

REVELATION:  
BOOK OF MYSTERY

A STUDY OF THE  
BOOK OF REVELATION

By Manly Luscombe

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# Preface

Those who have been in my Bible Classes through the years have heard me say, "When I write my commentary on Revelation, then you will know the answers." While it was said in jest, there was behind the humor a seed planted in my mind.

I have taught Revelation in adult Bible classes on several occasions. I noticed that each time I would teach the material, I would see things that I had not noticed before, things that I had taught differently. As I studied more, read more commentaries, and taught more classes, I realized that my views were beginning to *ögelö* into a more logical form.

In the fall of 2000, I was asked if I would be willing to teach an adult Bible class on the book of Revelation. I started out just reviewing my notes and making comments to prepare for this class. Soon, I realized that I had written more than just some notes. I was writing a commentary. At that point I decided to chase the dream of writing a commentary and putting it into the hands of the church.

This book is the result of many hours of reading commentaries of all kinds (see the Bibliography for a complete list) and trying to find a consistent view toward the book of Revelation. This book is the result of this attempt.

As I wrote this commentary I tried to establish the fundamental truths taught in this book of the Bible. I sought to determine the meaning of the symbols for those first century Christians who received and read this inspired book. I also endeavored to make applications from the principles of Revelation that would help Christians today. And, I made every effort to be consistent

As you read, study, understand the book and make application to your life, you will be blessed. (1:3)

## **COMMENTS:**

As you read the text you will notice the following format:

All Scripture references within Revelation are give with just chapter and verse, for example, a reference to Revelation 1:3 would be given as (1:3).

The bold text of this commentary is the New King James Version. This is the version from which I preach and study.

All quotations are cited with a *öworks citedö* number followed by a comma and the page number. For example a quotation from Ray Summerø's book, Worthy is the Lamb, would be given as (2, 153). On the top of the Bibliography page is the Works Cited section. The number of each work is the first number used, followed by the page number.

It is my prayer that your study of Revelation will be deepened by this study.

Yours for the Truth,  
Manly R. Luscombe

# Introductory Matters

## Introduction

1. "Neglected, misunderstood, and grossly perverted, the book of Revelation stands quite alone in the New Testament. Most readers have been content to pass it by with the attitude, "No one understands it anyway."
2. Shall we abandon this book? Since it is an accepted part of the book we call the Bible, we cannot just dismiss the book. God has given by inspiration this literature to us. We must study it.
3. Since we do not see fit to abandon it, is it not our duty before God and a confused world to seek earnestly to find the true meaning of the book? It is a mystery book. We do not always know the meaning of the symbols used.  
For example, imagine a political cartoon about the last presidential election. The cartoon shows a donkey and an elephant both pulling on a ballot. We understand the meaning of the donkey (Democrat) and elephant (Republican) but will it have any meaning 2,000 years from now?
4. "Revelation is difficult to study verse by verse because many times the meaning of a symbol used in one passage may have to be derived from a passage not yet studied. There are also symbols which may be best understood by collectively studying all passages dealing with them." (1, 5)

## Purpose of our study

1. To establish the fundamental truths in this book of the Bible.
2. To determine the meaning of the book for those who first received and read it.
3. To unearth applications for our situation today.
4. To present consistent interpretation to the entire book.

## Principles we will use in this study

1. The book is filled with symbols. It must have a symbolic meaning.
2. It must have had meaning to the 1<sup>st</sup> century Christians who read it.
3. The message of the book must have application to all eras of Christians.
4. This book must harmonize with all other teaching in the Bible.
5. This book teaches that God and Christ will triumph over evil and Satan.

## Purpose of the book being written

1. God sees their tears, pain and persecution. (7:17, 21:4)
2. Their prayers rule the world. (8:3-4)

3. Their death is precious in His sight. (14:13, 20:4)
4. Their final victory is assured. (15:2)
5. Their blood will be avenged. (6:9, 8:3)
6. Christ rules forever. (5:7-8)
7. Christ is coming again to receive His own. (21, 22)

### Parallel chart

O. T. Example	N. T. Parallel	Symbolism
Physical bondage	Spiritual bondage	Great Tribulation
Crossing Red Sea	Blood of Christ	First Resurrection
Mt. Sinai	Mt. Zion	Lamb on Mt. Zion
Wilderness	Church in world	1000 Year Reign
Jerusalem	Church (Holy City)	New Jerusalem

(1, xiv)

## Nature of Apocalyptic Literature

### *Background of Apocalyptic literature.*

When the Jews returned from captivity in Babylon they were very strongly monotheistic (loyal to the One True Living God). All the people around them were heathen polytheistic (believed in many gods). During the Greek period there was little attempt to molest the Jews. However, with the Romans in power the attitude shifted. The feelings of animosity toward the Jews (and later the Christians) intensified into hatred. Political events added to the tension. The result was a time of severe persecution.

Antiochus Epiphanes (175-164 BC) was a very dark time for the Jewish nation. He saw that the best way to destroy the nation was to destroy their religion.

The next political event to cause conditions to call for apocalyptic literature was the iron fist of Nero and Domitian (the time of Revelation being written). [More about this later.]

### *Conditions which prompt this type of literature.*

Troublous times give birth to this type of literature. Trial, suffering, sorrow, near-despair and death are the soil in which this literature grows.

Why is this literature written in such a cryptic manner? The times are dangerous. Plain language would be considered treason. The personal safety of the writer and the reader was in danger. So, the message was written to reveal and conceal at the same time ó Conceal from the outsider and Reveal to the initiated. Jesus spoke in parables for these same reasons. See Matthew 13:11-17.

### **Comparisons of Prophecy and Apocalyptic**

### In Content ó

*The predictive element is present in apocalyptic literature as well as prophecy.* But, in apocalypses the predictions are wider in scope and fulfilled over longer periods of time. They differ in their view of ðeschatologyö (end of time). Prophecy dealt with the end of Israel as a nation. Apocalypses deal with the end of the world.

### In Form ó

Both make use of visions. In prophecy the vision is described. Then, with the explanation of the vision comes the predictive element. In apocalyptic literature, the vision is the prediction. In prophecy the symbols are natural (bones represent death). In apocalypses the symbols have no natural connection with what they represent. This is the reason many try to explain symbols in Revelation and result in inconsistencies along the way.

### Non-canonical apocalypses

- Enoch (also called 1<sup>st</sup> Enoch) ó 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC
- Assumption of Moses ó 1<sup>st</sup> century AD
- Secrets of Enoch (also called 2<sup>nd</sup> Enoch) ó early 1<sup>st</sup> century AD
- Book of Baruch ó (scribe of Jeremiah) ó late 1<sup>st</sup> century AD
- Ezra IV ó late 1<sup>st</sup> century AD

## Characteristics of Apocalyptic Literature

### Historical Significance

Since this type of literature comes out of the stress and persecution of the time, it is important to know the historical setting of that time. Knowledge of the situation greatly aids in understanding the work.

REMEMBER: The main purpose in apocalyptic literature was to bring comfort, assurance, and courage in difficult days. To know the day's concerns is to know the courage needed and to understand the message. To ignore the historical setting is to ignore the main piece in the jigsaw of interpretation.

### Pseudonymous Authorship

Generally these books were written in the name of some great person of the past ó Adam, Abraham, Enoch, Moses, rather than their own names. Safety is certainly one reason for this.

Another reason is that the Jews believed that the revelation (Old Testament) was the complete revelation of God. Anyone who claimed inspiration was rejected. Also the typical Hebrew author was almost wholly devoid of the pride of authorship. The work was more important to them than pride of being the author.

## Message through Visions

While many books of prophecy use visions, it became the chief method of delivering the message. There has been much discussion as to whether they actually saw the vision or just use this means to describe events.

In the book of Revelation (as well as Daniel and Ezekiel) the visions seem to be real. Not only are the scenes described but John's feelings as the vision unfolds.

## Predictive Element

In such times of dark despair, the people needed to hear words of encouragement, to know that times would get better. You can see the present turmoil, persecution, upheaval and distress. Then there is the future of vindication, triumph and freedom from the handicaps they now experience.

## Use of Symbols

Ray Summers wrote, "The writer was faced with the task of seeing the invisible, painting the unpaintable, and expressing the inexpressible. The writing is therefore full of imagery and symbolism, which are hard to understand, and which make the task of the modern interpreter far removed from those conditions exceedingly difficult. Symbolism is a system in which qualities, ideas, principles, etc., are represented by things concrete." (Ray Summers, *Worthy is the Lamb*, page 20)

The writer uses symbols to communicate his thoughts to those who are familiar with the process and at the same time concealing his ideas from those outside this circle.

The symbols are often arbitrary rather than natural. The meaning of the greater part of the symbols is clear, but there are some for which there are many varied opinions.

## Chart of Symbols

Symbol	Passage	Definition	Definition Passage
Babylon the great	18:2, 10	She is also called the mother of harlots; fornication, immorality with ability to control the lives of many people	18:3; 1 Chronicles 9:1
Beast out of the sea	11:7; 13:11; 17:8, 11	Religious powers which control the lives of many people upon the earth, also called the false prophet	Daniel 7:13, 15
Beast out of the earth	13:1; 17:8, 11	Civil persecuting governments which rule this world	Daniel 7

Bride	21:9	The church	Romans 7:4
False prophet	16:13; 19:20; 20:10	Religious powers which practice false teachings	2 Peter 2:1
First resurrection	20:5	Spiritual resurrection; Baptism	Ephesians 2:5, 6
Great city	11:8; 17:18; 18:10	Those people who worship God but not according to the teachings of the Bible; The apostate church	17:2, 18
Holy city, Holy Jerusalem, New Jerusalem	21:2, 10; 22:19	The church	Hebrews 12:22, 23
Lamb	5:6, 12	Christ	John 1:29
Mountains	6:14; 8:8; 17:9	Great governmental powers which rule this world	Amos 4:1
Second death	20:14; 21:8	Spiritual death; Destruction in hell	21:8
Sun, moon, and stars	6:12, 13; 8:12; 12:4	Lights of the world; Those forces which direct the physical and spiritual lives of people	See 6:12
Temple	11:1, 19; 15:8	The church; The dwelling place of God	1 Corinthians 3:16; 2 Corinthians 6:16
White robes	3:4, 18; 7:9, 14; 19:8	The righteousness of saints	19:8
¼ part of man	6:8	The physical part of man	See 6:8
1/3 part of man	8:9; 12:4	The spiritual part of man	See 8:6
1000 years	20:4, 6	The Christian dispensation; The gospel age	See 20:4

# Numerology

There are three factors that we must understand about numbers and their use in apocalyptic literature.

## Letter / number relationships

Think with me for a minute. Go back to those first ðABCö books in your childhood. ðA (1) is for Apple, B (2) is for ball, C (3) is for cat, D (4) is for dog, E (5) is for elephant. In this simple illustration an apple could represent the number one. The number one could represent an apple. The apple (or number one) could represent the letter A. There is a three-way connection.

In early language development and alphabet development letters were used for numbers. Here was the usual process. The first nine letters are single digit numbers (1-9). Then you begin 10, 20, 30, 40, etc. up to 90. Then you have 100, 200, 300, etc.

Here are our alphabet and the numerical equivalents:

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	20
L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V
30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100	200	300	400
W	X	Y	Z							
500	600	700	800							

## Addition of letter equivalents

The next step in the process was to find the sum of the letter values. Using the chart above notice that ðCATö would be the numbers, 3, 1, 200. Add those three numbers and cat = 204. ðManlyö has a numerical equivalence of 821. Superstitious people would determine destiny, tell fortunes, and encrypt signatures on a document using these numbers. Jesus would be J=10, E=5, S=100, U=300, S=100 ó Thus, Jesus = 515. By the use of such ðcodeö numbers they could discuss Jesus without using his name. They could say, ðWe met at 515 and had a good discussion.ö Translated, this meant that the church met and learned more about Jesus.

## Number Symbolism

Numbers came to represent concepts and ideas. I will give you just a brief introduction to this concept.

## Numbers

1 = Unity, independence, alone

2 = Courage, strength, energy

3 = God (trinity), triangle, divine power

4 = World (4 directions, 4 corners), human world, work, live and die in this world

5 = Completeness, full, well-rounded man, all members intact (5 fingers, 5 toes)

6 = Imperfect, just short of perfection, defeat, failure

7 = Combine 4 (man) and 3 (God) and you get 7, a perfect number.

### Multiply

10, 70 = multiples of numbers were used to emphasize the single digit.

Jesus was asked about forgiving 7 times. He responded until 70 times 7. He was saying perfection multiplied by perfection times perfection.

$$4 \times 3 = 12$$

### Divide

7 divided by 2 =  $3\frac{1}{2}$  -  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years, 42 months, 1260 days are the same length of time

### Chart of Numerology

Number	Definition
1	Unity of the ability to stand alone. God is one Lord.
2	Strength or courage. 2 are stronger than 1. The disciples of Jesus went out by 2s.
3	Deity. The divine or spiritual number. The Godhead is a 3-fold in nature, God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit.
4	The physical world in which we live. The 4 winds and 4 corners of earth are frequently used. There are also 4 directions of the earth: north, south, east, and west.
7	Perfection. A sacred number, the perfect divine number, 3, plus the perfect number of this physical world, 4, equals 7 or total perfection.
10	Completeness. If a person has all 10 fingers and toes, he is humanly complete. The number 5 is used in connection with this to mean half complete or more specifically, incomplete or short of persecution.
1000; 10 X 10	Ultimate completeness

X 10	
12	Organized religion. There were 12 tribes of Israel and 12 apostles. They represent the two laws which God gave man to follow.
6	Evil. This number falls short of the perfect number 7. It carries with it the idea of impending doom or destruction.
3 ½	A time of despair or confusion. This number is expressed several ways such as time, times, and half a time, 1260 days, and 42 months.
144,000	The entire redeemed from the earth; all God's people of all ages.

## Drama

One of the most striking elements of apocalyptic literature is the graphic, forceful and vivid drama. There is tension and suspense. What will happen? The symbols add to the drama. Blood, dragons, war, grotesque creatures and Death riding a horse make the scene come alive and you feel the trepidation.

## Methods of interpreting the book of Revelation

The interpretation of the book of Revelation depends entirely upon the method of approach. There are as many interpretations and explanations as there are men to write them. I have 25 commentaries on the book of Revelation. No two of them agree on various parts. (See Bibliography for a list of these.)

But the views of the writers (Expositors of Revelation) are so utterly conflicting that the student of them soon finds himself driven to take from each whatever of useful suggestions he may find there, and then proceed independently in his search for the meaning and lesson of the book. (2, 27)

With the many diverse views, all the commentaries fall into five major categories.

### 1. Futurist Method

The futurist method is so called because they interpret the entire book from chapter 4 to the end of the book as unfulfilled prophecy. The futurists hold that the events from chapters 4 to 19 are to take place in a 7-year period. This is called the period of tribulation, called the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel 9.

To some the book becomes largely a problem of celestial mathematics; and they are more concerned with calculating of time charts than they are of securing social and economic and political righteousness for their immediate neighbors. (2, 28)

Most of the futurists are millenarians in their theology. Some of the major branches of this theory include Pre-tribulation, Post-tribulation, Mid-tribulation, Dispensational, Darbyite, and a dozen more varieties.

They hold that Jesus came to establish a visible rule on earth and that John the Baptist had this in mind when he preached that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. Jesus set out his standards for this kingdom, but the Jews rejected him and his plans. The offer was then withdrawn, and the kingdom was postponed until the second coming. (2, 30)

### Objections

1. **Shortly** ó It is inconsistent with the statement made by John that the events were in the main to come to pass soon. The word "must" is from a Greek word that means, "it is a moral necessity." Paul told Timothy to come "quickly" or "shortly." In the context it meant, come before this winter.
2. **No relation to 1<sup>st</sup> century** ó This view does nothing for the suffering Christian in the first century. There is not any encouragement that thousands of years from now some event will take place. One of the basic principles of understanding any scripture is to start with what it meant to the generation which first received it.
3. **Inconsistent** ó Chapter 12 is a problem for the futurist. The book is taken as literal until they arrive at chapter 12. Then they become believers in symbolism.
4. **Materialistic** ó The futurist method is a materialistic philosophy of the kingdom of God.

### Strong Points

1. **Literal** ó They take the Bible at its word. There is a firm belief in not adding or taking from the Word of God.
2. **Hope** ó Their view places the strongest emphasis on the return of Christ.
3. **Evangelism** ó This view is the most evangelistic method of interpretation.

## 2. Continuous – Historical Method

This method has several different names attached to it. All of them come down to one central principle. This method looks on the book of Revelation as a forecast, in symbols, of the history of the church (and for some, a history of the world) from the first century until the second coming.

For example ó the following is a sample of this method.

- 1<sup>st</sup> seal ó Domitian death (180 AD)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> seal ó Death of Commodus (193 AD)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> seal ó Caracalla (211 AD)
- 4<sup>th</sup> seal ó Gallienus (243-268 AD)
- 5<sup>th</sup> seal ó Diocletian persecution (284-304 AD)
- 6<sup>th</sup> seal ó Invasion of barbarians (365 AD)

They interpret every section as a sequence of events in history. Some can see world wars, Hitler, Russia, Kennedy assassination and other events. Of course as history continues, the final events must be adjusted. In the 1930s Hitler was seen as the antichrist and the end of the world was near.

John T. Hinds, Gospel Advocate Commentary Series and Albert Barnes Notes are familiar commentaries with this view. Hinds' focus was more on the rise of the Catholic Church and the papacy. Barnes places greater emphasis on the civil and world history.

## Objections

1. **Out of touch** ó This view is entirely out of touch with the Christians to whom the book was written. They are being killed, threatened, and persecuted. How does learning about the rise of Russia or Hitler starting WWII help them?
2. **Catholic emphasis** ó This view places undue importance on the Roman Catholic Church and ignores the other major branches. What about the Orthodox Church, which is larger than the Roman branch?
3. **Narrow** ó The ability to interpret each passage is limited to your view of the passage on each side of it. If all the events are in sequence then you must find an event that fits the description and fits between the preceding and the following sections.
4. **Sometimes absurd** ó In this search to make everything fit in its place, some passages are explained away to the point of being absurd.
5. **Calculations** ó Like the futurists, it is necessary to do a lot of calculation of times, and periods to make everything fit. They must decide that a day = a year. That each year is 360 days. That each month is 30 days long. That 42 months = 3.5 years = 1260 days = 1,260 years. Then they must decide when to begin counting and when to end counting. Finally they must find a significant event to mark each end of the period.

## Strong Points

There are no strong points for this method. It gained popularity as a means to oppose the papacy and the Roman Catholic Church. There is no reason to accept this view except that some just want to believe this method is correct.

## 3. Philosophy of History Method

This method completely removes the book from the historical setting of the first century. The belief is that the book of Revelation sets out the principles on the basis of which God deals with men in all ages. Symbols are understood to refer to forces or tendencies and may thus be fulfilled over and over as these forces or tendencies are repeated in history.

For example, the wild beast rising out of the sea (Revelation 13) is seen as the secular powers antagonistic to the church whenever and wherever that power arises. The second beast represents corrupt religious power.

All the various visions, seals, trumpets, bowls of wrath, are seen as showing the same thing from different viewpoints. William Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors*, is one of the more familiar commentaries holding this view.

### **Objections**

1. **Removed** ó This view also removes the intent of the book from those to whom it was written.
2. **Narrow** ó It holds that symbols refer to forces or tendencies and that there are no specific prophecies of specific events in the book.

### **Strong Points**

1. Recognizes the book of Revelation has some meaning to those who first received it.
2. Realizes the hand of God in history. He has not left the world to evil men. God is still in charge and He is still dealing with men in a consistent manner.
3. Comprehends the goal of all history is moving toward a complete triumph. His purpose and His plan will not fail.

## **4. Preterist Method**

This method is the opposite of the futurist view. The futurists claim all the book of Revelation is yet to be fulfilled. The preterist believes that the entire book was fulfilled in the first century.

The word ðpreteristö is from a Latin word meaning ðpast or beyond.ö This method of interpretation believes that all things in the book are in the past, not future. They were ðsoon to come to passö and they did.

### **Objections**

1. This view has few solid objections. It does require an early date for the book. For most of this book to be fulfilled in the first century, it is necessary to have to book written before the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD.
2. I will deal with the arguments for an early or late date later on in this study.

### **Strong Points**

1. It is true to the background of the work. It keeps the historical situation in view.
2. It is the best method that gives meaning to those who first read this work.
3. The preterist view gives room for a universal application of the message of the book.
4. It is the most consistent view as it relates to the entire New Testament.

## 5. Historical – Background Method

The final method of interpretation is, thought by some, to be a part of the preterist view. It is separate from the preterist method because the preterist views the entire book as belonging to the first century and that it has nothing to offer for us today.

The approach that I am using suggests:

1. You should keep in mind that the writer wrote his message primarily for the encouragement and edification of the Christians of his own time.
2. This book is written in symbolic language. As we have ability, we can seek to understand the symbols and their meaning.
3. Revelation uses Old Testament terminology with New Testament meanings. Many of the expressions are found in the Old Testament. However, in the book of Revelation, the symbol, phrase, imagery is given a new meaning. Some have thought that a symbol must mean the same every place it is used, Old or New Testament. Not true. The same symbol may have a different meaning in different places in the same book.
4. You must see the book as a whole ó one moving picture ó without pressing the details of the symbolism. Many of the details are there for dramatic effect. If you spend all your time trying to figure out every symbol in the vision, you will get bogged down in the details and you will lose the big picture of the vision.
5. Revelation is addressed to the imagination. It must be seen in mind's eye as the various scenes are described with intense drama.

# Historical Background of Revelation

I have already stated that, in order to understand the book of Revelation, one must understand the world situation at that time. What was going on in the world? What was the danger that they faced? How would reading this book offer them any encouragement, hope or courage?

There are four matters that remain to be discussed before we can begin to study the text itself.

## 1. Authorship

### Was it written pseudonymously?

Most apocalyptic literature was written with a false name, usually some person from Biblical history. The literature would be signed as if written by Moses, Enoch, Abraham or some other figure from ancient history. Was Revelation signed by a pseudonym?

1. Because the Jews believed inspiration had ended, no work was accepted unless it claimed to have been written during the time of inspiration. This was not true for the church. In the first century all the New Testament works were being written and well accepted as inspired.
2. The author claimed a current name, not one from another century.
3. The author also identified his location and the location of his audience.
4. These facts tell us that the author is not writing under a false identity.

### John is the author

There are several questions to be discussed here. Which John is this?

There are some clues to help us with the identity.

1. He was Jewish. He knew the Old Testament. He knew the books of prophecy like Daniel and Ezekiel.
2. He was familiar with Asia Minor. He knew the cities and their situation.
3. He had settled in Ephesus until his exile to Patmos.
4. He was recognized as an authority, had power, in the churches of Asia Minor.
5. He is a sensitive man with deep spiritual insights.
6. He has a deep faith in God and is not afraid to speak the truth.

The traditional position is that this is John the son of Zebedee. Some object to this but they have been in the minority since the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. From Justin Martyr on, most of the early church fathers taught that John was the author of this work. This would include Aurelius in 166, Irenaeus in 190, and Polycarp in 120.

NOTE: Polycarp was a student of John in Ephesus. Irenaeus was a student of Polycarp. These two have a direct link to John and their claims must be considered seriously.

Later church fathers also credit John with this book. These would include Clement of Alexandria in 323, Tertullian in 220, Origen in 223, and Hippolytus in 240.

The internal evidence is clear. John claims to be the author (1:1, 4, 9; 22:8). Other factors of the internal evidence include:

1. **Chain of authority.** He gives the direct link of how the message came from God, through Christ to an angel who delivered it to John.
2. **Terminology.** The gospel of John uses the Greek work *ōlogosō* (Word) to describe Jesus (1:1, 14). He also uses this term in 1 John 1:1. The same term is used in Revelation 19:13.
3. **Spear.** John is the only one of the gospels that tells of the spear in the side of Christ. (John 19:34) It is also mentioned in Revelation 1:7.
4. **Lamb of God.** The gospel of John uses the phrase *ōlamb of Godō* to describe Jesus. (John 1:29, 36) This phrase is also used in Revelation 22 times.

There are some who object to John's authorship. Dionysius, a student of Origen, did not agree with his teacher. He rejected John as the author based on syntax and vocabulary. However, the differences in vocabulary and sentence structure are apparent because this is not an epistle, it is apocalyptic in nature. The style and vocabulary are different.

The same author could write a novel and a school textbook. The vocabulary would be different because of the disparity in purpose.

### **Other names suggested**

With brief comments (if any) here is a list of other names some have offered as the author of Revelation.

1. John Mark ó primary argument is with his age, younger, more active late in 1<sup>st</sup> century
2. John the Elder ó Papias mentions another John as an elder at Ephesus. Some have supposed that he is the author of Revelation. He was at Ephesus. We do not know if he wrote anything.

### **Conclusion**

It seems that honesty and fairness demands that we accept John the son of Zebedee as the author of Revelation. The evidence from those who were his students and students of his students give the weightiest evidence in his favor. The internal evidence demonstrates a link with the author of the gospel of John and the book of 1 John.

## 2. Date

When the book of Revelation was written has been in much dispute. Here is what we do know. We know it was written during a time of severe persecution. There are two major views ó Early date (65) and Late date (95-96). What follows is a discussion of the arguments for each.

### Early date

The early date, also called the Neroian date, is claimed primarily by the preterists. There are three main arguments for the early date.

1. **Temple** ó There is reference in Revelation 11:1. It is argued that the temple had to remain at the writing of this book. The temple was destroyed in 70 AD.
2. **Persecution** ó Since the book was written at a time of persecution, the early date fits the time of Nero, who persecuted Christians around 65 AD. It was under the reign of Nero that Paul was in prison in Rome and died under Nero's command.
3. **666** ó It is argued that the number of the beast is discovered if you take the name ðNron Ksrö (translated Nero Kaisar in Greek). If you take the name of the Roman Emperor, translate his name and title into Greek, give the letters their Hebrew number equivalent, the total is 666. How logical is that?

*Objections to these arguments* ó It is not necessary for the temple to be left standing for Revelation 11:1. It was necessary that John be familiar with the temple. The measuring of the temple was not literal because John is in exile on an island far removed from Jerusalem. Temple or no temple, the measuring was not literal.

### Late date

The internal condition of the church forbids an early date. Here are the arguments for a later date, probably around 95 or 96 AD.

1. **Christians were being persecuted for not worshipping the emperor.** This did not occur during the reign of Nero. It did take place in the reign of Domitian.
2. Some of these churches had only been organized a few years when the persecution of Nero came.
3. The persecution of Nero was primarily in and around Rome. Domitian's persecution was over the entire empire.
4. **Early church fathers give the date as the time of Domitian.** Origen says that John wrote near the end of the reign of Domitian. Victorious, Hippolytus, Clement of Alexandria, and Jerome ó all state it was during the time of Domitian's reign that John wrote.
5. **Domitian was emperor from 81 to 96 AD.** He is known as the one who bathed the empire in the blood of Christians. His persecution was for the purpose of enforcing emperor worship. Domitian and Christianity were in a struggle of life and death.

## Conclusion

I believe that the later date better fits the situation, the crisis for the writing and the account of 1<sup>st</sup> century witnesses. This means the book was written around 95 or 96 AD.

## 3. Recipients

Who first read this letter? The simple answer is found in the text of Revelation 1:4 and 11. The seven churches of Asia are named. They are also addressed separately in chapters 2 and 3. The condition of the Christians who first received Revelation was very critical.

