

The New Testament, Book 27

The Revelation of Jesus Christ to Saint John

The greatest happiness of the thinking man is to have fathomed what can be fathomed, and quietly to reverence what is unfathomable.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

The Revelation of Jesus Christ to Saint John is the final book of the Bible. It is last in canonical order, last in time of writing, and last in the historical chronology. Revelation is aptly named, for it is largely a revealing of the future: the coming restoration of all things as they were in the beginning, and the ultimate fulfillment of God's purposes in the Creation.

A Book of Sevens

It is also a book of sevens (and multiples of seven). In just one verse of the salutation we will see the book addressed to "the seven churches which are in Asia," and a wish for grace and peace from "the seven spirits" before the Throne of God. Continuing in just the 20 verses of Chapter 1 we will see the glorified Christ, Himself, referring to the seven churches (twice), references to seven golden candlesticks (four times), and seven stars (three times). This makes 11 appearances of the numeral seven in 20 verses; and, if we count Christ's enumeration of the seven churches by name in verse 11, that would make 12¹. This should not surprise us, for seven is the number of completion--of fulfillment. This "seven-ness" of Revelation is just one way in which the Lord makes the important point that Revelation completes, fulfills and ends the inspired Bible. There may be explanatory notes, charts, tables, maps and a concordance between it and the back cover; but Revelation is the completion of the Bible.

Also Known as the Apocalypse

This book has also been called "The Apocalypse," derived from the underlying Greek word, *apokalypsis* ("an uncovering"), which is rendered in most Bibles as "Revelation." Since the writing of this book by John the Revelator in the late 1st Century, the words "apocalypse" and "apocalyptic"

¹ It is important to remember, when thinking of numbers and their significance in Revelation (or in any other part of the Bible), that chapter and verse numbers should be ignored as such, for they are man-made divisions, and are not inspired.

have taken on the added meaning of disasters in general, climactic disasters of any kind, or doomsday—the disastrous end of the world. But when John the Revelator wrote, as God inspired and directed him, it meant simply what the Greek says: “the uncovering, removing the veil, and revealing”—thus, our English name, “Revelation.”

A Controversial Book

Revelation is not only the Bible’s final book; it is also the Bible’s most controversial book. There was controversy as to whether or not it should be included in the inspired canon of Scripture; it was one of the last books to be accepted and included in the canon. Its inclusion was probably delayed because so much of its content, as we are about to see, is mysterious and capable of various interpretations; yet it was ultimately accepted because of the testimony of the earliest Church Fathers, chiefly Papias (ca 70-160 AD), who was a disciple of John the Revelator (the human author) himself. Papias may well have been at John's side, assisting him as he wrote this final book of the Bible. We, the Church, **believe** that it is the real thing; however, Papias **knew** that it is, and this he expressed in his writings, some of which, thanks be to God, have survived².

Revelation and the other 26 books of the New Testament were finally accepted as inspired, and the New Testament canon was closed, at the Council of Carthage in 397 AD, precisely 300 years after these things were revealed to John, in his lonely grotto on the island of Patmos, and he faithfully wrote them down³. I will not try to interpret the three centuries, the period between God’s revealing and the Church’s accepting, except to say that it was an extremely important matter to be decided, and that I have noticed that God enjoys doing things in threes.

Revelation Is Unique

There are prophetic portions in other New Testament books (e.g. Matthew 24-25, Mark 13, Luke 17, I Thessalonians 4, II Thessalonians 2, II Peter 3, and I John); Revelation, however, is the only purely prophetic book in the New Testament.

Revelation is also unique in that it is the only book that contains a promise of blessing to those of us who read it, and those of us who hear it read. It is also the only book in the Bible that pronounces a curse upon anyone who

² ANF, Vol 1, Fragments of Papias, pp 151-155.

³ At his age, about 95-100 years, he probably dictated them to a scribe; but this cannot be known--nor does it matter.

would add to it or take any part away from it⁴. This much is easy to understand, and should neither be doubted nor forgotten.

A Seedbed of False Doctrines and Cults

More than any other book of the Bible, and perhaps more than all of the others combined, interpretations of Revelation have been the seedbed of schismatic Christian groups, non-Christian cults, and false doctrines. Chief among these in modern times have been the “Adventist” groups, which have built their doctrines around predictions concerning the return of Christ (Second Advent). Such groups have set precise dates for the return of Christ, based upon their interpretations of Revelation and the Old Testament prophets; and, as Jesus predicted, all have been wrong⁵. Chief among these in the U.S.A. have been the 19th Century Millerites (followers of William Miller), and their doctrinal descendants, the Jehovah’s Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists.

A Unique and Refreshing Approach to Revelation

Revelation has been controversial, concerning its interpretation, from the time of its writing and first circulation, until today. Many Christians spend their lives trying to interpret Revelation (and its usual companions, Ezekiel and Daniel), and there can be almost as many interpretations as there are interpreters.

The late Henry M. Morris, Ph.D, LL.D, Litt.D, took a position that is (in my experience) unique. He wrote, “It would seem, based upon the stated purpose of the book, that the best interpretation is no interpretation.” He reasoned that, since the purpose of the book is to unveil the future (not conceal it), and that the reading and hearing of the book is to be a blessing (not a struggle or source of confusion), it must have been written as simply and understandably as possible. Thus, he reasoned, it should mean precisely what it says, with no interpretation required.

He went on to write that, because the coming judgments revealed in Revelation are so severe, and so globally vast, that the problem for scholars is not so much that they find them hard to understand--but that they find them hard to believe⁶.

His position is a point worth pondering, and this is the direction in which I shall lean as we make our way through this enormously important,

⁴ Revelation 1:3, 22:7, 22:18-19.

⁵ Acts 1:7.

⁶ Morris, Henry M., PhD, LLD, LittD: The New Defender’s Study Bible, Introduction to Revelation, p 1983.

fascinating, and final book of the Bible. Maybe it will not be as difficult to understand as most of us thought it was.

My Early Experience with Eschatology (Study of the End Times)

When I was a new Christian, at age 40, after a lifetime in church, it was the time of the great charismatic renewal of the late 1960s and 1970s. The air was electrified with excitement over the Word, over the reality of the gospel, and the Spirit-filled life; and millions were responding hungrily to the gospel and being set free. For me it happened in the sweeping revival that began among the Jesus People in Southern California. Among the excited multitudes of new (and renewed) Christians, in the USA at least, the study of the End Times was a hot topic; we wondered much about who “the Antichrist” might be. Many thought he was Henry Kissinger, that his capital would be in Rome, and that the re-establishment of the old Roman Empire was underway in Europe. We were excitedly counting flagpoles in Brussels, as member nations were being added to the European Union, waiting for “the tenth and final one” that would mean the re-establishment of the old Roman Empire⁷. We were all devouring the best-selling book, “The Late, Great Planet Earth,” and believing every word of it as if it were Scripture. There were other popular books published, saying essentially the same things, which tended to canonize the popularized opinions concerning the last days.

Disappointment and Disillusionment

The return of the Lord and the rapture of the Church were expected to occur at any day. There were bumper stickers warning others, saying “In Case of Rapture, this Car Will Have No Driver”; and there were actually some preachers, preaching like hucksters “hard selling” a product, urging the unredeemed to “come to the Lord and escape the tribulation.”

There were Bible teachers saying that the vultures were multiplying at six times the normal rate in Israel, preparing to clean up the innumerable corpses after “the battle of Armageddon.” We were told that all motor vehicle license plates in Israel had the prefix, “666.” And one popular teacher said that the stones for re-building the Temple were already cut, and loaded on flat cars in Indiana, waiting to be shipped to Israel. I was so excited at the spiritual reality that I had found, and was so hungry to learn,

⁷ In the 1980s speculation shifted to Mikhail Gorbachev as “the Antichrist”; and much was made of that purple mark on his forehead (“mark of the beast?”). Christians were wasting their time and energy on a false trail. Satan must have been laughing.

that I believed it all. I think that virtually all of us who were caught up in those exciting, life-transforming days believed it all.

But there was a problem: **none** of this was true.

When I discovered that much of what we were being taught, and what was being dogmatically written in books as truth, consisted only of opinions presented as facts, and that some of it was pure fiction, it soured me on the study of the End Times in general, and on the book of Revelation in particular. I turned my focus entirely, from the prophetic future, to Bible history and the Bible's truth for living today, where my primary interest has remained to this day.

As a result of my early experience, Revelation became my least favorite book; and, as a result, I missed a lot.

“Orthodox” Eschatology Can Be Bewildering--At Least to Me

In the past, when I did think of End Time events, and how they relate to us today, I thought in terms of “orthodox” eschatology, with the same general concepts that have become almost universally accepted among evangelical Protestants, and by some Roman Catholic scholars, during the last century. And, always, I found the overall picture a bit bewildering and elusive, like a jigsaw puzzle with some pieces that just don't fit, and with some which are missing.

I approached Revelation from the basis of popularized fundamental assumptions, such as the central role of a great and evil man known as “the Antichrist,” who would bring peace, at last, to the World for 3 ½ years, and then declare himself to be God and demand to be worshipped, bringing on horrible tribulation for 3 ½ years. I accepted the concept of a great, end time “Battle of Armageddon” which would resolve everything, put an end to evil, and take us into the paradise of the New Heaven and New Earth.

When I did think of the End Times I thought, subconsciously at least, in terms of these basic assumptions, which are so well established in much of contemporary theology as to be treated as canonical. As a result, I had difficulty making clear, solid sense of it all, and my mind never lingered there for very long.

A Fresh Approach and Some Surprising Discoveries

In the preparation of this study guide, however, I have taken a fresh approach, as if I had never read Revelation, or anything about it; and, in the process, I have made some amazing discoveries that have been surprising, clarifying, and liberating.

For example, the word “antichrist” does not appear in Revelation. Stop for a moment and think of the implications of this one, simple, undeniable fact; it should be a conversation stopper. The word simply isn’t there! Not even once! In fact, the word “antichrist” appears only five times in the entire Bible: four times in I John (once in the plural, “**many** antichrists”), and one time in II John (“**an** antichrist,” i.e. definitely not personalized, and with “an” strongly suggesting the existence of more than one)⁸. In all five occurrences, and, I repeat, they are all in the epistles of John the Revelator himself, the man to whom God told this Revelation story, “antichrist” describes an attitude, a theological position, a heresy, a type of sin or sinner, and not a person. According to I John 2:22, if I deny that Jesus is the Christ, then **I am antichrist**. Similarly, II John 7 tells us that if I deny that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, then I am **an** antichrist. This creates the potential for millions of antichrists, and you and I, theoretically, could be among them. This is, at the very least, a point to ponder, and it should be a game changer.

I also discovered that the words “battle of Armageddon” simply do not appear in Revelation; in fact, they do not appear anywhere in the entire Bible!

The single word, “Armageddon,” occurs only once in the Bible: in Revelation 16:16, where the sixth vial of God’s wrath is poured out, and three evil spirits are loosed to draw the kings of the Earth “to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.” The place where the kings of the Earth are gathered is called Armageddon; but the battle is called “the battle of that great day of God Almighty.” The English word “Armageddon” is derived from Hebrew, *har Megiddo*, meaning “Hill (or Mount) of Megiddo”--not a vast valley or plain, one at least 200 miles long, where we have assumed that a great “Battle of Armageddon” will take place⁹.

The discovery of these two simple facts first shook my concept of Revelation to its unsubstantial foundations; and then it set me free.

There are treasures in Revelation; and I have come to believe that the true treasures in Revelation lie in what it says, and not in someone’s opinions as to what it means.

⁸ If you have come this far with me in our journey through the Bible, you will know that when I refer to “the Bible,” I mean the Authorized Version (KJV), with its New Testament translated from the Textus Receptus of Stephanus--not to any of the myriad of modern versions.

⁹ Megiddo is a small and ancient town about 60 miles north of Jerusalem, on a hill overlooking the Valley of Jezreel to the northeast, and the Plain of Megiddo to the west.

The Importance of the Books of Ezekiel and Daniel

Most students of eschatology believe that Revelation cannot be properly understood without the parallel and concurrent study of Ezekiel and Daniel. These three books, Ezekiel, Daniel and Revelation, are typically looked upon as the “End Times Trilogy.” The vast majority of the popularized assumptions about End Time events, which have become canonized as orthodoxy in the minds of so many, are based, not upon the unadorned content of Revelation, but upon what is found in other prophetic books, especially Ezekiel and Daniel.

My Different Approach

The traditional approach to the study of Revelation, I have come to believe, is inverted, i.e. a great mistake of reversal has been made. I no longer believe that, in order to understand Revelation, it is necessary to study Ezekiel and Daniel. On the contrary, I believe that Ezekiel and Daniel cannot be fully understood without the light shed on them by Revelation.

I realize that this puts me completely out of step with virtually all End Times expositors, professors of New Testament and popular Christian writers; however, I have come to believe that the primary source for understanding Revelation is Revelation itself; and, after that, the most valuable resources, by far, consist of what Jesus told his disciples about the End Times, near the end of his earthly ministry, in Matthew 24 and 25, Mark 13 and Luke 21, of what Peter wrote in his 2nd epistle, and what John wrote in his 1st and 2nd epistles.

Ezekiel and Daniel, of course, should also be consulted and, at the end of this study guide to Revelation, I have added an Epilogue, which contains cross references to the most significant portions of all of these ancillary sources. But, first, last and always, Revelation should be the primary source and the anchor. The synoptic gospels, and the epistles of Peter and John, are pretty straightforward and simple; but some of them cannot be fully understood without Revelation. Without the anchor of Revelation, without returning to it for clarity, it is easy to go adrift, confused and bewildered, in the related sources, especially Ezekiel and Daniel.

John the Revelator Was Reporting--Not Interpreting

And, as we make our way through this book, it is important to be reminded that, as John wrote it, he was not interpreting; he was simply reporting what he had seen and heard. He brings it to us without a single footnote.

In the process of his amazing experience he was, at times, translated, both in time and space, from one time and place to another; therefore he was an actual eyewitness to the things of which he wrote. It is small wonder that, at times, he was overwhelmed by it all¹⁰.

And There Is Much, Much More in the Literature for Those Who Desire It

Hear me please: I do not intend to demean the traditional expositors and their interpretations of Revelation. The traditional interpretations have been almost universally accepted as orthodoxy by genuine Bible scholars, infinitely better qualified than I, for 100 years. After all, who am I, just a broken-up old Marine, and onetime obscure biologist, to disagree with E.I. Scofield, J. Dwight Pentecost, and other such theological giants? Nor am I trying to “sell” my simplified approach to Revelation; I probably couldn’t, even if I tried.

I am merely telling you what to expect in this approach to Revelation, and why. For those who wish to explore the various interpretations and symbolic meanings in this unique book of Scripture, going beyond my humble treatment, the literature is vast and rich.

For those not already familiar with apocalyptic literature, and who would like to examine and take the traditional approach, I recommend, as a place to begin, the copious writings of the late Finis Jennings Dake, beginning with the notes in the Dake Annotated Reference Bible, and the copious and reasoned writings of Dr. David Reagan of Lion and Lamb Ministries¹¹.

*** * * * * And Now to the Book Itself * * * * ***

Historical Background

Following the ascension of Jesus, back to Heaven, John had lived in Jerusalem, caring for Mary, the mother of Jesus, in his home until her death; the date of Mary’s death is not known. At some point after Mary’s death John moved to Ephesus where he spent the rest of his life, except for about a year of exile, near the end of his life, on the island of Patmos (probably AD 95-96)¹².

¹⁰ This is the plain meaning, without interpretation, of 1:1-2 and 1:10f.

¹¹ Dake Annotated Reference Bible, Dake Publishing Company, Lawrenceville, Georgia.

¹² John’s long tenure of about 30 years at Ephesus, and the three years that Paul had spent there earlier, may be the reason for the Ephesian church’s reputation as the model church of Asia Minor.

We know that his move to Ephesus was after 63 AD, for he is not mentioned in Paul's farewell meeting with the elders from Ephesus on the return leg of his 3rd missionary journey; and, in that address, Paul speaks with the authority of the overseer¹³. It is probable that John moved to Ephesus about 68-69 AD, following the martyrdom of Paul and Peter, to assume the leadership over the churches in that area. Ephesus, capital of Roman Asia, was in the center of Paul's area of ministry, and was, at the time, the geographic center of the Church. John lived at Ephesus for about 30 years.

Near the end of his life he was exiled to the island of Patmos during the persecutions by Emperor Domitian. He was there for about a year before being released, upon Domitian's death, in AD 96. We can be pretty precise about these years because of the accurate records kept by the Romans. Domitian was emperor from AD 81-96; and Eusebius tells us, quoting earlier, secular, Roman historians, that John was on Patmos "in the 15th year of Domitian¹⁴."

Patmos was, at the time, a barren, rocky island in the Aegean Sea, about 70 miles southwest of Ephesus, and was used by the Romans to imprison criminals. It was there, on Patmos, that John received the revelations recorded in this book. Tradition, perpetuated on the island, has it that he received the revelations in a lonely grotto on the southern part of the island, a place still visited by pilgrims and tourists today.

***NOTE:** It is interesting to note the cause of Domitian's persecution of Christians, persecutions that ended only with his death. As emperor, he declared himself both Emperor and Divine, and insisted upon being addressed as "Dominus et Deus." This is Latin for "My Lord and my God," the very title that Thomas used to address the risen Jesus when he first saw Him and his wounds. Of course, the Christians would not commit this blasphemy; and they suffered terribly for their faithfulness¹⁵.*

A. Author. Characteristically, critical scholars assign the book of Revelation to an unknown Christian named John from Ephesus, writing much later. To support their position they cite the fact that the author does not identify himself as John the apostle, and the unusual writing style in the book. However, neither does John identify himself as an apostle in his

¹³ Acts 20:17-38.

¹⁴ Eusebius: Ecclesiastical History, Book 3. 20. (9).

¹⁵ The Roman world was shocked at Domitian's deifying of himself, and after his death the Senate stripped him of all of his honors; but, for 15-plus years, the pagan Romans complied (or died).

gospel, nor in his three epistles (except in a cryptic sense, as "the elder" in his 2nd and 3rd epistles).

And, concerning his writing style, the style of Revelation is unlike that of any other book in the New Testament, because of its unique content. Trying to describe the things John saw and heard would change anyone's style of writing!

We may be completely confident, I think, that the human author was John the Elder (John the Beloved), author of the gospel and three epistles that bear his name. He identifies himself as the author four times in the book, beginning in the very first verse; and, in 1:9, identifies himself as having been exiled on Patmos because of his "testimony of Christ." The early Church Fathers agree: most notably Papias, John's disciple (1st Century); Irenaeus (2nd Century); Methodius (2nd Century); and Hippolytus (2nd-3rd Centuries)¹⁶.

B. Time and Place. John received the revelation while exiled on Patmos, 95-96 AD. He either wrote it at the time of his receiving of the revelation, on Patmos, or after he was released and returned to Ephesus. His use of the past tense in 1:9-10 strongly suggests the latter.

C. Occasion. John had been living in Ephesus for about 30 years, apparently as overseer of the churches in Asia Minor, when, during the persecutions of Domitian, he was exiled to Patmos for about a year, and was set free upon Domitian's death.

The Lord had things that He wished to reveal to John concerning the future: important things to be passed on to the Church. I am tempted to think that He arranged for John's exile to that lonely island, to get him away from the pressures and distractions of his ministerial and overseer's duties, to a place where He would have John's complete, undisturbed attention. There, on that barren island, in his lonely grotto, the only thing John would hear, except for the wind and the sea birds, would be the voice of his Lord.

D. Theme. The theme of Revelation is, in a word, revelation--enormous, mind-boggling, revelation. Revealed in the book is God's plan for the last times, the end of the age (in Greek, *aeon*); in English, the AV renders this expression, "the end of the World [as we know it]."¹⁷ Things explained and revealed to John include terrible, disruptive and destructive times to come on the Earth, the return of Christ, his millennial reign, final judgment of all mankind, the eternal punishment of Satan, with his fallen angels and

¹⁶ ANF, Vol I, Fragments of Papias, VI-VIII, pp 154-155.

¹⁷ Matthew 28:18-20.

unredeemed mankind, and the eternal happiness of the saints to follow, forever, in the presence of God. All things made wrong by the entrance of sin into the Garden of Eden will be nullified; the heavens and the Earth will be purified, and all things will be made new and right, as they had been in the beginning. It is entirely logical and proper that the first book of the Bible is Genesis, and that the last book is Revelation. In ways that we may never understand, all that occurs, from Genesis 3 to Revelation 21, are the record of what was necessary in order to return us to the paradise state of Genesis 2. Revelation 22, the last chapter of the last book, describes that state of restoration.

And a Message of Hope. We must remember that, historically, those seven churches to which the book is addressed were undergoing terrible persecution under Emperor Domitian. This book was also a message of correction and hope for them, assuring, eventually, a blissful, happy ending with great rewards, for those who are faithful to the end. This message also applies, of course, to us today, for Christians are under persecution today-- those of us who believe the Bible and live by its precepts. And some today are being persecuted unto horrible deaths, especially in places under autocratic Muslim or Hindu control. As we have seen in earlier studies, and shall see again in references here, Jesus clearly warned us to expect this¹⁸.

E. Highlights. Highlights in Revelation include the following:

1. Establishment of Credentials and a Blessing. (1:1-3)

At the outset, John clearly establishes the source of what he is about to write, and promises a blessing for those who read it, hear it, and keep its precepts¹⁹. And why is this so important? Because the time is “at hand”; these things will soon take place.

