” we mean “the plain, ordinary, normal, regular way of understanding.” It is to understand the text the way the author most obviously meant for it to be understood. That, of course, includes metaphors, figures of speech, if and only if the author meant us to understand it that way.] But that does not give us a license to do it. For an apostle to write inerrant truth, inspired by God, and using Old Testament texts in a new way different from the original author adds to our understanding of God and gives us new additional revelation. For us to do it as a method of interpretation is quite different. **The New Testament authors’ intent was not to interpret the Scripture (as ours is) but to give us new revelation from God.**
4. Amillennialism did not arise historically from a study of prophetic Scriptures but rather from a neglect of it. Augustine came to it objecting to certain worldly cults, not by studying Scripture—that is certainly not how he developed his other theological positions. The Roman Catholic church and the Protestant Reformers took it from Augustine because his teachings were already accepted, and there were more socially pressing issues for the church to deal with. A biblical study of prophecy was simply neglected. The only real guiding principle for amils is that Christ will not physically reign on earth. But that’s a negative not a positive goal. Consequently, most of their discussions are against Premillennialism rather than making a case for Amillennialism. The reason for that is because very few amils come to the same conclusions about the future. So it’s very hard to find a prophecy conference (or even a lesson on it) in most amil groups.
5. In amil denominations, the objective of missions is more apt to be church planting than evangelism and discipleship. [It appears that many dispensational premil groups that formed missionary groups in the 1940s and 1950s are now practically operating like the amils or the postmils. Most have gone into church planting or church helping. The result is: (1) there is very little emphasis on prophecy today, even in premil groups, and (2) many have joined the amils in changing the world instead of saving sinners.] If there is no imminent Rapture, then “Jesus is coming soon” or “maybe today” become rather hollow slogans. The urgency of the Gospel message is lost in a network of organized religion designed to not only save people but make the world Christian. The focus becomes not so much in heaven as on earth, and not so much what God is doing on earth as what we are doing in the church (or in our Christian organization).

### **Roman Catholic Eschatology**

Roman Catholicism basically holds an amil view of prophecy. Its characteristics are:

1. Generally, Catholics are more literal in their view of Scripture than other modern amils.
2. They hold a literal judgment for sin after death.
3. They hold that Christ’s death on the cross is absolutely necessary for forgiveness of sin (although they also hold it is not sufficient—one must also be in the church).
4. They believe the saints will ultimately all be in a place of eternal bliss or heaven (although they also believe in a purgatory which conditions ultimate salvation on human works).
5. They practice a non-literal form of interpretation of the Bible in areas of prophecy.

6. They deny any future earthly kingdom of righteousness where Christ reigns on earth.
7. The promises to Israel get spiritualized into the church.

### Premillennialism

Premillennialism is that system of prophecy based on a grammatical, historical, literal interpretation of Scripture. It is presented in the main body of this study book.

## What Difference Does It Make? Eschatology (Theology of End Times)

By Walter Henrichsen

### [A.D. 33, The Gospels]

In the days of our Lord's life on earth, no effort was made to separate His ministry from the Old Testament hope of Israel. He came proclaiming that He was the fulfillment of their expectations. In the minds of His followers, Israel and the fruit of Jesus' ministry were one and the same. Did He not come exclusively to the Jews (Matthew 15:24)? The followers of Christ were the true people of God. Granted, they weren't numerous, but then the elect in the Old Testament were never but a remnant.

### [A.D. 35, Acts 1–14]

In Acts, the disciples saw themselves as the true Israel. Gentile converts had to come to Christ via the Law. A mission to the Gentiles was not in the thinking of the early church. The time between Christ's two advents would be short, and the inclusion of the Gentiles, in fulfillment of the Old Testament, would take place when Christ returned to sit on David's throne.

### [Acts 15]

The Jerusalem Council (cf. Acts 15) changed all of this. Paul alone saw that the Mosaic Law was no longer in force, allowing for the inclusion of Gentiles without their having to change cultures. His definitive treatment of this is in Romans 9–11, especially 11:25-28.

### [All apostles except John die in A.D. 60, the Temple is destroyed in A.D. 70]

No one in these early days of the church believed that two thousand years would lapse between the first and Second Coming of Christ. The New Testament authors consistently agree in anticipating His imminent return. Having expected the Lord's return during his life, Peter closes his second epistle reflecting on the possibility that his death would precede Christ's Second Coming (2 Peter 3:3-4).

### [A.D. 95]

John's Revelation lays out the events preceding the Lord's return. Granted, there are a plethora of interpretations on what John saw and recorded, but let's take a broad overview of it. Revelation 6–19 deals with a time of tribulation of seven years' duration prior to Jesus' Second Coming. This is followed by a thousand-year reign of Christ, a discussion of two resurrections (Revelation 20:1-6), followed by the loosening of Satan, Satan's judgment, and the judgment of the Great White Throne (Revelation 20:7-15).

If amillennialism is correct [**no 1,000 years, Christ comes after the kingdom, it's a Gentile (church) kingdom**] and the return of Christ comes after the Kingdom, then the disciples would have

anticipated a rather lengthy period of time between the two advents. For example, Augustine [A.D. **300s**], the father of amillennialism, thought that the Millennium was a literal thousand years, beginning at the conversion of Constantine [A.D. **300**]. But let's assume that the thousand-year period shouldn't be understood literally, representing, rather, an indefinite period of time. In this case, the disciples of Jesus would have had no legitimate reason to believe in His imminent return.

If we assume that the Apostles had just cause to believe in Christ's imminent return, then whatever conclusions we come to regarding the interpretation of Revelation, Jesus would have to come (in the minds of the disciples) to gather His saints before the Tribulation and Millennium. This, of course, is the first resurrection mentioned in Revelation 20, and may coincide with 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

#### **[A.D. 100-200s]**

All of the Patristics [early church fathers] who commented on eschatology were premillennial. It formed the foundation of their hope during perilous days of persecution. They saw, however, the Millennium in Gentile terms, having rejected the Jews' claim as the people of God. From the very beginning, the Patristics saw themselves as the New Israel, which was the perception of the Apostles as well—with this difference: the Apostles saw the true Israel in Jewish, not Gentile, terms, and even Paul, the one who argued for the inclusion of the Gentiles into the church apart from the Law, believed that the Gentiles were incorporated into the Jews, not vice versa (cf. Ephesians 2:11-22, esp. vv. 11-13).

As persecution began to wane [**with the conversion of the Emperor Constantine in the 300s**], the church saw opportunity to expand its influence in the Roman Empire. You can see a direct correlation between the tapering off of persecution and the ascendancy of amillennialism. By the time of Constantine's conversion to Christianity, not only was there no need for premillennialism, it proved to be an impediment to a church that saw itself in imperial terms.