1. **Christianity was an illegal religion.** Christianity was *ōreligio illicitaō* in the Roman Empire. Christianity was seen as a run away truck going down hill with no brakes. Somehow, somehow the emperor had to stop this religious fervor from sweeping the world.
2. **Christianity was quickly becoming universal.** They were going everywhere preaching the word. They were making converts faster than anyone could get organized to stop them.
3. **Christianity was an exclusive religion.** Members of the 1<sup>st</sup> century church refused to mingle freely with the customs and social life of the pagan world around them. They refused to enter pagan temples. Christians rejected pagan rituals and customs.
4. **Christians were accused of all manner of evils.** Because of misunderstanding, hatred and derision, the Christians were indicted with:

Eating flesh and drinking blood (reference to the Lord's Supper)

Cannibalism *ō* eating the body of Christ

Incest *ō* loving each other, hugging, kissing, fellowships, love feasts, calling each other brother and sister

5. **Christians refused to go to war.** There was a real fear that they would kill a brother in Christ.
6. Christianity grew most among the poor and outcast. They were not *ō*respectable.*ō*
7. Among Christians was contempt for the evil Roman government.
8. **They were accused of being fanatics** because of their wild enthusiasm.
9. **Christians refused to worship the emperor.** They refused to call him *ō*Lord*ō* when they believed that Jesus was their one and only Lord.
10. **Christians were blamed for all the calamities that came** *ō* fire, drought, flood, famine, earthquake, and military losses. Christians had offended the Roman deities.

## 4. Conditions in Roman Empire

As we seek to understand the book of Revelation, we must understand the conditions of the Roman Empire as the 1<sup>st</sup> century came to a close. Here are some observations about the Roman world.

1. **Conquests and Commerce.** The Greek world was built on education, art, writing, philosophy, and other branches of the fine arts. In contrast the Roman world was built by war, conquest, forceful takeover of territory and was established by international trade, shipping, and commerce. The Romans built the first interstate (international) road system, with mile markers, maps and road signs. Shipping was expanded so one could purchase goods from Rome, Spain, Egypt, Arabia and the Orient.
2. **Wealthy rich.** The upper class was very wealthy. Some would have literally hundreds of slaves, each with only one specific task. It is said that some wealthy women would have a slave for each shade or type of makeup (eyes, cheeks, lips). They wore expensive jewelry. Seneca, a friend of Nero, wrote that some wealthy ladies wore two or three estates suspended from their ears.
3. **Impoverished.** There was no middle class. The rich were very rich and the poor were very poor. There was little difference in slaves and free working people. Little work was done for hire. The rich had slaves to do everything. Even if you were free from slavery, you had no means to earn a living. Many would beg to become a slave in order to survive.
4. **Moral decline.** One only needs to read Romans 1:18-32 to understand the very immoral world of the Romans. Their moral decline was blatant and bold. Paul ended this long list of wicked deeds by including those who took pleasure that such was being done. Evil made no attempt to hide in the darkness. Marriage was a commercial transaction that could be cancelled anytime. When children became a burden to a family, the children were sold into slavery. The parents justified this by saying, they will eat for the rest of their lives, and we will eat for a while longer.
5. **Religious debauchery.** The penetration of evil had defiled even ceremonies of religions. The women at these pagan festivals had become prostitutes. By the time of Domitian, the Emperor had declared himself to be God, Lord of the Empire. All were commanded to bow before his statue, drop a pinch of incense in the fire and say, "Caesar is Lord." Anyone who refused was guilty of treason against the state and was to be executed.  
The Christians of the 1<sup>st</sup> century saw their faith about to be crushed by the Roman government and wondered about the outcome. Revelation was badly needed to assure them of victory.

Ray Summers concludes, "This message is peculiarly relevant today ó the call to choose the eternal rather than the temporal; to resist temptation, to refuse to compromise with pagan secularism, to place the claim of conscience above all demands against it; to cherish the confidence of ultimate victory for the kingdom of God, not only in the reign of Domitian but also in every other chaotic period of world history, including the twentieth century." (2, 93)

# Outline

Here is an outline of the book of Revelation in some material written by Steve Flatt.

## **Introduction 1:1-20**

- A. The purpose of the book is related and the original readers identified 1:1-8
- B. John tells of his call to write the book and recalls his vision of the glorified Christ 1:9-20

## **The letters to the seven churches of Asia 2 – 3**

- A. Ephesus 2:1-7
- B. Smyrna 2:8-11
- C. Pergamos 2:12-17
- D. Thyatira 2:18-29
- E. Sardis 3:1-6
- F. Philadelphia 3:7-13
- G. Laodicea 3:14-22

## **The vision of God enthroned and the scroll with the seven seals 4 – 7**

- A. Almighty God is surrounded by a heavenly host 4:1-11
- B. John saw a book containing the destiny of mankind in the Father's hand 5:1-5
- C. The book was taken by the Lamb as all heaven praised him 5:6-14
- D. As the seals of the book were opened, four forces are unleashed against the church:
  - 1. Conquest 6:1-2
  - 2. War 6:3-4
  - 3. Famine 6:7-8
  - 4. Death 6:7-8
- E. As the sixth seal is opened, the martyrs cry out for vindication 6:9-11
- F. The opening of the sixth seal begins the judgment of the church's enemies 6:12-17
- G. Prior to that judgment there is a sealing of God's saints 7:1-17

## **Sounding of the seven trumpets 8:1 - 11:19**

- A. Seven trumpets are sounded 8:1-6
- B. The first four are blown in rapid succession and the environment is affected 8:7-12
- C. The fifth trumpet begins the torment against Rome 9:1-12
- D. The sixth trumpet envisions external invasions on the empire 9:13-21

- E. John sees an angel holding a scroll which he is told to eat 10:1-10
- F. The temple of God (His church) is measured as an assurance of her divine protection 11:1-14, and the seventh trumpet sounds to signify the overthrow of her enemies 11:15-19

### **Vision of the church and her foes 12 – 14**

- A. New set of figures are introduced
  - 1. A woman, a child, and a dragon are the central characters 12:1-6
  - 2. They represent Israel, Christ, and Satan, respectively
- B. Satan tries to destroy Christ and his people 12:7-17
- C. He calls two allies:
  - 1. Beast from the sea 13:1-10
  - 2. Beast from the earth 13:11-18
- D. Triumph of the saints is secured as the 144,000 are safe at home with the Lamb 14:1-5
- E. A series of angels announce divine judgment against God's enemies 14:6-20

### **The seven bowls of wrath 15 – 16**

- A. Seven more angels unleash the last and most devastating plagues against the Roman Empire 15:1-8
- B. The bowls of wrath are poured on:
  - 1. Earth 16:1-2
  - 2. Sea 16:3
  - 3. Fresh waters 16:4-7
  - 4. Sun 16:8-9
  - 5. Throne of the beast 16:10-11
  - 6. Euphrates River 16:12-16
  - 7. Air 16:17-21

### **The judgment and fall of "Babylon" 17:1 – 19:21**

- A. Rome is pictured as a harlot 17:1-6
- B. The mystery of the beast and harlot are explained 17:7-18
- C. Rome (symbolically, Babylon) is overthrown 18:1-24
- D. Heaven praises! 19:1-10
- E. The beast and false prophet are destroyed 19:11-21

### **The judgment of Satan and Humankind 20**

- A. The devil is bound for 1000 years 20:1-3

- B. The martyrs reign with Christ 20:4-6
- C. Final overthrow of Satan is pictured 20:7-10
- D. Judgment of humanity is described 20:11-15

**The eternal home 21 – 22**

- A. John is allowed a glimpse of heaven 21:1 ó 22:15
- B. Conclusion 22:6-21

## Method of Study

As we approach the study of the text itself, there are several final observations that must be made.

1. **Select a method of interpretation.** Before you can begin to study the book you must decide which approach you will use. Review the five methods of interpretation discussed earlier and decide which one makes more sense to you.
2. **Be very careful about trying to explain EVERY symbol, term, or expression.** Some are inserted for drama and visual effect. If you get bogged down in trying to figure out every symbol you will lose the main story of this book.
3. Keep the objectives of the writing in mind.
  - a. Comfort to persecuted Christians
  - b. Prophecy to the church about its immediate future (take cover)
  - c. Prophecy to apostates and those denying the truth of the gospel (a warning)
  - d. Build faith in the church and its future
  - e. Great Victory is coming (it will be worth the persecution)
  - f. Glorify God
4. Try to look at the book through 1<sup>st</sup> century glasses.

Revelation is possibly the most fascinating book in the Bible. It was written in the form of apocalyptic literature, which makes use of symbols and figures to express spiritual concepts. Sometimes the figures described are almost beyond our ability to visualize. Yet, God gave these symbols to the apostle John to be written down for our study and understanding. We know these symbols are understandable because 22:9 says that we can "keep the saying of this book" and 22:14 says that those who "do his commandments" will be blessed. Certainly God will not promise to bless us with sayings which cannot be understood. (1, 1)

# Revelation 1

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

- A. This is a single ðRevelationö, not multiple revelations. Most books of prophecy describe multiple scenes, visions, or dreams. This book is one revelation. It contains one motion picture in living color.
- B. John does not claim this work to be original with him. It is the revelation of Jesus Christ. Jesus does the unveiling. John gives the ðchain of authorityö - - God ó Jesus Christ ó his angel ó John ó written form.
- C. Purpose is given clearly. To show things that will happen shortly. There is much division on the word ðshortlyö. It could mean in the next months or years. It could mean shortly as God counts time.
- D. The word ðmustö is an important word. These things are not a guess. They are sure. These are things that must happen. The Greek word here is an impersonal verb that indicates that a moral necessity is involved. God has issued the decree. God does not lie. These things will happen.

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

- A. John is well known in Asia Minor. Before he was banished to Patmos, he lived and taught in Ephesus and the surrounding area. He, since the day of Pentecost, more than 60 years ago, has been one who testified as a witness to the resurrection of Christ.
- B. This book is the record of what he saw. This is a revelation, a parting of the curtain, where John is allowed to see things yet in the future.

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

- A. A triple blessing is pronounced here.
  - 1. **He that reads** ó A blessing is upon those who give an oral or public reading of this book in the church assembly. Many church assemblies of the first century included a public reading of a section of scripture.
  - 2. **They that hear** ó those who listen to the words being read are also blessed. Listening implies more than just receiving an audible sound. Listening includes understanding, heeding, and obeying the message they heard.

3. **Keep those things** ó The real blessing comes when we follow the commands, heed the warnings and believe the promises.
- B. John repeats what was said in verse one. These things will happen shortly. They are seen as *ōat handō* or within reach. They are close enough that one could reach out and touch them. There would be no encouragement to say, *ōHere are some things that will happen in a couple of thousand years.ō*

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

- A. The common manner of beginning a letter in the first century was to identify the author, then express a greeting to those who were the intended recipients.
- B. **John, the son of Zebedee** is the author. See full discussion in the introduction where the authorship is explained in detail.
- C. **To the seven churches** ó We know there were more than 7 churches in this area. The letter to the Colossians was also to be read at the nearby city of Laodicia. (Colossians 4:15-16)
- D. **Grace and peace** ó was a common greeting. While these words have theological connections, they mean nothing more here than when we say, *ōHello. How are you?ō* It is a common greeting.
- E. **Which was** ó Jesus WAS here on earth. He lived, taught, performed miracles, and had many converts. He was killed, buried and raised from the dead on the third day.
- F. **Is to come** ó He promised a 2<sup>nd</sup> coming. (John 14:3) We do not worship a dead savior. We serve a living, resurrected Lord. He is alive and coming again.
- H. **Seven** ó Seven is an important number throughout the book of Revelation. It must be understood to be symbolic of completeness, perfection, and wholeness. There were 7 churches, 7 angels, 7 seals, 7 trumpets, 7 bowls of wrath, 7 candlesticks, 7 stars, etc. We know that there were more than 7 churches in this area. So, the 7 churches are understood to represent the whole, complete body of Christ.
- I. **Spirits before the throne** ó Who are these spirits? Several possibilities ó martyrs, angels ready to deliver letters in chapters 2 and 3, the perfect spirit of God, the Holy Spirit.

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

- A. **From Jesus Christ** ó This book is called *ōThe Revelation of Jesus Christō*. Many Bibles title this book *ōThe Revelation of Saint Johnō*. The latter is incorrect. John is not seeking the gain, fame or glory for this work. It is from Jesus Christ.
- B. **Faithful witness** ó Jesus was faithful in teaching the will of His Father. He was faithful to the law of God. He was faithful to His mission. He willingly died for the sins of the world.

- C. **First begotten from the dead** ó While not the first to be raised from the dead, Jesus is the first to be raised from the dead to immortality. There were several raised from the dead in the Old Testament. Jesus and his apostles raised many. But all of these resurrections were temporary. They later faced physical death again. Jesus is the first to overcome death.
- D. **Ruler of the kings of the earth** ó Jesus is King over all kings, Lord over all lords. In our day, we think of the king as supreme. Not so in the Roman Empire. Judea had a king who was subject to the emperor and all his princes. A Roman prince was over a Judean king.
- E. **Unto him that loved us** ó Jesus loved us and died for us. (Romans 5:6-8)
- F. **Washed us from our sins** ó Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. (Hebrews 9:22) Jesus shed his blood for the remission of sins. (Matthew 26:28)
- G. **In his own blood** ó The blood of an animal sacrifice could not take away sin. (Hebrews 10:4) The forgiveness of sins required a perfect sacrifice, the sinless Son of God.

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

- A. **Made us kings** ó Christians, as fellow citizens in the Kingdom of Christ, are also kings.
- B. **Priests unto God** ó Christ is our King of kings and our High Priest. We are kings and priests, participants in the spiritual kingdom of our Lord. We are a royal priesthood. (1 Peter 2:5) We do not go to a priest. We are the priests. We are a priesthood of believers.
- C. **Glory and dominion** ó All praise, honor and glory belong to Jesus. He is the ruler. He has all authority. (Matthew 28:18) He is our King forever.
- D. **Amen** ó Just as we end our prayers with this word, it is often used to denote the end of a section. This verse ends the opening greeting. What follows is the heart of the message.

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

- A. **Comes with clouds** ó An angel said that Jesus would return in the same manner as he went from the earth.
- B. **Every eye shall see him** ó This passage teaches a general resurrection of all men who have ever lived. All will be made alive and alert as Jesus comes.
- C. **They that pierced him** ó The Roman soldier who thrust the spear in his side will see his triumphant return. The soldiers who drove the nails in his hands and feet will witness the second coming of Christ.

- D. **Wail because of him** ó The wicked, unbelievers, atheists, and agnostics will see him and moan, groan, and wail because the proof is now before them, but too late.
- E. **Even so, Amen** ó A short prayer that simply said, “I am ready for it to happen. The sooner the better. Let Jesus come now.” The revelation ends with a similar prayer, “Even so, come Lord Jesus.”

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

- A. **Alpha and Omega** ó These are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. We have phrases like, “From soup to nuts” or “Everything from A to Z.” Jesus is our all in all. He is everything from the first letter in the dictionary to the last word in the dictionary.
- B. **Beginning** ó Jesus was before the beginning. (John 1:1) Jesus was involved in all parts of creation. (Colossians 1:16-17) Jesus was involved in the formation of all things. Nothing exists apart from Jesus’ creative powers.
- C. **Ending** ó He will bring this world to its fiery end. He is eternal ó both eternal in the past ó without beginning ó and in the future ó without end. Just as he participated in the creations of all things, he will be involved in the end of all things.
- D. **Is, was, and is to come** ó God is the great I AM. God is always in the present tense. You may speak of a deed that God did in the past, but God is always present tense. God is. The same is true of Jesus. He is. He was here on earth in human form. But he is in the eternal present. There is a sense in which Jesus WAS on earth in human form. There is a sense in which Jesus IS TO COME, when he comes to redeem the faithful bride. But Jesus always IS.
- E. **Almighty** ó The most common attribute ascribed to deity in the Bible is his power. God is all-powerful. Nothing is impossible with God. He is the Almighty God.

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

- A. **Brother** ó As a member of the church, we are in the family of God. We are brothers and sisters in Christ. We are family. We share a common faith, love and hope.
- B. **Companion in tribulation** ó John understands their hardship and persecution. He, too, is suffering persecution. He has been sent to a prison island called Patmos.
- C. **In the kingdom** ó The church is the kingdom of God. (Matthew 16:18-19) This verse is one of three in the New Testament that speaks of the kingdom in the present tense. The kingdom was already in existence in the first century. (Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 12:28)

- D. **Patience** ó Here is the heart of the message of this book. God is aware of the suffering of His people. He will deal with this evil, in His time. We must be patient to wait for God.
- E. **Patmos** ó This small island in the Aegean Sea was used to exile prisoners. There were no other islands near by. The only escape was to be taken by boat. Most of the prisoners lived here in caves, grew small gardens and struggled to survive.
- F. **For the word of God** ó The reason John is here is not because he committed a felony or was guilty of some terrible crime against humanity. He is here because he preached the word of God.
- G. **For the testimony of Jesus Christ** ó The Roman government saw the rapid spread of Christianity as a real threat. It had to be stopped.

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

- A. **In the Spirit** ó John was in tune with the Spirit of God. The message was being delivered but John had to be aware of its message, importance and willing to record the vision. Some believe John was in a trance like Peter was in Acts 10:10-11. Others think John was in a spiritual frame of mind on this Lord's Day.
- B. **Lord's Day** ó Sunday, the first day of the week, was called the Lord's Day by many in the first and second centuries. Many of the church fathers used this term to tell when the church would worship together and partake of communion.  
Remember ó It was on Sunday (Lord's Day) that Jesus was raised from the dead. He appeared to the men on the road to Emmaus.  
He met with 10 apostles on a Sunday.
- C. **He met with 11 apostles**, including Thomas, the following Sunday.  
The day of Pentecost, when the church began, was on a Sunday.  
The early church assembled to partake of communion on Sunday.  
The church was to give as part of their assembly each Sunday.
- D. **Great voice, trumpet** ó Here, the drama starts. John does not just hear a voice. He hears a great voice. Then he describes that voice. It was like a trumpet in his ear.

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

- A. **Write what you see** ó John is instructed to record the events as they are revealed to him.
- B. **Send it to the seven churches** ó This was not to be a private journal for John to keep. It was to be copied, read, studied, distributed, and obeyed.
- C. **List of the seven churches** ó We will introduce each church as we come to them in chapters 2 and 3.

- D. The order of the churches listed here follows the location of the churches in a circular motion.

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

- A. **I turned** ó John wanted to see who was speaking. He turned toward the trumpeting voice.
- B. **Seven golden candlesticks** ó John does not see the source of the voice. Instead, he sees the ultimate recipients of his writings.

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

- A. **In the middle** ó Walking around among these candlesticks (churches) John sees the Son of man.
- B. **Son of man** ó One of the terms used to describe Jesus was the Son of man. Jesus often used this term. While öSon of Godö described his relation to the Father, öSon of manö referenced his relationship to the human race.
- C. **Long garment, golden girdle** ó John is describing the Son of man. The golden girdle was a part of the garments worn by a Jewish High Priest.

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

- A. **Hair** ó white like wool ó Generally, white is a symbol of purity. Here it may just be part of the drama he is about to tell you. White hair was also a symbol of wisdom and maturity of mind.
- B. **Eyes** ó flame of fire ó Most do not take this in a literal sense. Flaming eyes would bring to mind a sense of his power, authority and fear.

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

- A. **Feet** ó fine brass ó His feet had been burned in a furnace. They had been through all types of torture. They were not the soft feet of a king who sat on a throne. These were the calloused feet of one who walked dusty roads all the way to Calvary.
- B. **Voice** ó sound of many waters ó Earlier, his voice was described as a trumpet. Here the tone is softer, gentler, and kinder. It is the sound of a babbling brook. It is the sound of water cascading down a mountainside. His voice is authoritative.

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

- A. **Seven stars in right hand** ó The stars are the angels (messengers) to the seven churches. Each of these stars was given a copy of this revelation. Each star was to deliver the book to the various churches.
- B. **Mouth** ó sharp sword ó Jesus speaks with a two edged sword. The Word of God cuts both ways ó coming and going, like it or not, in season or out of season. The Roman soldiers carried double-edged swords. (Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12)
- C. **Countenance** ó sunshine ó His strength was glistening in the brightness of the sun. The whole appearance was a glow, brilliance, and brightness.

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

- A. **Fell as dead** ó How would you react? It was clear that John was in the presence of deity. He was filled with fear and awe. All he knew to do was to fall down at the feet of Jesus.
- B. **Right hand** ó Jesus extends his hand to offer assurance and comfort.
- C. **Fear not** ó Jesus used these words when the apostles thought they were going to die in the storm on Galilee. The word ðfearö in this passage refers to being afraid. Jesus was offering comfort. There is no reason to have any fear of harm.
- D. **First and last** ó This is a parallel phrase to those in verse 11.

*18 I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.*

- A. **He that lives** ó Jesus begins to describe himself. He is the one that lives. He has always lived. He is now alive. He will be alive forever.
- B. **Was dead** ó As the Son of man, Jesus lived on earth, suffered and died a physical death.
- C. **Alive forever** ó Jesus is still the eternal one.
- D. **Keys of Hades** ó ðHades,ö the grave, the world of the unseen. It may be that Jesus is saying, ðI can open the graves.ö It may be that Jesus meant, ðI am in control of all the departed spirits.ö Either way, Jesus is assuring John that those who died are in his care and control. He is aware and is with them. He has the power to resurrect.
- E. **Of death** ó Jesus was the first to be raised to immortality. He has the key to overcome death. He can raise us from the dead.

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

- A. **Write** ó John will record what he sees and hears. He will write under the inspiration and direction of Jesus.

- B. **The things which are** ó Jesus is going to show John the current situation. Remember, John is isolated in exile. He will learn what is happening back in Ephesus and the other cities.
- C. **Things which shall be** ó Jesus will show John what is going to happen shortly. This is a clear statement that this work is prophecy. It has a predictive element.

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

- A. **Mystery** ó This book is full of symbols. Some of them are explained. Some of them we can figure out by the context. Some of them we may not know. Some of the imagery was not intended to be symbolic, just for dramatic effect.
- B. **Stars** ó The stars represent the messengers who will deliver the book to the various churches in Asia Minor.
- C. **Candlesticks** ó The candlesticks, stands of shining light in a dark world, are the churches to whom this book is addressed.

# Revelation 2

## Seven Churches of Asia

### Ephesus (Verses 1-7)

#### The City

The city of Ephesus was the capital of Asia Minor and was one of the most important cities in the Roman world. It had a population of over 250,000. It was the home of the temple of the goddess, Diana. The temple of Diana was one of the Seven Wonders of the World. It was 4 times larger than the Parthenon; had 127 marble pillars; 36 of them covered with gold and jewels. Diana was (in pagan folklore) the daughter of Jupiter.

#### The Church

Paul had done some great work in this area. He taught at the school of Tyrannus. He spent three years here. The church was started in the midst of the riot in the theater. (Acts 19) John was here before his banishment and returned here when he was released from exile.

#### Things Commended

Their toil and work

Patience in the midst of persecution

Discipline of false teachers

Dealing with the Nicolaitans (who retained pagan practices)

Faithful to the doctrine, refusal to accept error

They worked for the name of Christ

Nicolaitans were of the branch of teachers teaching antinomianism. This is a big word that simply means, (in the words of a restaurant commercial) "No Rules, Just Right!" Free in Christ, they believed meant no rules, no law, no commands, no moral code.

Anything goes, was their motto. They are identified with Baalam because he led Israel into fornication. Christ hated their teaching and so did the Ephesians.

#### Things Condemned

They left their first love

Left their first love ó Think back to the first time you were in love. Can't eat. Can't sleep. Excited. Write their name all over your notebook. Can't stop thinking about them. Talk to them for hours. Spend every moment possible with them. What happens over time? One of two things ó the love deepens or you "get over it." The problem is that the Ephesians were "getting over it." Jesus was saying, "You no longer love me as you once did."

## **Smyrna (Verses 8-11)**

### **The City**

Thirty five miles north of Ephesus was another harbor city of 200,000 people. It was known as a most beautiful city. Smyrna was a wealthy, prosperous and proud city. The city was founded by Alexander the Great. The original Olympic games were held here. It is the only city still in existence today. Now it is called Izmir, Turkey.

### **The Church**

The origin of the church here is not recorded in the New Testament. History tells of the persecution suffered here. Polycarp is a well known martyr from Smyrna.

### **Things Commended**

This was a WEALTHY church.

Rich in spite of real poverty. They had no money but had treasures in heaven.

Rich in spite of slander. The Jews were blaspheming them. When Polycarp burned, Jews brought the firewood.

Rich in spite of persecution. Polycarp would be burned at the stake some 60 years later. Some were beaten. They were not allowed to buy or sell in the open market. They suffered tribulation for 10 days.

Rich because of a sympathetic savior. Jesus was on their side and aware of their problems.

Rich because of the precious promises. They were promised a crown of life. There are two different words translated "crown" in the New Testament. There was the royal crown of power and authority, the royal diadem. But the crown mentioned here is the crown of victory (Gold medal from the Olympics). They will not be hurt in the second death (eternal punishment in hell) because they will have eternal life.

### **Things Condemned**

There is not a single word of condemnation in this letter. Jesus found nothing to rebuke.

## **Pergamos (Verses 12-17)**

### **The City**

Pergamos was a city high in the mountains. It was located at 1,000 feet elevation. It was another city with a large population, around 200,000 and the world's second largest library. It had a famous school of medicine. Pergamos was known for ointments,

medicines, parchments and pottery. A large temple to Aphrodite, goddess of fertility, was located here. Pergamos was the beginning of emperor worship.

### **The Church**

We have no information about the planting of the church here.

### **Things Commended**

They are living in the seat of Satan's throne, the origin of emperor worship. Being faithful here was more than just attending church services. They had already suffered the death of Antipas. His death was a great testimony to his faith in Christ. They had not denied the faith, even in the face of such persecution. What would you do? Justify? Cave in to the pressure? Would you stand firm in your faith?

### **Things Condemned**

Heresy had entered the church. The teachings of Baalam were here. (See Numbers 23-24) Baalam sought to make material gain at the cost of the spiritual and moral life of the people. He led the people to idol worship and fornication. Some were willing to make spiritual compromise in order to obtain personal safety. They would teach evil in order to save their own neck.

## **Thyatira (Verses 18-29)**

### **The City**

Of the seven letters, the letter to Thyatira is the longest. The city was known for manufacturing and marketing. Here every trade (silversmiths, candle makers, carpenters, etc.) was organized into trade guilds. If you wanted to sell candles, you had to belong to the trade guild of candle makers. Each trade guild had a special god who was supposed to bless their work. Lydia, a seller of purple, was from this city. She was converted by Paul in Acts 16:14-15.

### **The Church**

It is assumed that Lydia was the first influence to begin the church here. We know that Paul was aware of this church and wrote a letter to them. We do not have that letter. However, the letter to the Colossians was to be exchanged with the letter to Thyatira. (Colossians 4:16)

### **Things Commended**

Jesus knows their works. He is aware of their service to God. He recognizes their love. Jesus appreciates their patience, their ability to hold their own under extreme pressure. They are increasing. Their works are more now than in the beginning. This is the opposite of Ephesus. They are a strong, faithful, growing, working, and loving church.

### **Things Condemned**

The church is harboring heresy. They allow a woman, Jezebel, to teach error. It seems this was some woman in the church who may have claimed some mystic power. She was seducing them to commit fornication. Some think the name, Jezebel, is not her real name, but symbolic of the Old Testament queen, wife of Ahab. She was a Jezebel in character, morals and conduct. Like the Old Testament namesake, she will not be allowed to continue. She and her followers will meet destruction. God is still in charge.

# Revelation 3

## Sardis (Verses 1-6)

### The City

Sardis was one of the richest cities of the ancient world. It had a 2,000 year history. Sardis was built on Mount Timolus. 600 years before Christ, Sardis was the capital of Lydia. Croesus, famous for his great wealth, ruled there. This is the first known existence of gold coins. By this time, late in the first century AD, the glory had faded. There had been several earthquakes, which had heavily damaged the city.

### The Church

The New Testament does not tell of the planting or history of this church.

### Things Commended

In all the other letters, Jesus first commends then condemns. Here the order is reversed.