***NOTE:** Because John closes this opening passage with the statement that “the time is at hand,” people have been expecting the soon return of Jesus, to one extent or another, since the words were first written down and read, nearly 2,000 years ago. For this reason erroneous theories have been advanced, and false prophecies proclaimed, throughout these two millennia; and sincere but gullible people, as Jesus warned us, have been led astray by false teachers²⁰. According to Peter’s preaching, Christians have been “in the last days” at least since the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost²¹. But Jesus told us clearly that we cannot know the time of his return; it is our*

¹⁸ Matthew 24, 25; Mark 13; and Luke 21.

¹⁹ See Revelation 22:7.

²⁰ Matthew 24:4-26; Lk 21:8f.

²¹ Acts 2:14-21.

job only to be ready when He does return²². In the meantime, he has given us some glimpses of things to come, and landmarks to watch for along the way, e.g. in Matt 24-25, Mk 13, Lk 17, I Thes 4 and, of course, here in Revelation.

2. A Greeting, Some Theology and Some Prophecy. (1:4-7)

John addresses himself to “the seven churches which are in Asia,” pronounces grace and peace upon them from the Father, from “the seven spirits” which are before his Throne, and from Jesus Christ, first-born from death, and the Prince of the kings of the Earth, who loved us and washed us from our sins with his blood, making us kings and priests unto God²³. He says that this same Jesus will return, appearing in the clouds, and every eye on Earth will see Him, including those who pierced Him, and all who rejected and persecuted Him shall wail in mourning²⁴. And he closes this brief portion with, “Even so, amen.” It is as if he is saying, “I realize that some of this is a bit deep, but this is the way it is, so accept it, and so be it.”

NOTES:

a. The “Asia,” referred to in v 4 does not mean today’s continent of Asia (China, Burma, India, Japan, etc.). Here John refers to the Roman Province of Asia (today, what we call Asia Minor, i.e. the western part of Turkey). In biblical literature it is referred to as “Proconsular Asia” because it was ruled by a Roman governor whose title was “Proconsul,” and to differentiate it from the continent of Asia. The capital of Proconsular Asia was Ephesus, John’s home and base of operations for the last 30 years of his life.

b. John’s use of the expression, “the seven spirits which are before his throne” is worthy of a pause. What does he mean by this? The AV (KJV) rendering of the Greek here is literal, and it leaves us wondering. Are there seven spirits attending the Throne of God? And, if so, what, and who, are they? This is not explained, and commentators have struggled to explain it for nearly 2,000 years. Since Revelation is a book of sevens, and seven is the number of completion, I am inclined to believe that the phrase, “the seven spirits before his throne” is a reference to the Holy Spirit, in all of his virtues, his fullness and his completeness. Commentators as diverse as Richard of St. Victor (12th Century), Matthew Henry (17th Century), Mrs. Frances Siewert (Amplified Bible), Dr. Henry M. Morris (New Defender’s Study Bible) and Finis Jennings Dake (Dake Annotated Reference Bible), all

²² Acts 1:7.

²³ Exodus 19:6; Is 61:6; I Pet 2:5-10; I Jn 1:7; Rev 5:9-10.

²⁴ Daniel 7:13; Zech 12:10; Matt 24:29-31.

of the 20th Century, agree with me. Some go as far as to enumerate seven virtues or roles of the Holy Spirit; but we, ever seeking simplicity, shall leave it here and move on.

3. Introducing the Divine Christ. (1:8)

Suddenly, as John finishes his greeting and condensed theological statement, Jesus appears, without introduction; and, in a single verse, He makes clear his divinity and his eternal existence. He declares that He is “the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending²⁵.” And then, in case we missed the point, He says simply that He is “The Almighty²⁶.” Dr. Henry M. Morris observed, “A more definitive claim to absolute deity could hardly be imagined”; I won’t attempt to improve upon his words.

4. The Setting for All that Follows. (1:9)

In one verse, John again identifies himself humbly, tells us where he was, and why he was there, when these revelations were given to him. He tells us that he, sharing the tribulation that has befallen the churches, was on the island of Patmos as a prisoner of Rome. And, he says, he was there because he, like they, would not deny the Lord Jesus, compromise his Word, or cease to proclaim it. And he, like they, would not blaspheme by referring to Emperor Domitian as “My Lord and my God²⁷.”

5. “I Was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day.” (1:10)

John begins his amazing narrative by telling us that he was “in the Spirit.” By this I think we can understand that he was in a surrendered, rapt, receptive state of communion with the Holy Spirit, ready and open to hear and receive from Him. Does this mean that he was in some sort of trance state? I think not; it seems more likely that he was just in totally surrendered harmony with the Spirit, and un-distractedly, single-mindedly ready to receive. And, interestingly, he tells us that this meeting with the risen Lord took place “on the Lord’s Day²⁸.” Suddenly, from behind him he hears a voice so powerful and commanding that he describes it as being like a trumpet blast. John is about to begin a trip with the Lord that neither he, nor anyone else, has ever taken.

²⁵ Alpha is the first letter in the Greek alphabet, and omega is the last letter, thus “the beginning and the ending.” Notice that He doesn’t say, “I was there in the beginning, and will be present at the ending”; no, He says that He **is** the beginning of all things, and **is** the ending. This is a point to ponder.

²⁶ Isaiah 9:6, 44:6; Jn 1:1.

²⁷ We saw this in the explanatory **NOTE** following **Historical** Background at the beginning of this study guide to Revelation. John does not say this in the passage, but we know that it is true, for it is established by multiple extra-scriptural, historical sources.

²⁸ The underlying Greek means, literally, “the day belonging to the Lord.” This is the only appearance of the expression, “the Lord’s day,” in the NT.

NOTE: *We must pause briefly to wonder what John means when he says that this happened on “the Lord’s day.” The underlying Greek means literally, “the day belonging to the Lord.”*

In the earliest days of the Church, following the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, it seems that the believers met daily for sharing food and worship; many, if not all of them, also continued to worship in the Temple²⁹. And we must remember that they were, at the beginning, all Jews.

By the time of Paul’s second missionary journey, when he wrote his first letter to the Corinthian church, ca 55 AD, he instructed them to receive an offering when the church met “upon the first day of the week.” By the time of Paul’s visit to Troas on his third missionary journey, where he preached until midnight, ca 57 AD, we find that the church there came together to break bread “upon the first day of the week.” At some unknown point, between the birth of the Church at Pentecost, and Paul’s second missionary journey, it appears that the Church had abandoned the seventh day Sabbath and adopted the first day of the week as the weekly Sabbath, to honor the day of the Resurrection.

The Didache (Teaching of the Twelve Apostles) is the oldest known summary of Christian teaching³⁰. We may think of it as the oldest known catechism. It is anonymous, dates from the mid-to-late 1st Century, and consists of 16 brief chapters. In Chapter 14 Christians are directed to gather together “every Lord’s day” to break bread and offer thanks to the Lord. Although the Didache is not inspired Scripture it does, I think, give us a fascinating glimpse into life and custom in the early Church.

In addition, Ante-Nicene Church Father, Ignatius of Antioch (35-108 AD) stated emphatically that Christians should no longer keep the Jewish weekly Sabbath, but should “keep the Lord’s Day...the queen and chief of all days [of the week]³¹.” And the author of The Epistle of Barnabas (ca 100 AD), under the heading, “The False and the True Sabbath,” wrote, “Wherefore we also keep the eighth day with joyfulness, the day also on which Jesus rose again from the dead³².”

Conclusion. *By “the Lord’s day” John almost certainly means the first day of the week, i.e. what we call Sunday.*

6. “I Am Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last.” (1:11-17a)

²⁹ Acts 2:46-47.

³⁰ The Didache was known to, and referred to, by the early Church fathers, but was lost. It was re-discovered in 1873 in a monastery in Istanbul.

³¹ ANF, Vol 1, Epistle of Ignatius to the Magnesians, IX, pp 62-63.

³² ANF, Vol 1, Epistle of Barnabas, xv, pp146-147.

The mighty voice behind John again declares that He is “Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last,” and commands that he write what he sees in a book and send it to the seven churches of Asia, the churches of which John seems to be the overseer³³. John turns around to see what is happening behind his back, and sees seven golden candlesticks. In the midst of them he sees an awesome being, one “like unto the Son of Man”; he is like the Jesus he has known and loved--yet very, very different. He is wearing a robe that reaches his feet, and a golden girdle around his chest³⁴. His hair is white like wool--white as snow, and his eyes are like flames of fire. His feet are like shining brass, and when He speaks his voice is like the sound of many waters. He has seven stars in his right hand, and out of his mouth there is a two-edged sword. Looking at his dazzling face is like looking into the Sun³⁵. John, completely overwhelmed, falls at the being’s feet “as one dead,” i.e. struck down and incapacitated--slain by the power of the divine presence.

***NOTE:** This Magnificent Being is definitely reminiscent of the one who visited Daniel, on the bank of the River Hiddekel³⁶. The feet of shining brass speak of judgment, as does the sword coming out of his mouth (the Word of God, by which all mankind will be judged)³⁷.*

7. Getting John on His Feet and Explaining. (1:17b-20)

The Divine Being lays his right hand on John, saying that there is nothing to fear. He says again that He is the first and the last, that He was dead but now lives and is alive forevermore. He also says that He possesses the keys to Hell and death. Apparently speaking of time travel, He tells John to write in a book the things that he has already seen, plus the things “which are,” and the things which are still in the future. He tells John that the seven stars are the “angels” (messengers) of the seven churches, and that the seven candlesticks are the seven churches (of Roman Asia).

* * * * *

Letters to Seven Churches.

³³ Isaiah 44:6.

³⁴ Daniel 7:13.

³⁵ Exodus 34:29-30.

³⁶ Daniel 10:5-6.

³⁷ John 12:48.

Chapters 2 and 3 contain letters (divine messages) to seven churches in Asia Minor; in modern terms, they may be thought of as employee evaluations, or military fitness reports. These seven churches were in an elongated, irregularly shaped cluster, about 100 miles long by 50 to 75 miles across, in what is today western-most Turkey. Ephesus, on the coast of the Aegean Sea, was its base, or headquarters. Smyrna, 40 miles north of Ephesus, was also a seaport, and the other five cities spread inland; all were connected by Roman roads.

It is likely that each church received not only the letter addressed to it, but a book with all seven letters in it, plus the rest of what would be revealed to John. In this way each church could read not only the Lord's evaluation of itself, but also those of the other six churches, and the lessons therein, plus the revelation of what John was about to see. **In each of the seven letters**, although addressed to a specific church, the Lord refers to what He is saying **"to the churches"** (plural). This would result in what we might think of as seven copies of the Book of Revelation, with one copy delivered to each of the seven churches.

It seems clear that John was to record these things in a codex, the basic form in which books are bound today, with flat sheets, arranged in order, bound between flat, protective, front and back covers. We can know this because the Greek word rendered "book" in 3:11 is *biblos* (book), not *biblion* (scroll). The development of the codex/book form was the greatest advance in storing information until the invention of the printing press.

Seven Churches, or Seven Periods of History? Some believe that the seven churches are actually prophetic revelations of six periods in church history now past, and that we are living in the seventh period, i.e. the "Laodicean Church Age." By this theory, the church at Ephesus would represent the nearly-perfect church of the 1st Century, and the church at Laodicea would represent the present time. I don't see how this could be true, for the letters are, on their faces, specific messages for local churches, with references to matters of that specific time and place (e.g. Antipas, a martyred Christian at Pergamos, and the false prophetess Jezebel at Thyatira)--these things were written as past and current events, leading up to 96 AD when John received the revelation of the letters. It is also true that some of the errors of five of the churches (Christ spoke of no specific faults in the churches at Smyrna and Philadelphia) were also true of others, and are still true of the Church today. Thus, they are not things which occurred only in six past periods of history and never happened again; and, surely, the promises of rewards for the faithful did not apply only to certain periods of

history, and not to all of us. It is true that there are many parallels between the Church of today and the 1st Century church at Laodicea; but there are problems in today's Church that were also problems in the other six churches. In addition to all this, the letter to Philadelphia speaks of a time of trial "which shall come [future tense] upon all the world," apparently the Great Tribulation, which has not yet occurred.

Thus, it seems to me that it is valid to consider these seven letters to be what they are on their faces: individual messages to individual 1st Century churches in proconsular Asia, and not a mysterious prophecy. Yet the problems cited in these seven churches can be found in most of today's churches, and their lessons are valid lessons for us today.

* * * * *

NOTE: It is pretty obvious that the One revealing these things to John is the resurrected, glorified Christ, God the Son, in a magnificent form in which John has never before seen Him. Because He is the central figure in this book it will be necessary to make frequent references to Him; and, from this point onward, for the sake of simplicity, we will call this Divine Being simply "Christ," "He," or "Him."

* * * * *

8. A Message for the Nearly Perfect Church at Ephesus. (2:1-7)

Identifying Himself as the One who holds the seven stars in his hand (He controls the seven angels), and who moves about among the seven churches, Christ commends the Ephesian Church for its good works, for its patience, for its steadfastness in difficult times, and for its intolerance of false apostles. He also commends the Ephesians for hating the sinful acts of an idolatrous sect called "the Nicolaitans," which Christ also hates. They do, however, have one serious fault: they have left their "first love"³⁸. This is not explained, but it seems to mean that, although the church at Ephesus is well led, faithful and orthodox in its practices, the people are not loving one another, not loving those outside the church, and are not loving Him as they did at the beginning. Having allowed this fundamental element of Christian life to be gradually diminished, while being operationally orthodox and

³⁸ The love mentioned here is in Greek, *agape*, the unconditional love that is the essence of God's nature (I Jn 4:8).

efficient, is such a serious shortcoming that Christ threatens to “remove” its candlestick. Christ doesn’t explain what He means by this, but it sounds like termination of the church’s existence.

What could be a more emphatic expression of the essential nature of the transcendent prevalence of the *agape* love of God in all that we say and do? Even a church that is perfect in its doctrine and mechanics of performance, such as the church at Ephesus, without the pervasive presence and motivation of his love, is not just a shortcoming, it is intolerable to God.

NOTE: Little is known of the sect Christ calls “the Nicolaitans.” They only appear twice in the Bible: here, and in the letter to the church at Pergamos. In both instances He says that He “hates” their doctrines and deeds. Although no one today really knows, it is generally believed that their practices were licentious in the extreme, featuring sexual abandon and the eating of meat sacrificed to idols (and, perhaps, participating in the sacrifices to idols). There are some who believe that the sect was based on the teachings of Nicolas (Nicolaus) of Antioch, one of the first seven deacons; but this may be no more than an association with his name³⁹.

9. A Letter to the Church at Smyrna⁴⁰. (2:8-11)

Calling Himself “the first and the last, which was dead and is alive,” Christ tells John to write to the church at Smyrna that He knows their works, their tribulation and their poverty; but, He says, He also knows that they are rich spiritually. He also is aware of the blasphemy of “them which say they are Jews, but are not”; instead, He says, they are of “the synagogue of Satan⁴¹.”

He warns them of coming persecution. It will come in order that they might be tried (tested); but, He says, after 10 days of persecution, those who are faithful will receive the crown of life, and shall not be harmed by “the second death⁴².”

NOTES:

a. The ten days of tribulation mentioned in v 10 are probably symbolic of all faithfulness in tribulation, and not ten literal days. The only other reference in the Bible to “ten days” of trial is in Dan 1:12-15, where Daniel and his three friends were tried for 10 days, were faithful in glorifying God by not

³⁹ Acts 6:5.

⁴⁰ Smyrna, 40 miles north of Ephesus, was an important seaport city; it is today’s Izmir, third most important city in Turkey.

⁴¹ These seem to be Gentile proselytes, not ethnic Jews, who oppose the truth of the gospel. We shall hear of them again in the letter to the church at Philadelphia.

⁴² The lake of fire (20:6, 14; 21:8). See also Jas 1:12.

eating the king's food, and after that God blessed Daniel with 70 years of fruitful ministry.

b. Smyrna is one of the two churches in the seven where Christ found no fault; the other is the church at Philadelphia, which is also the only other one where Christ mentions the synagogue of Satan.

c. "The second death" is a mysterious combination of words; what does it mean? We will be told plainly what it means near the end of the Book of Revelation (19:14-15): it is the Lake of Fire, the place of eternal punishment for all whose names are not written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

The sense of this seems to be that all experience a "first death," i.e. the physical death of our bodies that comes at the end of life on this Earth. This death occurs when the heart stops beating, stopping the supply of blood to the brain; the electrical circuits of life shut down, and physical life ends. We will all experience this first death, except for believers who are alive when the Lord returns⁴³. This first death is a matter of a moment, and it is over; and, in a physical sense at least, it brings peace, in that the pain and trials of this life end.

There will be, however, for Satan, his fallen angels, and for all who have rejected Christ, a "second death," and it will be consignment to the lake of fire. This death will be very different from the first death in that, when this judgment is pronounced the prospect will bring anything but peace, the experience of it will be unimaginably horrible, and it will never end.

d. Polycarp, John's disciple, will be appointed by John to lead the church at Smyrna; he will be martyred there in 155 Ad.

e. Smyrna is reputedly the birthplace of Homer, classical Greek poet; however, six other cities of ancient Greece make the same claim.

10. A Letter to the Church at Pergamos. (2:12-17)

Identifying Himself as the One with the sharp, two-edged sword (projecting from his mouth), Christ directs John to write to the angel of the church at Pergamos that He is aware of their good works, and that they dwell in a place where Satan is enthroned and honored by pagans. He commends the Pergamos church for being faithful, even in the days when Antipas was martyred, slain "where Satan dwelleth⁴⁴."

There are, however, some very serious problems in the Pergamos church. Some follow the doctrine of Baalam, who taught Balac to set a trap for the children of Israel, causing them to commit whoredom with the women of

⁴³ I Thessalonians 4:13-18.

⁴⁴ This may be a reference to the great altar of Zeus at Pergamos, reputedly the largest altar in the World at the time.

Moab, to bow down to their gods, to commit fornication, and to eat food sacrificed to their gods⁴⁵. Not only this, but some of them are following the doctrines of the Nicolaitans, which Christ hates; and, Christ says, if they don't repent of these idolatrous immoralities He will "fight against them" with the sword of his mouth (a fight the sinners can neither win nor survive).

He closes the letter on a positive note. He promises that those who are faithful and overcome the trials he will give "the hidden manna," and a white stone, with the believer's new name engraved on it, a name that only the recipient will know.

NOTES:

a. The sin of fornication is referred to 12 times in Revelation, to mean sexual sin in general. Since idolatry is referred to in the Old Testament as to "go a-whoring after other gods" (spiritual adultery), and since idolatry typically involves physical fornication, the word is used figuratively, literally, and, in some cases, it is used to describe both.

b. Antipas (v 13) is an unknown martyr, mentioned only in this verse. He is believed by some to have been the leader of the church at Pergamos, and to have been put to death by being placed inside a bronze bull, which was then super-heated by a fire kindled under it, burning him to death.

The Romans never executed people in this manner; however, there is some evidence that priests of Babylonian paganism had moved to Pergamos, when Babylon fell to the Persians, bringing this form of idolatry with them.

c. The hidden manna and white stone seem to represent ultimate redemption. The jar of manna in the Ark of the Covenant was hidden from all eyes but God's, and Jesus said in the synagogue at Capernaum the He is the life-giving manna from Heaven⁴⁶. In ancient times a black stone was a common symbol of a "guilty" verdict in a trial, and a white stone was a common symbol of a finding of "not guilty." The new name appears to be fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy in Is 62:2.

11. A Letter to the Church at Thyatira. (2:18-29)

Christ seems to be particularly offended by the church at Thyatira. In the only one of the letters to the seven churches where He does so, He opens by referring to Himself as "the Son of God," and describes Himself as the One whose eyes are like flames of fire, and whose feet are like fine brass (an awesome picture of a very angry judge)⁴⁷. John has described Him in this fearsome way in the opening verses of the book; but only here does Christ

⁴⁵ Numbers 25:1-2; 31:15-16.

⁴⁶ John 6:48-58.

⁴⁷ Daniel 10:6.

refer to Himself in this way, emphasizing the fact that he is speaking in the role of a fearsome judge, and that He is not at all pleased.

He commends them for their good works, which are increasing, for their faith, love, service to those around them, and patience; but there is one extremely important problem in the church: its leaders are tolerating an apostate Christian, a false prophetess whom He calls Jezebel⁴⁸. This woman is a poisonous presence, corrupting those within the congregation, leading them into sexual sin and the eating of food sacrificed to idols (“the depths of Satan”); this is classic paganism. Christ says that He has given this wicked woman an opportunity to repent and change her ways, but she refused to repent. It is still possible for her, and for those she has led astray, to repent; however, if they don’t, He will cast her into a bed of anguish, and cast those who follow her into great tribulation and strike them all dead. This will be a lesson for all of the churches. He says that He knows our thoughts, deepest feelings and purposes, and will reward each one according to his works⁴⁹. He cannot be deceived, and will not tolerate sin; these are two foundational facts of life.

To the rest in Thyratira, those who have not followed Jezebel, He will require nothing more than what He has already commanded, and that is to hold fast to what they have until He returns.

And then He makes an extremely interesting promise to those who overcome and are faithful: He says that, when He returns, He will give them authority and power to rule “the nations,” and they shall rule the nations with a rod or scepter of iron. He expresses this absolute authority and power by comparing it to the way that a rod of iron can smash clay pots into shards. This authority and power will be the same authority and power that the Father has given to Him. In addition, He will give to the faithful “the morning star.”