If premillennialism was ridiculed for its excesses, it at least maintained a consistent hermeneutic [principles of interpretation] in so far as its interpretation of Revelation is concerned. Those who would later be classified as amillennial were even more excessive in the sense that their hermeneutic allowed for all sorts of fanciful interpretations. You can see this clearly as you read men like Jerome, Eusebius, Tyconius, and Augustine.

#### **[Cyclical rather than linear view of history—the church is “recycled” Israel]**

Greek philosophy such as Gnosticism, influenced heavily by Hinduism, in turn influenced the church. As the church began to shed its acceptance of an eschatology that was material or earthly and rooted in history, while embracing a figurative interpretation of Scripture, it began to drift towards a Hindu worldview, seeing history as cyclical rather than linear. [By way of review, you will remember that Old Testament eschatology teaches a material recreation with the restoration of the nation of Israel. When the church saw the Jews as the enemies of Christ, they interpreted these Old Testament eschatological passages figuratively, applying them to the church, and in the process, severed their ties to a linear view of history.] In large measure, Augustine was responsible for correcting this drift.

From a macro perspective, therefore, we see the following five perspectives:

1. During Jesus' ministry, He made no distinction between the church and Israel; they were one and the same.
2. As the apostles sought to obey the Great Commission after Pentecost, they understood that Gentile converts would be incorporated into the church via the Law, becoming “Christian Jews”

in the process.

3. Paul taught that Gentiles could come to Christ without embracing the Law, convincing the other apostles that he was correct at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15. Paul also taught that there would be a future restoration of Israel, at which time it would turn to Christ and the Old Testament promises to Israel would be fulfilled.
4. The Patristics [early church fathers] taught that Gentiles could come to Christ without the Law, but believed that there was no distinction between the church and Israel; the church had replaced Israel in the affections of God.
5. Augustine taught that the church replaced Israel, but the church was obligated to keep all Law that was not rescinded in the New Testament. The church as the “new Israel” sought to replicate Old Testament Israel in keeping the Law, the priesthood, and establishing a Theocracy.

## Implications

Discussions on eschatology tend to be emotional and polemic. For a long time I wondered why. As I studied the subject, it became apparent that eschatology, in defining a biblical hope, sets the foundation for your worldview. In short, it marks the difference between a temporal and an eternal worldview. You would think the opposite—i.e., because amillennialism cut its ties to an Old Testament hope of a material recreation, it would develop an eternal worldview. So too, premillennialism, with its belief in a material recreation for the Jews, would embrace a temporal worldview.

In reality, however, because amillennialism sees the church from an Old Testament perspective, believing that the church is Israel, it tends to define ministry in Old Testament terms: correcting the ills of society and claiming her institutions for Christ. Because premillennialism sees the church and Israel as separate entities, the material recreation promised in the Old Testament is for the Jews during the Millennium, and the task of the church is the Great Commission.

Amillennialism and postmillennialism are more optimistic than premillennialism. Since they see themselves in Old Testament terms, their vision for the world is Theocratic. (We remind ourselves that within each of the schools of eschatology, there are as many variations as there are adherents. My summary endeavors to capture an overview of each system, understanding that it may not accurately represent the convictions of all concerned. I simply suggest that this is how it was conceived at its conception.) Whether they believe that their efforts will succeed or fail, they understand their mission in temporal terms: anti-abortion, involvement in politics, Colorado Amendment 2, etc., are all expressions of this.

Premillennialism tends to be more pessimistic. The New Testament in general and the Great Commission in particular define the mission of the church. Taking their clue from Jesus who said, “My Kingdom is not of this world,” (John 18:36), they see this life as the seedtime for eternity. Life has no purpose other than to prepare people for the life hereafter. We are best prepared by participating with God in what He is doing: reaching people with the Gospel and helping them mature in Christ.

If you have been reading this series on eschatology, you no doubt have concluded that I am premillennial in my understanding of Scripture. You are correct. I, of course, cannot convince you or anyone else that I am right. All I can do is present the evidence, and even here, I have not tried to exegete the biblical passages on eschatology. Rather I have sought to lay out its historical development. But I can suggest what the consequences or implications of your decision in this important matter will be. By the way of review, they are:

- It will influence your view of the mission of the church, as already noted above.
- It will influence your view of the role of the laity. When you see the church in Old Testament terms, there is a tendency to make a laity/clergy distinction not found in the New Testament and hold in suspect an unruly laity not under the control of the institutional church. This is why most churches wish the laity to function under auspices of the institution.
- It will influence your view of the place of the Mosaic Law in the Christian life. Amillennialism says that you are obligated to obey the Old Testament Law unless it is repealed in the New Testament. Premillennialism argues that you are not obligated to obey the Old Testament Law unless it is repeated in the New Testament.
- It will influence your view of the church. In the Old Testament, God had a dual commitment to both the individual and to the institution of Israel. In the New Testament, He only has a commitment to His elect saints, not to the institution of the church. God has no covenant with the church.

## Conclusion

Finally, let me note that premillennialism has never been popular in the institutional church. It is, by and large, a lay theology, born out of a simple, straightforward hermeneutic that reads the Bible as one reads the newspaper. The laity generally has no vested interest in the institutional church, and therefore has no problem with the implications of a chiliast [Greek for “1000” in Revelation 20:2] eschatology.

Humans are creatures of hope. In the Old Testament, this hope was principally temporal, rooted in the Promised Land. In the New Testament, a biblical hope is primarily eternal, rooted in the life to come (John 6:27; Matthew 6:19-20; 2 Corinthians 4:18). It is hard to live in a temporal environment and maintain an eternal hope. We all want to express our creative energies and make our environment more comfortable and attractive.

A layman can embrace a temporal hope, pouring his talent and energy into his vocation, while objectively concluding that the Bible calls upon the believer to hope in the eternal. Granted, it is inconsistent with and in violation of Jesus’ statement, “You cannot serve two masters . . .” (Matthew 6:24). This is a bit more difficult for the clergy, simply because there is lacking that clear distinction between the temporal and eternal in his vocation.

The work of God cannot be created, measured, or controlled; the work of man can. Ministry, therefore, cannot be created, measured, or controlled. It is hard for a man to pour his life into what he can never create, measure and control. Thus he is prone to embrace a worldview that argues that God is committed to the temporal, and that his contribution can be created, measured and controlled. Even those trained in premillennial seminaries, such as Trinity, Dallas, Biola, and Western in Portland, become “closet amillennialists” for this reason. And it is precisely for this reason that the subject of eschatology takes on an emotional, polemic tone.

Consider well what the Bible says, and the pull of culture, as you formulate your eschatology. The implications are eternal.

[Walt Henrichsen, “Eschatology,” Part 24, The Co-Laborer Letter (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Leadership Foundation, September, 1997), used with permission.]