There is so much wrong that Jesus first condemns ó then commends the few that remain faithful. A few have not defiled their garments. They took no part in the pagan worship and worldliness around them. They had remained faithful and would be judged on their individual faithfulness, not on the faithfulness of the church.

### Things Condemned

They had a reputation in the city as being active, alive and spiritual. In fact, they were dead. There was lots of outward activity, but no inner spirituality. A visitor would be impressed with the activities mentioned in the announcements ó youth trips, fellowships, adult parties, outings, and camping trips. As far as the visitor could tell, this was a church involved, busy, well organized and alive. The forms were all correct, but the faith, power and devotion to God were missing. (2 Timothy 3:5)

Someone has observed, òThere are few things better organized than graveyards.ö Everything is neat, well kept, and orderly, but no life. This is what Jesus saw. Appearances of being alive but they were really dead.

Sardis was urged to òestablish the things that remain.ö What little life was left needed to be put on life support or they would soon die.

## Philadelphia (Verses 7-13)

### The City

Philadelphia was founded in 140 BC by the king of Pergamos. The name, Philadelphia, means òbrotherly love.ö It was a center of Greek culture, learning, and language. The city was destroyed by an earthquake in 17 AD and had suffered many tremors since then. This whole region is a very active earthquake area. The volcanic ash made the

soil excellent for vineyards. Today the city is called Ala-Sekar and has a population of about 10,000.

### **The Church**

Again, we have no record of this church being planted. The best information is that while Paul spent 3 years in Ephesus he taught in many cities in this region. It is assumed that during this time many of these churches were started.

### **Things Commended**

Jesus has set before this church an open door, which no man can close. The meaning is generally understood to be that, while the church is weak (has little power), yet she has remained faithful. Therefore, Christ is assuring them that the right-of-way to spiritual joy will not be denied them.

While Sardis was threatened by the coming of Christ, this church has nothing to fear. The coming of Christ, to the faithful, is a promise, not a threat. If you are faithful, the coming of Christ brings hope and encouragement. If you are not faithful, the coming of Christ brings fear and dread.

Jesus promises them that the synagogue of Satan will be made to recognize and respect the faithful Christians. Remaining faithful is urged even when persecution comes. All of us will have an hour of trial in which our faith will be put to the test. This persecution will come to the whole earth, not just Philadelphia.

God promises to öbrandö the faithful by writing on them:

The name of God

The name of the city of God, the New Jerusalem

The New Name

### **Things Condemned**

Only good is spoken about this church.

## **Laodicea (Verses 14-22)**

### **The City**

Laodicea was a city of great wealth, richest in the region of Phrygia. It is located in the Meander Valley on the Lycus River. It had existed since the third century BC, but was badly damaged in an earthquake in 60 AD. It was being rebuilt with Roman assistance.

The city was on a major trade route. It was known for its raven black wool and a famous eye salve made developed in its medical school. It was also a banking center for the region. Six miles away was the city of Hierapolis, known for its hot springs. This hot water flowed near Laodicea after falling over a 300-foot cliff. It was, thus, lukewarm when it got to Laodicea.

## The Church

We know that the church had existed for many years, because Paul wrote a letter to them. This letter predates the letter to the Colossians. Paul urged that the two churches exchange and read the letter. (Colossians 4:16)

## Things Commended

There is nothing good to say about this church. In all the other letters Jesus first commends then condemns. In Laodicea there is nothing good to say, therefore, nothing is said. In the movie *öBambiö*, Thumper's mother said, *öIf you can't say somethin' nice, then, just don't say nothin' at all.ö*

## Things Condemned

This is the church that made Jesus sick. They were lukewarm. Not hot, on fire for Christ, not cold, opposing the truth. They were just lukewarm.

Jesus pictures himself as on the outside of this church seeking permission to come in. Most often this verse (20) is used to invite those who have not obeyed the gospel to open the door of their heart and invite Jesus into their lives. However, Jesus is speaking to a church, body of believers, who have not allowed Jesus into their hearts.

Because Christ loves them, he rebukes them.

Jesus uses the fame of the city to urge them to become an alive, active and faithful church.

1. Banking center ó This city was proud, arrogant, and self-sufficient because of their riches. Their thinking was, *öWe have gold, and we need nothing else.ö* Jesus requests that they buy some gold from him, tried in the fire of persecution and trial. This is the only way they can be rich.
2. Black wool ó Since there was pride in their black wool, Jesus requires them to buy some WHITE (pure) garments. In their black wool ó they were naked and failed to realize it.
3. Eye salve ó The city was famous for an eye salve developed by the medical school. Jesus said, *öYou have all this eye salve at your disposal, but you are not using it.ö* They were commanded to apply some of the salve to their spiritual eyes so they could see. The sight here is spiritual discernment, ability to see and understand the will of God.

This church had everything ó everything except Christ! He was on the outside looking in. He was knocking, seeking permission to come in and fellowship with them.

**Conclusion:**

Here is the summary conclusion of Ray Summers in his book, "Worthy is the Lamb", page 127.

"The message delivered first to the churches of Asia Minor is universal. Its truth applies wherever similar conditions are found today; and it is difficult to find churches where at least some of these conditions are not found. The warning against spiritual apathy still stands."

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

# Revelation 4

As we enter into the description of the vision itself, here is a little outline that might help you.

Chapter 4	Have faith in the power and dominion of God.
Chapter 5	Keep your faith in the power and dominion of Jesus Christ.
Chapters 6-18	Learn the wrath of God upon those who persecute His church.
Chapters 19-22	See the final and complete victory of God and His church.

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

- A. With chapter four begins the vision, the revelation, the moving picture in living color.
- B. John sees a door open in heaven ó This door was not opening, it was open.
- C. **The first voice** ó The first sound in this movie is the voice of God speaking to John.
- D. **Come up here** ó Often the vision is brought down to the prophet. Here the prophet is invited up to heaven to see what is about to happen.
- E. **Must take place** ó In the mind of God there is no difference in past, present and future. The future can be recorded in the past tense. The future is as certain (must take place) as the past.

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

- A. **In the Spirit** ó John was in a spiritual frame of mind. He was open and ready to see and hear and record what God is willing to show him. See also chapter 1:10.
- B. **Throne is set** ó God is on the throne. He is the all-powerful One. Here we are reminded that God is powerful and has all dominion. God is in control of what happens on earth.
- C. Regardless of what happens, good or bad as we view it, God is still on His throne. He is guiding history toward the climax He plans. He is in command.
- D. The symbol of a throne occurs more than 40 times in the book of Revelation.

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

- A. Some have tried to figure out what each stone represents. I believe the message here is this ó When you are in the presence of God ó you are dazzled by the brilliance.

- B. **Bright colors, precious stones, a rainbow** ó This is a picture of the impressive and stunning presence of God.
- C. **Jasper and Sardus** ó These were stones worn by the High Priest under the Law of Moses. They are also part of the foundation of the New Jerusalem in chapter 20.
- D. **Rainbow** ó Since the time of Noah, the rainbow is a covenant sign that God will keep His promises. God is faithful.

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

- A. **24 elders** ó Most commentaries teach that this number represents the 12 tribes of Israel (Jewish Age) and the 12 apostles (Church Age). Thus, they represent God's dealing with man in all periods of history.  
NOTE: The names of the 12 tribes are inscribed on the 12 gates of heaven. The 12 apostles are on the 12 foundations.
- B. **24 thrones** ó Some believe this represents the heavenly court (similar to our President meeting with his Cabinet).
- C. **White robes and gold crowns** ó White robes are used in Revelation to signify purity and salvation. The gold crowns show us that they are reigning with God. Of course, they are not over God. They are reigning with Him.  
NOTE: This is an important point to remember when you get to chapter 20.

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

- A. **Thunder and lightning** ó John returns to focus on God, His power and might.
- B. **Seven Spirits of God** ó Are connected to the seven lamps. This may refer to the seven churches and their messengers. (See 1:20)
- C. **Burning before the throne** ó God is aware of each church. He knows of our faith, works, teaching, and steadfastness. He is aware of our sins, weakness, and downfalls.

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

- A. **Sea of glass** ó Have you been near a lake at sunset. All is very calm. The water is smooth, like glass. The picture here is one of calmness and tranquility in heaven. This stands as a sharp contrast to the hardship, persecution and exile John was enduring on earth.
- B. **Four living creatures** ó There are three possible explanations here ó a) Since the number four represents the earth, these creatures may represent the entire population of earth. b) These four creatures may be the archangels. We know of Michael and Gabriel by name. Some have thought there are four of them. They would be close to

God because they are over all the heavenly host of angels. c) The four creatures represent all living things. (See the comments on the next verse.)

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

- A. **The four creatures are described** ó The first like a lion (wild animal); the second like a calf (tame animal); the third like a man (humans); the fourth like an eagle (birds). Here you have represented four major categories of living things.
- B. **God is creator of all life.** He created man, but He also created wild animals, which can cause us great harm and even death.

*8 The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!"*

- A. **Six wings** ó The graphic picture here may show us the speed and swiftness of their ability to deal with our needs.
- B. **Eyes around** ó They have the ability to see in all directions and know what is happening everywhere. Nothing goes on that escapes their sight.
- C. **They worship God** ó While they might have some amazing abilities as we humans see them, they are subject to the öLord God Almighty.ö
- D. **Was, is and is to come** ó God is present tense. What God was in the past, He is today, and will be the same tomorrow. With God all things are present tense. God is the great I AM.

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

- A. **Give glory and honor and thanks** ó Here is a picture of worship. All we do in worship must seek to give glory, honor and thanks to God.
- B. **Sits on the throne** ó The 24 elders and the four living creatures are around the throne. God is the one on the throne.
- C. **God is eternal** ó God is forever alive.

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

- A. **All worship God** ó The 24 elders, cast their crowns at the throne. They have no power except what is granted them by God. God has all authority and dominion.
- B. There were some who were faithful and would not worship the Roman emperor, in spite of his decree. In heaven, all creatures worship Him who is on the throne.

*11 “You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created.”*

- A. **Worthy art Thou** ó These words were on the entrance to the Roman palace. Here they are used to worship and praise God.
- B. **Many worshipped the emperor because it was commanded.** We worship God because He is worthy of our praise.
- C. **Why was man created?** ó We were created by the will of God. We were created to serve the will of God. Everything that God created was for a purpose. Each plant, animal and insect has a place in the plan and will of God. Man must seek to serve in the place and manner that God intended.

# Revelation 5

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

- A. **God is holding a book.** This book (scroll) is important.
- B. **It has writings on both sides.** There are two types of scrolls at this time ó Parchment and Velum. Parchment is made with strips of reeds pressed together. The topside was laid horizontal for easy writing. On the backside the reeds were laid vertically. This made writing on the back said very difficult. The other type of scroll was velum (animal leather, usually deer). Again, one side of leather is smooth and easy to use. The backside of leather is rough and more difficult to write on.
- C. By writing on both sides there are two indications ó a) the message is important and no space must be wasted. b) There is a scarcity of writing materials ó either very costly or not available.
- D. **It is sealed.** The seal is not like one seals a Mason jar with fruit inside. Some have tried to make this teach the doctrine of ðonce saved, always saved.ö They have implied that God seals us in and we cannot escape.
- E. **But the seal here is for three purposes.**
  - 1. The seal shows the item to be *genuine*
  - 2. A seal proves the document is *official*
  - 3. A seal demonstrates that it has not been tampered with or altered.

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

- A. Strong angel ó It is assumed that this is one of the four living creatures around the throne.
- B. He cries, ðWho is worthy to open the book, loose the seals?ö
- C. The issue is not ó Who can (has the ability), but who has the authority and power?

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

- A. The search was extensive. No man on earth and no man in heaven had such authority.
- B. No man under the earth (among the dead and buried) could open the book or look inside.
- C. No human (saved or lost, living or dead) could open the book.

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

- A. John wept. He was searching for answers. The answers are in this book. John cannot just walk up to God and open the book to learn what it says.
- B. There is important information in this book and no one can open it and share its content with the suffering Christians.

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

- A. An elder points to the LION of the tribe of Judah. Judah = tribe of kings of David, Solomon, and Christ.
- B. The Lion is the symbol of rule and power. The lion is the king of the jungle.
- C. He (Christ) is triumphant. He is of the root of David (in the line of kings).
- D. He has the power to open the seals and reveal the contents of the book.

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

- A. John turns to see the LION.
- B. And there in the middle of the 24 elders and the four living creatures stood a lamb.  
NOTE: Jesus is the lion of Judah AND the Lamb of God.
- C. He had 7 horns and seven eyes = 7 Spirits of God.

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

- A. Jesus takes the book out of the hand of God.
- B. Only Jesus could reveal its content.

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

- A. The 24 elders and four living creatures fall down and worship the lamb.
- B. They have harps and golden bowls full of incense.
- C. The incense represents the prayers of the saints.
- D. If the bowls are symbolic, the harps must be also. Bowls = prayers; harps = praise.  
(See 14:2)

*9 And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,*

- A. They sang a ñew songö.
- B. New because this song could not be sung in the OT. It was not sung before the cross.
- C. This song praises the one who redeemed us.
- D. Every kindred, tongue, people and nation = Jesus redeemed all people of all ages.

*10 And have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth."*

- A. We (Christians) are kings and priests on this earth.
- B. Christ is our king and we are reigning WITH Him (20:4).
- C. We are a priesthood of believers. We do not go to a priest to communicate with God. We ARE the priests. (1:6)

*11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands,*

- A. Angels surround the throne ó around the 4 living creatures ó around the 24 elders.
- B. They number 10 thousand times 10 thousand PLUS thousands of thousands. (See Hebrews 12:22)

*12 saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!"*

- A. The angels agree, öThe lamb is worthy to receive ó
  1. Power
  2. Riches
  3. Wisdom
  4. Strength
  5. Honor
  6. Glory
  7. Blessing.

There are 7 qualities listed here ó the number of perfection.

*13 And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!"*

- A. Around the angelic host are all humanity.
- B. Every creature in heaven, on earth, under the earth, in the sea.
- C. All humanity ó worship and praise God and the Lamb.
- D. There is a sigh of relief. There is a ðHallelujahö from all humanity. Now we can learn what God has in store for His people.

*14 Then the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.*

- A. The 4 living creatures and the 24 elders joined in the worship.

# Revelation 6

## Symbols in this chapter

- A. **Seals** ó Proof of genuine, not tampered with, and official. The seals show that God has written and preserved the contents of this book, and it is definitely a message from God.
- B. **Horses** = needed in order to wage war. The color determines the type of war being described.
- C. **Number 4** ó Physical realm ó all the wars are waged here in earth.

*1 Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, "Come and see."*

- A. The Lamb begins to open the seals.
- B. They are opened one at a time.
- C. There is thunder. One of the 4 living creatures says, "Come and see." This statement is directed toward those who read the writing of John.
- D. This a way of saying, "Pay attention. Listen. Study. Seek to understand."

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

- A. **White horse** ó rider carries a bow and receives a crown.
- B. **The rider is Christ.** The white horse is used in 19:11 where Christ is clearly identified.
- C. **The horse is symbolic of wars and battles.** Christians will have to fight many battles here on earth.
- D. **Since white shows purity,** this horse symbolizes righteous war. See 19:19-21.
- E. In 19:14 Christians are pictured sitting upon white horses and following Christ.

*3 When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come and see."  
4 Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword.*

- A. **Red horse** ó rider with power to take peace from the earth.
- B. Red shows bloodshed.
- C. The rider of this horse has the ability to take peace from the earth and cause people to kill one another.

D. The rider has a great sword in his hand. This is the short sword of the Roman soldier.

*5 When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come and see." So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand.*

- A. **Black horse** ó rider has a balance in his hand.
- B. Black symbolizes mourning or death.
- C. The events described in the next verse will result in severe hardships and even death.

*6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine."*

- A. **A measure of wheat or 3 measure of barley** ó These measurements are the amount needed for a day's ration.
- B. **A penny = a typical day's pay.** Therefore, a man's complete wages would be needed in order to feed just himself. What about his family?
- C. This is a poverty situation.
- D. This seal represents more physical trials and hardships.
- E. **Oil and wine** were items of luxury.
- F. **Where there is poverty,** there will also be the extremely rich. While some are near starvation, others are living a life of luxury.

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

- A. **Pale horse** ó rider is Death. Hades followed behind Death.
- B. **Death is symbolized by the pale color.** The persecutions described here are so severe, death and Hades will result.
- C. Power is given to hurt the 1/4<sup>th</sup> part of the earth.
- D. Sword (war), hunger and death.
- E. We must understand the fraction ó one-fourth. The fourth part points to a part of something. The earth represents the people who are killed by the sword, not the actual earth. If one makes this a literal number ó there will be all kinds of difficulties.  
NOTE: The number 4 is the physical number. A fourth is a fraction of physical world. A third is a fraction of the divine

### **Summary of first four seals**

The first four seals make it clear that they deal with events on the earth. These will occur during the Christian dispensation. The first seal = going out to preach the gospel. The

2<sup>nd</sup> seal = wars fought between nations. The 3<sup>rd</sup> seal = physical hardships. The 4<sup>th</sup> seal = physical persecutions which people will suffer until Christ comes.

All these seals will not affect all people. Some will suffer hardship or poverty. Others will suffer war. Some will endure persecution.

The next three seals are very different. The first four dealt with humans (Christians) on earth. The next three describe events that God will set in motion.

*9 When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held.*

The fifth seal ó Under the altar are souls. We know some things about these souls.

1. Souls ó not bodies
2. Before the throne ó they are in the presence of God in heaven (8:3)
3. Killed ó martyrs for the Word of God
4. Faithful ó the held the testimony in time of persecution
5. Aware ó knew how they died, knew that others were suffering

*10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"*

- A. How long ó is a question of pain.
- B. It is also a question of faith that God is in control. God, how long before you intervene on behalf of the faithful?
- C. There is an expression of understanding that God is the avenger of evil. ðI will repay,ö says the Lord.
- D. Coffman wrote, ðFor Christians, upon their own behalf, to engage in acts of vengeance is indeed sinful; but for them to pray for God's vengeance to fall upon their enemies is right, a proposition that is proved by the verse we are studying.ö

*11 Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.*

- A. They are given white robes and told to wait.
- B. God does not work in our time frame. They were told to wait for a little time. Others will also face hardships. Others will also suffer persecution. Others will also die in war.
- C. NOTE: We do NOT get white robes when we get to heaven. We get white robes when we obey the gospel. (3:4) The white robes are the symbol of the righteousness of the saints. White robes were given to these martyrs to identify them as Christians.

- D. God will avenge the blood of the saints. But He will do it in His time, not ours.
- E. God does not keep us from persecutions and hardships, but the evil will be punished at judgment.

*12 I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. 13 And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. 14 Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. 15 And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, 16 and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! 17 For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"*

- A. Great earthquake ó The 6<sup>th</sup> seal is a picture of the end of time. The earth will be destroyed. The description is of the Second Coming. All the world and physical things will end. Similar language is used in the Old Testament (Joel 2:10; Isaiah 13:5-11).
  - 1. The sun becomes black
  - 2. The moon becomes as blood
  - 3. The stars of heaven fall to the earth
  - 4. The sky is parted and rolled up like a scroll
  - 5. Every mountain and island are moved (earthquake)
  - 6. Seven classes of men ó kings, great, rich, chief captains, mighty, bondman, freeman
  - 7. Try to hide from the wrath of God
  - 8. They beg for death to escape facing God
- B. The final ðpaydayö has come and no evil person can survive.

# Revelation 7

## Introduction

Take a minute and refresh your memory of the in the chart we studied in the introductory material.

O. T. Example	N. T. Parallel	Symbolism
Physical bondage	Spiritual bondage	Great Tribulation
Crossing Red Sea	Blood of Christ	First Resurrection
Mt. Sinai	Mt. Zion	Lamb on Mt. Zion
Wilderness	Church in world	1000 Year Reign
Jerusalem	Church (Holy City)	New Jerusalem

(1, xiv)

**Great Tribulation** ó Israel was in physical tribulation during the time of Moses. They were enslaved in Egypt. Today all those outside the kingdom of God are in great tribulation. They are enslaved in sin. (John 8:32-34)

**The giving of the Law of Moses** on Mt. Sinai is a physical parallel to Christ giving His law on spiritual Mt. Zion. (Micah 4:1-7) Christ reigns on Mt. Zion today. Those who stand on Mt. Zion are Christians, described in chapter 14 as the 144,000.

**The great truth being pictured** here in chapter 7 is that those who are in the bondage of sin (great tribulation) are coming out of that spiritual tribulation by washing their robes. They are made white in the blood of the Lamb.

**Verse 9 describes them as a great multitude in white robes standing before the throne. They are Christians.**

**Chapter 7 deals with the question asked in 6:17. Who shall be able to stand? Answer: Those whom God has sealed (identified) as Christians, the 144,000 are the servants of God. Only**

**Christians have any hope of being able to stand in the Day of Judgment.**

*I After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree.*

- A. After the sealing of all God's people appear four angels (the 4 living creatures around the throne) holding the four winds.
- B. The number 4 is dominant in this verse. The physical things of this earth are being discussed.
- C. This is a picture of God delaying the destruction of this earth. Certain things must take place first. NOTE: God works on God's schedule, not on our calendar. God had other things in His plan that must be done first.

2 Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea,

- A. Now another angel comes from the east with the seal of God.
- B. His duty is to seal the true servants of God. He is to seal their foreheads. (3)
- C. Study Ephesians 1:13 ó *“We are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.”* At the time of our faithful obedience to the gospel (confession and baptism) we are forgiven (robes are washed white in the blood of the Lamb) and we are sealed (identified as belonging to God) with the ògift of the Holy Spiritö (Acts 2:38).

3 saying, *“Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.”*

- A. The angel instructs that the earth not be hurt ó destroyed ó until the sealing is completed. God will not destroy the earth, or allow it to be destroyed until He is ready.
- B. God is in control. As long as there are people who render obedience to the gospel, God can be patient.
- C. Man will never totally destroy the earth. God will do the final, total and complete destruction.
- D. Sealed on their foreheads ó similar to 22:4 ó Name of God on their foreheads.

4 And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed:

- A. The number of people who are sealed is 144,000. They are out of all the tribes of Israel.
- B. 12 tribes times 12,000 = 144,000. Also see this number used in 14:1.  
12 tribes = all the people faithful to God. Multiply times 12,000 from each tribe.
- C. This number represents the complete, sum total of all the obedient to God.  
NOTE: The 144,000 are given the holy city, which has a wall of 144 cubits. (21:17). This wall represents the law of God which man must obey. The wall measures 144 cubits, and all the people who are inside this wall, the 144,000, are the saved of all ages. Those who obey must pass through the 144-cubit wall and become part of the 144,000.
- D. Some believe this number accounts for the saved in Israel ONLY, not including any Gentiles. Some teach that only Israel will be in heaven. The saved among the Gentiles will be in a Paradise on Earth (a newly refurbished earth).  
I reject this idea because:
  - 1. The list is NOT the list of the 12 tribes that became the nation of Israel.
  - 2. The tribes of Dan and Ephraim are omitted.
  - 3. The tribes of Joseph and Levi are added.
  - 4. This is done to show, we are not dealing with the literal 12 tribes.
  - 5. They represent all of God’s chosen people.

6. Also, Judah is listed first. In most Old Testament listings, Ruben is first, because he is the firstborn.
7. All of these things point to the spiritual rather than a literal Israel. The 144,000 represents the sum total of all people of all ages, who have obeyed God in faith and are part of the redeemed.

*5 of the tribe of Judah twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand were sealed; 6 of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand were sealed; 7 of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand were sealed; 8 of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand were sealed.*

- A. This listing of the 12 tribes is different from any list in the Old Testament.
- B. See the notes above on verse 4.

*9 After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands,*

- A. As in a movie, you move from one scene to another. Here is the fade to a new scene.
- B. The sealing has been completed. Now all nations stand before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, palms in their hands.
- C. Palm branches were laid on the path Jesus took in his entry into Jerusalem. (Mark 11:8; John 12:13) While the white robes represent our salvation in Christ, the palms are symbolic of our willingness to serve Him.

*10 and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"*

- A. We are saved. Isn't that reason to rejoice?
- B. Do you still have the joy of your salvation? (Psalm 51:12)
- C. They recognize the source of their salvation is not their own merit. Salvation belongs to God and to the Lamb. Salvation cannot come by any other. (Acts 4:12; John 14:6)

*11 All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God,*

- A. All the angels are around the throne.
- B. Inside of them are the 24 elders.
- C. In a closer circle around the throne of God are the four living creatures.
- D. They worshipped God.

12 saying: “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honor and power and might, Be to our God forever and ever. Amen.”

A. They offer a 7-fold blessing.

1. Blessing
2. Glory
3. Wisdom
4. Thanksgiving
5. Honor
6. Power
7. Might

B. All of this praise and adoration belong to God.

C. Notice that this blessing begins and ends with “Amen.” The word “amen” means, “I am in agreement; may it be so; so be it.” Today, the word more often means, “I have finished; the end.” Here it was used at the beginning of the worship.

D. Here again we have a 7 that has a natural division into a 3 plus 4. The first three (Blessing, Glory, Wisdom) are attributes of God in the Divine realm. The number 3 represents God, the trinity, and the spiritual world.

The last four (Thanksgiving, Honor, Power, Might) are ways in which we recognize the majesty of God in the material world. The number 4 is the number of the physical and material world.

The Christians were seeking to give thanks to God. They were also looking for ways in which they could honor His name in an evil world. They were also praying for His power and might to intervene in this time of terrible persecution.

13 Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, “Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?” 14 And I said to him, “Sir, you know.” So he said to me, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

A. John is not willing to risk a wrong guess. “You know.”

B. The answer is given: “These are the ones who have washed their robes, white in the blood of the Lamb.”

C. These are the ones who have come out of the great tribulation.

NOTE: This is not some great event at the end of time. These Christians had already come out of this tribulation.

D. See the notes at the introduction to this chapter on the great tribulation. Our tribulation is our bondage (enslavement) in sin. When we believe and obey the gospel, we come out of that tribulation. We are washed (declared righteous) and sealed (marked and identified) as belonging to God.

## Discussion: Great tribulation

1. Some believe this verse speaks of a time after the rapture that a world leader, anti-Christ, will persecute the world. They believe that this will be a 7-year period of time.
2. When do we make our robes white in the blood of the Lamb? We are to put on the robes of righteousness (19:8). If our robes are not white, we are living in a state of sin and following the devil. Acts 22:16 gives instruction to Paul to be baptized "washing away his sins." When we obey the gospel in baptism, our sins are washed away; we put on the white robe. We are in a state of righteousness. There were some at Sardis that had defiled their garments (3:4). They had gone back to the way of the world.
3. Anyone who leaves the world of sin behind has come out of great tribulation. The great tribulation is the difficult decision we make to leave the world, family, friends, sin and evil and begin a new loyalty to Christ.
4. There is a parallel with Moses leading Israel out of physical tribulation by crossing the Red Sea. Christ leads us out of spiritual tribulation by baptism.
5. Those outside of Christ are in the bondage of sin (Romans 6:13-16). They are slaves to the devil and sin.
6. As people continue to obey the gospel, confess their faith in Jesus, and be baptized into Christ, they are coming out of great tribulation, washing their robes, and added to the church.

*15 Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them.*

- A. We have left the kingdom of sin and Satan. We are before the throne of God. We are fully dedicated to him, day and night.
- B. God dwells among us, in His temple. You are the Temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16; 2 Corinthians 6:16). God dwells in his Holy temple. We are under the perfect law of liberty (James 1:25).

*16 They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat;*

- A. In heaven some things we endured here on earth have ended. "The former things have passed away." (21:4)
- B. Hunger no more ó We are fed by the Word, the bread of life
- C. Thirst no more ó We have full access to the living water (John 4:13-14)
- D. Sun not burn them or make them hot ó God is our light.
- E. The church is a place of refuge, a protection from the physical things of life.