NOTES:

a. The church at Thyratira calls to mind the established, mainline denominations of today. They are strong on good works and responsibility to those in need, but in the name of “tolerance” and “diversity” they are inclined to tolerate a lot of unscriptural things, including dabbling in paganism, and sometimes embracing it. As one example, I recall a Lutheran church which invited a Buddhist monk to come and teach the

⁴⁸ This woman is, of course, not the infamous Jezebel, wife of King Ahab and nemesis of the prophet Elijah, who corrupted the Northern Kingdom (I Kings 16f); she has been dead for 1,000 years. This is a wicked, influential woman who behaved like her, and promoted the same pagan practices..

⁴⁹ Jeremiah 17:10.

precepts of Buddhism. At one point, he had the children sitting in a circle on the floor, teaching them to meditate. Such things must make Christ weep--or set his eyes aflame with fury.

b. Ruling the nations? He seems to be saying that, when He returns and establishes the Kingdom of God in the Earth, some of us (perhaps all of us) who are faithful to the end will be placed in positions of leadership over portions of the World, with Christ as King, and with us as his subordinate leaders. And this, it seems, could only occur during the thousand-year period mentioned in Chapt 20:2-6.

c. But what could He mean by giving the faithful “the morning star”? He calls Himself “the bright and morning star” in 22:16. Since this promise is part of what He says about our ruling the nations as his subordinates, perhaps it means that the faithful will reflect his attributes in fullness during that period, as the Moon reflects the light of the Sun. Or, it may just mean that we will experience the fullness of his presence with us.

12. A Letter to the Church at Sardis. (3:1-6)

The church at Sardis is in terrible shape. It is condemned more completely than any of the other churches except for Laodicea. When Sir William Ramsay excavated the seven ancient cities of Revelation 2 and 3, at the turn of the 20th Century, only these two were still uninhabited ruins, never rebuilt.

Again identifying Himself as the One who has “the seven spirits of God” and “the seven stars” (angels or messengers), Christ says that He knows all about them and what they do. Although they pretend to be alive in Him they are actually dead as a church. He enjoins them to strengthen the few remaining things in the church that still have life in them, but are near death, for He has not found anything in the life of the church that is perfect before God. If they do not repent, he says, He will come upon them with judgment as a thief, and they will not know when it will happen.

There are still a few in the church who are faithful and have not defiled their garments with sin, and those few will walk with Him in clean, white garments. Those who are faithful and overcome their sinful surroundings will be clothed in perfect white garments, and He will not blot out their names from the Book of Life⁵⁰. Instead, He will confess their names before the Father and his attending angels.

NOTES:

⁵⁰ Daniel 12:1.

a. Sardis had been the capitol of ancient Lydia, and one of the richest cities in the ancient World. It is generally believed that it was the place where monetary coins were invented, and first minted, from abundant gold found in the sands of the river Pactolus. Its fabulously rich king, Croesus (560-546 BC), became so powerful that he even attempted to control the succession to the throne in far-off Nineveh. Today there is no gold in the Pactolus River, and Sardis survives only as scattered ruins. The discovery by archeologists of a 4th Century AD Christian chapel, with altar, built against the southeast corner of the Temple of Artemis (Diana), architecturally wedded to the temple, seems to be a vivid illustration of the Sardis church's illicit love affair with the fertility cults of the city.

b. The fact that Christ promises not to blot out of the Book of Life the names of the faithful few, seems to be a clear implication that the names of the unfaithful majority were in the Book of Life, but were to be removed⁵¹.

13. A Letter to the Church at Philadelphia. (3:7-13)

Like the church at Smyrna, Christ has no rebuke or criticism for the church at Philadelphia; these two churches are alone in this category. In this letter Christ identifies Himself as the One who is holy, true, and who holds “the key of David.” Whatever this key opens, no man can shut; and what this key closes and locks, no man can open. His authority over such matters is absolute and final.

And, as in the letter to Smyrna, Christ refers to the “synagogue of Satan,” those who claim to be Jews but are not. These are enemies of the truth and enemies of the churches at Smyrna and Philadelphia; and Christ promises to make them bow down at the feet of the Philadelphia Christians, and these wicked people will know that the Philadelphians are the ones Christ loves.

And then He makes a promise that He makes to none of the other churches: He promises to keep them from a time of trial that will come upon the whole Earth⁵².

Urging the Philadelphians to hold fast to the confession and blessing that they have, so that no one can rob them of their crowns of righteousness, He makes another fascinating promise: those who are faithful and overcome, Christ says, He will make pillars in the Temple of God, and they will abide there, never forced to leave it. And, Christ will write on the faithful the name of God, and the name of the city of God, the New Jerusalem, which

⁵¹ Revelation 20:15.

⁵² This is a reference to a specific, future, time of trial--not to protection from trials in general, as shown by the following verse (11).

shall come down out of the sky⁵³. Not only that, but Christ will write on these faithful ones his own new name. He does not explain this matter of writing the names on the faithful, but it seems emphatically clear that the faithful believers will be given the permanent mark of blessed children, belonging to God; and this is in stark contrast to the mark of the Beast, which shall forever brand the doomed--the children of perdition⁵⁴.

NOTE: The meaning here of "pillars" is not literal; that would turn the faithful into inanimate, dead objects, as in the case of Lot's wife, robbing them of their humanity, their joy, and their function in the family of God. And, as Matthew Henry put it, "Heaven needs no such props." It seems to say that they will be trophies and monuments to the grace and power of God, and to their faithful service to Him; they will eternally glorify God, with his mark, in some way, upon them. It is a common expression today to refer to someone who is particularly faithful and active in the congregation, as "a pillar of the church." This seems to be the meaning here.

14. A Letter to the Church at Laodicea. (3:14-22)

Christ opens the final letter with an unusual and interesting self-identification. He calls Himself "the Amen" (literally, "so be it"), apparently making the point that He is the personification of that which is unchanging. He calls Himself "the faithful and true witness," whose testimony of God to men should be received, and whose testimony to God concerning men will be fully believed. And, to clearly proclaim his deity, He calls Himself "the beginning of the creation of God." This latter part of Christ's identity probably didn't surprise or puzzle John, for he had already proclaimed it in the opening of his gospel account⁵⁵.

The most stern and sobering rebuke in all of the seven letters is reserved for this last one, Laodicea. Christ is so disgusted with this church that he threatens to vomit them out of his mouth, using the imagery of spewing them out, as if to get them as far from Himself in the process as possible. But why is He so displeased with this church? It is because they are neither hot nor cold. Being lukewarm is worse to Him than being cold toward Him and the gospel. They are indifferent, apparently so prosperous, so self-satisfied, that the life of the church is reduced to self-fulfilling ritual. They are blinded by their material riches so that they can't see that, in terms of spiritual reality, they "are wretched and miserable...poor, blind and naked."

⁵³ Revelation 21:9-27.

⁵⁴ Revelation 13:18.

⁵⁵ John 1:1-3.

Then He gives them good advice--the remedy for their condition: He advises them to “buy of me gold tried in the fire.” He speaks of true riches, spiritual riches that cannot fly away, pure white robes of righteousness to cover the ugliness of their spiritual nakedness. This spiritual gold is pure--refined in the crucible of Christ’s sacrificial death. They also should apply healing salve to their eyes to relieve the blindness of their wealthy self-satisfaction.

But can righteousness be “bought” in the earthly sense? No; but spiritual buying is another matter. Isaiah introduced us to this heavenly paradox, urging us, “who have no money,” to “come, buy and eat⁵⁶.”

The Laodiceans are so pleased with themselves and what they have that Christ has been excommunicated from their fellowship; yet, because He loves them, He is attempting to correct them. Even though He pictures Himself as standing outside the church, knocking on the door, He offers a chance to repent. He invites any one inside who will listen to Him, and open the doors of their hearts, to have righteous fellowship with him. The invitation is still there for the taking; and those who do respond, and overcome, will sit with Him in the glory that He won by overcoming what He faced, in paying the terrible price for our redemption⁵⁷.

NOTES:

a. The last three verses of Chapt 3 (vv 20-22) probably refer to all seven of the churches addressed in Chapt 2 and 3, as well as to the church at Laodicea. These three verses could be thought of as a closing statement, a brief epilogue of encouragement and promise for all of these churches, if they will repent.

b. Revelation 3:20 is often quoted by evangelicals as a concluding statement when witnessing--presenting the plan of salvation. They interpret the verse as a picture of Jesus, knocking on the heart’s door of the lost, and offering salvation. However, on its face v 20 is a vivid picture of Jesus, knocking on the door of a dead church, offering redemption, fellowship, and eventual glory, to any individual within that dead church with ears to hear and a heart to respond to Him. Perhaps both interpretations of the verse are valid; but this latter meaning is what the verse, and the two verses following, clearly say, especially since “churches” in v 22 is plural.

15. The Majestic and Beautiful Throne Room of God. (4:1-5)

⁵⁶ Isaiah 55:1-2.

⁵⁷ This offer of forgiveness, and promise of reward by the Savior, was also foreseen by Isaiah, in Is 55:3-6.

John is about to take a trip, one that he cannot even imagine; and we shall take that trip with him.

John sees a door open in Heaven, and another voice like a trumpet blast invites him to “come up hither” where he will be shown things that will occur in the future. Immediately he is again “in the Spirit,” in Heaven, and looking upon a throne with “one” sitting on the throne. Lacking adequate words to describe the “One” who sits on the throne, John describes Him in terms of precious jewels; and there is a rainbow around the throne (and it is one unlike any that I have ever seen). John describes it as being “like an emerald⁵⁸.”

Around the throne also there are 24 seats, and seated in them are 24 elders, clothed in white robes, with golden crowns on their heads. From the throne there comes lightning, thunder, and indescribable voices. And, arranged in front of the throne there are seven flaming lamps, which are the seven Spirits of God⁵⁹. This is the Throne of God.

16. A Crystal Sea and Endless Worship. (4:6-11)

Before the Throne John sees a glassy sea; its appearance is as if it were made of pure crystal. Attending the Throne of God there are four living creatures ("beasts"), “full of eyes, before and behind⁶⁰.” The first one is like a lion; the second is like a calf; the third has the face of a man; and the fourth is like a flying eagle⁶¹. Each creature has six wings, and is “full of eyes, within and without.” They are all-seeing, and they do not tire; they praise God continuously. Seeing things eternal, yet trying to describe them in human terms, John writes, “they rest not, day and night⁶².”

And, as the four living creatures offer continuous praise to God (“Him that sat on the throne”), the 24 elders fall prostrate and cast their crowns before Him, crying out “Thou art worthy, Oh Lord, to receive glory and honor and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were, created.”

NOTES:

a. The word “beast” describing the four creatures around the Throne is, in Greek “zoon,” meaning “creature” or “animal.” The AV translators were simply saying that they definitely are not human; but, made clear by their

⁵⁸ Ezekiel 1:26-28.

⁵⁹ See in this regard 3:1 and 5:6.

⁶⁰ The attendants, closest to the throne, can see in all directions, at the same time.

⁶¹ Ezekiel 1:10.

⁶² I don't think there will be any night in Heaven. John is merely saying that they never rest; they apparently don't need to rest.

position in the constant presence of God, and by their declarations of praise, that they are not to be confused with, or compared to, the evil “beast” whom we will encounter later in Revelation. These glorious creatures of Heaven will appear again in Chapt 5 and 6; and, again, they will appear as servants of God.

On the other hand, the anti-Christ “beast” who will be prominent as an instrument of evil, from Chapt 13 through Chapt 20 is, in Greek, “therion,” meaning a wild, savage, predatory beast. It is a decidedly negative word. In the Septuagint, “therion” is never used to refer to an animal sacrificed to God; as Vine summarizes it, “zoon stresses the vital element, therion the bestial⁶³.”

b. Interestingly, in v 1 of the Greek manuscript there is no word where the AV translators put “one,” as if John didn’t know what to call Him, so he left the space blank. But the identification of “one” on the throne progresses. The “one” on the throne is called “Him” in the next verse (4:3). In v 9, the identification expands to “Him that sat on the throne, Who liveth forever and ever.” And the worship by the 24 elders in vv 10 and 11 removes any doubt; it is GOD, the YHWH of Heaven and Earth, Who sits on this Throne.

*c. The four and twenty elders declare in v 11 that God has created all things for his pleasure. That sounds, on its face and in human terms, rather self-serving and negative. A person among us, whose sole and paramount motive for all that he does is his own pleasure, is one we would abhor. But everything else that the Bible tells us about God cries out against this interpretation here. The underlying Greek rendered “pleasure” is “thelema” whose primary meaning is “will.” We use the expression, “I will do as I please in the matter,” meaning that I will do whatever I decide to do--whatever I will.” It is the same word rendered “will” in the Lord’s prayer, “thy will be done⁶⁴.” We might think of it in this way: in creation, He did it as He pleased, for He is supreme, i.e. not subordinate to any other creator, and He alone is all-knowing, all-powerful and all-wise. There was not, nor could there be, anyone else making decisions about creation; He alone willed it and performed it. And, when I read v 11 I like to think of the words of Jesus in Lk 12:32: “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s **good pleasure** to give you the Kingdom” (emphasis mine).*

d. In v 11 there is an interesting combination of the present and past tenses, in “are and were created.” To me it suggests that God did not merely

⁶³ W.E. Vine: Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, “beast,” Vol. I, pp 102-103.

⁶⁴ Matthew 6:10; Lk 11:2.

create the Universe long ago, and then leave it to the natural order of things. It suggests to me that his infinitely creative Mind is still at work, creating things, from mutations creating new and beautiful varieties or subspecies of flowering plants to, perhaps, new galaxies. I think He is very much involved in his unimaginable creation, and is not a distant Creator who now only sits on his Throne and watches.

17. The Book with Seven Seals. (5:1-4)

There is, in the right hand of Him who sits on the Throne, a book. The book has writing within it, and on the back cover, and it is sealed with seven seals⁶⁵. As John sees this, a mighty angel proclaims with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seven seals?” And no human being is able, or worthy, to open the book or even to look upon it, not any man in Heaven, on Earth, or beneath the Earth (in the realm of the dead). John weeps much and bitterly, because there is no human being found who is worthy to open the book, or even to look upon it.

NOTE: The Greek word rendered “book” here is “biblion,” literally meaning “a written document.” It can mean a book, a bill of sale, a letter, or a deed to property. What John sees is probably not a book in the modern sense; this same Greek word is used in Matt 19:7 for “a writing of divorcement.” The “book” John is seeing is probably a scroll, sealed with seven seals. It may be thought of as the title deed to the Earth or, perhaps, the totality of Creation as we know it. In ancient times, a deed to property contained, within it, a complete description of the property conveyed; but on its back was written a brief description of what was written within, so that it could be identified without opening (unrolling) it. Such documents were sealed.

For an excellent commentary on vv 1 and 2, and what the “book” might contain, see the explanatory notes in Dr. Henry Morris’ “New Defender’s Study Bible.”

(Ask Dr. David R. Reagan (Lion and Lamb Min) for permission to use the Lion/Lamb picture on my wall)

18. The Lion Who Is a Lamb. (5:4-7)

Because no one is able, or worthy, to open or read the book--or even to look upon it--John weeps bitterly. But one of the 24 elders consoles him, saying that the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed and overcome, and can open the Book and open its seven seals.

⁶⁵ Daniel 12:4.

When John looks again toward the Throne he sees, standing by the Throne, with the four glorious creatures and 24 elders around Him, not a Lion, but a Lamb. And the Lamb appears to have been slain, but is very much alive. And this Lamb has seven horns, seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the Earth. This Lamb takes the book out of the right hand of Him who sits on the Throne.

NOTES:

a. The imagery here is pretty obvious, but worth noting. The Lamb is “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the World,” the suffering Messiah, of Whom John the Baptist spoke and prophesied. He is the One who was made flesh and dwelt among us, lived a sinless life, overcoming all temptations and trials, even the death of the cross. He is, as He told John in Chapt 1, the One who was dead but is alive, and lives forevermore. He is also the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, prophesied by Judah himself in his old age. Horns represent power; seven horns represent absolute power. The seven eyes represent his all-seeing knowledge, as well as the fullness of the Holy Spirit, “sent forth into all the Earth.”

b. In referring to the Lamb, two royal titles referring to Jesus Christ are used in this passage: Lion of the Tribe of Judah; and Root of David⁶⁶.

19. Offering the Prayers of the Saints. (5:8-10)

When the Lamb takes the book there is rejoicing around the Throne. The four creatures and 24 elders fall down before the Lamb in worship. Each has a harp for making music, and golden containers filled with incense; the incense consists of the prayers that have been offered by the saints, the people of God⁶⁷.

Those around the throne sing a new song, declaring that the Lamb is worthy to take the book and to open it, because He was slain, and has redeemed us to God by his blood--redeeming the lost from all over the World. Not only that, they sing, but He has made the redeemed to be kings and priests unto God, and we shall reign with Him in all the Earth⁶⁸.

NOTE: The exact meaning of the harps played by the four creatures and the 24 elders is not known, but they were probably ten-stringed instruments such as lyres or harps. The Greek word rendered “harp” is “kithara,” the word from which we derive our English word, “guitar.” Interestingly, the Hebrew word for harp is “nebel,” referring to the rounded shape of a wine

⁶⁶ Genesis 49:8-12; Is 11:1-10; Rom 15:12.

⁶⁷ Psalm 141:2. I really like the thought that God stores our prayers as incense for his pleasure

⁶⁸ Deuteronomy 14:2; I Pet 2:9-10.

skin, whether symmetrical as in the guitar or lute, or asymmetrical, as in the harp.

20. The Praise of Uncountable Worshipers. (5:11-14)

Suddenly John is aware of the voices of many angels around the throne--so many that he cannot even express the numbers. They are praising the Lamb. And then the innumerable angels are joined in the praise of the Lamb by "every creature" in Heaven, on Earth, and even under the sea⁶⁹. The four creatures around the Throne say "Amen." And the 24 elders fall down and worship the Lamb "who lives for ever and ever."⁷⁰

NOTES:

a. The 24 elders around the throne prostrate themselves before the One on the Throne and worship Him; yet the four glorious "beast" creatures around the Throne do not do this. This seems to illustrate the fact that the elders are glorified human men; but the four glorious "beast" creatures, which are even closer to the Throne than the four and twenty elders, are not human in any sense; they are created beings of a very different order, as are angels, seraphim and cherubim. This, plus the fact that these four are of an apparently unique type, make it understandable that John does not know what to call them, except to make it very clear, by calling them "zoon," that they are not, in any way, human.

b. The expression, "for ever and ever" in vv 13 and 14, referring to the infinite life span of God, is, in Greek, fascinating to me. In Greek it is literally "to the ages of the ages." This is, I think, another example of the difficulty for John (and for subsequent translators of Scripture) in trying to express the inexpressible. Mrs. Siewert, in her Amplified Bible, uses "forever and ever" as in the AV; but she, trying to be both accurate and helpful, adds, in parentheses, "through the eternities of the eternities." It is, I think, a conceptual problem that our finite minds simply cannot handle linguistically; the best we are able to do seems to be "for ever and ever."

*c. The modern (Westcott-Hort) family of Greek texts, from which all modern NTs except for the NKJV are translated, omit "Him who lives forever and ever" from v 14. This undermines--**in fact, denies**--the foundational doctrine of the divinity of Christ⁷¹. Characteristically, Mrs. Siewert, in her*

⁶⁹ Daniel 7:13-14.

⁷⁰ The underlying Greek rendered "for ever and ever" (literally "to the ages of the ages") is exactly the same as is rendered "for ever and ever" in 19:3). It must have been very difficult for John to find words to express the infinite.

⁷¹ At the very least, it rejects one opportunity to declare the divinity of Jesus, the Lamb of God. You can see that this is a matter about which I have very strong feelings and cannot--will not--take lightly.

Amplified Bible, although including these words in italics, nevertheless includes them; for she knew that to omit them would be an affront to the divinity of her Lord.

* * * * *

Opening the First Six Seals of the Scroll. Revelations of the Future?

21. The Opening of the 1st Seal. (6:1-2)

The Lamb who is worthy begins to open the seven seals of the Book. When He opens the 1st seal John hears a great noise, like the sound of thunder. And, with this great noise, one of the four glorious creatures by the Throne says to him, “Come and see.”

What John sees is a magnificent white horse, and he that sits on the horse has a bow (and, we must assume, some arrows for the bow). A kingly crown is given to him and he goes forth to conquer.

***NOTE:** This rider of this white horse is not identified, and there are differing opinions as to his identity. However, since the kingly figure on this white horse represents the beginning of terrible events on Earth, and a white horse appears again near the end of Revelation (19:11-21), whose rider, obviously the conquering Christ, represents the end of those terrible events, the probability is that this rider is the anti-Christ enemy of God, going forth to conquer (temporarily).*

22. The Opening of the 2nd Seal. (6:3-4)

When the Lamb opens the 2nd seal, John hears the second glorious creature say, “Come and see.” He sees a red horse, and to the one sitting on the red horse is empowered to take peace from the Earth, and that men should kill one another. And he was given a great sword.

23. The Opening of the 3rd Seal. (6:5-6)

When the Lamb opens the 3rd seal, John hears the third glorious creature say, “Come and see.” John then sees a black horse, and the man who sits on the black horse holds a balance (a scale) in his hand, as if to weigh things. And John hears a voice, which comes from the midst of the four glorious creatures around the Throne. This voice says, “A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and be sure not to damage or hurt the oil and the wine.”

***NOTE:** The penny spoken of here is a Roman coin, the denarius, symbolic of a day’s wage. Ordinarily, one denarius would buy many times more than one measure (about a quart) of wheat, or three measures of barley.*

Estimates, as to what one denarius would buy in the 1st Century, vary from 8 to 20 measures of wheat, and 24-60 measures of barley. This speaks of great famine to come, with food extremely expensive, probably brought on by the wars represented in the 2nd seal. As usual, the wealthy and powerful will continue to live in luxury (olive oil and wine will be plentiful for them).