# Revelation 20 continued

## Final War of Kingdom Rebellion

**Verses 7-10—*When the thousand years are completed***—According to God’s exact timetable.

- ***Satan will be released from his prison***—As we’ve seen throughout Revelation and the whole Bible, God controls what Satan can and cannot do, where he can go and not go. Satan cannot get out of the abyss, but God releases him from his prison.  
—I imagine Satan will now hate God more than ever.
- ***and will come out to deceive***—Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44) right up to his end. As during the tribulation (and all ages), people reject God because they love sin (2 Thess 2:10-12), so they easily fall for deception in keeping with their own desires.  
— What does Satan deceive them to do? To wage war against God and think they can win.  
— People have been forced to be outwardly righteous in order to survive in the Millennium, but when Satan is released, their true nature of rebellion against God is made evident. They will be as unmoved by the peace, joy, and righteousness of the Millennium as sinners were by the devastating judgments of the tribulation!  
— The abyss is not a place of purging or reformation (as our prisons are supposed to be). Satan comes out the same evil being as when he went into the abyss.  
— It is no surprise that these people with their sin nature rebel against God and His rule. Even in the Garden of Eden, sinless Adam and Eve rebelled against God, being deceived by Satan.
- ***the nations***— It’s interesting that people on earth are organized into nations, during the Millennium, over which we are evidently reigning as part of God’s government.
- ***which are in the four corners of the earth***—i.e., the whole earth (north, south, east, and west). People from the whole world gather together with Satan to attack Christ’s kingdom, centered in Jerusalem.
- ***Gog and Magog***—These are ancient names, probably referring to a leader (Gog) and the people (Magog)—see Ezekiel 38–39.
- ***to gather them together for the war***—This is the final war of human history.
- ***the number of them is like the sand of the seashore***—Shockingly—the number in rebellion is huge, uncountable. However, it really should not be a surprise. Throughout all the ages, as Jesus said, ... *the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it* (Matt 7:13-14).
- God’s righteousness is only attractive to those who are His. The rest of mankind hate it. ...*they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved...they did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness* (2 Thess 2:10-12). What a person takes pleasure in tells a lot about their morality and their stand with God.
- ***And they came up on the broad plain of the earth***—There are topographical changes during the tribulation, but also at the beginning of the Millennium. *All the land will be changed into a plain from Geba to Rommon south of Jerusalem, but Jerusalem will rise and remain on its site...* (Zech 14:10).
- ***and surrounded the camp of the saints***—This word is used six times (Acts 21:34, 37; 22:24; 23:10, 116, 32) to describe a Roman military barrack. The saints are *camped* around Jerusalem, where Jesus has His headquarters during the Millennium (Isa 24:23; Ezek 38:12; 43:7; Mic 4:7; Zech 14:9-11).
- ***and the beloved city***—Jerusalem
- ***and fire came down from heaven and devoured them***—The battle is really an extermination. As the rebels move in for the attack, they will all be swiftly and instantly killed by God. And their

souls will go to Hades—but only for a short time, as the Great White Throne judgment will soon follow this event.

- ***And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone***—The place God prepared in eternity past for Satan and his demons (Matt 25:41). The lake of fire is a place of eternal mental and physical torment (Dan 12:2; Matt 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Mark 9:43-44; Luke 13:28). The same Greek phrase translated *forever and ever* is used in 1:18 to speak of Christ's eternity; in 4:9-10; 10:6; 15:7 of God's eternity; and in 11:15 of the duration of Christ's reign.
- ***where the beast and the false prophet are also***—These two humans are still there after the one thousand years, refuting the false doctrine of annihilationism (that death ends a soul's existence).
- ***and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever***—of course, they need a resurrected body to live forever in torment. This is so horrible, it should motivate us to get our loved ones and friends to Jesus for salvation.

## Great White Throne Judgment

**Verses 11-15—*Then I saw***—As throughout Revelation, this introduces a new vision, of an event after the Millennium, the final war, and Satan and his demons being cast into the lake of fire without judgment, and before there is a judgment of the rest of mankind.

- ***a great white throne***—This is the last trial that will ever take place. There will be no debate over guilt or innocence. There will be a prosecutor but no defense. The convicting evidence will be presented but there will be no rebuttal or cross-examination. There will be an unsympathetic Judge and no jury, and no appeal of the sentence He pronounces. The guilty will be punished eternally, with no possibility of parole in a prison from which there is no escape.
  - *Great*—Gk. *mega*, mega, very large, probably in eminence, compared to the thrones from which the resurrected believers are reigning in 20:4.
  - *White*—usually indicates purity, holiness, and justice. David wrote, *The Lord abides forever, He has established His throne for judgment, and He will judge the world in righteousness; He will execute judgment for the peoples with equity* (Psa 9:7-8; Dan 7:9-10; John 5:29).
  - *Throne*—Ever since Satan fell, as the father of lies (John 8:44), he has attempted to deceive people about the reality of the coming judgment. He has deceived sinners into believing they can live as they please without fear of ultimate accountability or future punishment. As he told Eve, “*You surely will not die!*” (Gen 3:4).
- ***and Him who sat upon it***—Jesus said, “*Not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son...*” and the Father gave Him [Jesus] *authority to execute judgment* (John 5:22, 26-27). Acts 10:42 says *Jesus is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead*. Also, *God has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead* (Acts 17:31). Romans 2:16, *the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus*. And to Timothy, Paul wrote that *Christ Jesus...is to judge the living and the dead* (2 Tim 4:1). It is Jesus, as described in Revelation 1, who will come again in chapter 19, who sits on this throne, as the Judge of all unbelieving mankind.
- ***from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them***—The present earth and heaven will not just be moved or re-shaped. They will go totally out of existence. *...the heavens will pass away with a roar [extremely loud noise] and the elements [basic elements, atomic and subatomic particles] will be destroyed [dissolved] with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up* (2 Pet 3:10; see Rev 21:1, 5; Isa 65:17; 66:22; 2 Pet 3:13). “...the reverse of creation is to take place. They are to be un-created. As they came

from nothing at the word of God, they are to be sucked back into nothingness by this same word of God” (Barnhouse). It did not take eons of evolution to create the universe, and it will not take eons to uncreate it.