*17 for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”*

- A. The Lamb of God will:
- B. Feed the hungry
- C. Lead them to fresh water
- D. Wipe away all tears ó not only in this world, but in the world to come

**NOTE: These symbols apply to heaven and to our relationship in the church.** There is nothing wrong with applying these things to heaven. But we must make sure we do not miss out on the message directed to the church in persecuted world. Right now, in the middle of your distress, persecution, life-threatening situation, you can have the Bread of Life, Living Water, Tears wiped away. You do not have to wait until you get to heaven. These are not future promises. They are available as present realities. That is the GOOD NEWS of the gospel!

# Revelation 8

*1 When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.*

- A. Here is real drama. You know that something important is about to happen. But, you wait. You keep waiting for 10, 15, 25 minutes. Still waiting. The drama is building.
- B. The silence (calm and quite) is a sharp contrast to the loud persecution and chaos on earth.
- C. If the 6<sup>th</sup> seal is the Second Coming, what is expected in the 7<sup>th</sup> seal? This seal must deal with eternity.
- D. Some believe that the silence is to emphasize that we are in the presence of God. Habakkuk 2:20, "The Lord is in His holy temple: Let all the earth keep silence before Him." We are now entering the presence of God. In awe, we stand in silence.
- E. Others, I among them, believe that the silence indicates that God does not do anything rashly. Even when He is ready to destroy the world, He waits calmly. This is a picture of the long-suffering, endurance and patience of our God. God will not end this world out of any anger of the moment. Count to 10 is good advice when we are angry. God waited 30 minutes, in silence, to assure everyone that this was His determined will and not His momentary wrath.

*2 And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets.*

- A. After the half hour of silence, there appear seven angels.
- B. Each angel has a trumpet. Out of the 7<sup>th</sup> seal comes the introduction to the sounding of the seven trumpets.
- C. Trumpets were used to command and to warn. The trumpet was their "early warning system" at a time of attack or storm. Any threat to the peace and safety of the people was announced by the sounding of trumpets.
- D. Trumpets were also used to pre-announce (call attention to) an announcement. For example, when a king was entering the city, the trumpet would sound. The trumpet would let all know that the king was coming to make an announcement.

*3 Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. 4 And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand.*

- A. Here is much symbolism borrowed from the Law of Moses. The altar, the incense, the golden censer, and the placement of the altar of incense are taken from the Old Testament.
- B. John explains some of the symbols here. The smoke of the incense represents the prayers of the saints. The smoke from the incense altar in the Jewish temple, which sat just outside the veil, sent smoke through the veil to the Ark of the Covenant, the mercy

seat and the presence of God. So the prayers of these hurting saints are passing through the veil and into the presence of God.

C. Message: God hears your cry. God is aware of your needs. God hears your prayers.

*5 Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake.*

- A. The angel took the censer filled with fire and threw it down on the earth. The earth here represents the wickedness of evil men who are opposed to God. (See 12:12, 16; 13:11; 16:2) The angel is casting fire on those who have been unfaithful to God.
- B. The earthquake depicts the fear and shaking of those who are fighting against the will of God.
- C. The noises, thunder and lightening are pictured as coming from the throne of God. (4:5)
- D. This verse ends the opening of the seven seals. We now move to the sounding (warning) of the seven trumpets.

*6 So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.*

- A. The angels are ready to sound their trumpets one at a time.
- B. The trumpets were used to announce great events and warn of danger. I believe the trumpets about to be sounded are sending a signal of danger and warning.

### **Special note:**

Before we begin to discuss the sounding of the seven trumpets, we must understand the term *third part of man* that is used throughout this section of Revelation.

Allow me to quote here from Woodruff. *“The key to interpreting this series of seven trumpets lies in understanding the symbolic meaning of the third part of man.”* Therefore, we must determine the descriptive meaning of the fraction *1/3*. In order to do this, we must consider a few passages which have a bearing on its meaning. (1, 137)

Stay with me for few minutes. In 9:4 the locusts are instructed not to hurt *any green thing*, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads (non-Christians). Therefore, *any green thing*, must mean Christians. The locusts were commanded not to hurt Christians.

Any plant, which is alive and growing, must be colored green. However, if we apply this meaning to 8:7, Christians would be destroyed.

Here is my conclusion: *Any green thing* represents the spiritual part of man's being. Man has two parts *physical* and *spiritual*. One part is *physical* *represented* by the number four *of* the earth and material. The other part is *spiritual* *represented* by the number three *of* the divine, deity and trinity.

Therefore, the fractions are symbolic. Fractions mean a part of the whole, as opposed to the entire. The fraction *one-fourth* means a part of the material and physical. The fraction *one-third* means a part of the spiritual.

Quoting Woodruff again, "The third part of man is used throughout the trumpet series. Therefore, the warnings, which are sounded by these trumpets, are to prepare man so he will not lose his spiritual part. This would condemn his soul to hell. In other words, they describe events taking place during the Christian dispensation which affect the spiritual part of man." (1, 137-138)

*7 The first angel sounded: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.*

- A. The first four trumpets warn of spiritual testing and trials.
- B. Just as the seals warned of physical harm that could come to our bodies, the trumpets are going to warn of things that could destroy the spiritual part of man.
- C. The color green is not used to distinguish living from dead. It is used to distinguish spiritual life from spiritual death. Plants need to be green, because chlorophyll is necessary for the plant to live and produce fruit. Christians, who are green, are filled with what is necessary for spiritual life and production of fruit.
- D. Trees and green grass represent those who are alive spiritually, Christians.
- E. The hail and fire show us that Christians will suffer persecution, trials, pain and death because of their faith. The expression, "mingled with blood" shows that some of this persecution will be so harsh that lives will be lost.
- F. Remember, the third part teaches us that even Christians are able to lose their spiritual life and be lost because of persecution.
- G. The 1<sup>st</sup> trumpet warns us that we can deny the faith and lose our spiritual life.

*8 Then the second angel sounded: And something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood.*

- A. The symbol of water is shown to represent people in 17:1 and 15. John is not concerned about the environment and pollution of our water in this text. He is apprehensive about the masses of people who are living on this earth.
- B. The severe persecution in the first century was causing many people to deny their faith and lose their spiritual life.
- C. The 2<sup>nd</sup> trumpet warns us that people of all ages can, in time of hardship, lose their spiritual life by giving in to the persecution, regardless of how severe it might be.

*9 And a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.*

- A. The part of man, which is spiritual (soul or spirit), is destroyed. This is not saying that 33% of all Christians will die. This is a warning that yielding to the persecution can cost you your spiritual life with God.
- B. What is the meaning of the "ships" mentioned here? Listen to Paul as the literal ship taking him to Rome was about to sink. "Except these abide in the ship, you cannot be saved." (Acts 27:30-31) The spiritual parallel is that we must remain in the ship of believers, in the church, the ship of Zion, if we expect to be saved. Jumping overboard or abandoning ship will result in our spiritual death.

*10 Then the third angel sounded: And a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. 11 The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the water, because it was made bitter.*

- A. There are two symbols which must be understood here:
  - 1. The star, named Wormwood
  - 2. The rivers, waters and fountains.
- B. God is the fountain of living waters. (Jeremiah 2:13) Jesus promised that he would provide living waters to those who believe his teachings. (John 7:38) The rivers and fountains represent the teachings of those who direct the spiritual lives of people here on earth.
- C. Wormwood is bitter. (Proverbs 5:4) These waters (teachings) are made bitter. False teachings will cause many to die, not physical, but spiritual death. If you follow these false teachers you will lose your spiritual life.
- D. The 3<sup>rd</sup> trumpet warns that if you abandon the truth for false teachings, you will suffer spiritual death. Following a false teacher is just as deadly as denying the faith in the face of persecution.

*12 Then the fourth angel sounded: And a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night.*

- A. Here the trumpet sounds and all of our sources of light on the earth are darkened.
- B. The trumpet warns that there will be times when there is no one willing to stand and preach the light of the gospel.
- C. There was a period in our history, called the Dark Ages, in which the Bible was hidden. There was no one to give the light of God to a dark world. There will be times in various centuries and in various places, where the spiritual light will be darkened. Men will be forbidden to preach the gospel of God.
- D. There are places today, China and Laos, for example, where the gospel is very dark. There is no light to shine in the hearts of these nations. Until 1992 the great nation of Russia was dark.
- E. Could it happen here? Yes. We do not know what the future holds. We do not know how our laws regarding freedom of religion will be interpreted and enforced. Could it become illegal to preach against homosexuality? Could you be arrested for trying to help a woman not abort a baby? Could you be punished for bringing a Bible into a public school classroom? Could you be jailed for having a group Bible study in your home?  
[The answer to all the above questions is ó YES. Not only is such possible, it has already happened in some places. It is not a stretch of our imagination to see that such could happen on a wider scale.]
- F. The 4<sup>th</sup> trumpet warns that our light must shine and no man should darken our zeal and willingness to spread the light of the gospel to the world. When you allow your light to go out or be snuffed out, you will die spiritually.

*13 And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!"*

- A. An eagle flies through the heavens and says, in effect, "You ain't seen nothing yet!"
- B. If you think these four warnings are bad, just wait. It gets worse.
- C. This verse makes it clear that the warnings are for those on earth.
- D. This verse also marks a division between the first four and the next three. There were four seals opened, then three more. Here four trumpets have sounded. Now you are about to hear the warning of three more.
- E. The first four trumpets warned Christians that they could lose their spiritual life. 1/3 would be hurt. Some will lose their spiritual life.
- F. The trumpets that follow will warn those who are not Christians. See 9:4. God commanded not to harm those who have the seal of God. Those without the seal of God (non-Christians) will be harmed if they fail to heed the warning of these last three trumpets.

# Revelation 9

## Introduction

1. We now move to the second half of the trumpets. The first four focused on warnings to Christians who might, under persecution or false teaching, abandon their faithfulness.
2. The next three trumpets sound warnings that only affect those who are followers of Satan. All that Christians have to do to avoid these last three warnings is to remain true, loyal and faithful to Christ.
3. The fifth trumpet is the only one that does not deal with the *third part* of man. Therefore, this one deals with man's physical life. The sixth trumpet affects the spiritual part of man.

*1 Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit.*

- A. At the sounding of the fifth trumpet, a star falls from heaven to earth. Who, or what, is this star?
- B. Jesus speaks of Satan as falling like lightning from heaven. (Luke 10:18) See also 12:12.
- C. This verse refers to Satan, the devil and his forces that are on the earth.
- D. The bottomless pit (abyss) seems to be the abode of Satan. It may represent hell itself. Smoke comes out of it. Where there is smoke, there is fire. Also in chapter 20, Satan is bound and cast into a bottomless pit.
- E. In all ages, including today, the forces of Satan are present and active in our world. God is warning us of the consequences of following the devil.
- F. NOTE: We must be careful about making the bottomless pit in chapter 20 and here the same. Here Satan has the key and is able to unlock and open the pit. In chapter 20 the angel of God has the key and binds Satan and throws him into the pit.

*2 And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit.*

- A. The smoke must represent the pain and anguish which is located there. It is called the *smoke* of their torment in 14:11.
- B. The smoke is so thick that the sun is darkened and the walking outside is like walking into a burning building.

*3 Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.*

- A. Out of the smoke come locusts. Common in the summer time, great swarms of locust would literally march across acres, destroying all plants in their path.
- B. Their power was like the power of a scorpion. The sting of the scorpion would do great harm and cause a lot of pain, but was seldom fatal.

C. When man follows Satan, painful consequences will result.

*4 They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.*

A. The power of these locusts was limited.

1. They were not after plants and grass.
2. They were after men.
3. Only men who were not sealed by God ó non-Christians.

B. ðAny green thingö is symbolic of the Christians who have the seal of God on their foreheads.

C. Here is a parallel with the plague of locust in Exodus. The locusts hurt the Egyptians, but not the people of Israel. Here, the locust hurt men who are not marked as God's. But, God's people are spared any harm.

D. The clear message ó Remain faithful and the locust will do you no harm. Abandon your faith and loyalty to Christ, and harm great pain can result.

*5 And they were not given authority to kill them, but to torment them for five months. Their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man.*

A. The locusts were forbidden from killing men. They were allowed to torment them.

B. The period of torment is described as 5 months. The number 5 is half of 10. Since 10 represents completeness. The number 5 is used to describe incomplete or short of perfection.

C. This should not be understood as a literal period of five months. This means that the domination of the locusts is not total or complete. Their powers are limited and there is a means of escape from this harm and pain.

D. The locusts represent all kinds of evil and wickedness. Today, we have problems with alcohol, drugs, prostitution, homosexuality, and adultery. The locusts are still around.

*6 In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them.*

A. The pain will be so severe that some will seek death as a relief from the intense pain.

B. Some have tried to make this say ðsuicideö. However, the next phrase shows that death is not available. They are wishing for death, but it does not come.

*7 The shape of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle. On their heads were crowns of something like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men.*

A. Now we will focus on the shape of the locusts. They are like horses ready for war.

B. Satan is ready for war. Satan is alive and active on the earth. Satan is prepared for battle but we are not always alert to his attacks.

- C. On their heads are crowns, which ðappearö to be gold. NOTE: They are not gold. They are pseudo-gold. They are fakes. The intent is to deceive and leave the impression that they have power and authority. But, they do not.
- D. Their faces are like the faces of men. These locusts are actually people we meet and deal with in our lives. They are following Satan and seeking to get others to do the same.

*8 They had hair like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth.*

- A. The symbolism here is not clear. Some have suggested that the long hair like a woman represents the practice of all kinds of sexual sins. Others have suggested that this picture is a man ó looking in some ways like a woman.
- B. Is this a picture of a cross-dresser, a transvestite or a homosexual? I do not believe it is. Rather, my view is that Satan's locusts can look like men or women, young or old, rich or poor. Satan's locusts are humans on the earth, living for Satan, and trying to get others to follow Satan.
- C. The teeth like a lion are much easier to understand. They have the ability to devour. If you listen to their teachings, and follow their examples, you will be devoured. Remember, Satan is a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. (1 Peter 5:8)

*9 And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots with many horses running into battle.*

- A. The breastplates of iron show that they have strong protection and defense.
- B. The sound of their wings was like an army of horses heading into battle. This tells us that the number of locusts is great. Satan has a vast army. This loud roaring sound also alerts us to the fact that Satan is always on the attack. He is aggressive in his war with mankind.

*10 They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails. Their power was to hurt men five months.*

- A. Similar to verse 5, we are reminded again of a couple of points.
  1. They are locusts, but they sting like a scorpion. This is repeated in verse 19.
  2. Their power is limited in duration. It is limited to five months.
- B. The five-month limitation represents that the destruction will not be total.
- C. The sting is in the tail. It is not as the temptation approaches, but as it leaves. Many sins seem to bring pleasure when we start them. It is later ó after the sin has taken its toll on our life, health, safety and relationships, and we are trying to quit ó the sting is felt. Ask any smoker, alcoholic, or drug addict. Ask a practicing homosexual who has contracted AIDS.

*11 And they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon.*

- A. Now the focus turns to the leader of this army, Satan himself. Their king, leader, and captain of the army, is identified.
- B. *Abaddon* is the Hebrew name. *Abaddon* means destruction.
- C. *Apollyon* is the Greek name. *Apollyon* means destroyer.
- D. NOTE: He is introduced as the angel of the bottomless pit. (1) Then he is identified by the Hebrew term (representing the Old Testament period) and is called destruction. Next, he is recognized by the Greek term (New Testament era) and named destroyer. Christ offers eternal life. Satan offers destruction. Do not follow Satan.
- E. This fifth trumpet is sounding a warning that the devil is active and his followers are on the earth seeking to make converts.

*12 One woe is past. Behold, still two more woes are coming after these things.*

- A. These last three trumpets are also called *The Three Woes* because woes are pronounced before they begin and between each one.
- B. One is past. Two more to go. Things are bad and they will get worse.

*13 Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,*

- A. Here we begin the sixth trumpet, the second woe. Now we are going to see God unleashing the powerful forces that will destroy the spiritual part of man.
- B. While the fifth and sixth trumpets have some similarities. They are very different. In the fifth trumpet, Satan is given power to hurt people. In the sixth trumpet, God is the one who has the power to inflict torment.

*14 saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates."*

- A. The voice comes from the throne of God, from the golden altar. This is real gold, not the fake gold of the locusts.
- B. The voice instructs the angel to release the four angels. This will take you back to 7:1. There were four angels at the four corners of the earth, ready to hold back winds and the sea. They were ready to destroy the earth, but were told to wait.
- C. The Euphrates River, 1700 miles long, was the farthest boundary of the Roman Empire. The Euphrates was also used in the sixth plague of God's wrath. (16:12)
- D. This river is not to be taken as the literal Euphrates River. It is the symbol of the border between God and his people, and Satan and his followers. It is the line of separation between righteousness and wickedness.

*15 So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind.*

- A. The angels were released to kill a third of mankind. Here, again, is the fraction of one third. Thus, what is described is not the death of physical men, but the death of spiritual men.
- B. Some believe this is against the nature of God. Not true. Study 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12. We should also pay attention to Romans 8:28.
- C. This in no way removes the longsuffering of God. He is patient. But, there will come a time when patience has ended and God is ready to act.
- D. The angels were prepared (taught, trained, given clear instructions) for an hour, a day, a month, and a year. This is additional proof of the longsuffering of God.
- E. My view, God sees a person rejecting, refusing and rebelling against the will of God. God encourages them He is patiently waiting for them to return. God waits for an hour. God says, "I will give them a day." Then, God extends the time to a month, then to a year. At some point, God determines that they are not going to repent. See 2:21 where God gave Jezebel "space to repent" and she would not.
- F. It is a serious mistake to think that our rebellion to God will prevent Him from ending this world and sending the rebellious to hell. The end will come. There will be a day of judgment. The wicked will be judged and assigned to hell. It will happen. God's time of patience will end. His longsuffering is not eternal.

*16 Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them.*

- A. The army is numbered at 200 million. Remember "2" is the number of strength and courage.
- B. Here is a picture of an army strong and complete. This army is very able to do the task God has given it. They are able to destroy the spiritual part of men who have rebelled against God.

*17 And thus I saw the horses in the vision: those who sat on them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow; and the heads of the horses were like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone.*

- A. The description of the horses and riders are similar to the fifth trumpet.
- B. The riders have breastplates of fire. They are indestructible.
- C. The heads of the horses are like lions. They are able to devour and destroy. They are breathing fire, smoke and brimstone. These are all terms used later in Revelation to describe hell, the place of eternal punishment for Satan and his angels.

*18 By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed—by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which came out of their mouths.*

- A. Today, there are many in our world that totally and completely rejects God, the Bible, Jesus, or anything spiritual. They have turned so completely away from the spiritual that prayer at a public gathering offends them. They object to an astronaut reading the

Bible from space. They are driven to file a lawsuit because a prayer for the safety of athletes is given before a football game.

- B. The fraction of one third shows we are dealing with the spiritual life, not physical life. God is not killing men. The destruction here is spiritual. He is allowing them to believe and live the lies of Satan. (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12)

*19 For their power is in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm.*

- A. Again, like the fifth trumpet, the tails carry the sting. The real harm, the pain, the agony is in the tail. After one has followed Satan and his teachings, after they have continually rejected God, they will be turned loose to follow their reprobate mind and heart.
- B. Often what begins as fun and pleasure turns into painful torture in the end. This is the pictured in the sixth trumpet.

*20 But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk.*

- A. Remember the fraction shows that this is not complete or total destruction of all the wicked souls. These thundering horses will not affect some.
- B. God lists some of the sins that are involved. Demon worship, idolatry of dumb statues of gold, brass or stone ó these are the sins that kill the spiritual man. These are the sins that took the heart and soul out of Old Testament Israel. They are the sins that will take the spiritual life out of New Testament Israel also.

*21 And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.*

- A. They did not repent. Remember, God gave them time. He gave them opportunity and encouraged them to make the changes needed. They refused.
- B. NOTE: All church discipline involves not just a sin, like adultery or drunkenness, but the refusal to repent. If they refuse to repent, there is not option left for God. God cannot remain Holy (pure, untainted by sin) if he condones, tolerates and permits sin to continue.
- C. God extends the list ó Murder, sorcery, sexual immorality, and stealing. These are just sample lists, not the sum total of sins that condemn. See Romans 1 and Galatians 5 for longer lists.

# Revelation 10

## Introduction

There was a pause after the sixth seal. Paul Rogers wrote, "This chapter was written to assure the faithful that the hour for the final woe has come and the mystery must be fulfilled. Just as there is a pause between the opening of the sixth and seventh seals to heighten expectancy, so now there is an interlude between the blowing of the sixth and seventh trumpets. During the pause two events take place, the presentation of the little book and the ministry of the two witnesses. There is no corresponding interlude between the sixth and seventh bowls." (3, 44)

*1 I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. And a rainbow was on his head, his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire.*

- A. **A mighty angel** comes from heaven. The angel is "mighty" showing that this angel has great strength. There are four symbols used to describe this angel.
- B. **Cloud** ó Commentaries are in great disagreement as to the meaning of the cloud. Some believe it could symbolize the coming of God as he did in Psalm 104:3. Jesus left this earth with clouds and will return in clouds. Some believe that the mighty angel is one of the archangels ó Michael or Gabriel.
- C. **Rainbow** ó From the time of Noah and the flood, the rainbow has represented the promise of God. God made a promise and the rainbow is the sign of that covenant.
- D. **Face like the sun** ó Jesus is the light of the world. (John 8:12) Jesus came to bring light to a dark world. The gospel is the light of life. This symbol is used in 1:16 to describe Jesus.
- E. **Feet like pillars of fire** ó With one foot on the sea and one on land, showing that all mankind is involved. Fire is often a symbol of passion, fervor, and zeal. The fire represents the burning message of the gospel.

*2 He had a little book open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land,*

- A. In his hand was a "little book open." Several comments are needed here.
- B. **Little book** ó Most commentators believe this is not the size of the volume, but the simplicity of the message. This is NOT a big, difficult, hard to understand book. It is little, small, and easy to learn the message from God.
- C. **Open** ó The Word of God is always open. The invitation of the gospel is not closed. I have aided people in obeying the gospel at all hours of the day and night. At worship services we extend a formal invitation, but responding to the gospel call is not limited to those moments.
- D. **This little book is the gospel**, the New Testament. Here are some reasons I reach this conclusion.
  - 1. The book is always open. The Gospel is always open to all who will obey it.

2. John was told to ðtakeö the book. It is not thrust on anyone. They must choose to take it.
3. John was instructed to ðeatö the book. The Bible cannot be just read. It must be chewed, swallowed, and digested.
4. After eating the book, John was told to prophesy. A prophet is one who speaks the message of God. John has eaten the book. Now, he can speak. Before a preacher or teacher can teach the Word, it must be studied, and digested.
5. This book is called the ðmystery of Godö in verse 7.

*3 and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roars. When he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices. 4 Now when the seven thunders uttered their voices, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them."*

- A. The angel cries with a loud voice. The sound was like a lion roaring. Then seven thunders utter their voices. John is about to record what he has heard from the seven thunders. A voice from heaven told John not to write. They were to be sealed, kept secret, not revealed.
- B. There has been much speculation about the reasons for keeping this information sealed. Many have also tried to speculate about the content of these seven thunders. There is simply no way for us to know what the thunders said. There is no information given on that subject.
- C. However, there are some logical guesses about why they were sealed and not revealed to us. Since the little book is the New Testament, the gospel of Christ, the will of God is complete. We do not need this information to obey God, serve God and live eternally with Him.
- D. NOTE: There are many things of curiosity, things we wonder about, things we would like to know, but are not needed for us to please God. God did not reveal ALL THINGS to us. He did reveal all things that pertain to life and godliness. (2 Peter 1:3)

*5 The angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to heaven 6 and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer,*

- A. The mighty angel lifts his hand toward heaven and swears by the God of heaven. God is the one who created all things. Therefore, when all things are about to end, God is the one to whom the angel speaks.
- B. The message is simple: ðTime will be no longer.ö
- C. Our ability to measure time is based upon the solar system. We measure days as the earth rotates; we measure months by the orbit of the moon; we measure a year by the earth's orbit of the sun. When the sun, moon and earth are burned up, there will be no time. We will lose all sense of days, months and years. Eternity for Christians is only one day long. There is no night there. We will never enter the second day of heaven.

- D. There will come a point where the time of opportunity will end. The little book will be closed. The offer of the gospel will cease.

*7 but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets.*

- A. The ðmystery of Godö will be finished.
- B. I have titled this work ðRevelation: Book of Mysteryö not because it is beyond our ability to understand. It is a book of mystery because it deals with things we have not yet experienced.
- C. When this world ends and time shall be no more, the mystery will be completed. Study Colossians 1:26-28 about the mystery of the gospel.

*8 Then the voice which I heard from heaven spoke to me again and said, “Go, take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the earth.”*

- A. John is told to take the book.
- B. The voice is either God or Christ here.
- C. John is given a simple command. It is not difficult.
- D. John is expected to obey the command ó as stated.

*9 So I went to the angel and said to him, “Give me the little book.” And he said to me, “Take and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth.”*

- A. John hesitates to take the book. He walks up to the mighty angel and asks for the book. The angel responds, ðTake it, and eat it.ö
- B. It is clear that expects His commands to be obeyed ó period. No changes. John wanted to change the command from ðtakeö to ðask forö and it was not allowed.
- C. The further instruction is that the book was to be eaten (chewed, swallowed and digested) before it can be of value. Many just read. While this is a good place to start, it is not the end of what we must do as we seek to understand and apply the Word of God to our lives.
- D. In John’s mouth it would taste sweet, but in the stomach there would be bitterness. The symbolism is clear. Many hear the gospel, understand the message of salvation, forgiveness and redemption. They obey the gospel, are baptized, and begin living the Christian life. It is wonderful to know that they are forgiven. We are filled with joy and delight, knowing that they are saved.
- E. Then, along comes some bitterness. Some calamity, hardship or persecution enters our life. Now the gospel has some ðacid reflux,ö a burning, and bitterness. When the gospel becomes bitterness, when living the Christian life becomes heartburn, many abandon the faith they once proclaimed and confessed.

*10 Then I took the little book out of the angel’s hand and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter.*

- A. It happened just as it had been explained to John. He took the book and ate it.

- B. In his mouth it was sweet and pleasurable, but in his stomach it was a bitter pill to swallow.

*11 And he said to me, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings."*

- A. Now that the book is digested, it is time to expound the message to all people.
- B. Before we can teach others, we must digest the meat of the Word. This does not mean that we must understand every detail, answer every false teaching, and explain every difficult passage. It does mean that the Word must become part and parcel with us.
- C. NOTE: John is not just watching a movie. He is an active participant in this vision. When no man was found to open the seals, John wept. Here John takes, eats, and digests the Word of God, then he must teach the gospel to all people of all nations.

# Revelation 11

## Introduction

Chapter 11 is divided into two parts. The first part has a great amount of information about the temple of God and two witnesses are killed but arise again. (1-14) The second section (15-19) is the end of the sixth and the sounding of the seventh trumpet.

Most commentators admit that this is perhaps the most difficult chapter to interpret. There are some similarities to Ezekiel 40-42 where the temple is measured before its restoration.

## Symbols in this chapter

- Temple
- Holy city
- Two witnesses
- Two olive trees
- Two candlesticks
- Two prophets

All of these symbols are different ways of depicting the church as the people of God who remain faithful in the face of severe persecution. Understanding that these symbols represent the people faithful to God, this chapter can be understood as a short history of the church from the beginning on Pentecost to the time it is taken to heaven to dwell with God for eternity. This is not a detailed history, of course. But, some major points are given in outline form.

Woodruff gives this view on pages 179-180:

- v. 3 ó God gives his people the power needed in order to spread the gospel during this Christian dispensation.
- v. 5, 6 ó God provided protection for his people in order that the gospel might be spread throughout the world.
- v. 7-10 ó Once the gospel was spread throughout the world, forces would arise upon this earth which would destroy the church for a certain period of time.
- v. 11 ó After this period of time, God again breathed life into his people and the church once again became strong.
- v. 12 ó At God's appointed time, the church will be called to heaven to dwell with him eternally.
- v. 13 ó Those forces which have persecuted the church will be destroyed, and great fear will fall upon those people at Christ's second coming.