24. The Opening of the 4th Seal. (6:7-8)

When he Lamb opens the 4th seal, John hears the fourth glorious creature say, like the other three, “Come and see.” When John looks, he sees a “pale” horse. The one who sits on the horse is Death; and Hell follows him. Death and Hell are given power over one fourth of the Earth to kill with the sword, with hunger, with death of other kinds (pestilence, murder, suicide), and by being victims of wild beasts.

NOTES:

a. The Greek adjective rendered “pale” in describing this horse is “chloros,” meaning pale green. This is a reference to what I can only describe as the pale, greenish-grey color that the skin of the dead takes on soon after death. This is in perfect keeping with the identity of this horse’s rider.

b. The apparent redundancy in v 8 of killing with death simply refers to all other causes of death, as expanded above.

c. The Greek noun rendered “Hell” in this passage is “hades,” the realm of the dead; it is the intermediate realm of the unredeemed dead, not “gehenna,” their ultimate and terrible destination⁷².

d. The Greek word rendered “power” in v 8 is “exousia” and it means “authority,” with the accompanying power included in the meaning by implication. It is the same Greek word used in Lk 10:19 where Jesus says to the “other seventy” successful disciples, who had been sent out two by two to minister, when He says that He gives them “power to tread on serpents,” etc..

e. We must remember that these powers given to Death and Hell are temporary; the glorified Christ made it very clear in his self-introduction to John in Chapt 1 that He has ultimate possession of the keys to Hell and Death. Both Death and Hell will ultimately be cast into the Lake of Fire in the final judgment⁷³.

25. The Opening of the 5th Seal. (6:9-11)

⁷² For a brief summary of the matter of Hell see “Understanding Hell” in Part IV (Selected Topical summaries).

⁷³ Revelation 20:14.

When the Lamb opens the 5th seal John sees an amazing thing. Under the altar of God John sees the souls of the martyrs, those who have been put to death for being faithful to God and to their testimony of salvation. These died rather than deny the Lord that bought them. They cry loudly to the Lord, asking how long it will be before He will judge and avenge their blood which has been shed in loyalty to Him. Each of these martyrs is given a flowing white robe, and they are told to wait until all who will, in the future, have been martyred, as these dead have been. There will be many more to join them.

NOTE: Stephen was the first martyr, stoned to death by the Sanhedrin⁷⁴. By the time John is seeing this vision of the martyred saints many thousands of Christians have been martyred in the persecutions under Nero and Domitian, and countless thousands more will be martyred in Roman persecutions, until Roman persecutions end with Diocletian in 305 AD. Yet persecution and martyrdom did not stop there; there are Christians dying for their faith today, even as you read these words, where atheist autocracies rule and where Muslims, Hindus and other violent pagans are in control. And, as the end approaches, we may expect this to become much worse. You and I, if we are faithful, may someday wear martyrs' crowns.

26. The Opening of the 6th Seal. (6:12-17)

When the Lamb opens the 6th Seal He opens the Great Day of Wrath. The wrath of the Lamb is expressed in unprecedented earthquakes, what seem to be widespread, destructive meteorite showers, and celestial abnormalities (the Sun turns black and the Moon is like blood)⁷⁵. These things cause universal terror and destruction so great that people of all levels of wealth and power, from the most wealthy and powerful to the slaves, try to find safety, hiding in mountains and caves. But there is no safe place to be found, for even “every mountain and island” is moved from its normal place⁷⁶. Those trying to find a place of safety even ask for the rocks and mountains to fall on them, for nothing is so terrifying to them as the face of the One who sits on the Throne,” and the terrifying wrath of the Lamb⁷⁷. The day of the wrath of the Lamb has arrived, and no one can stand against it.

⁷⁴ Acts 6:8-7:60.

⁷⁵ Joel 2:31.

⁷⁶ Islands are actually the tops of mountains, rising above the water levels from the floor of the oceans and seas.

⁷⁷ Hosea 10:8.

NOTE: *Although the word “rapture” does not appear anywhere in the Bible, it is a word commonly used by theologians, Bible commentators and interested Christians. The word is based upon the Latin verb, “rapere,” meaning to seize by force. We classify certain birds, such as eagles and hawks, as “raptors.” Because they seize their prey with long, sharp talons and snatch them away, up into the air, to be eaten and/or fed to their young. Theologically, the word, “rapture,” is used to describe the catching away of the redeemed at the return of Christ, being carried up to meet Him in the air⁷⁸. As we shall see in the study of this final book, there will be a seven-year period of unprecedented tribulation on the Earth, which we usually call “the great tribulation.” Some commentators believe that this “rapture” of the redeemed will occur before the great tribulation; some believe that it will occur in the middle of the tribulation; and some believe that it will occur at the end of the tribulation. In addition to these three beliefs, some believe that the “rapture” of the Church will occur immediately before the wrath described here (“pre-wrath” rapture). Who has the “correct” doctrinal interpretation concerning this? Only God knows.*

27. The Sealing of the 144,000 Believers. (7:1-8)

Next John sees four angelic beings, equally spaced on “the four corners of the Earth.” These four angels are holding back all winds, so that no wind blows on land or sea. These four angels also have authority and power to do harm to earth and sea. Then another angelic being rises from the east. This one has the seal of the living God and he commands the other four, in a loud voice, that they do no harm to the earth, or sea, or to the trees, “until we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads⁷⁹.” John hears the number of these servants of God, and it is 144,000⁸⁰. There will be 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel. These will come from the tribes of Judah, Reuben, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Simeon, Levi, Issachar, Zebulon, Joseph and Benjamin. The natural disasters cease.

NOTES:

a. The “seal of the living God,” which this fifth angel has, is not identified or explained. It may be the name of God on his forehead; and the same applies to the “seal” on the foreheads of the 144,000. We will see more about this group, and its seal, in Chapt 14.

b. In the listing of the tribes represented, the tribe of Dan is omitted. The tribe of Joseph, which had been divided by Joshua into the half-tribes of

⁷⁸ 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

⁷⁹ Concerning the preservation of the trees from destruction, see 9:4.

⁸⁰ Ezekiel 9:4.

Ephraim and Manasseh, is included, along with the half-tribe of Manasseh (which seems to be a redundancy)⁸¹. Why Dan is excluded, why the half-tribe of Manasseh is included, and why Manasseh was chosen over Ephraim in this way, is not explained.

28. The Blood-Washed Multitude. (7:9-17)

After hearing about the 144,000 who are to be sealed, John is given a vision of a multitude before the Throne so great that it cannot be counted. The people are from all nations, are clothed in white robes, and hold palm leaves in their hands⁸². They are shouting praises to God and to the Lamb. And “all the angels” appear before the Throne, fall on their faces and worship God with the multitude.

One of the elders asks John who the people of the multitude are, and from where have they come; and John, of course, doesn't know. Then the elder answers his own question, saying that they are those who have “come out of great tribulation,” and have washed their robes to brilliant whiteness in the blood of the Lamb⁸³. Because of this, the elder says, they are in the presence of God day and night, and He dwells among them. He also says that they will never again hunger or thirst, and they shall be protected, because the Lamb shall feed them, lead them to fountains of living waters, and God Himself shall wipe away all tears from their eyes⁸⁴. This is a beautiful word picture of the paradise that awaits the faithful, and the personal involvement of God, who knows the number of hairs in the head of each one of them.

NOTES:

a. The phrase, “all the angels” in v 11 is not explained. It cannot, it seems reasonable to say, mean all of the angels in existence, for there are surely a great many in all parts of the World at this time, attending to other matters for God. It probably means all of the angels who are present, around the Throne, at this time.

b. This passage seems to refer to the great tribulation of Dan 12:1 and 9:27, Matt 24, Mk 13, and Rev 13, although this period has not yet occurred. The Greek is clear, saying “the great tribulation” (using the definite article “the”). It may refer to the 3 ½ year period of the second half of the great tribulation, after the anti-Christ leader has his image set up in the Temple.

⁸¹ Joshua 14:1-4.

⁸² In ancient times palm leaves were a common symbol of victory or some other worthy accomplishment. See also Jn 12:12-13.

⁸³ Daniel 12:1.

⁸⁴ Psalm 23; Ezek 34:23.

This event will mark the beginning of the very worst part of the unprecedented tribulation of which Jesus had spoken very clearly.

By the time of John's revelatory visions, the temple at Jerusalem no longer existed, having been completely destroyed by Titus about 25 years earlier. The temple in John's vision may be just a symbolic point of reference for him; or, it may refer to the millennial temple with the Throne from which Christ will rule during his thousand-year reign on Earth.

*c. The Lamb will lead the white-robed tribulation saints "unto living fountains of waters," and God shall wipe away their tears. In the AV (KJV), "living water(s)" is a metaphor for the Holy Spirit, our divine Comforter. Some non-traditional, critical translators render "living" water(s) as "running," or "flowing" waters, thus reducing the phrase from the supernatural to the natural. For a discussion of this and its implications, see the explanatory **NOTE** following Highlight 22 in the study guide to Zechariah.*

29. The Opening of the 7th Seal. (8:1-6)

The Lamb opens the 7th and final seal, and terrible things are about to happen. After a strange silence in Heaven, which lasts about 30 minutes, John sees seven angels "which stood before God." To these seven angels are given seven trumpets. Then another angel appears, standing at the altar before the Throne; he has in his hand a golden censer, a container for holding hot coals and burning incense. There is given to him much incense, so that he can offer it, with the prayers of the saints, before God. And the smoke from the burning incense, mingled with the prayers of the saints, ascends up before God as a holy offering. Then the angel fills the golden censer with hot coals from off the altar and throws them into the Earth. This results in the sound of voices, lightning, and an earthquake. And the seven angels prepare to blow their trumpets.

NOTE: *The seven angels are considered by some to be the "seven spirits of God" who are mentioned in Chaps 3, 4 and 5. It is more likely that they are archangels, who have a special status, standing in the very presence of God. Gabriel identified himself to Zacharias, father of John the Baptist, as Gabriel, who stands "in the presence of God"⁸⁵. Paul wrote that, when the Lord returns in the air, his coming will be announced with "the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God"⁸⁶. Also, the apocryphal Book of Enoch speaks of seven "presence angels." Although the Book of Enoch is*

⁸⁵ Luke 2:19.

⁸⁶ I Thessalonians 4:16.

apocryphal, the fact that Jude, half-brother of Jesus, mentions it in his small canonical book, gives it some divine authority⁸⁷. For more on the Book of Enoch see “The Book of Enoch” in Part IV (Selected Topical summaries).

30. The 1st Trumpet. (8:7)

The first angel sounds his trumpet and the Earth is struck with hail and fire, mingled with blood. As a result, all green grass is destroyed, along with 1/3 of all trees.

31. The 2nd Trumpet. (8:8-9)

The second angel sounds his trumpet and something like a great mountain, burning with fire, is cast into the sea. 1/3 of the sea turns to blood, 1/3 of the sea creatures die, and 1/3 of all ships are destroyed.

32. The 3rd Trumpet. (8:10-11)

The Third Angel sounds his trumpet and a great, burning star falls on 1/3 of the rivers and springs of fresh water. Its name is “Wormwood.” This 1/3 of the rivers and springs of fresh water become bitter, and many die by drinking the bitter water.

NOTE: “Wormwood” is the common name of a woody, Old World herb (*Artemisia absinthium*), which symbolizes bitterness and calamity. It yields a very bitter, dark green, oil. Interestingly, it is used as flavoring in making absinthe, a somewhat bitter liqueur⁸⁸. Today, some may consider their absinthe a treat; but when the calamitous event of vv 10-11 occurs it will apparently be fatal, when it poisons the water supply.

33. The 4th Trumpet. (8:12-13)

The fourth angel sounds his trumpet and 1/3 of the Sun, 1/3 of the Moon, and 1/3 of the stars are smitten, so that 1/3 of the light, both by day and by night, becomes darkness. And then John hears another angel flying through the heavens saying, “Woe, woe, woe” to the inhabitants of the Earth, because, with the sounding of the remaining three trumpets, things are going to get much worse!

34. The 5th Trumpet. (9:1-12)

The Fifth Angel sounds his trumpet, announcing Three Woes to be loosed on the Earth. A “star” falls to Earth and **he** (this being called “a star”) is given the key to the bottomless pit; he opens it and smoke rises to darken “the sun and the air.” Out of the smoke come “locusts” that look like warhorses prepared for battle, with crowns like gold, and with faces like men. They have hair like women, teeth like lions, and their tails sting like

⁸⁷ Jude 14-15.

⁸⁸ Technically, absinthe is not a liqueur; but that is the way it is thought of and marketed, so we shall not split technological hairs here.

scorpions; their sting causes terrible pain, but doesn't kill. They have breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings is like the sound of many chariots, racing into battle. They are ordered not to harm the grass, trees or any green thing; but, for 5 months, they will torment all men who do not have the seal of God in their foreheads. The torment will be like the pain from the sting of a scorpion. The pain will be so terrible that men will seek death, but will be unable to die. The scorpions will have a king, the angel of the bottomless pit (or the abyss). This evil angel/king has a name. In Hebrew, his name is Abaddon ("destruction"); in Greek his name is Apollyon (destroyer). This is the First Woe; and 2 more are yet to come.

35. The 6th Trumpet. (9:13-21)

The Sixth Angel sounds his trumpet, and a voice from "the four horns of the golden altar which is before God," tells the Sixth Angel to release the four angels who are bound in the Euphrates River. The four angels rise from the Euphrates River, leading an army of 200 million horsemen riding supernatural horses with heads like lions and tails like serpent heads, breathing out fire, smoke and brimstone⁸⁹. These demonic warriors will wear breastplates with colors of fiery red, sapphire blue and brimstone (sulfur) yellow. This demonic army will kill for 13 months, one day and one hour, and will destroy 1/3 of the human race. In spite of all of this, the remaining 2/3, amazingly, will not repent of their idol worship, murders, sorceries, fornications or thefts. In light of the horrors just described, it is difficult to understand how the survivors could fail to be broken and repent! Could this be what Paul described as having reprobate minds⁹⁰?

***NOTE:** These four demonic leaders arise from a place where they have been held as captives in the great Euphrates River; the length of their previous captivity is not stated. The previous demonic destroyers, those of the Fifth Trumpet, arose from the Bottomless Pit (Abyss). Perhaps these, and their hordes of demonic soldiers, were imprisoned in the Euphrates River (or in its vast valley) because they were involved in Nimrod's rebellion against God, in the building of his unfinished Tower of Babel⁹¹.*

36. The Divine Messenger from Heaven. (Chapter 10)

As Chapter 10 opens, John sees "another mighty angel" descend from Heaven. He is "clothed with a cloud," and has a rainbow upon his head. His face has the brilliance of the Sun, and his feet (and legs) are like pillars of fire. This messenger seems to be the Creator Christ Himself; He stands

⁸⁹ Brimstone is an old name for sulfur; when heated it produces sulfur dioxide, a foul-smelling gas.

⁹⁰ Romans 1:18-32.

⁹¹ Genesis 10:6-11:9.

with one foot on the sea and one foot on the land, as if to declare his dominion over all of the Earth. And, in his hand, there is a “little book,” and it is open⁹².

This Messenger cries with a loud voice, as if a lion had roared. Seven thunderclaps occur, and these thunderclaps are apparently spoken words. John is about to begin writing what has been said, in the seven thunderous pronouncements, when he is told by a voice from Heaven not to do it. The Messenger who stands astride of the land and the sea lifts up his hand to Heaven and swears “by Him that liveth forever and ever,” the One Who has created all things, that there should be time no longer. When the 7th angel begins to sound his trumpet, the revelation of the mystery of God’s hidden purposes, spoken of by his prophets, will be complete.

John is then told to take the little book from the hand of the Messenger; and, when he does this, the Messenger tells John to eat the book. He also tells John that the book will taste sweet in his mouth, but will make his belly bitter. John obeys, eats the book and, as he had been told, it was sweet in his mouth; but, after he eats it, it makes his belly bitter.

And then the Messenger tells John that he must prophesy again, and before many peoples, nations, tongues and kings⁹³.

NOTES:

a. In the same way that Earth’s first rainbow, in Noah’s time, had signified the mercy of God after a punishing, terrible, cleansing of the Earth, the rainbow crown of the Messenger seems to promise a repetition of God’s mercy after the terrible cleansing described in Revelation, and the restoration of righteousness in the heavens and the Earth.

*b. The fact of the deity of this messenger is revealed repeatedly in this passage, including his swearing by Himself in v 6. Since there is no power greater than God, He can only swear by Himself; and his identity as God the Son is made clear because He is the Creator, without Whom “was not anything made that was made⁹⁴.” Also, as we shall see in v 3 of the next chapter, He calls the two witnesses of God “**my** two witnesses” (emphasis mine).*

c. The Greek noun rendered “time” in v 6 is “chronos,” meaning a period of time, not time as a concept. Here it seems to mean that there will be no

⁹² In **that** mighty hand, any book would appear to be “little”!

⁹³ This final command of the Messenger has been in the process of fulfillment since John wrote them, about 96 AD, and continues to be fulfilled as we read these timeless words.

⁹⁴ Genesis 22:15-16; Dan 12:4-9; Jn 1:1-3; Hebr 6:13-14.

more delay in the judgment of the enemies of God, as in “your allotted time is up.”

d. Eating a holy document is a Hebrew metaphor for receiving revelation, as in Ezek 3:1-3. As in Ezekiel’s experience, the book is sweet when eaten, for God was offering forgiveness. Here, however, in John’s case, after being sweet in his mouth, the revelation made his belly bitter, apparently because the revelation of things to come is bad news, not good news.

37. Measuring the Temple. (11:1-2)

The Messenger gives John a measuring rod and tells him to rise and measure the Temple of God, its altar, and “them that worship there.” He is told not to include the outer court, for it shall be given over to the Gentiles (foreign nations) and these Gentiles shall trample the holy city (Jerusalem) underfoot for 42 months (3 ½ years).

NOTE: What temple is this, and why measure it? It appears that, by this time (mid-point of the seven-year tribulation period) the Temple has been rebuilt, and a form of Temple worship reestablished, although God has not commanded that it be done. The Jewish people are still rejecting the ultimate sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin, which has already been made by Jesus on the cross⁹⁵. God’s true people, the redeemed, have no need of such a temple.

John’s measuring of this illegitimate temple seems to mean a spiritual evaluation of the Jews who are still rejecting Christ and practicing Mosaic sacrifices in it. There is no need to measure (evaluate) the Gentile nations represented by the outer court, for they are the enemies of God.

38. The Messenger’s Two Witnesses. (11:3-14)

Without introduction, the Messenger speaks of his “two witnesses,” saying that they shall prophesy for 1,260 days (3 ½ years), dressed in sackcloth⁹⁶. He then tells John that the two witnesses are “the two olive trees and the two candlesticks (or lamp-stands) that stand before the God of the Earth⁹⁷. He says about the two witnesses that if any should try to harm them, fire shall come out of their mouths and kill their attackers. They will also have power to cause there to be no rain, to turn bodies of water to blood, and to smite the Earth with all manner of plagues, whenever they choose to do so.

And then, after the appointed time (3 ½ years), when their prophesying is completed, a being called “the beast” shall arise from the bottomless pit

⁹⁵ Hebrews 1:3, 10:12, et al.

⁹⁶ Sackcloth was a crude material made of goat hair, used for making sacks and crude clothing, often worn by mourners, penitents and prophets, symbolizing grief or humility. It was scratchy and uncomfortable..

⁹⁷ Zechariah 4:11-14.

(abyss). He will make war on the two witnesses, defeat and kill them. For 3 ½ days, their bodies will lie, unburied, on the street in Jerusalem (“that great city which is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified”). The wicked people, who have been tormented (and not converted) by the truth and the power of the two witnesses, rejoice at their death! They are so happy to see the witnesses lying dead that there is celebration, complete with the exchanging of gifts; but their rejoicing is to be short-lived.

After lying dead in the street of Jerusalem for 3 ½ days, the two prophets are raised from the dead by the Spirit of God which enters into them. They stand up, completely restored, and the rejoicing of the wicked gives way to great fear, terror and dread! Then, a mighty voice from Heaven speaks to the witnesses, commanding them to “Come up here!” And, with the wicked, terrified crowd watching, the two witnesses are carried by an unseen power up into the air, and they disappear into a cloud. And, while the wicked in Jerusalem are still gaping up into the sky, a great earthquake strikes the city. In the earthquake, 1/10th of the buildings collapse, and 7,000 men (plus an unknown number of women and children) are killed. The survivors of the earthquake, terrified, give glory to God, and the Second Woe is finished. The Third Woe will not be far behind.

NOTES:

a. The two witnesses are generally believed to be Enoch and Elijah, for they are the only two servants of God who have, as yet, not experienced physical death⁹⁸. Also, they were both, in their earthly ministries, prophets of judgment⁹⁹. Additionally, their ability to “shut up the heavens” and cause rain to cease is reminiscent of the same miracle performed by Elijah during his earthly ministry. During the life and ministry of Enoch, there was not, and never had been, rain on the Earth.

The Greek noun rendered “witnesses” in Christ’s referring to the two as “my witnesses” is the plural of “martus,” literally meaning “martyrs,” which they have become after completing their 3 ½ years of earthly ministry¹⁰⁰.

b. The similarities of the experiences of the two witnesses, to the crucifixion, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, are striking.

c. I doubt that the giving of glory to God by the survivors of the earthquake (v 13) was very sincere or long-lasting.