- ***And I saw the dead***—Again, John’s observation, what he saw. These would be the souls of all the unbelievers of all of history. At the final war, led by Satan, the fate of the final living unbelievers is ... *fire came down from heaven and devoured them*. **Now all unbelievers are dead, and no more are born.**
- ***the great and the small***—the somebodies and the nobodies. Here is a gathering together for the first and last time, those who were great sinners in their lives and those who were seemingly “good” people, who seemed to sin very little. Or it could be people well-known or rich in their lives and those who were poor and unknown. The point is, it’s all unbelievers, no matter who they were in this life or no matter what they did.
- ***standing before the throne***—*at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow* (Phil 2:10), i.e., they all will be accountable to Jesus.
- ***and books were opened***—There’s two kinds of books: the book of life, i.e., with the names of believers in Jesus Christ, and the book of works which unbelievers did in this life.
- ***and another book was opened, which is the book of life;... And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire***—
  - Jesus opens this book first to show them their name is not there. This book is referred to several times in Revelation (v. 15; 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 21:27). It is the record of God’s elect (Dan 12:1; Mal 3:16; Luke 10:20; Phil 4:3; Heb 12:23).
  - There is nothing you can do to put your name in that book, and there is nothing you can do to erase your name from that book. Of course, all whose names are in the book will also accept Jesus as their Savior. It is impossible to have your name in the book and not accept Christ. Election is God’s sovereignty, salvation is our free will decision. Both things are 100% true.
  - If someone’s name is not in the book of life, there is only one destiny—the lake of fire.
- ***the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds***—These books contain the record of every thought, word, and deed of every unsaved person who ever lived. God has kept perfect, accurate records of every person’s life.
  - *For nothing is hidden that will not become evident, nor anything secret that will not be known and come to light* (Luke 8:17). Jesus said, “*For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned*” (Matt 12:37). *God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil* (Ecc 12:14).
  - Both creation (Rom 1:20) and their conscience (Rom 2:14-15) reveal God’s righteousness. They will be judged on the basis of the knowledge they did have (Rom 2:12).
  - Each person’s life will be individually evaluated, and each person’s punishment will be consistent with that evaluation. Therefore, there will be varying degrees of punishment in the lake of fire (see Matt 10:14-15; 11:21-24; Mark 12:38-40; Luke 12:47-48; Heb 10:29).
- ***And the sea gave up the dead which were in it***—obviously, before the sea and earth were burned up. Why mention the sea? Possibly because it seems like the most difficult place from which bodies could be resurrected. But God will call up from its depths new eternal bodies for all who perished in the sea throughout human history—including those who drowned in the Flood, those who went down with the Titanic, etc.
- ***and death***—all the places from which God will resurrect new bodies for the unrighteous
- ***and Hades gave up the dead which were in them***—Hades is where the souls of the unrighteous dead are kept, waiting for their judgment and sentencing to the lake of fire (Luke 16:23). It is a place of torment from which there is no escape except to this judgment. They *came to life* (v. 5), i.e., get a resurrected body that will live forever in torment.

- ***and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds***—Those deeds will be measured against God’s perfect, holy standard. Not what they considered to be “good” but what God considers to be “good.”
  - Good deeds do count in the judgment (for both believers and unbelievers), but good deeds do not determine a person’s eternal destiny. Good works will not save you, but good works will give you a less worse place in hell.
  - And *the wages of sin is death* (Rom 6:23). These are people who have not accepted Christ’s death as payment for their sins. Therefore, they must pay for their own sins.
  - Their deeds will also include their thoughts. *God...knows the secrets of the heart* (Psa 44:21), *For nothing is hidden that will not become evident, nor anything secret that will not be known and come to light* (Luke 8:17).
  - Notice it is *every one of them*—each person’s life will be individually evaluated, and each person’s punishment will be consistent with that evaluation.
  - Therefore, there are varying degrees of punishment in the lake of fire (see Matt 10:14-15; 11:21-24; Mark 12:38-40; Luke 12:47-48). They will be miserable, but not equally miserable.
  - I’m sure some people will experience shock and horror and will protest, “*Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?*” But Jesus will reply, “*I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness*” (Matt 7:22-23).
- ***Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire***—Hades is now empty. With no more humans being born and dying, there is no longer a need for Hades.
- ***This is the second death, the lake of fire***—“lake of fire” is *geenna* (Gehenna), the New Testament word for the valley of Ben-Hinnom (2 Kings 23:10; Isa 30:33; Jer 7:31-32; 19:6). In Old Testament times, idolatrous Israelites burned their children in fire there as sacrifices to false gods (Jer 19:2-6). In Jesus’ day, it was Jerusalem’s garbage dump. The fires were kept constantly burning. Jesus used that image to describe eternal hell (Matt 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 12:5). Those who die in their sins in this present world of time and space will die a second death in and for eternity.
- ***And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire***—It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb 10:26-31).

## Chapter 21

### The Eternal State

For the believer in Jesus Christ, our focus is to be on heaven. Paul wrote, *our citizenship is in heaven* (Phil 3:20). *Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth* (Col 3:1-2). A heavenly perspective is vitally important, because everything connected to the believer’s spiritual life and destiny is there. Our heavenly Father is there. Our Savior is there. Our Comforter is there. Other believers are there. Our names are recorded there. We are citizens of heaven, our inheritance is there, our reward is there, and our treasure is there. It is our home. We are pilgrims on earth (1 Pet 2:11). “This world is not our home, we’re just a-passin’ through.” Paul had been caught up to heaven, and his response was, *to live is Christ, to die is gain...[I have] the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better* (Phil 1:22-23).

Longing for heaven has important implications for the Christian here on earth, *for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also* (Luke 12:34). It will shape your Christian character. It will

bring joy and comfort in trials (2 Cor 4:17). It helps us to be less likely to become ensnared by earthly temptations (Rom 8:5-6). It motivates us to Christian service, as rewards for pursuing heavenly things are greater than rewards for pursuing earthly things. And, most importantly, longing for heaven honors God above everything else.

The Bible refers to heaven more than 500 times. Revelation mentions it 50 times. The Bible describes three heavens (2 Cor 12:2): the first heaven is the earth's atmosphere (Job 12:7); the second heaven is where the planets and stars are (Gen 15:5; 22:17), and the third is where God dwells (Matt 5:34; Acts 7:55). Although we don't know where heaven is, from the perspective of earth, it is "up" (Rev 4:1; 2 Cor 12:2). When believers die, they will be in heaven immediately (Luke 23:43; 2 Cor 5:8). At the Rapture, those who are alive on the earth will be taken to heaven immediately (1 Thess 4:13-18).

**Verse 1—*Then I saw***—as throughout Revelation, this indicates a new vision. And John is making observations of what he saw. As we begin chapter 21, several things have happened: Satan and his demons have been cast into the lake of fire (20:10-15); all ungodly humans have been tried before the Great White Throne and cast into the lake of fire (20:15-20). The current world and universe have been destroyed by fire (2 Pet 3:10).