*1 Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, "Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there.*

- A. A reed (bamboo rod) is given to John. He is becoming more active and involved in the vision.
- B. He is told to measure the temple. Some have argued for the early date (65 AD) because the temple was destroyed in 70 AD. It is argued that this must have taken place before the destruction of the temple.
- C. I answer ó 1) John was in exile and Patmos. It does not matter if the temple is still standing in Jerusalem or not. It is not possible for him to literally measure it anyway. 2) It is, I believe, not the temple of the Old Testament structure. The temple here represents the hearts of God's people.
- D. This is not a literal measurement. We, Christians, are the temple of God. God does not dwell in a temple made with hands. He dwells in the hearts of the faithful believers.
- E. What does it mean to measure the temple? The measuring rod represents the gospel. It is the way to measure those who are Christians and those who are not.
- F. The gospel does the measuring. In judgment we will be held up to the standard of the teachings of the New Testament. (John 12:48)

*2 But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months.*

- A. John is not to measure the outer court. Many pretenders could come here and not be true believers and worshippers of God. The TRUE church is included.
- B. The pretenders are excluded. Some teach that the court represents the area of unfaithful church members. They were close to the church, once a part of it, but now abandoned their faithfulness to Christ.
- C. The point is that the court will tread the holy city (church, God's faithful people) under foot. The temple is the dwelling place of God.
- D. The holy city is the location of the temple. Therefore, throughout Revelation, these symbols are used to represent the same concept, the church of Jesus Christ.
- E. The idea of "treading under foot" shows contempt and lack of regard. If something is of no value it is thrown out and walked on. This is an open display of contempt and disdain.
- F. Throughout history, the church has been trampled on. Men have sought to stop, silence, kill, destroy and weaken the gospel message. It happened in the first century and it is happening today.

*3 And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth."*

- A. Many different ideas can be found about the two witnesses. Some have suggested ó Moses and Elijah. Others suggest the Old and New Testaments. Some believe they are Peter and Paul. Coffman says they are "definitely and undeniably God's word, and God's church." (5, 240)

- B. Here is my view ó Remember the number two represents strength. I believe the two witnesses represent another symbol for the church. This is close to Coffman because the church is to preach the Word of God. The church, the faithful in God's family, is to be the witness to a lost and dying world. This is the mission and purpose of the church. (Ephesians 2:10; Matthew 28:18; Mark 16:15) This is still true today.
- C. We, in churches of Christ, often avoid the term "witness" because of the abuse of this term among many denominations. However, it is a proper term, when used as the New Testament uses it. We are to be "faithful and true witnesses" in carrying the gospel to the lost. (1:5; 3:14) Study 1 John 5:10 in this context. As we live for Christ, we are to be witnesses for Him.
- D. These witnesses are also called olive trees and candlesticks in the next verse. We learned in 1:20 that the candlesticks are the churches. While very different images, they all represent the same concept.
- E. As to the length of time expressed here ó 1,260 days. Most commentators take a view that there are several phrases used to describe the same period of time.
  1. 1,260 days ó A day represents a year, thus 1,260 years.
  2. 42 months ó A month is 30 days, thus  $42 \times 30 = 1,260$ .
  3. 3 ½ times ó A "time" = a year, so 3 ½ times = 3 and a half years. A typical prophetic year is 360 days long.  $360 \times 3.5 = 1,260$ .
  4. Time, times, and half a time ó Time = one year; times = two years; half a time = half a year; thus, this phrase is equal to the one above.
- F. I am not convinced that we can interpret this number with precision. We are not sure when the counting starts or ends. What event would mark the beginning of the trampling? What event would identify the resurrection of the witnesses?
- G. Many have tried. None have been successful with any valid proof. Most commentators here begin playing with their prophetic calculator.

*4 These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth.*

- A. The two witnesses are here described as olive trees and candlesticks.
- B. Olive trees were used by Paul in Romans 11 to describe how God cut off the Jew and grafted in the Gentiles. Here the olive tree represented the church.
- C. Candlesticks were used in 1:20 to represent the churches in Asia.
- D. I believe that, while the symbols are very different, they are used in other places in the New Testament or in the book of Revelation to represent Christians, the true church.

*5 And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner.*

- A. God is saying, in effect, "You might despise Christians and you might seek to eliminate them from the earth. But, if you hurt one of my family, you will have to deal with Me."

- B. Do not think that delay in retribution means that God is not aware or does not care. He will meet out His wrath in His time.
- C. While individual Christian might be killed, the church will not be destroyed. Jesus promised that the gates of Hades would not prevail against the church he would build. (Matthew 16:18)

*6 These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire.*

- A. The church grew rapidly. Christians had great power on the earth.
- B. For the first several centuries, the church had great power on the political, social and economic situations in the world.
- C. Christians has the power to make it rain or make it stop raining. They could call upon God to come to their aid.
- D. The figures used here represent the power exercised by God's people through prayer. Not only can Christians pray for good things to happen (healing, comfort, and forgiveness) but we can also seek God's intervention in our troubles.
- E. God can inflict punishment on the wicked. This is a prelude to chapters 15 and 16 where God pours out His wrath on the earth.

*7 When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them.*

- A. Just when the church is reaching into the entire world and exercising great power and influence, it will seemingly lose a war with Satan. It will seem that Satan has defeated the church.
- B. The church will be (almost) non-existent on the earth. It will be invisible. If there are any still faithful, they will be in hiding.
- C. The church will not have any power or influence in the world. As far as the world is concerned, the church has been dealt a fatal blow.
- D. As noted in the introduction to this chapter, we have here a brief history of the church. It grew to great power. It was sent into the wilderness, in hiding, and seemed to be dead.
- E. The beast that kills the two witnesses is the same beast discussed in 17:8 as a beast rising out of the bottomless pit. This is a clear statement that the source of the death of the church is Satan and his angels. (A full discussion of these beasts will be found in chapter 13.)

*8 And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.*

- A. The church would lie in public view, in the street, dead. While some part of the church would remain visible, it would, in reality, be dead.

- B. The true church was taken over by an apostate church. This did not happen suddenly. It was a slow gradual process that took over 400 years. Small changes here and there were made. Things were added to the worship. The church developed a hierarchal system. It corrupted, changed, added, and eliminated many parts of the New Testament church. By 600 AD the church that was visible was NOT the church of first century. There was no resemblance between them.
- C. The great city, Jerusalem, where Jesus was crucified, was now called Sodom (because it was a city filled with sin) and Egypt (because it rejected Jehovah as Lord). Even today, Jerusalem is not a spiritual city. There is today, fighting in the streets. The location of Solomon's temple is the site of a mosque of the Islam religion.
- D. During a period we call the Dark Ages, the church was non-existent. Through this period the church that was visible (in the street) was a dead hulk of corruption and filth (a dead body).

*9 Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves.*

- A. All nations will be aware of the dead body. While all know it is dead, no one wants to sign the death certificate.
- B. Study the church at Sardis in 3:1. This was a church that had a name (visible in appearance) of being alive, but this church was dead. Some churches and dead but no one wants to bury them.
- C. Pronouncing a church dead is a difficult thing. It admits our failure.
- D. In this case, the visible church, the corrupted and altered church, was still performing weddings and funerals. They baptized babies and said prayers for the dead. There was no life in this body. The Bible, the bread of life, was not read or even available to be read.
- E. NOTE: In my mission work in Russia, I have seen the work of a church without power. During the era of communism, the Russian Orthodox Church was just a shell. It had no rights, except to baptize, marry and bury. This is what happened during the Dark Ages. The true church had no power or ability to preach the gospel to a lost world.
- F. Here the term 3 ½ days describes the period of time the witnesses lie in the street. As noted above, I am not sure we can assign a specific event to know when to start counting or what event would mark the end of this period. I believe the phrases are related to the same period of time. See the notes about this in verse 3. It seems to me that this period of time represents the era when the church was powerless, dead, and in limbo. Roughly, this would be from the from about 550 or 600 to the early 1800's when the Restoration Movement of Campbell and Stone began to revive the church to activity and power.

*10 And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.*

- A. The world of evil and wickedness had a party. They thought the church and the idea of Christianity was dead. They rejoiced at what they had accomplished.
- B. But, the church was not dead. One cannot kill an idea.
- C. The principles of the New Testament remained alive.
- D. The power is in the seed. (Luke 11:8) Wherever the seed is planted in open and honest hearts, Christians can be produced. The seed may appear to be dead. But it is dead seed that brings the living organism to life and vitality.

*11 Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them.*

- A. Once the Restoration Movement began, it was received with great excitement. It spread across the world rapidly. It started in the northeastern part of America.
- B. Within 15 years, it was in all parts of Europe (especially Britain, France, Spain, Scotland), Russia, China, and Australia.
- C. It was spreading faster in America than America was settling westward. By 1830 the restored church was all the way to Texas, Oklahoma, Nebraska, and on the west coast of California.

*12 And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them.*

- A. The triumphant church is invited to come to heaven, the dwelling place of God. The party suddenly ended.
- B. The enemies thought they had killed the church. Now, the church is having the victory party, an eternal celebration of victory.
- C. No timetable is given here. From the resurrection (Restoration Movement) to the time the church is delivered up to the Father is an unknown period of time. On God's timetable, the next event is the second coming and deliverance of the church to God. (1 Corinthians 15:24)

*13 In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven.*

- A. At the same moment that the church is invited to the victory party, the tenth part of the city will fall.
- B. At the second coming of Christ, when time will be no more (10:6), these things will take place. Here is what is described:
  1. There will be a great earthquake.
  2. The tenth part of the city will fall.
  3. 7,000 men will be killed.
  4. Those remaining will be frightened.
  5. They will (out of their fear) give glory to God.

- C. These symbols are difficult to understand. It is clear that God will be victorious. It is clear that those who opposed God will recognize Him as Lord.
- D. What is the meaning of the tenth part of the city? If the number 10 represents total or complete, then the tenth part would mean that the city was no longer complete. I do not believe this is a destruction of buildings and structures, but the fall of the wickedness of the people.
- E. Who were the 7,000 men that were killed? The meaning seems to be that many claimed to be spiritual in nature, but really opposed God and rejoiced when the witnesses were dead. Their hypocrisy will be exposed. They will not escape.
- F. God will deal with the apparent killers of the church and the pretenders who hung around Jerusalem and the temple court, but were not true and faithful Christians.

*14 The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly.*

- A. Here ends the second woe. Two are gone. One more is coming.
- B. And it is coming quickly.

*15 Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"*

- A. With the sounding of the seventh trumpet, we move into the time of judgment. Time has ended (10:6).
- B. The world has reached the end of things, as we know them. God is taking over. All worldly kingdoms will end. There is now the one kingdom, the kingdom of God. Only the church (the kingdom of God) will remain forever and ever.
- C. It is clear in Hebrews 1:3 that Christ is on the throne, reigning over the kingdom of God. When the end comes, the kingdom will be delivered to the Father.

*16 And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God,*

- A. The 24 elders have seen and endured so much.
- B. Now, it is time to rejoice. They worshipped God.

*17 saying: "We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was and who is to come, Because You have taken Your great power and reigned.*

- A. God is praised because:
  1. God is Almighty.
  2. God is Always. (Was and is)
  3. God is in control of all things.
  4. God is reigning.
- B. The phrase, *and is to come* is omitted from the text here.

- C. The reason ó Christ has already come. The second coming is over. God is and has always been.

*18 The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, And the time of the dead, that they should be judged, And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, And those who fear Your name, small and great, And should destroy those who destroy the earth.”*

- A. All the wicked people of earth are angry. Upon them has come the wrath of God.
- B. They are now facing an eternity of dread. They will be judged and given the reward that is due them. Those who were faithful to God will participate in the judgment of the wicked.

*19 Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.*

- A. The temple is opened in heaven. This is the dwelling place of God and His people.
- B. The Ark of the Covenant is there.
- C. There is lightning, booming voices, thunder, an earthquake and large hail.
- D. All things come to a crashing, banging, booming conclusion. This is the grand crescendo of all creation.

# Revelation 12

## Introduction

As Ray Summers observes, “Many times it appears that the enemy has the upper hand and will win, but all the time we know that victory is ours because we have seen the headline announcing victory. John used this method many times in Revelation ó always very effectively.” (2, 167)

Chapter 12 begins the second part of the book. Some have thought this begins a second vision. I do not believe there is a second vision. The seals lead to the trumpets. The trumpets end with the little book that tells about judgment of men. John is told that there are many things that he will need to prophesy after eating the book. With chapter 12 begins the message that John was to deliver.

In the second half of Revelation, the characters are the same. The war between Satan and the church is the same. The outcome will be the same. The action will intensify in speed. The actions will be more dramatic. And the book will end with the complete victory for the church and complete defeat for Satan.

*I Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars.*

- A. John begins now to describe what he saw after he had eaten the little book.
- B. A woman ó John sees a radiant woman, clothed with the sun. She has 12 stars on her head.
- C. There are a couple of theories about whom this woman represents.
  - 1. **Mary** ó It is thought by some that this is a description of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Mostly Roman Catholic commentators, seeking to elevate the worship and veneration of Mary, hold this view.
  - 2. **Jewish System** ó Woodruff believes that the woman represents the “Jewish system of religion.” Christ was brought to the world through the Jewish lineage. God intended the Law of Moses to bring us to Christ. Woodruff argues that the 12 stars symbolize the 12 tribes of Israel.
  - 3. **Church** ó The church is, in the rest of the New Testament, seen as the bride of Christ. In Romans 7:4, the church is married to Christ. In 21:9 the church is referred to as the bride of Christ. Christ is the bridegroom and the church is the bride. This view holds that the 12 stars symbolize the 12 apostles. Rather than thinking in the past to Mary literally bringing Jesus into the world, or the Jewish system supplying the bloodline for Christ; we need to think of the church as the woman who, through evangelism and preaching, is presenting Jesus to the world.
- D. The church is pictured as a bright and radiant woman in contrast to the “great harlot” of immorality in chapter 17.
- E. The woman represents the true church, and those who are faithful to Christ.

*2 Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth.*

- A. She, the woman, gave birth to a child.
- B. Most commentators agree that the child is Jesus. Satan will do whatever he can to stop Christ from being preached in the world.
- C. Bringing Christ to the world can be painful. It can result in imprisonment, suffering and even death. The gospel is being spread today, not in comfort, but in pain and anguish.

*3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads.*

- A. John next sees the fiery red dragon. This dragon is also called the devil, and Satan, in verse 9.
- B. There is no dispute about this. John clearly calls this dragon, Satan.
- C. You will soon meet his allies ó the beast from the sea, the beast from the earth, the great harlot, and the false prophet. All of these are subject to the dragon. He is clearly in charge.

*4 His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born.*

- A. The great dragon is seen as having a long tail. The dragon knocked a third of the stars out of heaven and threw them to the earth.
- B. These stars must represent the people who are now loyal to Satan. Remember the òthird partö is not a literal number. It represents the spiritual part of man. Satan has the ability to destroy the spiritual part of man.

*5 She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.*

- A. Satan knew that Christ was coming. He tried to stop His birth.
- B. Think about the times when the lineage of Christ was hanging by a thread.
  - 1. Haman almost carried out a plot to kill all Jews in the time of Esther.
  - 2. At the time of Athalia, the queen who killed all her family, EXCEPT a six-month old baby named Joash.
  - 3. Just as Jesus was to be born, Mary and Joseph had to make a difficult trip to Bethlehem. Jesus had to be born in a stable.
  - 4. By creating insurrection, Jesus was arrested and executed at Calvary.
- C. At each of these times, the coming of Christ was threatened. Satan tried to prevent the church from bringing Christ to the world.
- D. When Christ was raised from the dead, and ascended to heaven, Satan turned his attention to the woman (the church) that was preaching Christ. This helps us

understand why the church was being persecuted. The attack on the church was Satan's way to get back at Christ.

*6 Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.*

- A. The woman (the church) flees into the wilderness. This seems to correspond to the killing of the two witnesses in 11:7-11.
- B. God will always protect His family. There is a parallel with the children of Israel leaving the persecution of Egypt and going into the wilderness before reaching the Promised Land. So must Christians, as we come out of great tribulation (sin) and head for heaven, we must go through the wilderness. The scene described here is the church in the wilderness. The church is in the world, but not of the world.
- C. The 1,260 days is equal to the 42 months, and 3 ½ times. God will feed, protect and care for the church, even under persecution. The period of time represents the church age or the entire Christian era. I do not believe that this is a literal period of years.

*7 And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought,*

- A. War in heaven ó As Satan tried to invade heaven and destroy Christ; Michael and his angels meet him. Michael is the fighting archangel.
- B. This is not a historical account of the origin of Satan. There are several theories about where Satan came from. This text does not deal with the origin.
- C. The war described here is the time that Satan lost power over people. He could no longer possess people as he did during the ministry of Christ. Until Jesus' death on the cross there was no forgiveness of sins. Now that Jesus died for all men, Satan lost his control over us.
- D. Does Satan still have power? Yes. He still is active. He still seeks to tempt, lead into sin, and cause us to lose faith. But, we have the power to resist. We can resist Satan and he will flee from us. (James 4:7) Satan seeks to devour us but we can resist. (1 Peter 5:8-9)

*8 but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer.*

- A. Satan did not win. He was not given any power to control people.
- B. The devil no longer has control over us.
- C. This does not mean that we will never be tempted. It does mean that as long as we remain faithful to our Lord and follow His teachings and commands, the devil cannot touch us.

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

- A. This verse makes clear that the dragon in this vision is Satan. He and his angels are now limited in what they can do, where they can go, and what power they can exercise.
- B. The earth is not the planet earth, the physical earth. Earth is used as opposite of heaven. If one is not in heaven, he is on the earth.
- C. The earth represents the dwelling place of sin, Satan and his followers. Heaven is the dwelling place of Christians, the location of Jesus and His followers.

*10 Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.*

- A. The time that Satan is cast out of heaven is the time that salvation came to humanity. This is the death on the cross.
- B. Christ now has the power. (Matthew 28:18; Romans 1:4) Christ overcame all enemies, including death. The last enemy was Satan, himself. (1 John 3:8)
- C. Satan has been limited in his power. Do not be afraid. Satan can kill your body, but he cannot harm your soul. (Matthew 10:28)
- D. Those being accused night and day by Satan are referred to as our brethren.

*11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.*

- A. These brethren have overcome Satan. How is this possible?
  - By the blood of the Lamb
  - By faithfulness in their testimony
  - By putting Christ above their personal safety.
- B. You will remember the letters to the seven churches gave promises to those who overcome. The word "overcome" means, do not give in, or give up. Remain faithful to Christ and His church. Do not abandon the faith even if it means your death. (2:10)

*12 Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time."*

- A. All the church should rejoice that Satan has been restricted. We can win. Satan cannot defeat us without our consent and approval.
- B. There is also a warning. Satan comes to attack the church because:
  - 1. He is angry. He has been defeated and is upset.
  - 2. He knows that his time is short. We, from our viewpoint, have a hard time seeing the shortness of time. However, in the eternal plan of God, the time is short.

*13 Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child.*

- A. The dragon sees that he has lost his spiritual battle. Since he tried over and over to prevent Christ from coming, and failed. He tried to prevent the preaching of the gospel by killing Christ, and failed to keep him in the grave. Satan's only recourse is to persecute the church.
- B. There is a human parallel here. When the dog bites you, you kick the cat. Sometimes we will be angry at something our boss does at work, and we take out our frustration on our spouse or children. Satan is angry with Christ and is kicking the church.

*14 But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.*

- A. The church is under the care and protection of God. Similar to Elijah by the brook, or the children of Israel in the wilderness, God will take care of His own.
- B. This verse is similar to verse 6.
- C. The church is given two wings (two showing strength; wings of eagles demonstrate the ease of escape) and is able to fly into the wilderness.
- D. God cares for the church during this "time and times and half a time" (3 ½ times). It should be clear that these terms are used interchangeably.

*15 So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood.*

- A. Satan is at work seeking to persecute and destroy the church.
- B. One of his methods of destroying the church is the use of the flood from his mouth.
- C. The Word of God is the water of life. The water from the mouth of Satan, the deceiver and liar, must be false teachings, lies and deceptions. Satan can harm the church by getting Christians to argue over false teachings that would lead some astray.
- D. When we argue, fuss, and disagree with each other, we are NOT taking Christ to the world. Satan wins. When we are feuding with each other over issues like:
  - 1. One cup vs. individual communion cups
  - 2. Eating in the church building, having social occasions like a wedding or funeral in the building, having a kitchen or fellowship area
  - 3. How to care for orphans & church support of an organization
  - 4. Churches cooperating in works like evangelism on TV
- E. Jesus said it very clearly in John 13:35. If we love one another, if we are united, Satan is helpless. If we are fussing, feuding, arguing with each other, Satan is delighted.

*16 But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth.*

- A. In some way the earth (dwelling place of Satan) is helping the church. How does this happen?
- B. I believe that this means that there are people, though not Christians, who are doing things to make the existence and survival of the church easier. For example, some denominational people, have not obeyed the gospel fully, but believe and teach some parts of the gospel message. Many denominational preachers have preached many moral truths. They have preached the message of the love of God, the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. There are many teaching the inspiration of the Bible. All of these people make our preaching the truth easier. They are helping us, even though they are of the earth (not Christians).

*17 And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

- A. Satan is angry. He feels he is losing control. He is venting his anger at the church.
- B. "The rest of her offspring (seed)" is defined as Christians. Jesus was the seed of Abraham. (Galatians 3:16) Christians are the seed of Abraham. (Galatians 3:29) As Christians, we are the rest of the offspring. Paul taught Timothy, who taught others, who passed it on to others, who are able to teach others. (2 Timothy 2:2) This was God's plan as Jesus commanded in Matthew 28:19-20. Teach the converts all things that Jesus commanded.
- C. If you keep the commandments, you are the object of Satan's wrath. If you are faithful in the testimony of Jesus Christ, you are the object of Satan's wrath. In 2 Timothy 3:12 is a warning that the godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

# Revelation 13

## Introduction

This is an important chapter. Not because it contains much more vital information. Just the opposite is true. It does not deal with any more vital information than the chapter before it or the chapter that follows it. The reason this chapter is important is because of the many misunderstandings connected with chapter 13. This is the chapter that introduces the beast and his number 666. There are more theories, calculations, and interpretations about how to understand this number than perhaps any other section of the Revelation.

This chapter introduces two beasts about which many theories have evolved and developed. The theories depend on the system of interpretation chosen. Before we enter this chapter we need to discuss the term beast and how it is used throughout the book of Revelation and in other apocalyptic writings in the Old Testament.

A study of Daniel 7 will be very helpful here. In Daniel there are four beasts that arise out of the earth. (Daniel 7:17) The meaning is clear. The beasts are the four kings, or better, the four kingdoms, which shall arise. This chapter writes world history in advance. God begins with Babylon. Following the Babylonian Empire will come the Medo-Persian Empire. Next will be the empire of Alexander the Great in Greece. Lastly will come the Roman Empire. It is clear in Daniel 7 that the beasts are kings or kingdoms. Therefore, a beast is a symbolic term for a government power or rule in this world.

## Beast out of the Sea

Here is a summary statement of the verses that follow about the beast out of the sea in this chapter (1-10). Since the beast represents governmental power, a kingdom or empire, it is clear from this chapter that the beast here stands for civil government. There are a couple of reasons for this conclusion.

1. The number seven is the number of divine completeness. This beast has seven heads. Some believe this represents seven actual governments or empires. This is a stretch, any way one tries to make the list.
2. This beast signifies all the kingdoms that have existed because God desired them. One can see this clearly in Daniel 4. God sets up kingdoms. God can take them down. Civil rulers only have power as God ordains them. (Romans 13:1-4)
3. In Jeremiah 51:24-29, the seven heads are described as seven mountains. One of the mountains under consideration is Babylon. Thus, Babylon is one of the seven mountains, which is one of the seven heads of the beast.
4. This beast has ten horns. Since ten is the number of human completeness, there will be many kingdoms in power. They will come and go. Some will last a long time and others will quickly fade away. Thus, this beast is not one nation or one ruler. A variety of nations will, at different times rise to rule, or seek to rule, the world.
5. The final end of this beast is given in 19:20. He is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone.



4. If you select the Continuous-Historical view with a civil government application, then you will find the following to your liking. The first Roman ruler was named Latinus. The Greek name is spelled ὀLateinos.ὀ Using the Greek letter values for this Greek spelling. (You will be surprised at this.) The sum of the letter values is 666.
5. Which of these, or the dozens of others devised, invented and calculated over the years is correct? In my view, **NONE OF THE ABOVE is correct.** I have seen schemes for Stalin, Watergate, Henry Kissinger, Pope Pius IV, and Pope John Paul. The manipulations that take place are sometimes so far-fetched that it is beyond reason.

Whatever view you take here, I believe, it must be consistent with the book, meaningful to the first century Christians and offer them some hope and encouragement. (My view is written in the comments of this chapter.)

Ray Summers concludes, ὀThis ὀreductio ad absurdumὀ treatment is given to indicate the futility of such efforts to arrive at the truth. By this cryptic method the number has been applied to several popes and a large number of political personages during the course of the world's history. A pathetic loss of time and thought and mathematical ingenuity has marked the labor of an endless number of men who have tried to solve the riddle of this mystic number and assign it to some contemporary.ὀ (2, 177)

*1 Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name.*

- A. Some have tried to make this literal. They claim that John was on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea and that the best is the Roman Empire coming by ship to invade Israel.
- B. It is true that Israel was most vulnerable by sea because they did not have a navy. There were not able to stop an invasion by sea until the enemy landed on their shore.
- C. I do not believe we should try to identify the sea. My view is that this is the sea of humanity, the world of people.
- D. The beast, which arises out of this sea of humanity, has seven heads and ten horns. As we read more about this beast it becomes clear that what is being described here is civil governments and their power to control people.
- E. The heads and crowns represent power and authority. The government (any government) seeks to control and exercise power over its people.
- F. The most important point of this verse is the fact that this beast is blasphemous. He makes claims that blaspheme the name of God, His church, His Son, and His Word.

*2 Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority.*

- A. The symbols of a leopard, bear and lion have a double emphasis.
  1. These are three of the four beasts described in Daniel 7 as the world powers of Babylon, Persia, and Greece.

2. In a broader sense, these animals represent great power, savage, persecuting power. They describe, not a kind and gentle government, but a brutal one.
- B. Civil governments have many powers at their disposal to control people. They use physical force. They can use violence, punishments, persecutions and all types of hardships (economic, family, property, etc.)
- C. Woodruff said, "Just because we live in a nation that offers freedom of religion, we should not lose sight of forces that exist in this world which seek to prohibit God's people from worshiping him." (1, 221)

*3 And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast.*

- A. Some commentators have tried to identify each of the seven heads as individual kings. Then they try to ascertain which one was wounded.
- B. If the heads represent individual kings, then you have an evil, persecuting king, being killed and resurrected to life again. I do not believe Christians can accept or even imagine such an event occurring.
- C. Here is my view. The civil Roman Empire was dealt a fatal blow and the empire was destroyed in 476. It was dead until Christmas day in the year 800. This is when Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne as emperor. This marks the new beginning of the Holy Roman Empire. Just go to your history books or to any encyclopedia and look up "Holy Roman Empire," "Papal Inquisition," "Spanish Inquisition," and "Middle Ages."
- D. This also matches the rest of this chapter as you meet the second beast in verses 11-16.