⁹⁸ Hebrews 9:27.

⁹⁹ If it were not for what Jude recorded in vv 14-16 of his small book, we would not know this about Enoch.

¹⁰⁰ See also Acts 1:8, and its footnote, where the same Greek noun is rendered “witnesses.”

39. The 7th Trumpet. (11:15-19)

The seventh and final angel sounds his trumpet and great, loud, voices shout in Heaven “The kingdoms of this world are become the Kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ (his Anointed One); and He shall reign forever and ever¹⁰¹.” The 24 elders fall on their faces before the Throne and worship God, praising Him because He is eternal, because of his great power, and because the time has come for Him to judge and destroy those who destroy the Earth with wars and greed, and to reward the faithful, both small and great.

At this point God’s Heavenly Temple is thrown open and the Ark of the Covenant is seen in the Heavenly Sanctuary. As this occurs, there are arcs of lightning, thunderclaps, voices, another earthquake, and a horrific hailstorm.

NOTES:

a. In v 15, in the expression, “the kingdoms of our Lord,” the words “the kingdoms” are in italics. As we have seen many times before, this means that they are not in the underlying Greek text. They are clearly justified by implication; however, since they exist only by implication, we cannot know whether or not to pluralize the word “kingdom.”

What I am about to say represents only my musing, but I prefer to leave the second occurrence of the word singular, as in the AV (KJV). This would express the idea that all of the earthly, imperfect, man-made, kingdoms, will be unified and sanctified by God, creating the one, holy, Kingdom of our Lord, including the entire World, over which He shall reign forever. The modern versions, without exception known to me, make both occurrences of “kingdom” in v 15 singular, thus, in my opinion, losing the full meaning of the verse. And, remember, in the AV (KJV), the first occurrence of “kingdom” is plural, and the associated verb “are” is plural; in the modern versions, both occurrences of “kingdom” are singular, and the associated verb, “are” is converted to the singular “is”¹⁰².

The growing trend toward a World government, which has intensified since the formation of Woodrow Wilson’s dream, the League of Nations, and its current incarnation, the United Nations, may be moving the World toward an anti-Christ, tyrannical World government, which, just when Satan

¹⁰¹ Daniel 7:13-27.

¹⁰² If you can listen to a recording of Handel’s “Hallelujah Chorus” (which is easily done on the internet) you will hear this verse repeated, in whole or in part, throughout this masterpiece; and you will understand its significance as written in the AV (KJV). This climactic portion of “The Messiah” is so triumphant and thrilling that it is traditional to stand when it is sung.

thinks he has won, Christ will defeat him and seize his World government, converting it to “the Kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ.” This, I must repeat, is only my thought; but I like it, and it is in complete harmony with the context.

b. The underlying Greek rendered “forever and ever” in v 15 is, again, literally “to the ages of the ages,” (or “for the eternities of the eternities”), a concept difficult for us speakers of modern English to express. It seems that, for us, “forever and ever” cannot be improved upon.

c. For those of us familiar with Handel’s great oratorio, “The Messiah,” v 15 will have us hearing, in our minds, these same stirring lines from the “Halleluiah Chorus.” Many of Handel’s lyrics are quoted from Revelation.

40. The Sun-Clothed Woman. (12:1-4)

And then a great sign, or wonder, appears in the heavens, apparently a warning of ominous future events. John sees a woman, clothed in the Sun, with the Moon under her feet, and wearing on her head a crown, or tiara, consisting of 12 stars. The Sun-clothed woman is pregnant, at term, and in labor. At this point John sees another sign, or wonder, in the heavens; it is a great, red, dragon, with seven heads, ten horns, and crowns on each of his seven heads. The dragon’s tail sweeps across the sky, dragging 1/3 of the stars down and hurling them to the earth. He then positions himself in front of the woman so that he can devour her baby, as soon as it is delivered.

NOTES:

a. This opening scene in Chapt 12 is so rich with meaning that a small book could be written about possible interpretations of only these four verses. We, of course, will keep it as simple as possible without, I pray, doing injustice to the meaning.

b. The Greek word rendered “wonder” in vv 1 and 3 is “semeion,” meaning literally “a sign.” This suggests that what John is seeing is symbolic; this vision is a fore-telling of future events. And, importantly, it also suggests that what he has seen prior to this point may be taken literally.

These two occurrences of “semeion,” referring to the Sun-clothed woman, and then to the dragon, are the only occurrences of this word in the book of Revelation.

c. The Sun-clothed woman can represent Eve, the mother of us all; or, she can represent Israel, the wife of YHWH; or, she can represent the Church, the Bride of Christ¹⁰³. She may represent Mary, the blessed virgin,

¹⁰³ Isaiah 54:1-6; Jer 3:1-14; Hos 2:14-23; II Cor 11:2; Eph 5:31-33; Rev 21:9.

delivering the Savior, whom Herod tried to kill. Perhaps she represents all of these.

d. The Moon under her feet may represent “false light,” i.e. the false religions of the World, which the Lord has conquered and put under her feet. The Moon, after all, is a dead planet, reflecting the light of the Sun; it has no light of its own¹⁰⁴. The 12 stars of her crown may represent the 12 apostles of Jesus; but it is more likely that they represent the 12 tribes of Israel, which are to be restored to God’s original purposes. Again, they could represent both, for both will have a special place in the ultimate fulfillment of God’s plan¹⁰⁵.

e. Verse 9 will make it clear that the red dragon is Satan, the old serpent who has been trying to destroy the woman and her spiritual seed ever since the Garden of Eden. Here, at the exact mid-point of the Book of Revelation, the vision seems to take us all the way back to Eden, then through the Old Covenant period, then through the Church age, and onward, to the end of the Tribulation period.

The seven heads with kingly crowns probably represent all of the earthly kingdoms (nations) which have been (and will be) ruled by wicked rulers and ungodly governments¹⁰⁶.

Since horns symbolize power in the Bible, the ten horns seem to represent the great power which the dragon still possesses. They could also represent 10 wicked nations which the dragon will gather into his evil confederation of kingdoms. The 1/3 of the stars which he sweeps out of the heavens seem to represent the fallen angels who joined Satan in his rebellion against God and are now evil spirits, doing Satan’s bidding¹⁰⁷. There will be much more detailed references to these heads and horns in the chapters to come.

f. Since, by this time, the Church seems to have been already caught up from the Earth, what follows, from this mid-point onward, must have special application to Israel¹⁰⁸.

41. The Birth of the Holy Man Child. (12:5-6)

¹⁰⁴ Isaiah 8:19-22.

¹⁰⁵ Ephesians 2:20; Rev 21:10-14.

¹⁰⁶ The number, seven, which occurs so many times in Revelation, is the number of completeness or completion; thus the seven crowns would seem to represent all of the “kingdoms of this world.”

¹⁰⁷ Pastor Chuck Smith, founder of the Calvary Chapel system of churches, has an interesting theory concerning the 1/3 of the stars swept from Heaven. See it in “The Stars Swept from Heaven” in Part IV (Selected Topical summaries).

¹⁰⁸ This would appear to **suggest** that the catching away, or “rapture” of the Church, described in I Thes 4:13-18, will either occur before the tribulation period or at its mid-point. This, however, is the subject of heated controversy among students of End Times, and beyond this point, about this question, I will write not a single word, except to say that only God truly knows the answer.

The Sun-clothed woman delivers her baby, a “man child” (boy), and He is immediately caught up to Heaven. This holy Man Child appears to be the Lord Jesus Christ, who will rule all nations with a rod of iron. The woman immediately flees to the desert wilderness where God has prepared a place of refuge. In this place, where God will protect and feed her, she will remain safely for 1,260 days (3 ½ years), until the second half of the tribulation is ended.

NOTES:

a. The Man Child is almost certainly Jesus Christ, although some believe that He represents the Church which, by this time, has been caught up to Heaven¹⁰⁹.

b. The Sun-clothed woman is almost certainly Israel, personified in Mary, the blessed virgin, clothed in righteousness, who gave birth to the Redeemer. Here, she seems to represent the faithful of Israel, perhaps led by the 144,000 sealed men of Chaps 7 and 14, actually fleeing to a place of refuge in the desert, where they will be protected from the horrible persecutions to come, under the reign of the Beast. Most interpreters believe that this place will be south and east of the Dead Sea, in the lands of ancient Moab, Ammon, and Edom. Many believe the ancient Edomite city of Petra, will be the center of this sanctuary.

c. In v 6, the “they,” who will feed the faithful of Israel, are not identified or explained. Perhaps they will be ministering angels, charged with providing for their needs during the remaining 3 ½ years of the tribulation.

42. War in Heaven. (12:7-12)

Michael the Archangel, with his army of angels, fights against The Dragon (Satan) and his angels, and the Dragon is defeated¹¹⁰. The Dragon, Satan, and his evil angels are cast out of Heaven. A loud voice from Heaven announces the outcome of the battle and identifies Satan as “the accuser of our brethren...which accused them before our God day and night¹¹¹.” The voice announces that, because of this victory, there has come salvation, strength and the Kingdom of God and the power of his Christ.” The voice goes on to say, “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death¹¹².”

¹⁰⁹ Psalm 2:7-9; Rev 19:15.

¹¹⁰ Only in Jude v 9 are we told that Michael is an Archangel; nowhere else in the Bible is he so identified.

¹¹¹ See also in this regard Job 1:1-2:10; Zech 3:1-2.

¹¹² There are more than 40 references in the Bible to the blood of Jesus and its essential role in our redemption. This is the last.

Finally, the voice declares that the heavenly realm should rejoice because it has been cleansed of Satan and his angels; but, says the voice, it is woe to the earth and the sea, for the Devil is cast down and has great wrath, because he knows that his remaining time of liberty to operate will be brief.

NOTES:

a. It is unclear as to when this great battle was fought. The expression "Kingdom of God" is generally applied to the Church, and yet the Church seems already to have been taken from the Earth. It could have occurred prior to Creation, but Christ told John in 1:19 that he was to write "things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter"--in other words, things of that present time, in AD 96, and things that were, at that time, still in the future.

*Considering, however, the **consistent** use of the past tense ("was" and "were" in vv 7-9), it seems likely that this great and hugely significant war in the heavenly realm took place before Creation (i.e., before Gen 1:1).*

b. Verse 9 does a thorough job of identifying the Dragon, who is the enemy of the Sun-clothed Woman and her Man Child. Here he is given the multiple titles of "great dragon," "old serpent," "the Devil," and "Satan."

The Greek for "devil" is "diabolos," meaning literally "slanderer" or "false accuser." The Devil seems to have been engaged in this pursuit since, at least, the time of the Garden of Eden. Although he hates being in the presence of God, Satan is allowed a certain degree of access to the Heavenly Throne Room to make his accusations against the righteous, where Jesus the Christ is our advocate¹¹³. The time of his revolt against God, and his fall from his formerly exalted position in the Kingdom of Heaven, is unknown; but it seems to have occurred prior to Creation as we know it.

43. The Fury of the Dragon. (12:13-17)

Finding himself defeated and cast down to the Earth, the Dragon is furious. He pursues the Sun-clothed Woman as she flees to the wilderness, but she is given giant wings with which to fly away to her refuge. He attempts to destroy her with a sudden flood of water; but the earth opens up and swallows the water. She is safe, and the Dragon is frustrated in his fury¹¹⁴. Unable to harm the Woman, who is now under the protection of God in her place of refuge, where she will remain until the end of the tribulation period, the Dragon turns his wrath against "the remnant of her seed," those who are

¹¹³ I John 2:1.

¹¹⁴ Daniel 7:25, 12:7.

faithful to God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ, adhering and bearing witness to Him¹¹⁵.

***NOTE:** The provision of giant eagle's wings as a means of escaping the Dragon suggests a supernatural departure, perhaps a translation. If she is to survive and prosper for 3 ½ years, only somewhere between 50 and 100 miles from Jerusalem, which will become the capital of the empire of the Beast (who is about to take dominion), there is the suggestion that he will not know where she is. Thus, by flying suddenly away, or disappearing by translation, perhaps neither the Dragon, nor the Beast, will know where she is. This, of course, is only speculation; but we must wonder about the significance of the giant wings¹¹⁶.*

44. The Beast Arises. (13:1-8)

As John stands on a sandy beach, he sees a beast rise up out of the sea. This beast (hereafter, as in previous references to him, capitalized and personalized as "the Beast") has seven heads, 10 horns, and on the 10 horns (not the heads) are 10 crowns. Upon each of the heads is the name of blasphemy¹¹⁷. The Beast has the appearance of a leopard, but he has feet like a bear, and a mouth like a lion.

The Dragon gives to the Beast his own power and throne, and great authority. One of the ten heads appears to have a fatal wound, but the wound is healed, and the whole world is amazed and in wonderment, and follows him. People worship the dragon, who gave power to the Beast, and worship the Beast, saying, "Who is like unto the Beast, and who is powerful enough to make war with him¹¹⁸?" The Beast is given power to speak, and he speaks boastful and blasphemous things; and he is given power to continue in this way for 42 months (3 ½ years)¹¹⁹.

He speaks great blasphemies against God, all that He represents, his dwelling place in Heaven and all who live with Him there. He is also permitted to make war on the saints and overcome them; and he is given power and authority over all nations¹²⁰. All people of the Earth will worship him, except for those whose names are written in the Book of Life of the Lamb who is slain from the foundations of the World.

45. A Word of Hope and Justice. (13:9-10)

¹¹⁵ See in this regard Gen 3:15.

¹¹⁶ See in this regard Ex 19:1-4.

¹¹⁷ The word "name" in v 1 is, in the Greek, singular; apparently each head has the same blasphemous name on it. What that name is, is unknown.

¹¹⁸ These people obviously have very short memories!

¹¹⁹ Daniel 7:8.

¹²⁰ Daniel 7:21, 25.

At this point this barrage of terrible news is interrupted by a brief message of hope and justice. John says, to all with ears to hear, who are open to receive the truth, that he who leads into sinful captivity will, himself, eventually become a captive. And, he says, he who kills with the sword will himself be killed by the sword. Here, he says, is the reason for the saints to have faith and patience. This is a message for all who will face death as martyrs, perhaps including us, for Christians are dying as martyrs all over the World, even as we read these words. This is the joy that is set before us if we are faithful unto death.

46. The Mark of the Beast. (13:11-18)

Another beast arises out of the land; it has two horns like a lamb, and the voice of a dragon¹²¹. This creature exercises all the authority and power of the Beast, and he requires that all people worship the Beast. He performs apparent miracles, including making fire fall from the sky. He deceives the people of the Earth, representing the Beast, and he requires the construction of an image of the Beast who had the fatal sword wound, and yet lived. This creature gives life to the image of the Beast, so that it speaks. All who will not worship the image of the Beast are killed. Hereafter, we shall call this new beast, “the False Prophet¹²².”

Then this False Prophet creature, acting with the authority of the Beast, requires that all people, no matter what their station in life may be, receive a mark which represents submission to the Beast. This mark must be either on the forehead, or on the right hand; and, without it, no one will be allowed to buy anything or sell anything. This is the ultimate control measure. The mark will be the name of the Beast or his number; and his number is “Six hundred threescore and six” (666).

NOTES:

a. The apparent miracles performed by this False Prophet creature may be a mixture of valid and false miracles. Satan has limited supernatural power, which he seems able to transfer to his evil spirit followers. Only God can create life, however, so the apparent life given to the image of the Beast is false, a “lying wonder¹²³.” We are told (v 14) that this creature deceives the people of the Earth, and this “giving of life” to a pagan statue is probably no more real than the “magic” tricks performed by entertainers on a stage today.

¹²¹ This False Prophet has the outward appearance of godliness (lamb), but the inner reality of evil (dragon).

¹²² Revelation 19:20.

¹²³ II Thessalonians 2:1-12.

b. It has been a fundamental policy, in producing this study guide, to avoid discussion of doctrinal matters of specific denominations or groups. Here, however, I believe that to violate this policy is both justified and unavoidable.

The Seventh Day Adventist Church, commonly referred to as “SDA,” is a large and wealthy, worldwide, organization which represents itself as (and its members believes it is) a Christian denomination. The group is a doctrinal descendant of the Millerite Adventist movement of the 19th Century. Their central doctrine is that people must observe the seventh-day sabbath (hence the name) of the Old Covenant, from sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday. They are also extremely legalistic concerning dietary restrictions and other matters. In terms of doctrine they are heavily influenced by the writings of one of their founders, Ellen G. White, whose books they consider to be divinely inspired, on an equal level of authority with the Bible (although some of its defenders will insist that this is not true). Some valid Christian theologians consider the SDA to be a cultic Christian group; others, of equal validity, consider them to be a non-Christian cult.

The thing that moves me to mention the SDA here is that they teach that the mark of the Beast is worshiping on Sunday, rather than on the Jewish Sabbath.

Here, it seems to me, is the lynchpin of their doctrinal system and, at the same time, a fatal flaw. The Book of Revelation is very clear in saying that the mark will be something visible (or electronically readable), on the right hand or forehead, a name or the number of the name (666) of the Beast--not going to church on Sunday. At the same time, they evangelize intensely, mostly by radio and “prophecy” conferences, making most of their converts from former members of Christian churches who have been going to church on Sunday all their lives. Since Revelation also makes it clear that, once a person takes the mark of the Beast the choice is non-revocable, and he is hopelessly, eternally, doomed, most of their converts are doubly deceived, thinking that, once they convert to the SDA they are children of God. Their concept of the mark of the Beast is not only unscriptural, it is completely irrational; yet millions of utterly sincere people believe this doctrine, and slavishly conform to the system.

c. In v 16 this mark will be “on” the right hand or forehead, for the Greek word is “epi,” meaning “on” or “above.” The verse renders this word “in”; perhaps it refers to a tattoo, in which, although the image is visible on the surface of the skin, the ink is within the skin. Some believe that the mark

will be in the form of an implanted computer chip; such a thing, of course, was unknown to the AV translators. It is equally obvious that we cannot ask them why they chose “in” rather than “on,” so we will press on.

* * * * *

NOTE: At this point John seems to be translated, taken forward in time, to the latter part of the tribulation period. Thus the chronological revelation is interrupted by what is called by commentators a “parenthetical passage”; all of Chapter 14 seems to be such a passage.

* * * * *

47. The Appearance of the Lamb and His Followers. (14:1-5)

John sees a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with him are 144,000 followers. They have the seal of the name of the Father of the Lamb written in (or on) their foreheads¹²⁴. From Heaven a voice speaks; it is like the sound of many waters, and thunder, and the sounds of harps playing. And the 144,000 sing a new song before the Throne of God, the four creatures around the throne and the 24 elders. It is a song that only these 144,000 men can sing; they are virgin Jewish men who follow the Lamb. They have been redeemed from among the men of the Earth, “the first-fruits” of the tribulation period, and they are without guile and fault before God.

***NOTE:** These are, it seems obvious, the 144,000 of Chapt 7; only here are we told that they are virgin men, that they have the seal of the name of God on their foreheads, and that they are the special followers of the Lamb.*

48. An Angel Proclaims the Good News. (14:6-7)

Next, John sees an angel, flying in the midst of the heavens, proclaiming “the everlasting gospel.” This message of good news is for all people, of all the Earth, in every language. He cries with a loud voice that all people should fear and revere God, who made the heavens, earth, seas and streams and fountains of waters, for the hour of judgment has arrived. Everyone on Earth will hear this message of good news and redemption.

***NOTE:** The angel proclaims the “everlasting” gospel. This means that God’s plan for the redemption of fallen man has never changed, nor will it ever change. It is the same gospel proclaimed by Peter at Pentecost, and*

¹²⁴ In v 1, again, the Greek word rendered “in” is *epi*, literally meaning “on” or “above.” And, again, its meaning may be both “on” and “in.”

preached by the apostles and all true evangelists since that day. Paul warned of false gospels and condemned them, even if proclaimed “by an angel from heaven¹²⁵.”

This (14:6) is the last mention of the Gospel in the Bible.

49. The Fall of Babylon. (14:8)

Another angel follows, declaring that the great city of Babylon “is fallen, is fallen” because of her great sins, because she has made all nations to drink the maddening wine of her passionate abandon to all sorts of sexual sin.

NOTES:

a. The repetition, “is fallen, is fallen,” in the angel’s message is a Hebrew way of expressing emphasis, saying that the fall of Babylon is (will be) utter and complete.

b. This is the first mention of Babylon in Revelation. As prophesied by Isaiah and Jeremiah, the city was conquered by the Persians, gradually became an uninhabited place in the desert, and was never rebuilt. It was, as prophesied, like Sodom and Gomorrah¹²⁶. It appears that Babylon will be reestablished, briefly, by the Beast as his symbolic capital. Although the final fall of “Babylon” (the reign of the Beast) is 3 ½ years in the future, this message seems to be a prophetic epilogue to the gospel message of the preceding angel.

50. A Terrible Warning. (14:9-11)

A third angel follows, and his message is a terrible warning to those who would take the mark of the Beast and worship him. Those who do, he says, will drink “the wine of the wrath of God,” and will be tormented in fire and brimstone, forever and ever. This torment will be observed by the Lamb and the holy angels, and will be continuous, without interruption, and with no ending.

NOTE: *Probably the most terrible way to die is to burn to death. But those who will take the mark of the Beast and worship him will suffer in the fire, but will be unable to die. What could be more terrible? And it will last for eternity. By comparison with the rest of this horrible reality, the sufferers will be breathing, forever, the foul-smelling gases, produced by the burning brimstone (sulfur).*

51. Another Word of Hope and Reassurance. (14:12-13)

Following the terrible warning of what is in store for those who take the mark of the Beast and worship him is, as in 13:9-10, another blessed,

¹²⁵ Galatians 1:8.