- ***a new heaven and a new earth***—This was predicted in Isaiah 65:17 and is now a reality in John's vision. "New" means fresh, never before seen.
- ***for the first heaven and the first earth passed away***—destroyed by fire (2 Pet 3:10), as the current, first, earth is polluted by sin (Job 15:15; Isa 24:5; Psa 102:5-26). Jesus also said, *Heaven and earth will pass away* (Luke 21:33).
- ***and there is no longer any sea***—The sea is mentioned several times with respect to the Millennial Kingdom (Psa 72:8; Isa 11:9, 11; Ezek 47:8-20; 48:28; Zech 9:10; 14:8). Water makes up about three-fourths of our current earth. Before even the first day of the creation on this earth, it says *the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters*. And the second day of creation, *God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters..."* (Gen 1:1-7). The point is simply that water is very much a part of our current earth. But the first thing we notice about the new earth is that *there is no longer any sea*. So every feature of life and climate will be much different on the new earth.

**Verse 2—*And I saw the holy city***—everything in it is holy, without sin, without evil

- ***new Jerusalem***—there's Jerusalem at the time of history, a restored and rebuilt Jerusalem during the Millennial Kingdom, and this completely new Jerusalem. In history, Jerusalem was an ancient city. The first mention of it is when Abraham rescued Lot, he stopped at Salem, to pay tithes to Melchizedek, the King of Salem [means "peace," the modern "shalom" greeting of the Jews] and *priest of God Most High* (Gen 14:17-24). After that, the Jebusites inhabited the city, and it was called Jebus. It was a well-fortified city, not conquered during the time of the judges. But *David captured the stronghold of Zion, that is the city of David* (2 Sam 5:7). If you picked a center of Israel, it would be Jerusalem, both east and west, north and south. And it will be the center of Jesus' reign during the Millennial Kingdom, and the New Jerusalem will be the center of the new earth. From a biblical perspective, Jerusalem is the center of our world, and the world to come. The "city of peace."
- ***coming down out of heaven from God***—Its *architect and builder* is God. It's coming from Him (Heb 11:10). This implies that it already exists in heaven, from where it is coming down. Hebrews 12:22-23 says, *But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem...and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect*. Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you..." (John 14:2). This is it.

- ***made ready as a bride adorned*** [a word also translated “cosmetics”] ***for her husband***—While the church age is described as the bride of Christ, that is not what is being talked about here. Notice the little word ***as***. The verse does not say this ***is*** the bride of Christ. It is just the same metaphor. The city itself is beautiful, ***as*** a bride is beautiful on her wedding day.

**Verse 3—*And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying***—This is the last of 20 times that the expression *a loud voice* is used in Revelation (first used in 5:2). It is probably an angel, as God the Father speaks and is described as *He who sits on the throne* in verse 5.

- ***“Behold, the tabernacle*** [lit. “dwelling place”] ***of God is*** [1] ***among men, and He will*** [2]  ***dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself*** [3]  ***will be among them***—John repeats this awesome fact three times—it is incredible news! As Paul wrote, *Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him* (1 Cor 2:9).
- God won’t be just a voice, only seen in visions, walking the new earth as the perfect human. God will be among us 100%, 100% of the time.

**Verse 4—*and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes***—no tears over lost love, tears of remorse, tears of regret, tears over the death of a loved ones, or tears for any other reason. ***Every*** tear will be wiped away.

- ***and there will no longer be any death***—Even in the Millennial Kingdom, there will be death. But once in our eternal bodies—no death. As Paul wrote, *Death is swallowed up in victory...thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ* (1 Cor 15:54-58).
- ***there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain***—all the sorrows associated with the consequences of sin
- ***the first things have passed away***—or “gone away”—it seems like the memory of them would be a “first things,” so they would be gone away, too. It’s like, when I was 3 years old, getting a doll meant everything to me. But now as an adult, I don’t even have the memory of wanting that doll. In a sense, we already experience some first things going away. In eternity, everything about this life will be a *first things* that will have gone away.

**Verse 5—*And He who sits on the throne*** [God the Father] ***said, “Behold, I am making all things new”***—This will not be a re-cycled or restored earth, as many believe. I think they take verses about the Millennial Kingdom and say they are about eternity. It’s very important to not get the two things confused.

- ***And He said, “Write, for these words are faithful and true”***—Though the present *heaven and earth will pass away*, God’s words *will not pass away* (Luke 21:33). As the angel told John in 19:10, *“These are true words of God.”*

**Verse 6—*Then He said to me, “It is done”***—...*then comes the end, when He* [Christ] *delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death...when all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, that God may be all in all* (1 Cor 15:24-28).

- ***I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end***—God started history, and He will end it. The same is said of Jesus in 1:8 and 22:13.
- ***to the one who thirsts***—who *hunger and thirst for righteousness* (Matt 5:6). As Psalm 42:1-2 says, *As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God...*

- ***I will give...from the spring of the water of life without cost***—This is eternal life, through Jesus, the living water (John 4:13-14; 7:37-38; Rev 22:17).

**Verse 7—“*He who overcomes*—**The overcomer is the person who in faith drinks the water of salvation freely offered by God. John used this term at the end of the letter to each of the seven churches (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21).

- ***will inherit these things***—They will *obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for [them]* (1 Pet 1:4).
- ***and I will be his God and he will be My son***—Even on earth, the believer is the adopted son of God (John 1:12; Rom 8:14-17; 2 Cor 6:18; Gal 4:5; Eph 1:5; Heb 12:5-9), but in heaven, that adoption will be fully realized (Rom 8:23).

**Verse 8—“*But for the cowardly* [perhaps meaning those who denied the faith when persecution came, showing they were not really believers after all] ***and unbelieving and abominable*** [vile, polluted, detestable, wholly caught up in wickedness and evil] ***and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers*** [Gk. *pharmakos*, in English, “pharmacy,” indicating drugs] and ***idolaters and all liars*** [it characterizes their life], ***their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death***—see 20:11-15. Obviously, this passage is not describing salvation by works but that these works show whether a person is saved or not. Of course, we believers are guilty of these very sins also—*we too all formerly lived in the lust of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind...even as the rest. BUT GOD...even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ* (Eph 2:3-4).**

These first verses describe the eternal destiny of believers (glorious future in the presence of God), for those who drink of the water of life, Jesus Christ. For those who are wicked and do not accept Jesus as their Savior, they are destined for a second death, eternal in the lake of fire.

**Verse 9—*Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues*—**The last mention of an angel was 1000 years earlier at the beginning of the Millennium (Rev 20:1). (Though they are most probably a part of the reign of God during the Millennium.) This angel was one of the angels who poured out the bowl judgments at the end of the tribulation (15:1).

- ***came and spoke with me, saying, “Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb”***—the bride was already identified as the New Jerusalem (v. 2). And, in fact, the next verses describe the appearance of that city.

**Verse 10—*And he carried me away in the spirit*—**As in the rest of Revelation, John’s body stayed in Patmos, but spiritually he was carried to this high mountain.

- ***to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem***—It’s a holy city, there is no sin or wickedness in it.
- ***coming down out of heaven***—It’s moving, coming down from heaven
- ***from God—whose architect and builder is God*** (Heb 11:10). It originated and was built by God.