*4 So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?"*

- A. Notice first that worship is offered to two things. They (sea of humanity) are worshiping the dragon (Satan) and they are worshiping the beast.
- B. The beast gets its power from Satan, so to worship the beast is to worship the power behind the beast.
- C. This beast is recognized for its power. Who could resist?
- D. I believe this question was being discussed in church assemblies. Rome is persecuting the church. We are weak and not able to stand. What good will it do for another one, ten, or 100 to die in this persecution? Are we able to resist the power of the government?
- E. Some first century Christians developed a doctrine called "Mental Reservation." It went like this: We cannot fight against Rome. We will all be killed if we resist. Here is what we can do. In our minds, we know that Jesus is our only Lord. But we can pinch some incense and say, "Caesar is Lord." Because, this is not what we really believe. It is just an outward act with no real meaning. In other words, we can lie, if we know in our heart of hearts that we really don't mean it.

- F. This is an ancient version of "Situation Ethics." There are some religious groups that still teach that mental reservation to preserve life is acceptable.

*5 And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months.*

- A. His voice is also powerful. He is able to speak great things.
- B. Blasphemy can include all types of critical lies. The Greek word means, "to speak against." Today we use words like libel, defame and slander. Here the civil governments have the power to speak against, to slander, Christians.
- C. The authority lasts for 42 months. See our previous discussions about this phrase representing the entire gospel age. See my comments at 11:3.
- D. I believe the number 42 is used here because 1) Four is the number of the earth and this material world; 2) Two is the number for strength; thus 3) This beast will work, persecute, threaten and exercise power on earth, over material things with great strength and power. The number is another way to express the 1260 days, and 3 ½ times. They all suggest that civil governments will be with us as long as this world stands. Some of these civil rulers will seek to control and restrict Christians. This will happen until the end of the age.

*6 Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven.*

- A. These evil governments will blaspheme God. They will slander the good name of God. They will ridicule His tabernacle. They will speak against Christians.
- B. NOTE: The tabernacle, in the Old Testament, contained the Ark of the Covenant and the Mercy Seat. This represented to Israel, the presence of God. The blasphemy against the tabernacle is blasphemy that scoffs at the presence of God. As many were being persecuted, they would be asked, "Where is your God now?"
- C. The last phrase in this verse has caused some dispute. Here is my view. Christians are in God's Kingdom, the church. (12:12) Faithful Christians are in "heavenly places in Christ." (Ephesians 1:3; 2:6) We are now in "heavenly places in Christ." We are in the sanctuary and protection of our God. Yes, we are still on earth in the fleshly sense. But, we have moved our citizenship to heaven.
- D. This beast does everything possible to destroy religion, worship of God and God's people. The beast seeks to control the people's soul and body.

*7 It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. 8 All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*

- A. Remember, we dwell in "heavenly places." This verse shows the contrast. Those who dwell on the earth are those who do not have their names written in the Book of Life. Christians have their name written in this book. (21:27)

- B. All the people who are not Christians will worship this beast. They will think that the civil government is looking out for their best interest. I am reminded of the many times I was told this by Russians. Under Communism, they were told that their government was the best in the world. They were led to believe that the government really cared about them and was doing what is best for them.
- C. I believe that the last phrase, "from the foundation of the world," refers to the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. This verse is showing that from the beginning the Lamb owned the book and keeps the records. It was God's plan from before creation that Jesus would die for the sins of all humanity. By our faithful obedience, we can have our names written in the Book of Life.

*9 If anyone has an ear, let him hear.*

- A. This short verse reminds us of the ending of each of the letters in chapters 2 and 3.
- B. The purpose is to issue a admonition to pay close attention. Something very important is about to happen and you will not want to miss this.

*10 He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.*

- A. Some have used this verse to oppose capital punishment. Others have suggested that this verse teaches that Christians must not go to war or fight for their nation's freedom and safety.
- B. NOTE: The term "He who" is not identifying Christians, but the beast. It is the beast that is taking people into captivity. It is the beast that is killing Christians with the sword.
- C. The beast will be in captivity in hell for all eternity. The sword (Word of God, the gospel) will strike the fatal blow to this beast.
- D. We are reminded that God will avenge these wrongs. Our task is to be patient. God does not work in our timeframe. God may not avenge the blood of persecuted Christians immediately. But, God will not forget. It will happen in God's time. (See 6:10)

*11 Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon.*

- A. We are now introduced to the second beast. This beast rises from the earth.
- B. He is described as looking like a lamb. I believe this indicates that it would look religious.
- C. But, he speaks like a dragon. In summary, He looks like Jesus and talks like Satan.
- D. He has two horns. Horns are a symbol of power. Two is the number of strength. This beast has strong power.
- E. Remember that Jesus is described as a lamb with seven horns. (5:6) Jesus IS the Lamb of God. He has complete power. This beast has two horns, indicating strong power. And this beast looks LIKE a lamb. It is NOT a lamb, it just appears that way.

*12 And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.*

- A. When the Roman Empire suffered its decline and fall in 476, the civil government was dead.
- B. When Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne as emperor in 800, the Holy Roman Empire was born and the Roman Empire was resurrected. These two beasts work together. The first, civil government dies. The second, false religion, gives power for the first to start again. This beast possesses both civil power over the emperor it appoints and religious power over people.

*13 He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men.*

- A. This beast that looks like a lamb, also tries to act like a religious power. He does great signs (miracles) to impress people and command obedience.
- B. Men are caused to fear the great power that this beast demonstrates.

*14 And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived.*

- A. These miracles are a fake. They are deceptions, a fraud. The beast does not have any supernatural power to perform miracles. His only power is the ability to deceive.
- B. This beast appears to be in submission to the first beast. The reality is that this beast is the one that put the first beast back in power. It resurrected the civil government, giving it power and life and it could take away that power and life.
- C. I have seen a parallel in my work in Russia. I have seen the Russian Orthodox Church claim to support the government, but in fact, it is more powerful than the government and could take it down if the civil leaders fail to follow the desires of the Patriarch.

*15 He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.*

- A. He, in this verse, refers to the civil government, which was to be worshiped. This beast was given delegated authority. He gave the image breath and life. The image (perhaps, the image of a Roman Emperor on the seal or on coins) was given life and breath by the living and breathing emperor.
- B. This beast was given two powers.
  - 1. He was given the ability to put force, fear and power behind the image. Without the emperor, the image would just be a picture or a statue. It is the emperor that gives this image power and dread.
  - 2. He was given the power to kill all who refused to worship the image. Christians, when they refused to bow down to the image of the emperor, were subject to death. It was considered treason to refuse to bow and worship the image of the emperor.

*16 He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads,*

- A. There has been far too much speculation about the mark mentioned here. What is that mark? Is it a literal mark? It is literally placed on the forehead?
- B. Some of the theories common today include: Social security number, Credit card accounts, a coming cashless society where some other method is used. Some have imagined that the time will come when all people will have a small computer chip implanted in their foreheads. As you enter a store, the chip will be scanned. If you do not have the chip implant, you will not be allowed to enter the store and buy what you need.
- C. This mark is not a literal mark that could be seen by others. It is a figurative method of indicating who has pledged himself or herself loyal to the emperor or not.
- D. The symbolism is similar to the seal of God in 14:1. God's name is not literally tattooed in our forehead. Neither is the mark of the beast.
- E. The forehead represents the mind, will, and intellect of man. In Deuteronomy 6, parents were to keep the commands of God before their children, writing it on their foreheads. This was a figurative way of saying make sure these truths are deeply implanted in the heart and mind of your children.
- F. The right hand (even though I am left-handed) represents, physical labor or work. A rancher will hire extra hands to round up cattle. The right hand is the symbol of work, labor and skill.

*17 and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.*

- A. This second beast represents false religious leaders, in whom also rests the power over the emperor. Between the two beasts there is tremendous power and control over all parts of human activity.
- B. There are two views here:
  - 1. The emperor kept tight control on commerce. Only those who had bowed to the image and expressed allegiance to the emperor would be granted permission to conduct business, import or export goods, or have freedom to travel over the empire.
  - 2. Similar to our labor unions, each trade or skill had a trade guild which had its own idol deity to be worshiped. If you were not a member and participant in these guilds, you could not conduct business. For example, a carpenter might have excellent skill to build houses, but if he did not belong to the carpenter's guild, he could not get any work. Christians, of course, refused to worship the pagan gods. They were excluded from these trade guilds.
- C. Christians have a mind and heart directed toward the worship of the true and living God. We worship the only Lord, Jesus Christ. To worship the emperor, or to submit to the pagan practices of the trade guilds, would be disloyal to our God.

- D. Woodruff comments, "Christians do not have God's name literally written in their foreheads, but they do commit their minds and will to him. They figuratively have God's name written in their foreheads. When men render their labors and allegiance to anything, they figuratively wear that mark in their right hand and forehead."

*18 Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666.*

- A. The number is important, not the name. See the introduction to this chapter for some of the ways this number has been explained.
- B. Since seven is the number of the sacred and divine completeness, then six represents doom, failure to achieve, incompleteness, and imperfection.
- C. In some of the writings of the early church fathers, Jesus is given the number "888" to symbolize that Jesus goes as far beyond perfection as this beast falls short of it.
- D. This verse has been twisted, distorted, and perverted in so many ways. It should not surprise us to hear John say, "Here is wisdom." This tells us, this will not be easy. It will take some extra care and study to determine what is intended here.
- E. The number given is the number of a man. The text does NOT say it is the number of a name. Most of the schemes devised, center around seeking to give this man a name or title and find a number equivalent to the name.
- F. Of course, you have already seen one problem. With so many different suggested answers to this puzzle, which one is correct? Because there are several possible solutions, we realize it becomes a matter of opinion. I must, therefore, reject all of these suggested answers.
- G. NOTE: Here are some observations that must be considered.
1. The number is not needed to identify the beast. We have a very clear picture of who this beast is. See the comments in verses 11-17. The beast is the great religious power that unites itself with the civil government to persecute Christians.
  2. Like most other numbers in Revelation, the meaning is not literal, but symbolic. We tend to associate some numbers with certain concepts or ideas. The number "13" is unlucky and the number "7" is lucky. Many hotels do not have a 13<sup>th</sup> floor because guests would not stay there, feeling it would be bad luck for them.
  3. The proper view of this verse requires wisdom and understanding, not a spiritual calculator.
  4. While this is the only time the number 666 is used in the book, it is not the only time the number 6 is used. The number 6 is used three times. It is used in connection with the seals, trumpets, and will be used again with the plagues that will be poured out. Each time the number 6 is used, we are approaching the end of all things.
  5. If you combine together the 6<sup>th</sup> seal, 6<sup>th</sup> trumpet, and 6<sup>th</sup> plague "666" you will have a clearer image of the meaning here.
    - a. The sixth seal shows the end of all physical things on the earth. Those who have not obeyed God seek to flee in terror and beg for death. (6:12-17)

- b. The sixth trumpet warns those who are not spiritually minded of the terrible condition in which they will find themselves at the second coming of Christ. (9:13-21; 11:12-14)
  - c. The sixth plague teaches that God will gather together all the non-Christians. It will be a time of great sorrow. (16:12-16)
- H. Here is my conclusion on this matter. The number 666 represents, failure and doom. The combined effect of the seal, trumpet and plague discussed above show that the beast will be totally, completely destroyed at the second coming of Christ. The beast will be powerless when Christ comes. The battle of Armageddon will be the final defeat, the last gasp. The beast will be defeated. The number proves it. 6 = failure. 6 = doom. 6 = imperfection. Combine them together and you have the complete, total, and utter defeat of this beast, which has done so much harm to God's people.

# Revelation 14

## Introduction

Chapter 14 is a continuation of the previous one. Here is a brief outline of this chapter.

- Description of those who refuse to worship the beast. (1-5)
- Babylon is introduced. (6-11)
- Another view of judgment. (14-20)

*1 Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads.*

- A. The 144,000 were discussed in 7:3-4. They are the servants of God who have the seal of God in them. They have the Father's name on their foreheads. They are faithful, loyal, and obedient followers of Christ.
- B. The seal of God shows genuineness and authenticity.
- C. Each of us must decide whom we will serve – Christ or Satan – and wear the mark that identifies our loyalty.

*2 And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps.*

- A. There are several issues that are often discussed here.
  1. **Does this passage authorize instrumental music in worship?** The argument is often made that there are harps in heaven. The claim is made, since it is acceptable in heaven, it must be acceptable in worship. This passage does not authorize the use of instrumental music in worship.
    - a. First, the harps mentioned here are symbolic. John does not hear harps. He hears voices like harpers playing their harps. There are references in Revelation to horses, frogs, lions, beasts, dragons, thunder, death, suffering, persecution and many other things which John sees in heaven. They are symbolic, not literal.
    - b. Second, what John heard were voices. Voices can offer praise to God. This is what God commanded the church to do. (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16) This is what the angels and 24 elders use to praise God in chapter 5.
  2. **What did John hear?** Did John hear harps? Did he hear thunder? Did John hear a babbling brook? NO! John heard voices. In the next verse this voice sings a new song.
  3. **What is the picture being painted in verse 2?** John hears a voice. Now he begins to describe this voice. He uses three symbols to describe the voice he hears.
    - a. **Many waters** – describes the flow and blending of this voice. It sounded like a babbling brook flowing over a rocky creek bed.  
Great thunder – As John seeks to describe the power of this voice; he says it sounded like a great boom of thunder.

- b. **Harpers harping** ó When you think about the melody and beauty of the voice, John describes them as if many harpists were playing their instruments.
- B. It is clear that the acceptable worship and praise that God seeks is the voice that offers genuine praise from the heart. This voice sings in verse 3.

*3 They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth.*

- A. The voices are here identified as coming from the 144,000. They sing a new song. It is a song that could not be sung before Christ came. Before the death of Christ, there was no redemption, no forgiveness, no salvation before the blood of Christ was shed on the cross.
- B. In the previous verse this voice is singular (denoting its unity and unison) and now it is in the plural as 144,000 sing together.
- C. Again, there is a parallel to the children of Israel. When they came out of great tribulation in Egypt, crossing the Red Sea, the first thing they did was sing a song of deliverance. So the church of the redeemed sings a new song of deliverance when they come out of the great tribulation of sin.
- D. For those who have not obeyed the gospel, the song is not familiar. If one has not committed their life to Christ, the words are just a strange sound.

*4 These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.*

- A. Who are these 144,000? They have not engaged in immoral or adulterous behavior. They have remained pure to the will of God. I do not believe that the word òvirginö is to taken literally. They are spiritually pure. They have remained faithful to their Lord. In 1 Corinthians 7:25-27 refers to men as virgins. Here the term is used to simply mean unmarried and not a reference to their purity and fidelity.
- B. They follow the Lamb. Jesus said that the seep know the shepherd and follow him. (John 10:4) If we want to serve Christ, we must follow him. (John 12:26)
- C. They are the redeemed from the world. Under the Law of Moses, the Israelites were required to give the first fruits to God. (Proverbs 3:9) We are said to be the first fruits of God. (James 1:18) We have, in effect, given ourselves to the Lord.

*5 And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.*

- A. The description continues ó There was no deceit in them. They were blameless. The American Standard translates this òwithout blemish.ö
- B. In the church at Sardis there were some who had not defiled their garments. (3:4)
- C. The 144,000 are Christians, faithful, and loyal. They have kept their garments pure.

*6 Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—*

- A. An angel is seen flying in heaven. This angel carries the gospel. The angel is not seen preaching the gospel. Rather, God, in His providence can be sure that the gospel message is preached in all places.
- B. It is obedience to this gospel that will allow us to become part of the 144,000.

*7 saying with a loud voice, “Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.”*

- A. The angel instructs us to do three things:
  - 1. **Fear God.** Reverence and a sense of awe will be apparent when we realize we are in the presence of God.
  - 2. **Give Him glory.** To God belongs all the praise and glory.
  - 3. **Worship Him.** God is the creator of all things. He made the sea, the earth, and the heavens. God created land and water under the land. His power must be realized. When one realizes the majesty, glory and power of God, worship is a natural result.
- B. We must fear God. We must give glory to God. The result is worship. Worship springs from our reverence and glory of God.

*8 And another angel followed, saying, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.”*

- A. In contrast to the 144,000, who are pure and blameless, we now meet Babylon. An angel says, “Babylon is fallen.” We are told that she led nations to commit fornication. We will learn more about Babylon later in our study. For now suffice it to say that Babylon represents immorality and corruption.
- B. She led kings of the earth into abominations. She is called the mother of harlots. (17:1-5)

*9 Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, 10 he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.*

- A. The third angel announces that all who worship the beast and receive his mark will also suffer the wrath of God. God’s cup of indignation is full. Those who worship the beast will suffer the torment of hell.
- B. God will punish the beast that is worshipped. God will punish Babylon who leads men into immorality. God will also punish those who are led astray. It is easy to point fingers and blame others for our sins. God realizes that both the temper and the temped have a responsibility.

- C. Many people only see the God of patience, love and compassion. God is all of these things. However, there is another side to God. (Romans 11:22) God is good. God is also a severe God. Verse 10 tells us there will be a time when the cup of God's wrath and indignation overflows.
- D. This punishment will occur, not in secret, but in front of all the angels and in the presence of the Lamb. The wrath of God will be poured out.

*11 And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."*

- A. God will punish the immoral. He will punish Satan, the beasts, and all who oppose God or do harm to God's sealed people.
- B. This verse describes Hell as a place where smoke rises eternally. Where there is smoke, there is fire.
- C. The place of torment does not take a holiday. There is no rest, no time off, and no relief.
- D. All who worship the beast will occupy Hell. All who receive the mark of the beast and follow the beast will be there.
- E. The very knowledge of Hell ought to urge us to remain faithful to our Lord. We must only worship the true and living God. Hell will be our eternal destiny, if we abandon our faith and worship the beast.

*12 Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.*

- A. God is patient with us. He is longsuffering, waiting for us to repent. Now, God is telling the saints under persecution to be patient.
- B. This generation is one of instant gratification. We have instant foods, microwave ovens, and fast modes of travel. We are a Burger King society. We want it our way, right away!
- C. We may not be able to see the end of our suffering. All we can do is remain faithful. Keep the commandments. Remain faithful to Jesus.
- D. When all else seems to fail ó Keep the faith. Stay faithful to Christ.

*13 Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them."*

- A. This voice seems to be the voice of God. Three times previously in this chapter an angel speaks and an angel is identified as the source of the message.
- B. John is instructed to write. Of course, he has been writing the entire vision. However, here is a specific statement. God wants to be sure this is recorded. This is not in any cryptic or symbolic language.

- C. Blessed are the dead. Yes, some have died. Others will die. God has not forgotten nor is He unaware of the persecution.
- D. "Blessed" is a word used 7 times in the book of Revelation. Jesus used this word to begin his "Sermon on the Mount." The word describes an attitude of joy, happiness. NOTE: These deceased saints are not happy because they suffered and died. They are happy that they were seen as faithful. Their faith is now confirmed.
- E. Heaven, more fully described in chapters 21 and 22, is a place of rest. Here, on earth, we labor, toil, work, suffer, and die. The "rest" comes after the labor is over. The message here: Don't quit too soon. Remain faithful. The situation is similar to a person quitting an employment a week before they are eligible for retirement benefits. For the Christian, the retirement benefits are in heaven.
- F. Their works, the good they have done, the example they set, will continue to influence others long after they have died. The Hebrew writer teaches us that even Able, the son of Adam and Eve, continues to speak even though he is dead. (Hebrews 11:4) If we are faithful and set a good example by our life and in our death, many Christians will be encouraged. Non-Christians will be challenged to consider the faith.

*14 Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle.*

- A. We now move to another graphic scene of the final judgment. John sees a white cloud. On the cloud is Jesus. Some deny this is Jesus because it says, "one like" Jesus. However, similar language was used in 1:13.
- B. The gold crown represents power and authority. The sickle is the symbol of one who is about to execute judgment on the wicked and unfaithful.

*15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe."*

- A. Now the fourth angel in this chapter begins to speak. This angel announces that the time of judgment is here.
- B. Thrust in the sickle. Harvest time is here. In our vernacular, "The fat lady is singing."
- C. The time of patience has ended. The time of grace and mercy are over. Now is the time of harvest. There are two parts to the harvest. The gathering of the good fruit and the uprooting and burning of the rest of the field. Study the parable of the Tares in Matthew 13:24-30. In Matthew 3:12, John the Baptizer makes a similar statement. Save the wheat and burn the chaff.

*16 So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.*

- A. Jesus, the righteous judge, thrusts the sickle on the earth. The earth is reaped.
- B. The message is clear. The righteous will be separated from the wicked. The wheat will be separated from the tares.

*17 Then another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.*

- A. We are now introduced to the fifth angel in this section of Revelation. This angel has a sharp sickle. The sharpness of the sickle in the hands of Jesus was not described until now. The word *ōalsoō* indicates that both Jesus and this angel have sickles sharp enough to separate the wheat from the tares. Their sickles can cut between the wheat and the chaff.
- B. This angle came out of the temple. It is clear that this angel is coming from the presence of God. He is not acting on his own. He is functioning under the direction of God.

*18 And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe."*

- A. In rapid succession, here comes the sixth angel. He comes from the altar. He has power over fire.
- B. The angel says, *ōThe grapes are fully ripe.ō* Interpretation: We cannot wait any longer. There is a time for patience. There is a time when it is proper for God to delay judgment. Now, that time is past. Any more postponement would be wrong.
- C. Our God is a Holy God. It is His holiness that will not allow Him to be seen as sanctioning or condoning evil. God declares that wicked men cannot come near Him because *ōI am holier than you.ō* (Isaiah 65:5) God also is described with these words, *ōFor you are not a God that has pleasure in wickedness: neither will evil dwell with you.ō* (Psalm 5:4) Christians are given instructions to avoid fellowship with false teachers or bidding them Godspeed. To approve or consort with a false teacher causes you to be equally guilty before God. (2 John 9-11) If we cannot sanction sin, certainly God cannot.
- D. The world is reaching a point of great evil and wickedness. God cannot appear that He is allowing or sympathetic to sin. Something must be done, and quickly.

*19 So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.*

- A. The angel with the sharp sickle begins the actual harvest. The vine of the earth, the fruit of all immorality, the product of all false teaching, the outgrowth of wickedness and corruption are being harvested. All of this evil fruit is being thrown into the winepress.
- B. The punishment will be great torment. The reason: They have harmed the people of God. If you harm or kill the sealed of God, you will have to face the judgment of God.
- C. The wrath of God is a justified anger. This is not quick, violent temper. The wrath of God is often ignored or overlooked. Many focus on the grace and love of God. They forget that God is a Holy and Just God. While this world stands the primary focus of God is on His Mercy, Patience, Love, Kindness, Forgiveness, and Gentleness. When

this world ends, at the Second Coming of Christ, the God who will judge us will be a God of Justice, Holiness, Wrath, and Severity. (Romans 11:22)

*20 And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs.*

- A. The torment of the wicked is outside the city. This term will appear again in 22:14-15. The obedient are inside the city of God. Outside the city are dogs. The dogs here are defined as sorcerers, harlots, murderers, idolaters and liars.
- B. Jesus was crucified outside the city of Jerusalem. (Hebrews 13:12) The wicked will suffer the wrath of God. Part of the wrath and retribution from God will be separation from Him. (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9)
- C. The disobedient will suffer. All the wicked will suffer punishment.
- D. The blood of those in the winepress of God's wrath will form a river of blood. It is described as a river as deep as the bridle of a horse's bridle. This river runs for 1600 furlongs. NOTE: A furlong is 606 feet and 9 inches (606.75 feet). This was the length of a race in the ancient Olympics (just over 200 yards). So, the river is as deep as a horse's bridle and over 180 miles in length.
- E. I do not believe that these numbers have any particular significance. I believe John is adding this information to the drama. The description is given for dramatic effect. Just as the streets of Rome were lighted with the burning bodies of Christians, so there is now a river of blood flowing from the wrath of God. The imagery is unmistakable. The wrath of God will be complete. No one will escape punishment.

# Revelation 15

## Introduction

This very short chapter and the one to follow introduce the seven vials or bowls containing the wrath of God. In the New King James Version they are called plagues that are contained in golden bowls. This section is one of the most difficult to interpret. There is greater variety of interpretation here than in any other section, with the possible exception of the number 666.

The interpretation I use here should:

1. Be consistent with the interpretation with the rest of the book.
2. Be understood by those who first read and studied this prophecy.
3. Not be applied to any specific event, but show a principle, which is applicable to Christians throughout the Christian age.

The seven angels are instructed to pour out the contents of their bowl. These bowls contain plagues. They are plagues that send out the wrath of God.

In summary, the plagues are seen as harming various parts of creation. Many commentators try to find a parallel with the plagues sent upon Egypt in the book of Exodus. While both sets of plagues come from God, they are very different. The plagues in Egypt were all physical. These final plagues of God's wrath are spiritual in nature.

Number	Does harm to:	Reference
1 <sup>st</sup> plague	Earth	16:2
2 <sup>nd</sup> plague	Sea	16:3
3 <sup>rd</sup> plague	Rivers, fountains of water	16:4-7
4 <sup>th</sup> plague	Sun	16:8-9
5 <sup>th</sup> plague	Seat of the beast	16:10-11
6 <sup>th</sup> plague	River Euphrates	16:12-16
7 <sup>th</sup>	Into the air	16:17-21

plague		
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Woodruff makes some excellent comments about this chapter. “As this chapter is studied, careful attention must be paid to the interpretation of 11:6 because in it is contained the ideas upon which this entire interpretation is based. Speaking to the “two witnesses,” which represent Christians, 11:6 says, “These have power í to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.” Christians have the power to smite the earth with plagues.” (1, 258)

*1 Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete.*

- A. John sees seven angels. These angels have the seven “last plagues.”
- B. We are told three important things here.
  - 1. These are the “last” plagues.
  - 2. They are from the wrath of God.
  - 3. They represent the “complete” wrath of God.
- C. Again we have seven angels and seven plagues. Since “seven” is the number of divine completeness, the image is presented here to show this is the total, complete, and final wrath of God.

*2 And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God.*

- A. In the middle of all this “wrath” and “plagues” is the calmness of God. There is no mass confusion or hysteria. God is not flying off in a “fit of rage.”
- B. The wrath of God comes from a calm determination to meet out punishment to the wicked on earth.
- C. On this sea, calm as glass, is fire. The fire of God’s wrath. The fire of retribution. The fire of eternal punishment.
- D. Around this calm sea are all who remained faithful. They did not receive the mark of the beast. They did not succumb to the temptation to worship the beast. They have suffered great tribulation and persecution. They overcame death. They overcame temptation. They are now in the calmness of God’s presence. They offer to God worship and praise.

*3 They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: “Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints!”*

- A. Christians are singing people. The apostles sang a hymn after the institution of the Lord’s Supper. (Matthew 26:30) James asks if we are happy. If we are happy, we

sing. These faithful saints who have overcome are rejoicing. They sing the song of the Lamb.

- B. The words to this song are words of praise. God is great, marvelous, powerful, and Almighty. God is true to His word. God promised a reward for the faithful. They are now rejoicing that their faith in these words is not misplaced.
- C. Have you sung this song lately? Have you taken time to just praise and magnify the Lord God for his majesty and power?

*4 Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, For Your judgments have been manifested.”*

- A. The song continues here. The second verse points out that the enemies of God will also fear Him. Who will fear God? Answer: All will, at some point, honor, recognize and fear God. For the world of unbelievers, this fear of God will be too little and too late. But, they will confess that Jesus is Lord. (Philippians 2:9-11)
- B. God is a Holy God. Only God is only holy. We have not done enough study on the holiness of our God. We must learn to appreciate His holy nature.
- C. All people will confess and worship God. It will be too late, but they will acknowledge that Jesus is Lord.
- D. This song also praises God for his judgments. Some Christians have questioned if a loving God would send anyone to punishment in an eternal hell. The answer is at least three-fold.
  1. **God will not cause them to be lost.** They are lost because of the choices they made. Just as in our judicial system, a judge is not the one who sends someone to prison. They are sent to prison because of their decision to violate the law. God will announce the sentence. The cause is their decision to sin.
  2. **God will pour out wrath on the disobedient.** 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9 is clear that God will punish those who do not believe in God and those who do not obey the gospel. They will suffer eternal punishment. (Matthew 25:46)
  3. **All faithful Christians will agree with God’s judgment.** Some seem to question the judgment of God. I believe this verse, and some others in Revelation, show that when judgment comes, we will agree that God had to judge the wicked or He would not be a Holy and Just God. The holiness of God requires that sin be separated from Him. He cannot allow wicked, evil and sinful men to be in His presence. God cannot be Just and allow the evil beast to be rewarded just like those the beast killed and persecuted. Even we humans have a sense of justice.