¹²⁶ Isaiah 13:19-22; Jer 50:38-40, 51:37; Rev 18:1-2.

parenthetical, interjection with a word of hope and reassurance for the faithful--those who endure the persecutions of the Beast, even unto the death. John hears a voice from Heaven, telling him to write of the reward for "the patience of the saints." He writes that the faithful dead, those who die in the Lord, are blessed, and the reward of their faithfulness will last forever.

52. It Is Time for Judgment of the Wicked. (14:14-20)

Now John sees a great white cloud and, upon the cloud, he sees "one like unto the Son of Man," with a golden crown, and in his hand He has a sharp sickle or scythe. An angel comes out of the (Heavenly?) Temple and cries to Him with a loud voice, asking Him to thrust in his sickle, for the time of harvest is come; and He thrusts in his sickle and the Earth is mowed and the crop harvested¹²⁷.

A second angel appears, this time coming from the Temple which is in Heaven; he also has a sharp sickle. Then a third angel comes, from the altar of the Heavenly Temple, and this one has power and authority "over fire¹²⁸." He cries with a loud voice to the angel with the sharp sickle, telling him to thrust in his sickle and harvest the grapes of the Earth, for they are fully ripe. The angel does this and the grapes are gathered, put into the wine-press of the wrath of God, "without the city," and trodden down (crushed), producing a stream of blood so deep that it can reach a horse's bridle, and 1,600 furlongs (200 miles) long.

NOTES:

a. The first angel, who comes "out of the temple," crying to the Son of Man to begin the harvest of the wicked, may be coming from the Heavenly Temple; or, he may be coming from the Temple in Jerusalem, where he has been greatly offended by seeing the Image of the Beast, standing in the Holy Place.

b. Verses 17-20 seem to be a detailed account of what is summarized in vv 14-16.

c. In our system of measurements, a furlong is 220 yards, or 1/8th of a mile. By this measure, the stream of blood will be 200 miles long. The Greek word rendered "furlongs" here is the plural of "stadion," or 1/8th of a Roman mile. By this standard, the length of the bloody stream will be 180 miles. By either standard, this describes an unimaginable stream of blood,

¹²⁷ Joel 3:13-21.

¹²⁸ This fire seems to be that on the Heavenly Altar (8:1-5).

reaching from Edom to the valley of Megiddo, with Jerusalem at its approximate center.

d. This mind-staggering stream of blood seems to be a reference to the climactic battle, when all of the armies of the Beast gather and are destroyed¹²⁹. The blood may be mixed with water from torrential rains; bloody water looks like blood. Hemoglobin is a strong red pigment, it dissolves readily in water, and a stream of water mixed with blood can have the appearance of a stream of blood¹³⁰.

53. Tribulation Martyrs Sing Praises to God. (Chapter 15)

Still looking forward approximately 3 ½ years to the final judgment and God's ultimate triumph over Satan, Chapter 15 paints a glorious picture of victory for the faithful, and a message of horror for the enemies of God.

John sees in Heaven the victorious tribulation martyrs, those who refused to take the mark of the Beast; they are standing on a sea of fiery glass¹³¹. With harps, the tribulation saints are singing, to the Lord, the victorious Song of Moses¹³².

Then John sees the Heavenly Temple open and, out of the Temple, he sees seven angels emerge. They are clothed in robes of pure white linen, with golden breastplates. One of the four glorious creatures attending the Throne of God gives each of the angels a vial which is filled with the wrath of God. And the Heavenly Temple is filled with a smoke-like glory of God, and no one is able to enter the Heavenly Temple until the plagues (representing God's wrath in the seven vials) are fulfilled.

NOTES:

a. The Greek word rendered "vials" in v 7 is the plural of the noun "phiale"; from it we derive our English word "vial." Some translators render it "bowl"; others render it "censor." The exact form of the container is unknown.

b. This "smoke from the glory of God" is reminiscent of the cloud of God's glory in Ex 40:34-35 which occurred at the completion of the Tabernacle by Moses, which prevented his entering the Tabernacle, and the similar (same?) cloud which occurred at the dedication of the first Temple by Solomon (I Kings 8:10-11), which made it impossible for the priests in the Temple to stand.

¹²⁹ The word "Armageddon," a place name, appears only once in the Bible: Rev 16:16. We will deal with the famous battle, commonly called by this name, later.

¹³⁰ Ezekiel 38:21-23; Joel 3:9-18.

¹³¹ This is apparently the glassy sea surrounding the throne of God (4:6).

¹³² Exodus 15.

54. The 1st Vial of Wrath. (16:1-2)

From within the Heavenly Temple John hears a great, loud voice commanding the seven angels to begin the pouring out of their vials of the wrath of God upon the Earth. Very bad things are about to happen.

The first angel pours out his vial and painful, foul-smelling ulcers appear on all those who have taken the mark of the Beast and worshipped his image. If they are thinking at all, they should be greatly troubled by this. It is a terrible affliction, and it is happening to everyone they know who has taken the mark. They have taken the mark to avoid suffering, yet now they are suffering; and things are going to get much worse.

55. The 2nd Vial of Wrath. (16:3)

The Second Angel pours out the contents of his vial upon the sea, and the sea water becomes “as the blood of a dead man.” This may mean literally like the blood of a dead man, which quickly decomposes if not refrigerated, becoming foul; however, it is more likely that the sea becomes **like** a dead man’s blood -- i.e., with no free oxygen. Either way, fish and other creatures in the sea which breathe with gills, obtaining oxygen from water, cannot live. This will be the ultimate fish-kill! Life for the wicked is getting worse by the minute!

56. The 3rd Vial of Wrath. (16:4-7)

The third angel (“the angel of the waters”) pours out his vial of wrath on the fresh water lakes, streams, wells and springs, and the water turns to blood so that people cannot drink it. The angel declares to God that this is a righteous and just act. Because the wicked people have shed the blood of saints and prophets, he says, God has given them blood to drink. Another voice issues forth from the altar in Heaven, agreeing that judgments of the Lord God Almighty are true and righteous.

***NOTE:** In light of this judgment we can see that it was not necessary for God to turn the sea water to literal blood, because sea water is undrinkable anyway.*

57. The 4th Vial of Wrath. (16:8-9)

The fourth angel pours out his vial of wrath upon the Sun, and authority and permission is given to him to scorch men with fire. Men are scorched with great heat. Instead of repenting and giving God glory, these wicked people blaspheme God.

***NOTE:** I cannot read these verses without remembering a man I met. He was a survivor of what was, at that time, the worst disaster in aviation history. It actually occurred on the ground, at an airport on the island of Tenerife, in the Canary Islands. Two Boeing 747s collided on the ground*

and 583 people died in the ensuing fires. The Christian man, who escaped death by means of a literal miracle, told me that as people were dying in the flames, many of them, instead of crying out to God for help or mercy, were actually cursing God! My mind still finds that hard to grasp! I suppose that this is an example of what Paul calls a reprobate mind: one so completely given over to sin that it can't be reached with the message of repentance and mercy.

58. The 5th Vial of Wrath. (16:10-11)

The fifth angel pours out his vial of wrath directly on the throne of the Beast, and on his kingdom, already in spiritual darkness, is plunged into literal, physical darkness. By now the wicked are in such pain that, combined with the complications of darkness they gnawed on their own tongues. Again, rather than repent of their wickedness and begging God for mercy, they continue to blaspheme God. It seems fair to declare them hopeless.

59. The 6th Vial of Wrath. (16:12-16)

The sixth angel pours out his vial on the great Euphrates River and the water dries up, to prepare the way for “the kings of the east.”

Then three unclean spirits appear, in the form of frogs, one each from the mouths of the “unholy trinity”: the Dragon (Satan), the Beast, and the False Prophet. These evil spirits are to perform miracles, for the purpose of deceiving all World leaders (“the kings of the whole world”), in order to cause them to gather, to bring about the final battle, “that great day of God almighty.” The gathering place will be called, in Hebrew, “Armageddon.”

With the deception of the wicked underway, the faithful are told to be watchful, avoiding sin, because the Lord will return at an unannounced time.

NOTES:

a. The expression, “kings of the east” (v 12) appears nowhere else in the Bible; it is not explained, but may refer to the kings of the eastern countries who are to gather for the great, final battle. The drying up of the Euphrates would allow them to cross the Euphrates river bed easily with their chariots and wagons.

This drying-up of the Euphrates mentioned in v 12 cannot refer to the conquering of Babylon by Cyrus the Great, for that had occurred more than 600 years earlier (ca 540 BC). On that occasion Cyrus famously conquered the city of Babylon, previously thought to be unassailable, by diverting the water of the Euphrates in a canal, drying up that part of the river temporarily, so that his army could walk into the city through the opening in the wall through which the Euphrates normally flowed into the city.

b. The Hebrew origin for our word, “Armageddon” is probably “har Megiddo,” (the hill or mountain of Megiddo). There is no mountain of Megiddo, but there is a small hill, topped with a small, ancient city scattered with ruins. The hill (or “tel”) is the result of layers of destroyed cities, each built upon the ruins of the preceding one. It is about 80 miles north of Jerusalem, overlooking the vast plains of Megiddo and Jezreel.

It was in this great valley (or plain), overlooked by the hill Megiddo on its south side, that there were two historic victories, and two tragedies. The victories were by Deborah and Barak over the Canaanites (Judges 4), and the victory of Gideon over the Midianites (Judges 7). The two tragedies were the deaths of Saul and Jonathan after the defeat by the Philistines (I Sam 31), and the death of good King Josiah (II Kings 23 and II Chron 35).

c. Even here, in the closing days before the return of Christ, the faithful are told to be watchful, but are not told when Jesus will return¹³³.

60. The 7th Vial of Wrath. (16:17-21)

The Seventh Angel pours out his vial into the air, and a great voice speaks from the Throne of the Heavenly Temple saying, "It is done." With these words of finality spoken, there is great thunder and lightning, and the most severe earthquake since creation. Jerusalem is divided into 3 parts, and all other cities, it seems, collapse into rubble. Babylon, having been re-established as the capital of the reign of the Beast, is particularly on the mind of God, to make her drain the last drop from the cup of his wrath. The mountains crumble and collapse, and islands disappear under the sea (islands are merely the tops of Mountains, that rise from the sea floor). Then comes the Great Hailstorm, with gigantic hailstones as large as a talent¹³⁴. And **still**, men blaspheme God!

61. Enter Mystery Babylon, the Great Harlot. (17:1-6)

One of the seven angels with the vials of wrath speaks to John, telling him to come with him. He will show John, he says, the judgment “of the great whore that sitteth on many waters.” With her, he tells John, the kings of the Earth have committed fornication, and “the inhabitants of the Earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.”¹³⁵

The angel carries John, in the Spirit, into the wilderness. There, John sees a woman, seated on a scarlet beast with seven heads and 10 horns. The

¹³³ Acts 1:7; I Thes 5:2.

¹³⁴ See in this regard Ezek 38:22-23. A talent is a unit of weight, the greatest unit of weight among the Israelites, usually applied to precious metals. It is variously estimated as representing between 50 and 100 pounds.

¹³⁵ Bedazzled and drunk with pleasure for a season--an easy sin to sell.

beast is full of blasphemous names. The woman is dazzlingly beautiful, dressed in purple and scarlet, adorned with gold and precious gems. In her hand is a beautiful golden cup; the cup is filled with abominations, and the filth of her fornications. Upon her forehead is written, “Mystery Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth.” The woman was drunk with the blood of the saints and martyrs of Jesus. In spite of her obviously evil nature, John is struck with amazement and admiration at the sight of her.¹³⁶

NOTES:

a. Except for scarlet color, the description of the beast upon which the woman sits is almost identical with the Beast of previous chapters. The one I have referred to as the Beast, has seven heads, decorated with blasphemy, and ten horns with golden crowns. No crowns are mentioned on these ten horns, but we are about to learn that the horns represent kings, so we have the equivalent of crowns. As for the scarlet color of the beast, he definitely represents sin, and Isaiah used scarlet, as well as red and crimson, to represent the deepest sin¹³⁷. This scarlet beast appears to be just another aspect of the Beast, the great anti-Christ leader of the Last Days revolt against God.

b. The beautiful golden chalice, full of evil and filthiness, is an interesting and striking counterpoint to the pure, indwelling Holy Spirit and glorious light of the gospel which, Paul has reminded us, are contained in our imperfect beings, described as “earthen vessels” (in his day, the cheapest cup of the very poor). Today, earthen vessels (pottery) can have great value; perhaps a better metaphor for us today would be that we have this unspeakable treasure in Styrofoam cups, the cheapest of throw-away containers¹³⁸.

62. The Angel Explains the Evil Woman. (17:7-14)

As John looks at the scene before him in astonishment, the angel offers an explanation; but the explanation seems to raise more questions than it answers. The beast, he says, “was, and is not, and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit (the abyss) and go into perdition.” The Beast, of Chapter 13 and following, rose up out of the Mediterranean Sea; however, this does not eliminate the possibility that, prior to his appearing out of the sea, his abode was in the bottomless pit with the multitudes of other evil spirits. We

¹³⁶ See Jeremiah 51:5-6; there is still time to repent.

¹³⁷ Isaiah 1:18.

¹³⁸ II Corinthians 4:5-7. I owe this insight to Mrs. June Thomas, Union City, Tennessee; I could not improve upon it.

mortals have never seen the bottomless pit (the abyss); and, for dramatic effect, what better place for the Beast to make his grand, dramatic appearance on the face of the Earth than to rise up out of the Mediterranean Sea, the center of the known World, which, incidentally, gives it its name ("Mediterranean," derived from Latin meaning "middle of the Earth").

So far, this description seems to fit the Beast, the End Times enemy of Christ. All of the lost, the angel says, those whose names are not written in the Lamb's Book of Life, shall marvel and look with wonder, upon this one "that was, and is not, and yet is." This last description certainly sounds like one that was alive, was then apparently dead, and yet appeared to be miraculously restored to life¹³⁹.

Continuing to explain, the angel says that, to understand all of this, calls for wisdom and careful thought¹⁴⁰. The seven heads of the beast (Beast?), he says, represent seven hills, or mountains, upon which the woman sits. And, he says, there are seven kings, of which five are fallen, one now exists, and one is yet to come. When this future king comes, he will exist to reign only for a brief period.

As for the beast (Beast?) that was, is not, etc, he is an eighth ruler, is like the seven kings, and (he reminds us) will go into perdition (doom). This "explanation" seems to be a bit murky; but if we hang on, and are careful, we may put the pieces together.

The ten horns, the angel says, are ten kings (we have suspected this, for the ten horns of the Beast, of Chapter 13 and following, have crowns). These ten kings have, as yet, no kingdoms; but they will receive power as kings, for only a brief period ("one hour"), along with the beast (Beast?). These ten kings will be united, with one mind and one goal, and that is to follow the beast (Beast?) in making war on the Lamb; however, they will be defeated, because the Lamb (the Lord Jesus Christ) is Lord of lords, King of kings, and his followers are called, chosen, and faithful¹⁴¹.

NOTES:

a. Here is a possible interpretation. The woman seems to be an utterly evil, worldwide religious system, which controls a vast political system of worldwide government. The two colors of her garments are purple and scarlet; purple is the color of royalty (kings and queens), and red represents sin; this suggests that she is the Queen of Sin. That world government

¹³⁹ Revelation 13:3.

¹⁴⁰ And, throughout the centuries, the saints have been saying an emphatic, "Amen!" to that statement.

¹⁴¹ Romans 8:28-31.

consists of 7 kingdoms, of which "five are fallen, one is, and the other is yet to come."

Being written in the 1st Century, this could be historical: the five world powers that had risen and fallen were Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia and Greece; the one that "is" was the Roman Empire; and the one that "is not yet come" would be the final, evil world government still to come (perhaps under the United Nations or some similarly pagan, Christ-denying, corrupt organization). The "seven heads [which are] mountains," on which the woman sits, are identified in the following verse (v 10) as the seven kings. In other words, her power is under-girded by the seven kings.

The beast's 10 horns represent a future confederation of kingdoms, not yet in existence in the 1st Century, which will be in worshipful submission to the Beast. The existence of this confederation will be brief, perhaps only long enough to declare war on the Lamb and be obliterated.

b. Many have interpreted (and some still do so) the seven hills as Rome, which has sometimes been called "the city on seven hills." They interpret the evil woman as an utterly corrupted Roman Catholic Church, headed by a thoroughly evil Pope. However, there are many cities situated on seven hills, and which refer to themselves in this way, including Cincinnati, Ohio, Athens, Greece, Brussels, Belgium, and Jerusalem. In addition to this, the text seems to equate the seven hills with the seven kings of v 10 who uphold her power.

63. The Angel Continues to Explain. (17:15-18)

Continuing to explain what he has shown to John, the angel says that the "many waters" upon which the great whore sits (v 1) are a multitude of peoples, and nations, speaking many languages and dialects. He further states that the confederation of the ten kings, and the beast (**the** Beast?) will turn on this dazzling, wicked woman and make her desolate, strip her of her rich and glorious clothing and jewelry, attack her, "eat her flesh, and burn her with fire."

And then the angel reveals an enormously significant thing: in all of their evil planning and workings, preparing (they think) to rule the entire World, they are, and have been, "playing God's game"; unknown to them He has been setting them up for their final, ultimate, defeat (v 17).

The angel ends with another revelation, which raises a question, and leaves it unanswered. He says that this amazing, powerful, yet betrayed and destroyed, woman is a city. The city is not named, but is described as "that great city," which rules the kings of the Earth.

NOTES:

a. This worldwide system of control will have two components: religious, and political. The woman is clearly identified as “MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH” (v 5)¹⁴². She seems to represent the religious component of the evil plan, combining all pagan, anti-Christian and pseudo-Christian religions, combined into one religion, which worships the Beast (the anti-Christ World leader) and Satan (the Dragon) as the god of this world¹⁴³. She represents all false religions and rebellion against God since the Great Flood, beginning with Nimrod and his Tower of Babel, the location of the future empire of Babylon, and its re-establishment as the capital of the empire of the Beast.

And, it seems, once political power and control are established, there will be no more need of the false religious system (“Mystery Babylon), and the political leaders will turn on their former ally, seizing her vast possessions for themselves, and destroying everything that they don’t want. Evil really will, eventually, slay the wicked¹⁴⁴.

b. Again, many identify “that great city” of verse 18 as Rome; however, it seems to me that it is more likely to the re-established Babylon, capitol city of the Beast. The city of Rome is far-removed from the center of these Last Days events; a re-built Babylon would be in its center.

* * * * *

The Turning Point

Here, we have reached a turning point in the narrative. From this point onward, things begin to go sour for the wicked system, justice begins to be served, the faithful are rewarded, and things are looking up for the righteous.

Notice also that, as things begin to get better for the faithful, the pace of the narrative is picking up. The story is moving more rapidly toward the conclusion. Events of great importance, about which books and long commentaries have been written, are happening in only a few verses. The Marriage Supper of the Lamb occupies only five verses. The great end-times battle which most commentators call "the battle of Armageddon" occupies only 11 verses; and the passage includes no description of the

¹⁴² The AV translators felt strongly enough about the importance of this title to render it in all-capitals.

¹⁴³ II Corinthians 4:4.

¹⁴⁴ Psalm 34:21.

battle itself--not a single verse. The wonderful millennial reign of Christ occupies only three verses!

It seems that the Lord is quickly wrapping things up, as we approach the happy ending.

* * * * *

64. Babylon the Great Is Fallen. (18:1-19)

An angel with great power comes down from Heaven, and his glory is so great that it brings light to the Earth; this is an extremely good sign of things to come¹⁴⁵. With a great voice, he announces that "Babylon the Great is fallen, is fallen," and that the end has come for the triumph and prosperity of the evil and corrupt¹⁴⁶. His description of the ultimate fate of the city is as was prophesied by Isaiah and Jeremiah¹⁴⁷. As the wicked have prospered and lived luxuriously, let them now suffer, and multiplied times over what they have enjoyed ("double her double, according to her works"). The faithful are warned to separate themselves from the evil system so as to avoid its terrible punishments.

Rich and powerful leaders, who have joined her in all sinful behavior, seeing the smoke of her destruction, will bewail the passing of the wealth and pleasure.

The economic system, which has made wicked men rich, will fail, suddenly and completely ("in one hour"). Although the ruined businessmen stay far from the destruction of the formerly great city in fear, they still mourn her destruction, and for the death of the system that has made them rich. In the way of the Middle East, they throw dust upon their heads.

NOTES:

a. in this chapter there is an interesting summary of commercial products and commodities that were most valuable in the 1st Century (vv 12-17). One commodity is particularly interesting: the souls of men. That item has been bought and sold, throughout this evil system, from its beginning.

b. The events of Chapt 18 sound very much like events prophesied in Ezek Chapt 26-28, and they are referenced here by some translators and commentators. However, those prophecies of Ezekiel were clearly spoken against the wealthy city of Tyre, and they were precisely fulfilled by

¹⁴⁵ Ezekiel 43:2.

¹⁴⁶ This event is foretold in Chapt 14 (14:8).

¹⁴⁷ Isaiah 13:1-22, 14:18-23; Jer 50-52.

Alexander the Great when he besieged and captured Tyre in 332 BC., about 400 years before John received this revelation.

65. It Is Time to Rejoice. (18:20-24)

The time has come to rejoice over the collapse and ruin of the evil system and its practitioners. The vengeance of God has come; it is recompense for the persecution of his holy apostles and prophets.