**Verse 11—*having the glory of God*—**the fullest expression of God, unlimited and unconfined, described as brilliant light (v. 23).

- ***Her brilliance*** [Gk. light radiates from it—Genesis 1:14, 16] ***was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper***—Jasper today is opaque, but the Greek word *iaspis* is a translucent stone, like a diamond. The whole city appears to be like a brilliant diamond, which would be very costly, blazing the glory of God throughout the new heaven and the new earth.

**Verse 12—*It had a great and high wall***—The city isn't a floating, ghostly place. It has specific dimensions, it has limits, and it can be entered and left through its gates (see. v. 17).

- ***with twelve gates, and names were written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel***—For all eternity, these gates represent the tribes of Israel, the people of the promises, the covenants, the Scripture, and the Messiah.
- ***and at the gates twelve angels***—In Genesis 3:24, God *stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life*. So this city will have angel guards at its gates. Symbolic because in the next verses he tells us no unbelievers are able to get into the city.

**Verse 13—*There were three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west***—“...if the names of the gates corresponded to the millennial Jerusalem described in Ezekiel 48:31-34, the north side from east to west would have the gates named Levi, Judah, and Reuben. On the west side from north to south were Naphtali, Asher, and Gad; on the south side from east to west, Simeon, Issachar, and Zebulun; and on the east side from north to south, Joseph, Benjamin, and Dan. In contrast to Revelation 7:5-8, where Dan is omitted and Joseph and Manasseh are included, Ezekiel mentioned Dan but not Manasseh” (BKC).

**Verse 14—*And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb***—The apostles are the foundation stones of the church (see Ephesians 2:20). Matthias *was added to the eleven apostles*, to replace Judas (Acts 1:26). The criteria for the replacement was *it is necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us—beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us* (Acts 1:21-22). From that point on, he was counted as one of the twelve (Acts 6:2). Paul was called an apostle (Rom 1:1), as was Barnabas (Acts 14:14), but they were not considered to be part of “the twelve,” as they did not meet the criteria of being one of the twelve. Also, “the twelve” had a huge ministry among believers before Paul was even saved. Also, Paul and Barnabas were apostles (sent ones) to the Gentiles, whereas “the twelve” were sent to the Jews. With the Israelite twelve-tribe gates and the twelve-apostle foundation stones, it seems like there is that distinction in eternity, though it does not say the saints are divided into those distinctions. (The tribulation saints as well as the Millennial Kingdom saints would be classified as Israel, not as the church. However, there are the saints before Israel also, such as Adam, Abel, Enoch, Noah...)

**Verse 15—*The one who spoke with me* [one of the seven bowl angels] *had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall***—This occurred at the millennial temple (Ezek 40:3f) and the tribulation temple (Rev 11:1). They mark out what belongs to God. And it shows real dimensions of a real place.

**Verse 16—*The city is laid out as a square and its length is as great as the width***—The base of the city is square.

- ***and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles***—lit. “12,000 stadia”—(12 times 1000), a stadia is about 607 feet, so the city is about 1,380 miles in each direction. This is approximately the distance from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico north/south and from Colorado to the Atlantic Ocean east/west.
- ***its length and width and height are equal***—Typically, the astronauts orbit the earth at 100 miles above its surface. This city is almost 14 times higher than the astronauts orbit. Some commentators think the shape is a pyramid. However, Henry Morris makes some good points:

The pyramidal shape... (of practically all ancient nations), seems always to have been associated with paganism, with the pyramid’s apex being dedicated to the worship of the sun, or the host of heaven. ...such as the Tower of Babel... Leviticus 26:30 condemns worship carried in high places, whether these were simply natural high hills or artificially constructed hills in the form of a pyramid or ziggurat.

The cube...was the shape specified by God for the holy place...in Solomon’s temple (1 Kings 6:20)...Both the language and the symbology thus favor the cubical, rather than the pyramidal, shape [“The Revelation Record,” p. 450].

- Our new resurrected eternal bodies, like the angels, will no longer be limited to gravity (for one thing, there’s no gravitational pull of the sun or moon or atmosphere of the “first things”). Our travel will be vertical as well as horizontal, as with the angels. A cube-shape would be much more conducive to that.
- Based on the estimated number of believers over the centuries and the size of the city, if we each had our “own” cubical space, Morris estimates we would each have approximately a 72-acre cube. It’s a total guess, but it helps us understand that there is plenty of room in this city. Ryrie says, “It has been calculated that even if only 25 percent of this space were used for dwellings, 20 billion people could be accommodated spaciously.”

**Verse 17—*And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards***—144 cubits, 216 feet. Every commentator I read seems to think this was the thickness of the wall, not its height. But I don’t know how they come to that conclusion... Verse 12 tells us it was a *great and high wall*.

- ***according to human measurements, which are also angelic measurements***—The angel is measuring, so he’s doing it according to human measurements, so John, and we, will understand.

**Verse 18—*The material of the wall was jasper***—as mentioned in verse 11, this jasper was clear, like a diamond. You could see through the wall. What we know as jasper today is not clear, but the jasper in the New Jerusalem is clear.

- ***and the city was pure gold, like clear glass***—These must be clear for the glory of God to radiate through them, giving light to the whole city. Some say, “What about privacy?” But there is nothing in heaven that calls for privacy.

**Verses 19-20—*The foundation stones of the city wall***—Some say these are floors in the city, but it specifically says these are foundations stones of the city wall, not the city itself. This wall encircles the whole city. We’re talking about a wall that is about 5,520 miles long.



- *were adorned* [lit. “put in order” or “arranged”] *with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation stone was jasper* (like a diamond); *the second, sapphire* (dark blue); *the third, chalcedony* (sky blue); *the fourth, emerald* (green); *the fifth, sardonyx* (red and white striped); *the sixth, sardius* (shades of red); *the seventh, chrysolite* (gold or yellow); *the eighth, beryl* (shades of green, yellow, and blue); *the ninth, topaz* (yellow-green); *the tenth, chrysoprase* (gold-tinted green); *the eleventh, jacinth* (blue or violet); *the twelfth, amethyst* (purple).— Throughout the centuries, these words and the colors of these stones have changed. The point is the same, though. The city wall will shine with the brilliance of a multitude of colors.

**Verse 21—*And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl***—This is the only gem formed within the oyster, the only one formed by living flesh. When the oyster gets an irritation or wound, the oyster builds a pearl around it. Some say the gates symbolize the same thing. Jesus took the wound of Calvary and made it into the beautiful gate into the eternal city, reminding us of Calvary each time we go through the gate. Like the song, “He the pearly gates will open, so that I may enter in; For He purchased my redemption; and forgave me all my sin.”

— There’s no mention as to the size of these gates. If they are as tall as the wall, and if the wall is 216 feet tall, the pearl would be 216 feet tall.