*5 After these things I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened.*

- A. Now the temple is opened. This temple is in heaven. This is not the temple of the Jewish system.
- B. Of course the tabernacle, and later the temple, represents the very presence of God. The Mercy Seat above the Ark of the Covenant was in the Most Holy Place. (Exodus 25:8; 2 Chronicles 7:12)

*6 And out of the temple came the seven angels having the seven plagues, clothed in pure bright linen, and having their chests girded with golden bands.*

- A. Out of the temple, from the very seat of God, come seven angels with seven plagues.
- B. They are in pure bright (white) linen. White linen is the righteousness of the saints. (19:8) They have golden bands around their bodies. There is some symbolism with the "Christian armor" and the "girdle of truth." (Ephesians 6:14)

*7 Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever.*

- A. According to 11:6, the two witnesses (Christians) have the power to harm the earth with plagues. Christians have two sources of power to inflict plagues.
  - 1. **Word of God.** The Word of God is powerful. (Hebrews 4:12) It is described as a two-edged sword. (Ephesians 6:17) We can smite the earth by the power and authority of the Word of God.
  - 2. **Prayer.** Christians have at their disposal the power of prayer. (Ephesians 6:18) Prayer can bring rain and stop rain. Prayer can change people, situations and circumstances. Christians have the ability to appeal to the throne of God directly. God can, in harmony with His eternal will and purpose, answer the plea and petition of Christians.
- B. The golden vials contain the wrath of our Eternal God. The four living creatures are the same ones introduced in chapter 4. They are around the throne, close to God and serving God.

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

- A. Here is a dramatic climax to this chapter and the drum roll to begin the final plagues from the wrath of God.
- B. There is smoke. This is not the smoke of tormenting fire. This smoke is said to be from the glory of God and from His power.
- C. The temple is open. It is not ready to allow us to enter, yet. It is open to allow out the angels with the wrath of God. When the wrath is complete, we will be allowed inside.

# Revelation 16

## Introduction

The previous chapter was a short introduction to what is coming here in chapter 16. As stated in the introduction to chapter 15, this chapter contains the most difficult section of the book. There is greater variety in the explanations and interpretations of this passage.

In this chapter the bowls of wrath are actually poured out. We had seals opened to reveal God's will. Then we heard the trumpets, which warned us of the plan of God. Now we are about to see the wrath of God as it is poured out. There does appear to be some similarity between the trumpets and the bowls of wrath.

*1 Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth."*

- A. God (the loud voice from the temple) issues the final command. "Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth." In very rapid succession these bowls are poured out.
- B. God is clear and direct. This is what he revealed would happen in the seals. This is what the trumpets warned would happen. Now it is about to happen.
- C. No one can say they were not warned.

*2 So the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image.*

- A. The first bowl is poured out.
- B. There is a great sore (boil) that rises on the beast. One of the 10 plagues on Egypt was the spreading of very painful boils. (Exodus 9:8-11)
- C. These sore boils were poured on the beast and those who worshiped his image. All who followed and obeyed the beast, as well as the beast itself are under the condemnation and wrath of God.

*3 Then the second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it became blood as of a dead man; and every living creature in the sea died.*

- A. Immediately the second angel moves forward and pours his bowl on the sea.
- B. Since the "earth" of the first bowl is described as the people who worship the beast, it is clear to me that each of these descriptions are not literal. We are not here discussing some great poison poured on the oceans.
- C. Rather, the sea represents the sea of humanity. Some would argue that this would make this bowl similar to the first. True. Both of these plagues are against the same people. The same is true with the 10 plagues against Egypt. All 10 plagues were directed against the same people.
- D. Every living creature died. All evil humanity, all those who worship the beast are harmed.

*4 Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood.*

- A. The third angel is now center stage and pours out the third bowl of wrath. This bowl is poured on the rivers and springs of water. The water was turned to blood. Again, there is a similarity with the first plague in Egypt.
- B. The next verses will help us understand the meaning of this plague.

*5 And I heard the angel of the waters saying: "You are righteous, O Lord, The One who is and who was and who is to be, Because You have judged these things.*

- A. The angel declares that the judgment of God is righteous. God is Just. I made some extended comments on this matter in the notes in chapter 15.
- B. When God judges the wicked, all the saints will agree that the judgment was the only thing that a Righteous and Holy God could do. If God did not judge them in this way, He would not be a Holy and Just God.

*6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, And You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due."*

- A. Who are these under this plague? They are the ones who have shed the blood of the saints. God, in response to this violent bloodshed, gives them blood to drink.
- B. The angel also explains that this is "their just due." They get what they deserve.

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

- A. A second angel affirms the righteousness of the judgment of God. Jehovah is Almighty.
- B. The judgments of God are correct and righteous.

*8 Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire.*

- A. Next comes the fourth angel with a bowl of wrath to pour out on the sun. It is clear that this is not taken as the literal sun in the solar system.
- B. The sun in this plague has the power to scorch men with fire. Therefore, this plague is on the same people as the previous plagues.
- C. When God issues judgment, wicked men will feel the heat. They will know that their end will be in a place of fire, smoke and torment.

*9 And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory.*

- A. When these men are burned with this great heat of judgment, they have two choices.
  - 1. They could weep, repent, seek forgiveness and plead for mercy from God.
  - 2. The plague could just make them more determined and angry. This is what they did. They blasphemed the name of God. They refused to repent. Even while they are suffering the pain of this plague, they still do not give God the recognition that He is God.
- B. It is clear that there is no willingness to repent. God is longsuffering. God will be patient as long as men are willing to repent and correct their behavior. Here, they are not willing to repent. God cannot allow this rebellion to continue.

*10 Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain.*

- A. Subsequently, the fifth angel pours out his bowl of wrath on the seat of the beast.
- B. The seat of the beast represents the place or territory of his power. When the wrath of God is poured out, the kingdom is thrown into darkness. In some way this darkness caused them extreme pain. They gnawed their tongues because of the pain.
- C. Many people have put their trust in physical kingdoms of this earth. It would be very painful if those kingdoms collapsed.
- D. NOTE: If you can imagine this, visualize some nation invading the USA, conquering it, overthrowing our government, and placing all of us under the dictatorship of some ruthless leader of the invading army. Would you be in pain? Of course. This is the picture being painted by John's brush.

*11 They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds.*

- A. **They blaspheme God.** They have done this wickedness and are angry that God is punishing them. They are not being falsely accused. They did the things for which they are being punished.
- B. **The do not repent of their deeds.** This is a clue that God could not allow it to continue. There was no reason or purpose to wait.

## Battle of Armageddon

We are now ready to study the sixth bowl of wrath. In the verses that follow, we will need to understand the term "Armageddon." There is much confusion and dissension about this matter.

The most common view of this battle is a literal one. It is commonly held that the forces of Satan and the returned forces of Christ will meet in a great literal battle fought in the valley of Megiddo. It is believed that Christ will win the battle, bind Satan, and establish an earthly kingdom in Jerusalem for a period of 1000 years.

In order to understand the term and its symbolic meaning we must trace some history of Israel.

1. Armageddon is from the Hebrew term "Mountain of Megiddo" (In Hebrew, Har Megiddo) and refers to a very important mountain and the narrow valley below.
2. The narrow valley below Mt. Megiddo is the only passageway into Israel from the north. Syria and any nation north of Israel must march through this pass. As long as Israel could control this narrow valley, they could stop any invasion from the north.
3. At this location Gideon and his 300 defeated the Midianites. It was here that the Philistines defeated King Saul. Barak and Deborah defeat the Canaanite king, Jabin. Ahaziah was killed by Jehu here. As this location Pharaoh-Necho defeated Josiah. Do you get the picture? This was the location of many decisive battles. Israel won some and lost some. This is not a place that represents defeat or victory. It does represent a place of great and decisive battles.
4. Ray Summers observes, "Thus Megiddo fitly symbolized the worldwide distress of righteousness and evil engaged in deadly combat. This is not an actual material sword and spear battle. Such a thing would be at cross purposes with all the teachings of the New Testament, the ideals which Jesus held, his death on the cross, and all God's purposes of grace." (2, 189)

*12 Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared.*

- A. The sixth angel pours out a bowl of wrath on the river Euphrates. The river is dried up. This opens the way for the kings of the east to prepare for battle.
- B. IF we understand that this is symbolic, then it will be easy to see that the Euphrates was the boundary line. When there is a battle for territory someone draws a "line in the sand" and declares here is the line. We will not move. This is the boundary.
- C. The Euphrates is symbolic of the boundary between the righteous and unrighteous. This is God's "line in the sand." The water that separates the saved from the lost is the water of the gospel in baptism.
- D. In this passage the water is dried up. The gospel is not being heard. People are not obeying the gospel. The hearts of the masses are so hardened that they will not respond to the gospel. This is consistent with the previous plagues where the people were so hardened that they refused to repent. Here, if they would repent, they would be baptized. (Acts 2:38)

- E. There is a similar description of sinful men in Romans 1. In this passage God gave them up to their immoral desires. God, in effect, turned them loose and let them suffer the natural consequences of their evil deeds.

*13 And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.*

- A. John next sees three unclean spirits. They are like frogs.
- B. NOTE: If the battle described here is literal, then the generals of the army are frogs.
- C. Here is another parallel with the plagues of Egypt of frogs. These frogs come directly from the mouth of the dragon, who is Satan. They come from the mouth of the beast (civil governmental power) and from the mouth of the false prophet (second beast of chapter 13).
- D. Here are the three generals in Satan's army. Satan = evil personified; Beast = persecuting governments; False prophet = false religions. When you combine these three together you have the ways in which Satan seeks to harm, kill, persecute, destroy, and eliminate Christians.

*14 For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.*

- A. These frogs / spirits / generals in Satan's army, appear to have the ability to perform miracles. Of course, the miracles are done by fraud and deceit.
- B. Combine the power of Satan with persecuting governments and the power of false religions, and you have a force to be reckoned with.
- C. They gather their followers together for a battle. They know they will be battling against God. In their pride and arrogance, they think they can win.
- D. The great Day of Judgment is coming. As the song expresses it, "There's a Great Day Coming."
- E. Christians in every period in history have had to fight the battle of Armageddon. There will always be a struggle between good and evil. The battle goes on internally of between our flesh and our spirit. (Galatians 5:16-18) The battle goes on when we are faced with a temptation. Like Peter, "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."
- F. But when the final battle is engaged of the Day of Judgment of God will be totally and completely victorious. We are told in Revelation 17:14 that there will be war against the Lamb and that "the Lamb will overcome them."

*15 "Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame."*

- A. The forces of Satan may think they are ready for battle. They have not seen battle until they meet the Almighty God. Amos warned of the serious mistake of thinking we are ready or able to take on God. "Prepare to meet your God, O Israel," (Amos 4:12) is not an invitation to get ready for a social fellowship with God. These words are a warning. Do you think you can meet God in battle and win?

- B. Jesus is coming. His coming is not going to be announced in advance. He will come in the same manner that a thief comes. When we least expect it. At the moment that we think He will not come. That is when he will come.
- C. In Matthew 24:36-25:46, Jesus warns us to be always on guard, always prepared. We must constantly watch. Keep your garments clean. Don't get caught with your pure white robe stained, blotched, or torn. Keep it always clean, always fresh.
- D. The Christians at Sardis were warned to "keep your garments." (3:4)

*16 And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.*

- A. All these evil forces gather together. They think they are ready, but they are not.
- B. The Hebrew transliteration is "Har Mageddon."
- C. Any time one mentions "Armageddon", most will recognize the term and have some (usually mistaken) notion of what it means. Even movies have been made with this title.
- D. In Zechariah 12:11 this location is referred to as a valley of great mourning. This place is the "Mountain of Sorrows." Thus, the symbolic meaning of this term is a place of great sorrow.
- E. The enemies of God will be gathered together in the place of great sorrows. The amount of sorrow they experience will be like a mountain. They will suffer immense grief. They will endure immeasurable amounts of pain.
- F. I share with you some statements from Paul Rogers work.

"What does Armageddon mean to us? It still represents the conflict between good and evil and we need not expect a literal battle to usher in the coming of Christ. There is a sense in which every man has his personal Armageddon, which is fought daily, on the plains of conscience. It will be fought every day and every hour until time is no more. However, we can take courage, as did the early disciples in the fact that God will ultimately triumph. Like them, we are surrounded by error and evil, with false religions very much in the predominance. And yet we know "our labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58). When the struggle is over, God will place his flag upon the highest hill, and the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever (Revelation 11:15)." (3, 68-69)

*17 Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, "It is done!"*

- A. The seventh and final angel pours out his plague in the air. It seems to me that the "air" would cover everything. The entire world is under the plague.
- B. A loud voice from the temple, from God, says, "It is done." This is a similar phrase to the words of Jesus on the cross. "It is finished."
- C. The total, complete, and final wrath of God has been poured out. All the wicked, all the false teachers, all the persecutors, and all the immoral have been defeated.

*18 And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth.*

- A. This verse describes the final drum roll. Thunder, lightning, an earthquake; these are the signals that it is all over. The world will end. All the saints are safe with God. The wicked have suffered the wrath of God.
- B. Other passages dealing with the end of time indicate fire, thunder, and stars falling. An earthquake like this has never been seen on earth. This might explain the great chaos. If the planet is literally coming apart, the molten lava coming to the surface would create the great fire of 2 Peter 3:10-12.

*19 Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath.*

- A. The "great city" is the same as several terms used in the book of Revelation.
  - Great city ó 16:19
  - Great whore ó 17:1
  - Babylon the Great ó 17:5, 18:2
- B. In connection with these terms are usually terms of immoral behavior. Drunk with wine, harlot, and fornication are the trademarks. It seems clear to me that this great city represents immorality in the world.
- C. In addition to persecuting governments and false religions, we also have immorality seeking to lead Christians away from faithfulness to God.
- D. Divided into three parts is similar to the "third part" of the trumpets. Remember, the number 3 is the number of God, things divine, deity. God completely destroys the city by cutting, severing, and dividing it into three parts.

*20 Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.*

- A. Most commentators believe that "island" represents the individual leaders of these nations. The previous verse mentions the cities of the nations.
- B. Mountains are used to represent kingdoms or nations.
- C. Combine these two and you have God's judgment on the kingdoms and on the kings. On the nations and on their civil rulers. For the early church the judgment of God's wrath is poured out on Rome AND on the Emperor.

*And great hail from heaven fell upon men, each hailstone about the weight of a talent. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great.*

- A. A great hailstorm, with each hailstone weighing about 100 pounds, is falling from the sky. V. E. Howard suggests that the weight of a talent is about 100 pounds. (4, 110)
- B. Again, there is no repentance. There is no plea for mercy. All God hears is more blasphemy. This reaffirms the view that God's judgment is just. Men were so hardened

that they would not repent even when tasting the wrath of God. Instead of seeking mercy and forgiveness, they curse and blaspheme God.

# Revelation 17

## Introduction

This chapter will focus on Babylon. She is also known as the "great whore" (KJV) and "great harlot" (NKJV & ASV). To understand the interpretation of these symbolic terms, it is important to notice the terms that are used to describe her. In verse 2 she is described as "drunk with the wine of her fornication."

There are two possible explanations given.

1. **Apostates.** This harlot represents those who claim to believe in God but have abandoned Him to avoid persecution. This would include, as Woodruff comments, "anyone who claims to follow God but not according to the teachings of the New Testament. It also includes anyone who has been a member of the church but has left to follow other gods." (1, 292-293) This view finds the harlot represents spiritual adultery. There is some reference to this type figurative language in the Old Testament. (Exodus 34:14, 17; Jeremiah 3:1) Israel was in covenant with God. When they began to worship idols, they committed spiritual adultery. I was leaning this direction until I came to 17:2. This view fails to explain verse two.
2. **Immorality.** It is my view that the harlot represents all forms of immorality. Satan used persecuting governments in seeking to destroy the church. He used false teachers to lead people astray. He also used immorality. Baalam did this. (2:14) He led the people of Israel into adultery. I believe that the woman, Babylon, the great harlot, represents all manner of immoral behavior.

*1 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters,*

- A. One of the angels who poured out the plagues engages in conversation with John. He invites John to see what happens next.
- B. After the plagues, next in God's timetable is the judgment. We are not seeing the general judgment of the world. This is a special judgment of the great harlot.

*2 with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication."*

- A. The view that the harlot represents those who have apostatized the faith fails here. This verse states that the kings of the earth commit fornication "with" the harlot.
- B. John sees that there is some interaction between the kings (civil governments) and the harlot. On some occasions, governments allow, approve and even condone immorality. In our nation there are states passing laws to accept homosexual marriages, courts allowing abortion, states creating lotteries, cities allowing liquor by the drink.

I can tell about cities that forbid weekly Bible studies in private homes, but allow weekly poker parties. I can add to the list of government and immorality working together to allow and support: pornography, prostitution, alcohol, gambling, divorce, homosexuality, massage parlors, distribution of condoms, abortion and many others. On the other hand the joint forces of these two will have a negative impact on: Bible

reading, prayer at a football game, mention of God in any school paper, home Bible studies, and many other ways.

- C. When governments and immorality join forces, the danger for Christians increases. The list given above is real. And this is in America. Imagine what Christians deal with in Russia, China, Cuba, Laos, and in Arab nations under strict Muslim laws.

*3 So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.*

- A. Now John is carried away into the wilderness. John sees a woman sitting on a beast. The scarlet color would suggest royalty and power. This is the union discussed in the preceding verse.
- B. The beast is full of blasphemy. The point here is the two forces have been joined together to seek to destroy the church. There has always been a close relationship between governments, at all levels, and immorality. Many of the laws passed deal with issues of morality. Some seek to impose a moral standard; other laws are based on amoral values.
- C. Seven heads and ten horns are on this beast. Seven is the number of divine completeness. Ten is the number of human completeness. Some believe that the heads represent various emperors. Others believe that these heads characterize the major world empires in world history. It is my view, seeking to be consistent, that the heads and horns signify all power of all civil rulers. Some good (7) and some evil (10).

*4 The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication.*

- A. The woman, immorality personified, is in purple and scarlet. She is in an alliance with governmental power.
- B. She is described as being arrayed with precious stones, pearls. She is pretty, attractive, and gets attention. She is covered with glitter and glitz.
- C. Christians are attracted to the shiny. It is the glitz that gets the attention. While she needed the support of the government to approve and condone her actions, she is the one who gets the attention and is the one to entice Christians to leave their faith.

*5 And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.*

- A. She is clearly identified. She is Babylon. She is the mother of harlots and known for her abominations.
- B. Again, Babylon, symbolizes immorality and those things that are abomination in the sight of our God.

*6 I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement.*

- A. She is drunk, not with wine, but with the blood of the saints. She is guilty of the death of martyrs. She is also guilty of leading many to spiritual death. She has lead many away from Christ and into fornication (physical and spiritual).
- B. When John saw her ó there was amazement. He marveled in wonder.

*7 But the angel said to me, “Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns.*

- A. The angel with John noticed his reaction. öWhy did you marvel?ö
- B. Then the angel assures John it will all become clear. All of this is now a ömysteryö but it will be revealed and explained.
  - 1. What will happen to the woman?
  - 2. What will happen to the beast that carries her?
  - 3. What will happen to the (individual leaders) heads and horns?

*8 The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.*

- A. The immoral Babylon is riding on a beast. This best was, and is not.
- B. This is similar to the beast in 13:3. The beast is seen as suffering a deadly wound, but is later healed. Verse 10 also must be considered here.
- C. Let me give you some explanations offered by some commentaries.
  - 1. Burton Coffman claims that the seven heads represent the seven major world empires, including Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. He says there will be a seventh. This seventh will be the Holy Roman Empire, which includes one of the above, which died and was raised to life again.
  - 2. Lonnie Woodruff says that the number seven represents divine completeness. There have been seven worldwide kingdoms.
  - 3. Paul Rogers believes that this verse is in reference to Nero. There is a belief that Nero promised to return from the dead. The Romans saw Domitian as the öreincarnationö of Nero.
  - 4. Ray Summers states the view of öNero redivivus mythö which claimed that Domitian is Nero reincarnation.
  - 5. The common view of the futurists is that the literal city of Babylon will be restored in the last days.
  - 6. The typical view of the continuous-historical group believes that this is the Roman Catholic Church.

- D. In trying to be consistent, I believe the following makes sense.
1. We know the beast represents persecuting governments. At some point this beast seems to lose its power, and is later revived.
  2. We have the advantage of being able to look back, study history, and see what actually happened. The Roman Empire fell in 476. On Christmas Day, 800, Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne as emperor. This new, revived government is known as the Holy Roman Empire. It was an empire of both religious and civil powers working together. This is what is seen in chapter 13.
  3. Here the angel explains that there will come a time when it seems that the persecuting government is dead ó 476. Don't plan a party to celebrate yet. There will be a new, revived government, combined with false religion, which will renew the persecution of faithful Christians.
  4. Now, you add to that partnership immorality. You have a òthree-prongedö attack on the people of God. God's people are suffering ó a) Persecution from the civil authorities; b) Persecution from false religions; and c) Being led astray by immorality.

9 *“Here is the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits.*

- A. Wisdom is needed here. Seek to understand these things.
- B. The seven heads are mountains. Some see this as a clear reference to Rome, a city that sits on seven hills. These seek to make the mountains literal. This view does not consider that one of the heads died and was revived. None of the hills on which Rome was built has died and been revived.
- C. Others see this as the Coffman view above. The mountains represent major world kingdoms, like Egypt, Greece and Rome.
- D. Still others see the seven heads as seven individual rulers. If this were true, then one of the rulers would have to die and be reincarnated.
- E. It is unmistakable to me that the mountains are emblematic of kingdoms. My view, expressed in the previous verse is consistent with the rest of the book, especially the parallel statements in chapter 13.

10 *There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time.*

- A. Some seek to translate this, òAnd they are seven kings.ö This is an attempt to make the seven heads represent individual rulers.
- B. The NKJV says, òThere are ALSO seven kings.ö That is, in addition to the seven heads / mountains, there are also seven kings. The kings are not the heads / mountains. They are in addition to them.
- C. Five have fallen ó Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, and Greece. One is ó Rome. The other ó the Holy Roman Empire ó has not yet come. He, the last one, will last a short time.

*11 The beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition.*

- A. The civil government that was, then was not, is the eighth. But his eighth is not a new one. It is one of the original seven. Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome and Holy Roman Empire are the seven.
- B. This verse refers to a power that was at one time a great power. It lost that power, then returned to power. Woodruff says, "This is the same kingdom as the one isö in verse 10. The kingdom in power during the time of John's recording of Revelation was the Roman Empire. Therefore, the one that was, and is not is the Roman Empire. (1, 303)
- C. The only credible explanation is that this eighth is the Roman Catholic Church. It has worldwide power, even today. It is headquartered in Rome. This is the eighth beast.

*12 "The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast.*

- A. Remember the number ten represents human completeness. There are ten kings, but they do not have a kingdom. They seem to have power delegated from the beast.
- B. These ten kings represent all governmental power, which came out of the world situation when there was not one major power in control. Many nations developed.
- C. The term one hour indicates that all of these kings are in power at the same time. This is not a succession of kings. There will be simultaneous kingdoms over the earth.
- D. These many nations, (governments) will co-exist with the beast (false religions). It is implied that these governments will not persecute. They will seek to cooperate with others who do persecute Christians.
- E. Today this situation remains. Do we cooperate with China while they imprison anyone who has a Bible? Do we send economic aid to Laos while Christians are sent to prison for having a home Bible study? Many Islamic nations outlaw any preaching of the gospel or any attempt to convert people to Christianity; but we buy their oil! In some nations, failure to convert to Islam is ground for punishment.

*13 These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast.*

- A. They all share power with the beast. False religions seek the support and backing of the governments. While living in Russia, the government, at the request and direction of the Russian Orthodox Church, passed a law that restricted mission work. They rescinded all legal church registration and rights. While some parts of this law have been overturned, other restrictions remain. This is a classic case of a false religion riding on the back of the civil government to persecute Christians.
- B. In effect these governments are recognizing their dependence on the religious leaders to remain in power.

*14 These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.”*

- A. It is this dangerous alliance of government and false religions that will become the frontline of the war against God’s people. There is a relentless battle being waged.
- B. While those who suffer are Christians, the real enemy is the Lamb.
- C. The Lamb will win. He is King over all kings. He is Lord over all lords. His army is comprised of the called, chosen and faithful. These terms simply mean faithful Christians.

*15 Then he said to me, “The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues.*

- A. This verse helps with some of the interpretation of this chapter.
- B. The “waters” represents people, nations and tongues. All the multitudes of people of all nations and cultures are included. She, immorality is not of any one nation, tribe, language, or group of people. Immorality is everywhere, in all nations, among all people.

*16 And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire.*

- A. The ten horns are kings. See verse 12.
- B. Chapter 18 seems to be a commentary on this verse. The basic message is that the Roman Empire will collapse of its own weight. It will become so immoral and corrupt that it will collapse because of its weakness.
- C. The alliance will fall apart. The “friendship” between the beast and the harlot will end. They will hate each other and accuse each other. The beast will strip her of power, devour her and destroy her influence.

*17 For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled.*

- A. Woodruff makes this comment, “Since we cannot foresee the future, it is impossible to completely understand why God deals with the people of this world as he does in matters of civil governments.” (1, 309)
- B. God has a purpose. He has a plan. We may not understand His plan. We do not understand why things are allowed to continue. Why doesn’t God step in and intervene?

*18 And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth.”*

- A. The woman is described as “that great city.” Many assume that she represents Rome.
- B. However, remember, she was also called “Babylon the great.” (18:2) There are several different terms used to describe this immoral world. Harlot, whore, Babylon, fornication and other terms show that she is a symbol of immorality.
- C. She rides on the back of the beast. She is the “real” power behind the persecution. She has the persecuting governments and false religions under her control and power.

# Revelation 18

## Introduction

The most common view among Christians is that this harlot is either Rome, the city; Rome, the government or empire; or Rome, the seat of the papacy. Many see this chapter as the fall of the civil Roman Empire in 476.

I do not believe that this chapter seeks to write history. Where is the encouragement to suffering, hurting and persecuted Christians in 96? How does it help them to know that almost 300 years later the government will fall? If our premise is valid, that the book must offer support and encouragement to the first century church, then writing history 300 years (or 2000 years) later is of little help.

Woodruff offers several reasons why he rejects this chapter as dealing with the fall of Rome.

1. It fails to apply the meaning of the great harlot and Babylon as they are used in the Bible.
2. It takes away any meaning it might have for Christians who live during other periods of world history.
3. It forces the interpretation of chapter 17 to also deal specifically with Rome.
4. The things that undergo destruction in chapter 18 are destroyed forever. But, the city and nation of Rome did once again exist and exists today. (1, 316-317)

The picture painted in graphic detail in this chapter is the ultimate doom of the immoral. Babylon, the great harlot, the one who led people into fornication, is destined for destruction.

Immorality has a strong hold on our politics and economy. Think about the drug dealer. There are the growers, the ones who fly planeloads into the county, the cars that distribute these drugs, the kingpin that distributes these drugs to dealers and the young person who steals to get the money to buy the drugs. If drugs suddenly stopped, think of how the ripples would affect many lives. The same is true with other forms of immoral behavior.

The message of this chapter is: There will come a day of reckoning. God will punish all the wicked. Not just the person doing an immoral deed. God will punish the drug grower, distributor, seller and user. Do not think, because one has gotten away with a sin, and even seems to prosper in their wickedness, that the sin is unpunished. To Christians ó remain faithful to God. It may cost you your life, but God will mete out the punishment.