A great angel throws a huge stone into the sea and it disappears, as if it had never existed; thus, says the angel, that formerly great city, center of all evil, wealth, and all political and economic power on Earth, will no longer exist. There will no longer be business conducted, there will be no pleasant living, no pleasant music, no voices of brides and grooms, no craftsmen working nor millstones grinding. There will not be even the light of one candle.

No longer will her sorceries deceive the multitudes.

The city is responsible for the blood of the slain saints and prophets, "and all that were slain upon the earth" (all who, in one way or another, the evil worldwide system and its evil religion have caused to die).

Justice is done at last.

66. Praise to God for Judgment on the Great Whore. (19:1-5)

After these things John hears a vast multitude in Heaven, praising God for his righteous judgments, and for his judgment of "the great whore" who corrupted the whole Earth with her fornication. They praise Him for avenging the innocent blood, shed by the servants of the Great Whore. They praise Him and the smoke of her burning will rise up "forever and ever."¹⁴⁸ The 24 elders fall down before the throne and worship God; and this time they are joined by the four glorious creatures ("four beasts"), who also fall down before God and shout their agreement and their praise. And a voice comes out from the Throne, commanding that all of the servants of God, both great and small, join in the praise.

NOTE: *The smoke of v 3, identified as "her" smoke, that rises up into the heavens "forever and ever" may come from two sources. One could be the burning of the facilities of the great whore's evil religious system (17:16); another source of "her" smoke could be the destruction by fire of restored Babylon, capital of the Beast, which she represented in her destruction of the righteous. Can it rise "forever and ever"? It can, metaphorically, as long as the memory of what she was and what became of her remains; and, perhaps, in light of the law of physics, the law of conservation of matter, it*

¹⁴⁸ See also Isaiah 34:10 and the study guide to Rev 5:11-14 with footnote.

will rise physically, in the form of its atoms, "forever." The underlying Greek rendered "forever and ever" is literally, "to the ages of the ages."

67. The Marriage Supper of the Lamb. (19:6-10)

Next, John hears the voices of a great multitude; it seems like the sound of many waters (rushing or falling), and like a series of thunderclaps; it is the raising of many voices, saying "Alleluia, for the Lord omnipotent reigneth!" They are announcing the marriage supper of the Lamb, and saying that his bride is ready, dressed in fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of saints, God's holy people.

The angel tells John to write, "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. These are the true sayings of God." At this point, John is overwhelmed with awe, and he falls at the angel's feet to worship him. Immediately, the angel tells John not to worship him, saying that he is only another servant of God, like John and the other faithful people who hold steadfastly to the testimony of Jesus as the Redeemer. He tells John to worship God (only), for the testimony, the declared truth, concerning Jesus, is the spirit of all prophecy.

***NOTE:** Who could blame John for being so overwhelmed that he falls at the feet of this angel to worship? After all that he has seen and heard, and with victory over all of the evil beginning to appear, and, remember, this angel is a special angel; he has such brilliance that he illuminates everything that John can see (18:1), while an unseen multitude sings (in perfect harmony) what we can only imagine sounds like Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus," multiplied many times over!*

Yet an extremely important point is being made here by the angel: only God is to be worshipped. A key part of the evidence of the divinity of Christ Jesus is that He accepted worship. Angels--true ones--will not do this. Compare Jn 20:26-29; Rev 1:17 and 22:9.

68. The King of Kings and His Army Appear. (19:11-16)

Heaven opens, and John sees a great white horse and majestic Rider at the head of the army of Heaven. This majestic Rider is identified as "Faithful and True," and John is told that in righteousness He makes judgments and wages war¹⁴⁹. This majestic Leader has eyes like flames of fire, and on his head are many kingly crowns, representing absolute, limitless and universal sovereignty, and a name or title written that only He knows and understands. He wears a robe dipped in blood, and his Name is The Word of God¹⁵⁰. The

¹⁴⁹ It can be righteous to judge and to make war, when the enemy is evil. This is definitely not "gentle Jesus, meek and mild."

¹⁵⁰ John 1:1; I Jn 5:7.

armies of Heaven follow Him, all mounted on white horses and clothed in purely clean, white linen.

Out of this Heavenly Leader's mouth there is a sharp sword, with which He shall smite the heathen nations, and He has a rod or scepter of iron with which He will rule them, as He treads out the winepress of God's wrath upon the haters of Almighty God. He has, written upon his robe and on his thigh, a name or title, which is KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS¹⁵¹.

NOTES:

a. This Christ figure on the white horse has an appearance much like the angelic figure who visited Daniel by the River Hiddekel; however, the context leaves the identity of the angel who visited Daniel uncertain, and unlikely to be the Christ, for he is fighting as part of a spiritual army, not as God the Son. The messenger who so impacted Daniel was probably a high-ranking angel--perhaps Gabriel.

b. Perhaps the fact that the robe of the Lord is "dipped (or dyed) in blood" is figurative of the coming slaughter of the armies of evil. He is about to tread out "the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God"; and, in Chapt 14, we saw the image of the harvest of grapes, and the treading of the grapes in the "winepress of the wrath of God," which produced the unimaginable river of blood¹⁵². In a literal winepress of that day, the people who trampled the grapes in a winepress, unavoidably, got much grape juice on their robes, making them blood red.

c. Why is this extremely important title written on the Lord's thigh? Or is it written on that part of his robe, and not actually on his thigh? We are not told.

This is the only appearance of this word "thigh," (in Greek, "meros") in the entire New Testament. I have found no commentator who will touch this question. Even the great learned, effusive, and expansive Matthew Henry, who could write pages of exposition, in Latin, Hebrew and Greek, on a single word, passes it by as if it were not there.

In Hebrew tradition the thigh has been associated with the genitals as the source of human life; Abraham, in taking a solemn oath concerning a wife for Isaac, required his servant to put his hand under the thigh. Jacob required the same thing of Joseph, in swearing to have him buried in

¹⁵¹ Once again, the AV translators felt strongly enough about this important point to capitalize it!

¹⁵² Revelation 14:18-20.

Canaan, and not in Egypt. Early Jewish commentators associated the thigh with the rite of circumcision¹⁵³.

For a woman to uncover the thigh was to lay aside all feminine modesty; Isaiah used this metaphor in prophesying of the utter downfall of Babylon¹⁵⁴.

Vine, in treating the Greek linguistically, and not as a commentator, at least offers a thought on the matter. He supposes that the appearance of the Name on the thigh is figurative, as being the place where the sword, the source of power, would normally be worn¹⁵⁵.

Perhaps the meaning is two-fold, representing the King of Kings as the essence and source of life, and expressing his omnipotent, sword-wielding power. It seems that we can only wonder.

69. The Great Battle With the Beast's Empire. (19:17-21)

John sees another angel, standing in the sun who, with a loud voice, issues an invitation to all of the vultures and other carrion-eating birds to gather, so as to be ready to feed on the huge numbers of dead from the coming battle. He calls this feast for vultures and other carrion-eating birds "the supper of the great God," suggesting that it is in the plan of God for the end-times, or that only God could arrange for such a huge number of dead men and animals at the same time (and perhaps it suggests both).

John sees the Beast and the evil kings allied with him, with their armies, gathered together to make war against the One on the white horse and his army on white horses.

But wait! Suddenly, the battle is over, and without a word of description!

The armies of the Beast are destroyed, apparently slain by the sword proceeding from the mouth of The Word of God on his white horse¹⁵⁶. Both the Beast and the False Prophet, apparently the only survivors of their evil armies, are captured. Alive, these two members of the "unholy trinity" of tribulation are cast into a lake of fire, burning with brimstone¹⁵⁷. The entire, vast evil army is 100% dead, and the vultures and other carrion eaters have a gigantic feast.

NOTE: *Entire books have been written about "The Battle of Armageddon," movies have been made about it, painters have painted great paintings to depict it, commentators have written voluminously about it; and yet nowhere in the entire Bible does the expression "battle of Armageddon" appear.*

¹⁵³ Unger, Merrill F.: Unger's Bible Dictionary, "Thigh," p 1,090.

¹⁵⁴ Isaiah 47:1-3.

¹⁵⁵ W.E. Vine: Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, THIGH, Vol 4, p 126.

¹⁵⁶ John 12:47-48; Eph 6:17; Rev 1:16.

¹⁵⁷ The third member of the "unholy trinity," the Dragon (Satan), will be likewise dealt with very soon.

Like the evil World dictator, the man whom the modern versions call “the Antichrist,” who is the personification of evil and rebellion against God, the “Battle of Armageddon,” as such, simply is not to be found in the Book of Revelation, nor anywhere else in the Bible. These elaborations must be inferred, from Rev 16:13-16, Ezekiel, Daniel, other prophetic Scriptures, and the 11 verses in Chapt 19, along with a heavy application of imagination¹⁵⁸.

*In fact, here in the Scripture, the preparation for, and the aftermath of, such a great battle occupy only 11 verses. And, even more interestingly, in these unique verses the actual battle **does not even appear!***

The appearance of the Christ figure on his great white horse, at the head of his warriors on white horses, occupies six of these verses; preparation of the vultures and other carrion-eating birds for the clean-up occupies two verses. The appearance of the Beast and his evil army of misled multitudes occupies only one verse. And then, suddenly and without explanation, the battle has already happened! It is as if we blinked and missed it.

The consignment of the Beast and his False Prophet to eternal damnation in a Lake of Fire, and the cleaning up of the battlefield occupy only the last two of these 11 verses.

There is one more battle to come, after the Millennial reign of Christ (which we are about to see); but, like the one just described, it won't be much of a battle, for Satan's entire army, surrounding Jerusalem, will be devoured by God with fire from Heaven.

70. Satan Goes to Prison. (20:1-3)

With the carrion eaters cleaning up a vast battlefield, John next sees another angel. This one comes down from Heaven bringing with him the key to the bottomless pit (abyss); he also has a chain. The angel seizes the Dragon (Satan) and makes him a prisoner. He then throws the Dragon into the bottomless pit (abyss) and has him locked down, unable to deceive. Satan is to remain an impotent prisoner in the abyss for 1,000 years. At the end of the thousand-year confinement, John understands, Satan will be released to deceive again, but only for a limited and brief period.

71. The Millennial Reign of Christ. (20:4-6)

Next John sees many thrones, and on them sit many martyrs, those who have refused to take the mark of the beast and have been beheaded for their faithfulness to the Lord. These seem to be acting as judges, under the authority of the Chief Judge, Christ Jesus. John sees the souls of many such

¹⁵⁸ See in this regard Ezekiel 13:5 and Dan 23-25.

martyrs, and they live and reign with Christ for the thousand-year period of Satan's imprisonment. This thousand-year period has come to be called "the millennial reign of Christ," or, simply, "the Millennium." This, John understands, is the First Resurrection. The rest of the dead will not be resurrected during this millennial period (verse 5).

Blessed and holy are these who take part in this first resurrection, John records, for they shall be priests and shall reign with Christ for 1,000 years; and the Second Death will have no power over them.

NOTES:

*a. I would like to think that this number will include all of us who die redeemed and faithful, for to rule and reign with Jesus as King, in a world with Satan bound, would be wonderful; but the passage does not seem to allow for this. The passage says clearly that those who rule and reign with Christ will be the Tribulation martyrs who refused to take the mark of the Beast. Further, the following verses (vv 5-15) will reveal that many (or all) of the redeemed will stand before the White Throne of judgment, along with the lost--those whose names are **not** in the Lamb's Book of Life.*

b. The great Christian Roman historian, Eusebius (263-339 AD), in his classic "Ecclesiastical History," criticizes Papias, disciple of John the Revelator, for believing that there will be such a literal millennial reign of Christ, on Earth. Eusebius was what, today, we would call "amillennial"¹⁵⁹.

Who am I to disagree with the great Eusebius? But I must. The millennial reign of Christ seems to be very plainly spelled out in 20:1-7, which Eusebius seems to have overlooked. Also, I cannot fail to mention again that Papias had heard about these things from John, recipient and author of this revelation, himself. Papias had gotten the story from the primary source--the eyewitness recipient of the revelation. I can't explain what appears to be the blindness of Eusebius to this.

72. The Final Battle. (20:7-10)

At the end of the thousand-year period, John is told, Satan will be released from his imprisonment in the Bottomless Pit, and will resume his evil pursuits. Again, he will go out and deceive the nations of the Earth, convincing them that they can conquer God and his Kingdom, and rule the Earth themselves. Satan will gather another massive army, including "Gog and Magog." This army will surround and besiege the saints and "the beloved city" (almost certainly Jerusalem). This army will be so vast that

¹⁵⁹ Eusebius: Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, Chapt 39, (11) - (13), P 105.

its soldiers will reach to the visible horizon in all directions (as numerous "as the sands of the sea").

Once again, however, this vast and wicked army is destroyed--and in an instant--this time consumed by fire from Heaven. There will be no need for vultures after this battle, for the army will be reduced to skeletal remains¹⁶⁰.

Satan, finally and ultimately defeated, is apparently the sole survivor (being a spirit and not a human being). This sole evil enemy survivor is a prisoner of war, but not for long. Already condemned, he is thrown into the lake of fire, to join his co-conspirators, the False Prophet and the Beast, to burn forever without being able to die.

Satan has been a significant player in cosmic affairs since before Creation--since before Genesis 1:1, first as a highly placed and esteemed, angelic servant of God, then as the ultimate enemy of God. And now his multi-millennial career as the grand seducer, deceiver, and accuser of mankind will have come to its fitting and just end. In Latin it is "finis" (the end), as we once saw on the screen at the end of motion pictures.

NOTES:

a. Gog and Magog, appearing here, and in Ezek 38 and 39, are somewhat mysterious names, and various interpretations and traditions have been attached to them. The most common theory is that Gog will be the king of a kingdom called Magog, and this conglomeration of powerful nations will engage in this second and final revolution against the authority of God. A related word, "Hamon-gog," appears only in Ezekiel (39:11 and 15). Its meaning is "people, or multitude, of Gog." This is the name Ezekiel uses to identify the valley in which the slaughtered army of Gog is described as being destroyed and buried.

*For more on Gog and Magog, see the study guide to Ezekiel 38:1-39:16, "Prophecies Concerning Gog and Magog," and the explanatory **NOTES** following.*

b. This is the only mention of Gog and Magog in Revelation; here the wording suggests that Gog will be the over-all leader of the wicked kings of the Earth. And, interestingly, Daniel makes no mention of Gog and Magog at all!

73. The White Throne Judgment. (20:11-15)

John sees a Great White Throne, and "Him [the glorified Christ] that sat on it¹⁶¹." Earth and Heaven, as we have known them, flee from his presence,

¹⁶⁰ Since Ezekiel prophesied that seven months will be required for burying the slaughtered multitudes of Gog's army (Ezek 39:12), and since markers for bones yet to be buried are mentioned in Ezek 39:15, it appears that the fire from heaven will leave only skeletal remains to be buried.

and apparently cease to exist¹⁶². The dead are resurrected (the Second Resurrection) and stand before the Great White Judgment Throne to be judged. Books are opened: one is the Book of Life, containing all the names of the redeemed; the others seem to contain a complete record of everyone's deeds. The dead are judged according to their works, as recorded in the books¹⁶³.

The sea will give up its dead, even death and Hell (Hades) give up the dead who are in them; no one who ever lived, except for the Tribulation martyrs (and, perhaps, the two witnesses, Enoch and Elijah), will be exempted from this appearance before the Great White Throne¹⁶⁴.

All whose names are not written in the Book of Life will join Satan, the False Prophet and the Beast, in the Lake of Fire. Finally, death and Hell are also thrown into the Lake of Fire. This is the Second Death, and it will be eternal. There will be no more death; and there will no longer be any need for the spiritual prison we call Hell (*Hades*), in the New Heaven and New Earth.

NOTES:

a. Will the redeemed be judged for their deeds? This is not explained. It must, however, mean what it says, so v 12 may refer to degrees of rewards in Heaven for the redeemed (whose names are in the Lamb's Book of Life); and eternal punishment in the Lake of Fire for those who rejected the gift of redemption, and lived in deliberate, ongoing sin.

b. This horrible "second death" is not obliteration, as some cults teach; rather, it will be worse; it is the agony of a burning death, but with the inability to die, and it will never end. Verse 14 makes this quite clear.

c. Physical death, as it has been known heretofore, will be no more. Having been introduced into the human experience by sin in the Garden of Eden, it will, at last, again no longer exist.

d. What could it mean, that Hell is cast into the Lake of Fire? If the wicked are to burn forever in Hell, as Jesus taught, how can Hell cease to exist? Here, the key to understanding is the fact that, in the New Testament Greek, there are two words rendered "Hell." One, "Gehenna," means a place of eternal fire; it seems to be synonymous with the Lake of Fire. The other,

¹⁶¹ Verse 12 identifies the One on the Great White Throne as "God"; however it seems that He is God in the person of his glorified Son, the glorified Christ (see John 5:22).

¹⁶² Perhaps this will be the fulfillment of Peter's prophecy in II Pet 3:10-13.

¹⁶³ Verses 11-13 could not mean that we are acquitted or condemned "according to [our] works," for we are redeemed (acquitted and found "not guilty") by faith, according to the grace of God. See explanatory **NOTE a.** following.

¹⁶⁴ See in this regard Daniel 12:2 and Matt 25:46.

"Hades," is what we may think of as a spiritual prison, somewhere in the underworld, where the spirits of the unredeemed await final judgment, between physical death and the Second Resurrection for final judgment before the Great White Throne.

Since the old system is passed away, there will no longer be sin or death; and, therefore, there will be no need for a spiritual prison (Hades).

e. And, finally, we must wonder why the ultimate dealing with sin is a "Lake of Fire"? It seems to be because, throughout the Bible, fire purifies; and in the New Heaven and New Earth, returned to the innocence and purity of the Garden of Eden, there cannot be any sin. Death, Hell, Satan, the Beast, the False Prophet, and all unredeemed humans will be, forever, in the Lake of Fire. The perpetual burning of the Lake of Fire will be necessary; for spirits (both evil angelic, spirits and God-rejecting, unredeemed, human spirits) cannot die. This place of eternal cleansing will be, it seems, some place infinitely far removed from God's restoration of his original, sinless, creation, with "a great gulf fixed between them" that cannot be crossed.¹⁶⁵

74. A New Heaven and A New Earth. (21:1-5)

The old Heavens and Earth are passed away--they no longer exist; but now John sees a new Heaven and new Earth, and there no longer exists any sea. He also sees, coming down from the new Heaven, the New Jerusalem, the Holy City, prepared as a bride who is adorned for her husband¹⁶⁶. And he hears a great voice, coming from Heaven, saying that the tabernacle (dwelling place) of God is now with men. He will dwell with people, they will be his people, and He will be their God, in what seems to describe a new and close relationship, uncontaminated by sin, as things were before sin entered the human race in the Garden of Eden.

God, the voice says, shall wipe away all tears then, and there will be no more death, sorrow, weeping, or pain. These things, inherent and unavoidable in the old world that has passed away, will no longer exist; there will be nothing to cause them.

75. But This Paradise Will Not Be for the Unredeemed. (21:5-6)

He who sits on the throne speaks to John, and says that He makes all things new. He also tells John to write, for his words are true and utterly dependable. He says to John, as he did when He first appeared to him in Chapter 1, that He is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. And he

¹⁶⁵ Luke 16:26.

¹⁶⁶ In Revelation, John identifies himself three times: in the introduction (1:4); v 2 here; and in 22:8.

states that, to anyone who is thirsty, He will give of the fountain of the water of life freely¹⁶⁷.

76. Who Will Live in This New Eden? (21:7-8)

Who will inhabit this paradise, and inherit this Eden-like existence? He who sits on the throne goes on to say that this blessed paradise will be for those who overcome, who are faithful and victorious. However, He warns, there are some who will not inherit this; rather, they will be condemned to the Lake of Fire. These, He says, will be the fearful, unbelieving, practitioners of abominable things, murderers, whoremongers, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars.

NOTES:

a. Based upon all that we have learned about sin and redemption up to this point makes it clear, without recourse to Greek grammar, that this passage refers to those who practice these things as a way of life, not those of us who have committed such sins, repented and been forgiven.

*b. But why would the fearful be included here? Everyone experiences fear at times, and for some it is an ongoing affliction--not something that they choose and enjoy. Here, the underlying Greek is helpful. The Greek word here rendered "fearful" is "deilos"; it does not mean those beset with anxiety. Rather, it means cravenly, thoroughly cowardly, selfishly seeking one's own safety and welfare, above, or at the expense of, others; one who cannot be trusted to do his part for others in time of difficulty or danger. Of the four Greek words for "fearful" in the New Testament, this one is **never** used in a positive sense.*

77. The New and Holy Jerusalem. (21:9-27)

One of the seven angels who had the vials of God's wrath comes to John and says that he should come with the angel, and he will show John "the bride, the Lamb's wife." He carries John away, in the spirit, to a great, high mountain. From there he shows John "that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of Heaven from God¹⁶⁸."

John goes on to describe this nearly indescribable city. He says that it has upon it the glory of God, its light is like a precious stone, clear as crystal. It has a great, high wall with 12 gates, an angel at each gate, and on each gate is the name of one of the 12 tribes of Israel¹⁶⁹. The city is square, with three

¹⁶⁷ John 7:37.

¹⁶⁸ Revelation 3:12.

¹⁶⁹ Here, again, and with finality at the end of all things as we know them, that there were never "ten lost tribes of Israel. It is clearly stated that there will be 12 gates, one for each of the 12 tribes of Israel; it

gates in each of the four sides of the wall. The wall has 12 huge foundation stones, and in them are the names of the 12 apostles of the Lamb. The angel has a golden measuring rod, with which he measures the city. It is about 1,500 miles wide, 1,500 miles deep, and 1,500 miles tall. The wall is measured and found to be, according to the angel's measurement, 144 cubits, or about 210 feet. We are not told whether this is height or thickness, but it is likely the height (who would need such thick walls, when you are never going to be attacked?).