- The millennial Jerusalem was burned up with fire.
  - It seems now that John enters the city. The first thing he notices is the street was clear gold, again allowing God’s glory to shine with no restrictions.

**Verse 22—*I saw no temple in it***—This is a surprise for John, as he saw the measuring of the tribulation temple (11:2), and Ezekiel 40–48 describe the measuring of the Millennial Temple. Also, some of the scenes in heaven originate in the temple in heaven (15:8; 16:1). Yet, in the New Jerusalem on the new earth, there will be no temple. It’s the city itself that is measured, and God fills the city with His glory.

- *for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple*—As in verse 3, “*Behold, the tabernacle* [lit. “dwelling place”] *of God is [1] among men, and He will [2] dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself [3] will be among them.* Life will be worship, and worship will be life. There will never be a moment when we are not in perfect, holy communion with God and Jesus. We won’t have to “go” to a temple as the Jews used to do.

**Verse 23—*And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it***—Our present earth depends totally on the sun for the cycles of day and night, heat, growth of our food, etc. Remember, on the first day of creation, God created light on this earth (Gen 1:3), but He didn’t create the sun to control the light until the fourth day (vv. 14-19). [It’s interesting that He created the plants on the third day—BEFORE He created the sun!!]

- *for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb*—This is an uncreated light of Him who IS light.

**Verse 24—*The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it***

— The thing we are sure of is from verse 27, *only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life* are allowed into the New Jerusalem (see also Heb 12:22-24).

— One interpretation of this verse is that there will be no national or social distinctions in the New Jerusalem. Everyone will be walking by the light of God. These distinctions will be given up to Jesus. Much like the elders, who *will cast their crowns before the throne* (Rev 4:10), those who were kings on earth will bring their glory in to give to Jesus.

- Another less recognized interpretation is that this refers to the human believers at the end of the Millennium, who are translated (changed) and taken into the New Jerusalem.
- Possibly there are nations on the new earth, and whatever they do, they will bring it to the New Jerusalem to give it to Christ.

**Verse 25—*In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed—***

Typically, in cities, the gates are closed at night for security reasons. But security is no problem in the New Jerusalem, and there is no night.

**Verse 26—*and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it—***repeating v. 24.

**Verse 27—*and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it—***These are the unbelievers described in verses 7-8. *their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.*

- It seems to me strong language showing that after death, there is no second chance to believe. Not only will the unbelievers be headed for the lake of fire, they will NEVER come into the New Jerusalem.
- ***but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life—***There are six references to the book of life in Revelation (3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15). Ephesians 1:4 says, *He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world.* And the names of the chosen have *been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain* (Rev 13:8). *And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire* (20:15).

## Chapter 22

**Verse 1—*Then he showed me a river of the water of life—***There is no rain and sea, as we know it. But this river represents eternal life. [This reference to a river should not be confused with similar millennial situations such as those in Ezekiel 47:1, 12 and Zechariah 14:8, which refer to rivers flowing from the temple and from Jerusalem and will be part of the millennial scene.]

- ***clear as crystal—***as with the other things in the New Jerusalem, this river is clear, to not obstruct the glory of God shining in the city.
- ***coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb—***They are the “headwaters” so to speak. Also significant is that Jesus is on the throne. First Corinthians 15:24 says that Christ *hands over the kingdom to God the Father after He has destroyed all dominion, authority, and power...* Here we have evidence that He has done that.

**Verse 2—*in the middle of its street—***Evidently the main street of the city

- ***On either side of the river was the tree of life—***Not many trees, just this one tree. This is the heavenly counterpart to the tree of life in Eden (Gen 2:9; 3:22-24), which represented living forever. Adam and Eve, after the Fall, were not allowed to eat of this tree because they would then forever live in a state of sin.
- ***bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month—*** In Revelation 2:7, believers were promised the *right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.* We know there is no time (months) in eternity, so John is simply saying, in our earthly terms, that there is constantly fruit. There are no “seasons” as we know them.
- ***and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations—***Rather than “healing,” the word is better translated “therapeutic” or “health giving.” They are like super vitamins, not to treat illnesses but to promote health. [Again, not to be confused with the trees by the river coming out

of the Temple in Jerusalem in the Millennium that will be for healing.] It sounds like we will be eating both the leaves and the fruit.

— **nations**—This word *ethnos* is usually used for Gentiles, or those outside of Israel. However, it can also be simply translated as “people.” A possibility is also that the new earth may be organized into people groups, which John is simply calling “nations.” See also 21:24.

— A simple paraphrase of this verse might be: There’s a tree of life in the New Jerusalem that has leaves and fruit, that are good for you, that the people there can eat it.

**Verse 3—*There will no longer be any curse***—or destruction or death. There will be a partial lifting of the curse during the Millennial Kingdom, but in the New Jerusalem there will be no curse at all, i.e., the consequences of sin.

- ***and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it***—This throne was described in chapters 4–5
- ***and His bond-servants will serve Him***—We’ll spend eternity doing whatever He wants us to do. As Paul wrote, *Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him* (1 Cor 2:9).

**Verse 4—*they will see His face***—Mortal men were not allowed to see God’s face or they would die. Remember, even with Moses, God said, “*You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!...while My glory is passing by, that I will...cover you with My hand until I have passed by. Then I will take My hand away and you shall see My back, but My face shall not be seen*” (Exo 3:20-23). But in eternity, we are no longer mortal. In eternity, we will see God face-to-face. Reminds me of the hymn: “Face to face with Christ, my Savior, Face to face—what will it be, When with rapture I behold Him, Jesus Christ who died for me? Face to face I shall behold Him, Far beyond the starry sky; Face to face in all His glory, I shall see Him by and by!” This isn’t just, “We’ll get to see Jesus.” It’s, “We’ll see Him face-to-face”—Something not possible in this life.

- ***and His name will be on their foreheads***—As we’ve already read in Revelation 14:1, during the tribulation, *hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads*. Also, those who worshipped the antichrist had his mark, the 666 on them. These marks indicate identification. For example, it’s like your wedding ring indicates you are married. In the New Jerusalem, we’ll have the mark of Christ on our forehead.

**Verse 5—*And there will no longer be any night***—no darkness. Night and darkness are associated with the earth. Of course, they are necessary for the cycle of life. We must rest. But there is no need to rest in the New Jerusalem. There is no cycle. (It reminds me also of how often the darkness is a time of sin and evil—it will not be there!!)

- ***and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them***—See 21:23. He doesn’t create light. He IS light.
- ***and they will reign forever and ever***—We usually connect “reigning” with the Millennial Kingdom, but whatever “reigning” means in eternity, we’ll be doing it as one of Christ’s chosen ones.

With these last verses, there is a sense of John urgency for the readers to act on the truth he has written while they still have time.....

**Verse 6—*And he said to me, “These words are faithful and true”***—It’s still the angel talking to John. In 19:9, he had said, “*These are true words of God.*” He’s told us the truth about the future. Every word in the book of Revelation is a true word from God. That’s why he says in verses 18-19 to not add to them or take away from them. They are God’s true words!!!

- **and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets**—As Peter wrote, *So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place...But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God* (2 Pet 1:19-21). Everything that has been prophecy so far has been literally fulfilled, and these words in Revelation will also be literally fulfilled. God told Isaiah, *Remember the former things long past, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, "My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure; ...truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it"* (46:9-11).
- **sent His angel to show to His bond-servant**—As we've read over and over in Revelation, the angels were the ones showing John what is to happen and explaining what those things mean and instructing him to write them down to be sent to the believers.
- **the things which must soon take place**—These words were to make clear what is going to happen. They are not to confuse or to conceal what will soon take place. We are to live like these things could begin to happen at any moment.

**Verse 7**—“*And* [change in speakers] **behold, I am coming quickly**—Same Greek word as previous verse, meaning “soon.” We don't know **when** He is coming, but it is imminent. The NT speaks of the imminence [at any moment] of Christ's return (see 1 Cor 1:7; 4:5; 16:22; Phil 3:20; 1 Thess 1:9-10; 4:15; 2 Thess 3:10-12; Titus 2:13; James 5:7; 1 John 2:29; 3:2). Notice, this is repeated 3 times: vv. 7, 12, 20, reinforcing the reality of His imminent return.

- **Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book**—This book is prophetic literature. “Heeds” means “to keep,” “to guard,” “to hold fast.” We are to guard or protect the book of Revelation. We are to defend it against anyone who attacks its authority or meaning. As Paul told Timothy, *Guard what has been entrusted to you...Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you* (1 Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 1:13-14). Peter wrote, “*Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God...since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless* (2 Pet 3:11-12, 14).

**Verse 8**—*I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things*—John names himself for the first time since 1:9. This is the Apostle John, who walked with Jesus as His disciple.

- **And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things**—Again, as he did in 19:10. John saw the angels do some really miraculous, huge, supernatural things. He would be “natural” to acknowledge their awesomeness. [As a side note, it's interesting that this is the very thing Satan desired as the highest angelic being. He wanted to be worshipped, something that should only be given to God. This would be one way to test the spirits (1 John 4:1-4). Do they accept worship? If they are truly God's servants, as the angels are, they will not accept worship that should go only to God.]

**Verse 9**—*But he* [the angel] *said to me* [John], “**Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book. Worship God**”

—Angels are messengers sent from God to do His will. Just as any believer is. Don't attribute worth to either angels or other believers, worth that should go to God alone. He is to be the object of our worship. No one else. For example, God is the Holy Father—no man on earth should be called that. You should never bow in worship before any statue or icon (painting) or person.

**Verse 10—***And he said to me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near*—Unlike Daniel, who was told, *“As for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; ...and knowledge will increase (Dan 12:4).* But now, *the time is near,* and these words are to be made known, rather than sealed up.

**Verse 11—***“Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and the one who is filthy, still be filthy*—How people respond to the truth of *the words of this book* will determine their eternal destiny. *Still* can have the sense of “yet more,” which seems like it would mean that those who do wrong and are filthy [morally] in this life, will have even more wrong in the coming life in the lake of fire.

- *and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and the one who is holy, still keep himself holy*—Those who are righteous and holy (because they heeded God’s Word and accepted Christ as their Savior), will be even more righteous and holy in eternity with God (because we will be without our sin nature and in the presence of God).

**Verse 12—***“Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done*—Your works do not determine **where** you will spend eternity, but they do determine **how** you will spend eternity. Our rewards in heaven are based on our faithfulness in serving Christ in this life. John also wrote, *Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward (2 John 8).* Knowing Christ could return at any moment should motivate you to live a holy life that is obedient to Him and give you an urgency to share Christ with unbelievers.

**Verse 13—***“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end”*—Christ existed before creation, and He will continue to exist after this earth is destroyed.

**Verse 14—***Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city*—Those who are believers in Jesus, will go to the New Jerusalem He just described.

**Verse 15—***Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying*—21:8 described these unbelievers as going into the lake of fire.

**Verse 16—***“I, Jesus*—The only place in Scripture where this phrase is used.

- *have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches*—This book was sent through His angel to the Apostle John, to write down and be sent to all the believers of our age.
- *I am the root and the descendant of David*—Historically and humanly, Jesus came from the Jews.
- *the bright morning star*—indicates a new day. Prophetically, Jesus’ coming will begin a new day, with Him as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

These next verses are bookended by *“Behold, I am coming quickly”* in verse 12 and *“Yes, I am coming quickly”* in verse 20. Therefore, it seems to me the word *come* in the first part of verse 17 is referring to Christ’s coming, not an invitation for unbelievers to get saved (a more common interpretation).

**Verse 17—***The Spirit* says, “Come”—The Holy Spirit wants Jesus to come as King of Kings

- *The bride* says “Come”—From 19:8, it seems this is the resurrected church age believers

- ***And let the one who hears say, “Come”***—The one who hears the messages given to the churches, the believer who repents and responds to the message (chapters 2–3), wants Jesus to come as King of Kings.
- ***And let the one who is thirsty come***—Now the word is used in a different way—It is an appeal to the person who is thirsts for eternal life to come to Jesus.
- ***let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost***—As Jesus told the Samaritan woman, *whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life* (John 4:14).

**Verses 18-19**—***I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book***—To the believer who heeds the words of this book, Jesus will come, and His reward will be with Him for that person. However, for the person who does not heed the words of this book, but adds or takes away from the words of this book—

- ***if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book;***
- ***and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book***—To reject God’s true words is to reject God Himself. Similar warnings were given in the Old Testament (Deut 4:2; 12:32; Prov 30:6).
  - The words of the book of Revelation cover the time from the Apostle John through to eternity. To add or take away from these words is to take away from all of Scripture.
  - To be responsible for not only not believing these words to be the inspired Word of God is really bad, but to actually teach others to disregard this book of Scripture is even more severe. As James 3:1 says, *Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.*

**Verse 20**—***He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming quickly”***—As it says in 19:10, *For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*. This is prophecy, and it is the testimony of Jesus Christ. He is saying, *“Yes, I am coming quickly.”*

- ***Amen. Come, Lord Jesus***—John affirms this with his words. *Amen*—“so be it.” John joins the Holy Spirit, the saints, the mature in Christ in declaring we want Jesus to come. *In the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing* (2 Tim 4:8). *Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus* (Tit 2:13).

**Verse 21**—***The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all***—The favorable gift of Jesus, or the wrath of Jesus—that’s the choice.

—***Amen***—So be it.