The wall is made of something like jasper. The city is pure gold, but transparent, like glass. The foundation stones are garnished with precious stones, and each of the 12 gates is made of a gigantic pearl. The streets are gold, also described, like the walls, as being transparent as glass.

John sees no Temple in the city, for there is no need of one; the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. We will not need a place to go in order to experience the presence of God, for He will be dwelling with, and among, us.

There is no Sun or Moon, for the glory of God and of the Lamb are the sources of its light. Its gates are never closed, and there is no night there. All of the nations and kings will bring their glory, as a gift into the city, to honor the Father and the Lamb, and nothing impure will be there. There will be only those in the city there whose names are in the Lamb's Book of Life.

NOTES:

a. This passage does not describe the same vision given to Ezekiel, who was also similarly taken up to a high mountain and shown the future. See the study guide to Ezekiel 38:1-39:16, NOTE c.

b. Is the Bride of Christ the city of the New Jerusalem, or the Church (the Redeemed)? Verse 9 seems to say that the city will be the Bride of Christ; yet we have seen other passages which seem to say, pretty clearly, that the Bride will be the redeemed, i.e. the Church¹⁷⁰. How can this be reconciled? This is another point that many commentators bypass.

First, we know that there can be no contradiction, for God is never confused. For centuries unbelieving skeptics have pounced upon what they saw as contradictory here, saying, "See? The Bible has contradictions,"

does not say that the city will have two gates, one for Judah and one for Benjamin. There is no evidence in the Bible that the 10 Northern tribes, carried captive to Assyria, were ever lost.

¹⁷⁰ II Corinthians 11:2; Eph 5:25-27, 31-33.

only to later be embarrassed and frustrated when pure science explained the apparent contradiction¹⁷¹.

Perhaps the explanation can be found in the perfection, both of the Church and the City, both of which are now beyond our ability to imagine. The perfection and beauty of the redeemed Church, without spot, wrinkle or blemish, will be such that She can be presented to the Creator God, as his bride; this, I think, is yet beyond our ability to imagine. We will be able, for example, to enjoy the very presence of God, comfortably, pleasantly and naturally, which today, in our imperfect state, would destroy us. Likewise, I suggest, the beauty and perfection of the New Jerusalem are, to us, yet unimaginable, and indescribable (could you draw or paint it, transparent gold and all, based upon John's attempt to describe it? I don't think so.) The beauty and purity of the Bride, and of the New Jerusalem where the Bride will dwell with the Lamb, cannot, it seems, be separated; their glory will be as one.

c. If all of the blessed redeemed, whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life, live in the New Jerusalem, who will be these kings of the earth and other visitors (vv 24-26) who come to honor and glorify the Lord there? This is not explained.

Perhaps, in this New Earth, God will create an entirely new order of people and things which He has not chosen to reveal to us. We cannot limit Him. After all, his redemptive plan for the Church was not revealed prior to the 1st Century, even to his prophets¹⁷².

78. The River of Life. (22:1-2)

The same angel who gave John the vision of the New Jerusalem has more to show him about the great city. He shows him a pure river, flowing with the water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb. And, through the center of the city, the river flows, and on either side of it there grows the tree of life, with its 12 varieties of fruit, yielding its crop of fruit every month, and its leaves are for the healing of the nations¹⁷³.

NOTES:

a. The River of Life appears to be the river that Ezekiel saw in a vision, which flowed from the Temple bringing life to all that it touched, even

¹⁷¹ For one of many examples, see the study guide to Luke 2:1-6, explanatory **NOTE**.

¹⁷² Matthew 13:17; Lk 10:24; Col 1:26.

¹⁷³ Can this be a reference to the nations mentioned in 21:24-26?

bringing life to the Dead Sea¹⁷⁴. And the tree of life lining both sides seems clearly to have been foretold by Ezekiel in the same vision¹⁷⁵.

b. In the Garden of Eden there was one tree of life. Now, in the New Jerusalem, these trees will line the banks of the River of Life, and their fruit will be there to enjoy forever. Life will have prevailed, and death is vanquished forever.

79. The Angel Summarizes. (22:3-5)

In what seems like an epilogue to what the angel has just shown John of the New Jerusalem and its central place in God's plan for the perfect future, the angel summarizes. He says that the curse of sin, that brought an end to the paradise of Eden, and introduced suffering and wickedness into the World, shall be no more; and the redeemed children of God will enjoy unhindered, personal fellowship with God, face to face, in the bliss that Adam and Eve once experienced, before the fall of man--and perhaps even better.

The throne of God and of the Lamb will be there in the city, and the angelic servants of God will serve Him. Likewise, the redeemed will serve and worship Him, living with Him face to face, and his Name shall be in their foreheads.

There will be no need for candles, lamps or sunlight there, for there will be no night; the city will be filled with the light of God, and this blessed existence, reigning over Paradise, will last forever and ever.(in Greek, "to the ages of the ages" or "through the eternities of the eternities")¹⁷⁶.

NOTE: Will we, the redeemed, actually have "YAHWEH," or some other representation of God written or tattooed on our foreheads? Maybe. But perhaps this just means that we will be so pure, so aglow with the Spirit of God shining from our faces, that our belonging to Him, in such a blessed, united relationship, will be obvious. Perhaps we will be "branded" with his likeness.

80. The Angel's Closing Instructions. (22:6-7)

In closing his visit with John, the angel assures him that what he has seen and been told is all "faithful and true," and that the Lord God of the holy prophets has sent him to reveal to the servants of God (the Church) things which will soon take place.

¹⁷⁴ Ezekiel 47:1-10.

¹⁷⁵ Ezekiel 47:12.

¹⁷⁶ Here, in v 5, is the last use of this mind-boggling Greek expression. When we are living in this perfect paradise "forever and ever" will be a simple reality; until then it is perhaps beyond the capacity of our finite minds to understand.

At this point, Jesus Himself seems to speak, saying that He is coming soon, and pronouncing a blessing on those who will faithfully keep the truths of prophecy in this book. If you have a red-letter edition of the Bible, in which the words of Jesus are in red, verse 7 should probably be solid red¹⁷⁷.

NOTE: The expression “Lord God” (“Kurios Theos”) occurs in the New Testament only seven times, all in Revelation. This is the final occurrence.

81. “Worship [Only] God”. (22:8-11)

Once more, John is overwhelmed (who wouldn't be?). He falls down at the feet of the angel to worship him, and is immediately corrected by the angel. The angel says that he is only a servant of God, like the prophets, and like all who accept and obey the contents of this book, and reminds John to “worship [only] God.” He has had to remind John of this once before¹⁷⁸.

He goes on to tell John not to seal up the prophecies in this book and keep them secret, for the time of their fulfillment is near¹⁷⁹. And then, in his closing statement, the angel says that, when the end comes, the unjust will remain that way, the spiritually filthy will remain that way, the righteous will remain that way, and the holy will remain that way. When the end has finally come, there will be no more opportunity to repent and be redeemed.

82. Jesus Speaks Again. (22:12-13)

At this point the angel, having finished his assignment to reveal things to John, seems to depart (although we are not told that). And, at this point, Jesus again speaks, saying that He is coming soon, bringing a just reward (pleasant or unpleasant), to judge everyone according to what he has done. And, for the third and final time, so that there can be no misunderstanding, He identifies Himself as “Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last¹⁸⁰.”

83. Blessed Are the Redeemed. (22:14-15)

Referring to the Alpha and Omega who has just spoken, we are told that those redeemed who obey his words, who are entitled to enjoy the fruit of the Tree of Life, and who may dwell in the city of God (New Jerusalem), are blessed. And, in summary of the lost, we are reminded that dogs, sorcerers, whoremongers, murderers, idol worshippers and those who love and practice lying, cannot expect to enter the New Jerusalem. By this time, it would seem that this has already been made clear; nevertheless, we are reminded,

¹⁷⁷ Revelation 1:3. In my red letter edition, only the first four words are in red.

¹⁷⁸ Revelation 19:10.

¹⁷⁹ Daniel 12:9.

¹⁸⁰ Revelation 1:8, 21:6.

here at the ending of God's revelations to mankind, so it must mean that we need to be reminded.

***NOTE:** In Middle East cultures, to be called a dog is a common insult; to call someone a son of a dog is an extreme insult, likely to result in violence. In the Bible "dog" is used sparingly to refer to practicing homosexuals and false prophets¹⁸¹. Here, it probably refers to both.*

84. A Final, Gracious Invitation. (22:16-17)

Jesus speaks again, identifying Himself as "the root and offspring of David, and the bright and morning star," and putting his seal and imprimatur on what John has recorded, as his "angel" (special messenger).

Then follows one last, gracious, invitation (perhaps from John, inspired by the Spirit) for the unredeemed to come to Him and be forgiven. The Spirit and the bride say "come." Those who have heard and received the benefit of the gospel also say "come." All who are thirsty for the water from the River of Life are invited to come, and all who have this thirst may drink of it freely.

85. And a Final, Fearsome, Warning. (22:18-19)

Revelation is, as we have seen, the only book of the Bible with a promise of a blessing to all who will read it or hear it. It is also the Bible's only book with a warning, and it is a serious warning.

John tells us that anyone, hearing or reading this book, who would add anything to the book will incur all of the plagues that are recorded in the book. Likewise, anyone who would remove any part of this book of prophecy, will have his name removed, by God Himself, from the Lamb's Book of Life and he will forfeit all the blessings of the redeemed. What could be more serious?

***NOTE:** At this point we must ask ourselves an important question: does the dire warning of 22:18-19 apply to the entire Bible, or just to Revelation¹⁸²?*

*The wording suggests that it applies only to Revelation; but, considering what is found in the rest of the Bible, my position is "**Why take a stupid chance?**" Here is wisdom: don't mess with the Word of God.*

86. The Last Word. (22:20-21)

Jesus speaks for the last time, saying that He will return to Earth soon. John says "Amen!" and then, in the eloquent words of Merrill F. Unger, "the longing of [John's] soul gathered itself up in the cry, 'Even so, come Lord Jesus!' " (22:20-21)

¹⁸¹ See also Deut 23:18; Phil 3:2.

¹⁸² For a discussion of this vital question see "The Debate Over Preservation of Scripture" in Part IV (Selected Topical Summaries)

And, with one brief benediction, John closes his final book. In so doing, he closes the New Testament; and, in closing the New Testament, John the beloved closes the entire Holy Bible.

Thus ends Part III, the New Testament

* * * * *

And thus ends the Holy Bible.

Epilogue

The Traditional Approach

Connections of the Old Testament Prophets, the Synoptic Gospels, and the Epistles, with Revelation; and Thoughts about “the Antichrist,” and “the Battle of Armageddon”

Other Scripture Passages Relating to the Events of Revelation

As I have pointed out already (and, perhaps, excessively), the literature relating Revelation to the Old Testament prophets, the synoptic gospels, and the epistles of Paul, Peter and John, is massive. It is also far from unanimous in its interpretations of various parts of Revelation and the related books of the Bible, because those who insist upon interpreting Revelation based upon Ezekiel, Daniel, and other books of the Bible, disagree with one another in some significant ways.

For those who are interested in what has become the traditional approach to Revelation, I have listed some of the related passages. It is far, far from exhaustive; but, for our purposes I hope it will be sufficient. And, for those who wish to go more deeply into the relationships with the extra-Revelation sources, it will provide, I pray, a simplified starting point. Selected examples are listed below and, for ease of reference, they are sequential.

Ezekiel.

1. Ezekiel 38 and 39 seem to speak of events related to Revelation 16:12-21; there are definite similarities in some places. If true, this would make Ezekiel 38, and 39:1-22, an expansion in detail of what is recorded in the last 10 verses of Revelation 16 concerning the sixth vial of wrath and what is recorded there as “the battle of that great day of God Almighty,” and of related events of the seventh vial.
2. Ezekiel 40:2 and the rest of Ezekiel seem, at a glance, to correspond to Revelation 21:9-27, but these are unrelated passages. This portion of Ezekiel probably refers to the Millennial Temple. See the study guide to Ezekiel, Highlight 24, **NOTE b**.

Daniel.

1. Daniel 7 is definitely suggestive of Revelation 13. The fourth beast of Daniel 7:7 is suggestive of the Beast of Revelation 13-19; Daniel 7:13-14 seem to relate to Revelation 5:6-14; and Daniel 7:21-22 seems to relate to Revelation 13:1-9.
2. Daniel 9:27 seems clearly to relate to what is often called “Daniel’s 70th week” (a week here meaning a week of years, or seven years). Verse 27 seems clearly to refer to the seven-year tribulation period, with its mid-point marked by the ceasing of “the sacrifice and the oblation” as described in Revelation 13 with the rise of the Beast, and the horrors that will occur during the second half of the tribulation period.
3. Daniel 10:5-6 certainly appear to compare with “one like unto the Son of Man” (the glorified Christ) described by John in Revelation 1:13-16.
4. Daniel 11:30-45 seems to relate to the second half of the seven-year tribulation period, once the Beast has his image (“abomination of desolations”) set up in the temple and the daily sacrifice is taken away.
5. Daniel 12:1 seems to reflect Jeremiah 30:7, a general reference to the seven-year tribulation period, “the time of Jacob’s trouble,” and to the protection of God’s people as described in Revelation 12:6-14.
6. Daniel 12:2 relates to Matthew 25:46 and Revelation 10-13.
7. Daniel 12:4 relates to Revelation 22:10.
8. Daniel 12:5-7 relates to Revelation 12:14 and 13:4-5.
9. Daniel 12:9 relates to Revelation 22:10.
10. Daniel 12:10 relates to Revelation 22:11.
11. Daniel 12:11-12 announces the end-point in the tribulation period.

The Synoptic Gospels

Matthew.

1. Matthew 24:11-31 describes the second half of the tribulation period, after the establishment of the abomination of desolation (image of the Beast) in the temple, as mentioned in Daniel 9:27, and warns of false christs to come.
2. Matthew 25:31-46 describes the Second Advent and the White Throne judgment of Revelation 20:11-15.

Mark.

Mark 13:14-20 (like Matthew 24:11-31) describes the second half of the tribulation, beginning when the abomination of desolation (image of the Beast) is set up in the temple, and warns of false christs to come.

Luke.

Luke 21:8-28 speaks of great tribulation, false christs, earthquakes, famines, and “fearful sights and great signs from heaven.”

The Epistles

1. I Thessalonians 4:13-18 tell us of the great catching away (“rapture”) of the saints, living and dead, which seems to have happened at some point prior to, or simultaneously with, the rise of the Beast at the mid-point of the tribulation period (Revelation 13).
2. In II Thessalonians 2:1-4, Paul urges the believers not to be troubled by what they have been falsely told about the immediate return of Christ. He tells them that that day cannot come until there has been a great falling-away, and “that man of sin,” whom he also calls “the son of perdition,” appears in the temple, declaring himself to be God. Compare Revelation 13:14-15 and 20:4.
3. I John 2:18 may warn us of the coming of (the) antichrist person, an enemy, one in opposition to Christ and his kingdom. Yet, in the same verse, he enlarges on his point, saying that many such antichrists will come, and by this we will know that “the last time” has come. This may relate to Revelation 13:1f; but it must be taken in the context of verses 22 and 23.
4. I John 2:22 condemns as a liar anyone who would deny that Jesus is the Christ; and declares that anyone who denies the Father and the Son, is antichrist (an antagonist of Christ). This defines a category of sinners and, to maintain context, must be taken together with verses 18 and 23; but it may also relate to the Beast of Revelation 13:1f.
5. I John 4:3, in dealing with a troublesome heresy, condemns “any spirit” that does not confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, and condemns such as “that spirit of antichrist of which the church has been warned, and which at the time was already operating in the world.

6. II John is a tiny book of only 13 verses. Yet John devotes seven of those verses to warning against the heresy that Jesus Christ came to Earth only in spirit, and not in the flesh. Anyone, he says, who comes with this message, “is a deceiver and an antichrist” (an enemy of Christ) (verses 5-11).

“The Great Battle of Armageddon”

As we have observed at the beginning of this study guide to Revelation, the term “battle of Armageddon” does not appear in Revelation; in fact, it appears nowhere in the entire Bible.

There is indeed a climactic battle (un-named) in which the army of the majestic, glorified, and fearsome Christ is mounted on his great, white, war horse. He is leading his vast army of heavenly warriors in white robes and, like Him, riding white horses. This great army faces the massive army of evil, including the deceived and sinful nations of the Earth, led by the evil World dictator, the Beast. An angel gathers all of the vultures and other carrion-eaters in preparation for the clean-up of the battlefield.

And, then, suddenly, it is all over. The army of the Beast is defeated (in fact, massacred); its only survivors are the Beast and his wicked assistant, the False Prophet, and they are thrown into the Lake of Fire, to stay there forever. And yet all of this takes place in only 12 verses (Revelation 19:11-21).

Most amazing of all is that the battle itself isn’t even there in the narrative, except by implication! It not only has no name, it seems not even to have occurred, as if we blinked and missed it; we are only told of its outcome.

The massing of great armies, their maneuvering, the countless chariots and horses, the vast battlefields covering thousands of square miles, and the burning of chariots and battle implements for seven years--all of these things--aren’t here in Revelation. These familiar prophetic scenes in other books of the Bible obviously have meaning; and some or all of it may refer to the climactic battle in Revelation 19:11-21; but the simple fact is that they are found nowhere in the Book of Revelation itself.

A Final Battle

There is, in Chapter 20, one more, and last-mentioned, battle in Revelation. It is described as occurring after the end of the millennial reign of Christ, and before the White Throne judgment. This one (which occupies only three verses) occurs when Satan (the Dragon) is released from his thousand-year imprisonment in the bottomless pit (abyss). Still in perfect character, (“ever learning and never coming to a knowledge of the truth”), the “king of unreformed repeat offenders,” Satan immediately goes out and

stirs up the nations of the Earth, Gog and Magog, and gathers a vast army, still hoping to destroy the Kingdom of God¹⁸³. This vast army surrounds the saints of God, who are gathered in Jerusalem, and it is their final mistake. Fire erupts from Heaven and consumes them all. This time there will be no need for vultures, for the army of millions, and its equipment, will be ashes, enriching the soil of God's Promised Land, which will be finally free from the curse of sin. And Satan, that old serpent, the deceiver and accuser of men, is ignominiously thrown into the lake of fire, joining his co-conspirators, the Beast and the False Prophet--forever.

The prophetic battle scenes in Ezekiel and Daniel may have meaning for this second battle, as well as for the great battle of Chapter 19; but they do not appear in Revelation.

Who or What Is "Antichrist"?

We now have seen that, contrary to popular belief, the word "antichrist" (in Greek, *antichristos*, meaning literally "against Christ") occurs nowhere in the Book of Revelation. In fact, it only appears five times in the entire Bible, all in the epistles of John, human author of the Book of Revelation, and **never** as a proper noun or title (e.g. "the Antichrist").

In these five verses John writes, not of an individual, but of a form of heresy, something that any one of us could become¹⁸⁴. In short, **nowhere** in the AV (KJV) is there an individual whose name or title is "the Antichrist."

The word does not appear in Eusebius ("Ecclesiastical History").

The synoptic gospels refer to an individual who will take command of the World and declare himself to be God (at, we think, the mid-point of the seven-year tribulation period); but in none of them is he called "the Antichrist." In Matthew Jesus refers to him (or his image/statue) as "the abomination of desolation." The same is true of Mark's gospel.

Paul, in II Thessalonians 2:3, calls him "that man of sin," and "the son of perdition."

Yet, the identification of the one that Revelation calls only "the Beast," as "The Antichrist," by modern writers and teachers has become so common that it is now reflected in modern translations of the Bible as if it were actually in Scripture. For example, the NIV adds the definite article "the"

¹⁸³ Revelation 20:7-10.

¹⁸⁴ I John 2:18, 2:22, 4:3; II Jn 7.

to what John, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God, has written, and has done this every time, without even the courtesy of italics¹⁸⁵.

This should be a lesson for us in how easily the traditions of men can assume the status of "fact" or "Biblical truth" if we are not careful to adhere to, and protect the primacy of, the unchanging Word of God itself.

In the 1970s, when I was a new Christian, we were all speculating excitedly about who "the Antichrist" might be; many thought "he" was Henry Kissinger. It now appears that we should have been reading Revelation and I and II John, instead of books like "The Late, Great Planet Earth."

***NOTE:** Since at least the 16th Century, Bible translations have been the work of teams of translators--not of just one person. Each translating team member is assigned a portion of the Bible to translate, and the work is supervised, edited, and given final approval by an editor (or editors). The entire Bible translation is ultimately approved by an editorial board, with its executive editor, and released for publication. Thus, Revelation may be translated by one or more scholars, who may work on no other part of the translation.*

In like manner, the editing of Revelation may be the work of one or more editors, who may not edit any other portion of the translation. Upon these men or women, (translator(s), editor(s), and upon the overall editorial boards and the publishers, it seems to me, would rest the weight of the curse pronounced in 22:18. It is worth repeating, that this is a point worthy of pondering.

Finis

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(Correct this date when the class finishes Revelation and all preceding it has had the final edit.)

¹⁸⁵ If I were the translator of Revelation, or his editor(s), in which "the" has been added to what John wrote, I think I would be on my knees, asking forgiveness for adding to what John the Revelator was shown, and faithfully recorded, in 22:18.