*I After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory.*

- A. An angel comes down from heaven. This angel has great power.
- B. The angel has power to announce. He also has power to act and judge.

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

- A. Babylon is one of the terms studied in the previous chapter. This announcement from the angel adds some information about Babylon.
- B. She has already been called the mother of harlots and guilty of fornication.
- C. Notice the terms added to this description.
  - She has become a dwelling place of demons.
  - She is a jail for foul spirits.
  - She is a cage for every unclean and hated bird.
- D. Those are strong terms. Demons, foul spirits, unclean, hated are used here. Babylon is also described with terms of confinement ó Dwelling place, prison, and cage.

*3 For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury."*

- A. People of all nations have fallen at the feet of immorality. All nations have participated in fornication. They have committed fornication with her.
- B. The second part of this verse makes reference to the control of world wealth. The great harlot has, in promoting immorality, made many people rich.
- C. Think about pornography for a minute. Many are made rich in the filming, production, and sale of such pictures. The same is true with gambling, prostitution, alcohol and many other immoral matters.

*4 And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues."*

- A. God expects his people to be separate from sin. Baptism puts us on the other side of the river. The water of baptism separates us from our former life of sin.
- B. 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 is a clear passage in which Christians are commanded to come out from among them. We are commanded not to participate (touch) things that are unclean.
- C. If you don't participate in the unclean activity, you will not suffer the plagues. If you refuse to engage in homosexual activity or share drug needles, you will not get AIDS. If you do not involve yourself in fornication, then STD is not a threat.

*5 For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.*

- A. God knows who has shared a role in immoral activity.
- B. God will remember their sins. Men will be judged by the deeds done while here on earth, good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:10)

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

- A. The great harlot will be rewarded as she rewarded those who worshiped her. Those who thought of immorality as their god, were rewarded with AIDS, STD, poverty, sickness, disease, broken homes, shattered lives and ruined reputations.
- B. God has always promised that all will be judged and rewarded according to their works.
- C. Galatians 6:7-9 teaches the principle of sowing and reaping. We will reap what we sow. If our sowing was in fleshly (immoral) things, we will reap corruption. If we sow to the spirit, we will reap eternal life.
- D. God promises a double portion of punishment. The reason is this: When man chooses to sin, he will suffer. When man leads, persuades, and encourages others to sin, there is greater responsibility for leading others into sin. James 3:1 shows that the teacher who leads others astray will suffer *ögreater punishment.ö*

*7 In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, 'I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow.'*

- A. In this life immorality seems to *ölive it upö* in luxury. Many immoral sins are seen by the world as good, exciting, fun and normal. There is a concerted effort, for example, on the part of homosexual groups to make their sinful lifestyle acceptable and normal.
- B. Many lived in luxury on the profits from such sins. Think about Hugh Hefner and the *öPlayboy Mansion.ö* God pronounces that in the same measure that they enjoyed the luxuries, they will suffer the greater torment.
- C. Immorality thinks that it is invincible. People who act upon these immoral impulses never think they will get caught.

*8 Therefore her plagues will come in one day—death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her.*

- A. There is a payday. There is a day of reckoning. She will suffer the plagues that she has caused on others.
- B. Babylon will suffer death, mourning and famine. Just as she lived in luxury, now she will suffer torment.
- C. The final end will be a burning with fire, because God is the one who judges.

*9 "The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning,*

- A. The kings (civil governments) lived in luxury. They, the kings, made an alliance with Babylon. They passed laws that allowed immorality to become legal and acceptable.
- B. They will see the results. They see the smoke of her torment. They will weep because, if immorality goes out of popularity, they will suffer loss.

*10 standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.'*

- A. These kings now seek to distance themselves from her. They were responsible for her success. Now that she is being punished, they try to say, "It is not my fault."
- B. Babylon was a mighty city, but now it has been judged.

*11 "And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore:*

- A. All the merchants of immorality are in mourning. The source of their income is going up in smoke.
- B. The filth shops, the drug dealers, and the porno sales on the Internet are exposed for the filth and corruption they have been selling. But, it is too late.

*12 merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble; 13 and cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and bodies and souls of men.*

- A. All the fine gold chains of the pimp, all the fancy cars of the drug dealer, have become the souls and bodies of men. The fine mansion of Hugh Hefner has become the lost souls of all the lives he has corrupted.
- B. What was glitter, gold, jewels and material things, now is disease, filth, corruption and death.

*14 The fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you, and all the things which are rich and splendid have gone from you, and you shall find them no more at all.*

- A. There is an old proverb, "The chickens have come home to roost." We need to be reminded that sometimes we think the wicked are getting away with their sins. Not true. God will punish them. They will suffer.
- B. The entire splendor is gone. All the gold and silver is tarnished. All the material things do not exist.

15 *The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, 16 and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls!*

- A. Just as the kings sought to distance themselves, so do the merchants. The people, who got rich because of the immorality of the world, are now seeking to remove themselves from her.
- B. They see the torment. They hear the weeping and wailing. They know that punishment has come upon the mother of harlots.

17 *For in one hour such great riches came to nothing.' Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance 18 and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, 'What is like this great city?'*

- A. The term "merchants" includes all who trafficked in this immorality.
- B. This would include the movie theaters that showed the films. It includes the truck drivers that distribute the alcohol and the airplane pilots that fly the drugs into the country.

19 *"They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate.'*

- A. All the profiteers are in mourning. The source of their gain is gone.
- B. "In one hour" all the gain is gone. She is made desolate. All who supported her, promoted her immorality, and all who profited by the evil products she produced are going down with her.

20 *"Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!"*

- A. God promises that vengeance belongs to Him. Our God will repay the evil that we suffer.
- B. Heaven (angels and martyrs) rejoice. They are not rejoicing because someone is suffering. They are rejoicing because their faithfulness has been vindicated.
- C. These Christians remained faithful. They suffered ridicule and scorn for speaking out and objecting to the immorality in the world. Now, their faith in God has been proven to be valid. The Christians have been justified in their faith.

*21 Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore.*

- A. A powerful angel stands up with a great stone. This huge stone is thrown into the sea.
- B. The symbol of throwing a large stone into the sea shows ó the speed with which this doom comes. It will not happen slowly or quietly. It will happen like a huge splash.
- C. The great city is thrown down. God has judged immorality and all connected with it.

*22 The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters shall not be heard in you anymore. No craftsman of any craft shall be found in you anymore, and the sound of a millstone shall not be heard in you anymore.*

- A. All the ðpleasureö associated with evil and immorality has been stopped. No more music or celebrations. No one is getting rich. Small businesses fail.
- B. All the skilled craftsmen (all who used their skills to produce these immoral products) have no place to use their skills.

*23 The light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore, and the voice of bridegroom and bride shall not be heard in you anymore. For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived.*

- A. All the glitter is gone. The candle has been blown out.
- B. All who are ðmarriedö to the immoral activity are gone. All who made a profit from the immoral activity have disappeared.
- C. All who were deceived are also punished.

*24 And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth."*

- A. Immorality is NOT a victimless crime. When a person commits fornication ó a spouse, children, extended families, friends, the church, are also harmed. One person's immoral activity can, in fact, cause death to the saints.
- B. God does punish the immoral.

# Revelation 19

## Introduction

The first part of this chapter is actually a conclusion to the previous one. The first few verses describe the joy and celebration of the saints at the destruction of Babylon, mother of harlots.

We have seen the doom of one of the three öfrogsö that lead Satan's army on the attack against the people of God. The mother of harlots, the great harlot, the great city of fornication, Babylon is down. Now, it is time for the people faithful to God to declare, öOne is down. Two more to go.ö

In this chapter we will learn the fate of the beast (persecuting governments) and the false prophets.

Some have thought that this describes a judgment that will take place on earth, before the second coming. I believe, as we near the climax of this vision, we are seeing the beginning of the end. Imagine watching a movie where a gang of outlaws is being chased by the sheriff. Toward the end of the movie, the sheriff begins to öpick offö the gang members, one at a time. Finally, there is no one but the leader of the gang of outlaws left to arrest and put in jail.

This is where we are in the book of Revelation. We have met the gang. We have learned the wicked things they have done. Now God is picking them off, one by one and sealing their fate. By the time this chapter ends, all that is left is to bind Satan and seal his eternal fate.

Woodruff states, öThe purpose of this vision is twofold. First, it assures us that the church has been established. Then it compares the destiny of the church to that of the beast and the false prophet. Because the church has been established, man has a way to avoid the plagues of the great harlot (18:4) and the final destruction of the beast and false prophet (v. 20).ö (1, 338)

*1 After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God!"*

- A. There is great rejoicing in heaven. The entire host, a great multitude, are honoring and praising God for his victory over Babylon.
- B. All power, honor and glory belong to God.

*2 For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her."*

- A. God is righteous. His judgment is true and upright. When God avenges the blood of the saints, all will agree that God did what was right and proper.
- B. Keep the faith. God will avenge the blood of those harmed by this general of Satan's horde. Many have followed in her footsteps. They will all be punished.

*3 Again they said, "Alleluia! Her smoke rises up forever and ever!" 4 And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sat on the throne, saying, "Amen! Alleluia!"*

- A. Babylon is suffering in the smoke of hell. She and her cohorts will suffer.
- B. The 24 elders and the four living creatures are around the throne. They join in the rejoicing and worshiping of God.

*5 Then a voice came from the throne, saying, "Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!"*

- A. We are servants who seek to remain faithful. There is immorality all around us. There is filth and corruption everywhere.
- B. How do we keep our garments white in the midst of all this? That is the challenge before us.

*6 And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!"*

- A. The angelic host, the 24 elders, and the four living creatures are now joined by the great multitude of all the saints.
- B. God is omnipotent. We serve an Almighty God. He reigns. He is on the throne and in control.
- C. NOTE: The sound of many waters and mighty thunderings are descriptions of the volume of the host of humanity joining together to praise God.

*7 Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready."*

- A. It is time to celebrate. This is not just a time to be happy. It is more than just a party.
- B. It is time to celebrate the marriage of the Lamb. The time for the marriage has come and the bride (church) has made herself ready for the wedding.

## **Weddings**

Some comments about the customs of the typical Jewish wedding of this era will be helpful. The comments here about the marriage feast and the marriage of the Lamb and his bride (the church) are based upon the custom of this time. There are at least four areas of importance.

1. **Engagement.** Coffman writes, "The betrothal, which often took place as much as a year before the actual marriage, was fully equivalent legally to the marriage itself; during this period of waiting, the bridegroom was absent preparing a place for the bride (as in John 14:1-13), and any infidelity upon her part was considered as adultery." (5, 442) The church is the bride of Christ. We are engaged, and waiting for the wedding. (2 Corinthians 11:2)
2. **Invitation.** As the time of the wedding is approaching, the bride and groom invite many guests to come for the wedding. In Matthew 22:4, 9 the king is bidding many to

come to the marriage. This is a parallel with Christians inviting people to come to the gospel.

3. **Garments.** As people come to the wedding, a garment is given. To make sure there not any uninvited guests, the king comes in and looks around to make sure all the guests are in their proper attire for the wedding. Those without the correct garment are removed. (Matthew 22:11) The parallel with the church is this: When we are baptized, we put off the garments of the flesh and put on the white garments. Our task to keep our white garment white and ready for the marriage.
4. **Feast.** We have been invited to the feast. This will take place in heaven. This will occur when the church, now waiting for the bridegroom to come, is taken to the home the groom is preparing. (John 14:3)

*8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.*

- A. The church, the true and faithful church, is dressed in fine linen. Their garment is clean, bright and white. There are many references to show that white is the color of purity and cleanliness. (Isaiah 1:18; Psalm 51:7; Daniel 12:10; Revelation 3:4; 3:5; 3:18; 7:14)
- B. Jesus will not come to claim a bride that is dirty, unkempt and not ready. Christ is looking for spotless, wrinkle-free, pure white garments. (Ephesians 5:27)
- C. Each Christian received a white garment when they were baptized. How is your garment now? Is it wrinkled, soiled, or spotted? Is it still clean, unblemished and smooth? Do you look like you need to do some washing and ironing or do you look like you are ready to attend the marriage of the Lamb of God?

*9 Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'" And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God."*

- A. Here is another of the seven beatitudes in the book of Revelation. There is a blessing pronounced on those who are called, accepted, and ready to attend the marriage supper.
- B. This supper is not the Lord's Supper or communion, which Christians observe to remember the death of Christ. This is the celebration of the wedding. It takes place when Jesus comes for his ready and waiting bride.

*10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."*

- A. John began to worship the angel bringing this announcement. The angel instructs John to get up. Angels are not to be worshipped. They worship God. So should we.
- B. Cornelius began to worship Peter. He was told to stand up. Peter is also a man. (Acts 10:26) Our Lord is God and we are to worship Him only.
- C. The angel here is also a fellow servant, along with the brethren. (See 1:9)

*11 Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.*

- A. Heaven opened up. A white horse appears with Christ as the rider. The focus is on the rider. The rider is named Faithful and True.
- B. He is the judge. His judgments are righteous.
- C. He is also the captain of our salvation, the leader of the army of God. He is ready to make war. Some have great difficulty here. It is argued ó How can the prince of peace come to make war?
- D. We must understand this is not a literal war of men, weapons and bloodshed. This is a spiritual warfare. All Christians are in this war. We are fighting evil (immorality) and corruption in high places. We are not fighting flesh and blood. Our war is against principalities and powers in heavenly places.

*12 His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. 13 He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.*

- A. These verses give a graphic description of Jesus.
  - He is **on a white horse**. His name is Faithful and True. He is the judge. He is the leader of the army (11)
  - His **eyes are alive with the flame of fire**. He wears all the crowns. He has a name that only He can wear. (12)
  - He **wears a robe dipped in blood** (His death on the cross). He is called the Word of God. John uses this term in his gospel and in the first epistle. (John 1:1-4; 1 John 1:1-3) (13)
  - He **has an army of soldiers clothed in white clean linen**. The whole army is on white horses. (14)
- B. All of these terms are descriptions of Jesus.

*15 Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.*

- A. He speaks and we are judged. (John 12:48)
- B. His judgment will fall upon all the nations. Jesus rules. He is the king.
- C. He is also the judge. He will tread the winepress of God's Almighty wrath.

*16 And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.*

- A. Jesus is the öKing of kings, and Lord of lords.ö

- B. To better understand these phrases, replace the word öofö with the word öoverö and you will see that Jesus is King over all kings. He is Lord over all lords.

*17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God,*

- A. The end is near. For the church, the waiting for the bridegroom is about over. It is almost time for the great supper.
- B. The invitations have been sent out. You are invited to get ready. Are your garments white, wrinkle-free, spotless? Are you ready for the wedding?
- C. If you have to öget readyö then you need to get started, NOW!

*18 that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great."*

- A. The time is coming that the army of faithful soldiers of Christ will mete out judgment on the wicked.
- B. All kinds of men will be lost ö 1) kings, 2) captains, 3) mighty men, 4) free people, 5) slave people, 6) small people, and 7) great people.
- C. All those who harmed Christians will be ruined.

*19 And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.*

- A. We are about to see the beast of persecuting governments and the beast of false religions.
- B. The civil governments, ruled by the kings of the earth, and their armies try to oppose the King of kings. They will not succeed.

*20 Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.*

- A. Here is what God says will happen to the beast and the false prophet.
- B. They are cast into the lake of fire and brimstone.
- C. The beast (persecuting civil governments) and false prophets (false religious teachers) are cast in the eternal pit called Hell. Along with them are all who followed them, received the mark of the beast and worshipped his image.

*21 And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.*

- A. Finally all the rest of Satan's army are destroyed. This is the end.
- B. The three generals have now been defeated. Next is Satan, himself.

# Revelation 20

## Introduction

This chapter is not that difficult to understand. The problem with chapter 20 is the many who have tried to make it say things it does not say. The contents here are confused with the supposed contents. Men have read into this passage many things that are just not there.

This chapter is, I am sure, the most abused chapter in the Bible. Perhaps it is tied with Matthew 24 as the most abused sections of scripture. Close behind is Daniel 7. These three chapters are all abused by the same religious persuasion. The pre-millenarian teachings cause people to read all kinds of things into these portions of the Bible.

I will not take the time or space here to expound on the theory of the literal return of Christ to establish a physical kingdom in Jerusalem and reign for a period of 1000 years. There are many facets of this theory. In a nutshell here is the heart of the matter.

1. They claim that Jesus came 2000 years ago to establish his earthly kingdom. Because of the rejection of the Jews, the kingdom had to be postponed.
2. Think about that. What if Jesus had succeeded? What if Jesus had set up his kingdom and reigned forever? There would be no forgiveness. We would still be under the law of animal sacrifices. We would still have no hope of eternal life or resurrection.
3. Here is the real issue: DID JESUS COME 2000 YEARS AGO TO SET UP AN EARTHLY KINGDOM AND REIGN FOREVER OR DID HE COME TO DIE ON THE CROSS, AND BE RAISED AGAIN THE THIRD DAY? It cannot be both ways. If Jesus came to live and reign forever, then He could not have come to die for our sins. If he came to die and be raised again, He could not have come to reign forever.

There is one issue that must be understood before we begin the study of this chapter. What is the meaning of the period mentioned in this chapter, one thousand years?

Of course, some take this number as literal. The question to ask is what in this chapter is literal? Bottomless pit, Key to the pit, Satan bound, great chain, a thousand years ó Which of these are literal?

My view, to be consistent with the rest of the book, is that this number must be symbolic. The number 1000 was commonly understood by the Jewish people to represent ultimate completeness. If ten is complete, then high multiples of that number ( $10 \times 10 \times 10 = 1000$ ) compounds the totality of the completeness. One thousand is ten to the third power.

It is my view that this period of one thousand years represents the entire Christian Age. While the church is on earth, while there is suffering and persecution, these events will recur.

*1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. 2 He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;*

- A. After the judgment of the immoral mother of harlots, the persecuting governments and the false religious teachers, Satan has no defense left. He is left alone. This chapter describes his fate.
- B. An angel appears with a great key chain. A key on the chain is the key to the door of the bottomless pit. This angel grabs Satan, and binds him for a thousand years.
- C. If the thousand years is symbolic of the Christian Age, then, some will ask, in what way is Satan bound? Is Satan bound today? Absolutely!
  - 1. The word *ōboundō* means to restrict. One might put a dog on a leash and tie it to a tree. The dog can move. He can run around. But, his area of activity is limited. This is the intent of the text here.
  - 2. Satan is limited in several ways. He is not able to control God's people. We have the power to resist Satan and he will flee from us. (James 4:7) Satan is not able to threaten us with death. Christ overcame death, and Satan. (Hebrews 2:14) Before the cross of Christ there was no forgiveness of sins. Death (spiritual death) reigned supreme. Satan ruled the world until the death of Christ. The death of Christ pulled down his hold over man.
  - 3. It has been observed that, during the lifetime of Jesus and the apostles, Satan was allowed to possess people. However, after the age of miracles ended, Satan has been restricted in his power and control

*3 and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.*

- A. He is *ōtied* to the *treeō* by being cast into this pit. He is limited. He is on a short leash. He can only harm those that come close to him and allow him to harm them.
- B. We are reminded that we have the power to resist Satan. (1 Peter 5:8-9) Satan wants us to come near to him. We have the power to walk away.

*4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.*

- A. Here we have a description of those who live and reign with Christ.
- B. NOTE: Notice what is NOT in this verse. This is not the reign of Christ. It is the co-reign of Christians. The thousand years is not the length of Christ's reign. It is the length of the time we reign with Christ.
- C. This is not a scene of eternity with resurrected bodies. John saw souls. These were souls of the martyred saints. (See the fifth seal *ō* 6:9-11) These souls had died because

of their faith. They had remained faithful, not receiving the mark of the beast. They had not worshipped his image.

- D. These faithful Christians, whose faith had stood the ultimate test, death, were living and reigning with Christ. This reign continued through the Christian Age.

*5 But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.*

- A. There are two views here. 1) The rest of the dead are all the non-Christians. 2) The rest of the dead are the faithful Christians who were not killed, but died natural deaths. I believe the first view is correct. The rest of the dead are those who are not Christians. The issue is not how a Christian dies ó natural vs. persecution. The fact is that the death of faithful believer is distinguished from the death of an unbeliever.
- B. Here is the message of this verse. There is a group who, after death, lives and reigns with Christ. This group is faithful Christians. Implied in this statement is: There is a group who does not live and reign with Christ.
- C. This group of unbelievers will not live and reign with Christ. They will not be resurrected until the thousand years (Christian Age) is finished.
- D. What is the first resurrection? The New Testament is of great help here. Paul explains that baptism is a death, burial and resurrection. (Colossians 2:12-13; Romans 6:3-6) When we confessed our faith in Christ, and repented (died to sin), we were buried in a watery grave and raised to a new life in Christ. Have you participated in that òfirst resurrectionö called baptism?
- E. Woodruff comments, òTherefore, the first resurrection is the resurrection of the soul from the grave of sin. It is a spiritual resurrection. (Colossians 1:18)ö (1, 370)

*6 Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.*

- A. If you have participated in the first resurrection (baptism into Christ) you are blessed.
- B. If you have already shared in the first resurrection, the second death poses no real credible threat. The second death will not harm the faithful baptized believer in Christ.
- C. We will be priests of God. (See comments on 1:6)
- D. We will reign with Christ during the Christian Age.

*7 Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison*

- A. Admittedly, this is a difficult verse to understand. It will help if we understand that the limitation of Satan is the preaching of the gospel.
- B. Satan is limited because the gospel is having an influence on the lives of men. Satan will be released (not bound or restricted) at some point. It would appear that there will come a time when the gospel is no longer reaching man. Perhaps man is hardened. Again, I quote Woodruff. òThe only logical meaning to this is that all people who will ever become obedient to the gospel will have done so.ö (1, 371)

- C. Here is the scary truth: There will come a time when men will not hear the gospel and be inclined to obey it. The gospel will not spread. As fewer and fewer people are willing to study and obey the gospel, more and more will be living lives of rebellion and sin.
- D. Think about the words of Jesus, "As it was in the days of Noah" (Matthew 24:37)

*8 and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea.*

- A. Where the gospel does NOT go, Satan will be given greater room to roam. He will go to the four corners of the earth. The four directions (North, South, East, West) are used to describe the complete and total spread of Satan's influence.
- B. This verse describes a time when Satan will have far reaching power and influence because the gospel has been stopped. The world will become more wicked and rebellious. This will be a world that totally rejects God and His church.
- C. Many theories have come out of the woodwork to find two modern nations that represent Gog and Magog. These terms represent those who oppose God. (Ezekiel 38 & 39)
- D. The numbers of people who have rebelled against God and rejected the gospel are like the sand of the sea. They are beyond number.

*9 They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.*

- A. Sin will literally take over the world. The entire world will be plunged into wickedness.
- B. The faithful Christians will be surrounded as if under siege.
- C. When you think that you are all alone, that no one else is faithful to God "Do not give up. This is no time to surrender. Victory is just around the corner.
- D. God will win the battle. Fire from heaven will devour the wicked world.

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

- A. This is the final defeat. Satan has lost his great harlot, Babylon. He has lost his persecuting governments. He has lost his false religions. He saw the world become so wicked that he was thinking he was winning.
- B. Out of the jaws of victory, God gives Satan his final and ultimate defeat.
- C. Satan is thrown into the same lake of fire and brimstone as his generals. They are now in torment. The torment is continual, without rest, day and night, forever and ever.

*11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.*

- A. All that remains is the final judgment. John sees a great white throne. The power and majesty of Christ is so strong that all look away.
- B. Because of the brilliance, Christians cannot look. Because of their sins, the world does not want to look. They are looking for a place to hide. The world has been destroyed. There are no rocks to hide under. There is no place to run.

*12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.*

- A. All the dead appear before God. All the dead will appear before the judgment seat of Christ ó small and great, good and bad, rich and poor. Paul adds that the living and the dead will stand before God. (2 Timothy 4:1) Jesus said, öAll nations shall appear before him.ö (Matthew 25:31)
- B. The books were opened. We will be judged according to what is written in these books. There can be little doubt that the books referred to here are the books of the law of God. For the nation of Israel before the cross, the Law of Moses, and for the world after the cross, the New Testament. In a broader sense, the entire Bible represents the books by which we will be judged.
- C. Another book (singular) is called the Book of Life. God keeps a record of those who are His. When one becomes a Christian, God writes their name in the Book of Life. (Philippians 4:3) Jesus promises that if we will remain faithful our name will not be blotted out of the book of life. (3:5)

*13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.*

- A. Some have devised theories of as many as seven different resurrections. God only discusses one bodily, physical resurrection. We have already discussed the spiritual resurrection by baptism.
- B. Jesus taught one general resurrection of saved and lost. (John 5:28-29)
- C. All who died, no matter where or how their body decayed, will be raised. Some have died at sea. Others died and were buried in protected vaults and caskets. Still others have been mummified. And still others have died in fire, explosion, war and other situations where there was no body to be found. None of these things matter to God. God created us from dust the first time. He can resurrect us from the dust of the earth.
- D. Judgment will be personal and individual. We will not be judged as a nation, state, city or local congregation. We will be judged öeach oneö by our own deeds.
- E. Some have questioned the reason for judgment. It is argued that if, when we die, we go to torments or paradise, then we know our destiny. Since there is a great gulf between the two, no one can cross from one side to the other. The problem is this: We often think of öjudgmentö as the time we are adjudged guilty

or innocent. Guilt or innocence is determined at death. The judgment of God is not for the purpose of holding hearings on our guilt or innocence.

The purpose in judgment is to pronounce sentence. In our legal system, when a person is pronounced guilty of a crime, the judge will say, "On this date, sentence will be pronounced." Here is a man who knows he is guilty. He is in jail. What he does not fully understand is the full punishment to be inflicted on him.

- F. Judgment Day will be the time when God announces the sentence on the wicked and the reward for the righteous.

*14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.*

- A. The ultimate end of all things is here. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. (1 Corinthians 15:26) All have been raised from the dead. Death ends. All have been raised to eternal life or eternal separation from God.
- B. Hades (the temporary abode of the departed spirits) has been emptied. Hades ends.
- C. God has finished with them and they are thrown into the lake of fire.
- D. The lake of fire is the second death. Death means separation. Spiritual death is separation from God. (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9)
- E. Christians do not have to fear this second death. We have already died twice. We died to sin in baptism. Then we died to this physical body. There is no fear of the second death for faithful Christians.

*15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.*

- A. God's record is accurate. Is your name written there?
- B. All not written in the Book of Life are thrown into the lake of fire.

### **Summary of Revelation 1-20**

We have now seen the end of all things.

- The material world
- Death
- Hades
- Immorality (Babylon, mother of harlots)
- Persecuting civil governments
- False prophets and false religions
- Pain, suffering, persecution, hardship

All that remains now is to follow the righteous to the glorious abode of our God and the Lamb.

# Revelation 21

## Introduction

We have now seen the final end of Satan and his three generals. We have witnessed the fate of persecuting governments; the fate of false religions and false spiritual teachers; the fate of immoral activity; the fate of Satan himself; AND the fate of all participants in such is eternal, spiritual death. Fire and brimstone is the final end of all the wicked.

Now we turn to the God's view of the righteous. There are some important points to remember as we begin to study the blissful state of the faithful.

1. **The language is still Figurative.** The beauty of God's faithful must be described in feeble language. How can you describe the place of the immortal in terms mortals can understand? "The writer was faced with the task of painting the unpaintable, and expressing the inexpressible." (2, 20)
2. **Two important things are discussed – Heaven and the church.** While the two are now separate and distinct they will be merged into one. Those who are now faithful in their service in the church of their Lord, will be rewarded with eternal life in Heaven.
3. We know that heaven will also include the faithful from among the patriarchs (including Noah, Enoch, and Abraham) and the faithful from the dispensation of the Law of Moses (Including Moses, David, Daniel). However, **the focus in the book of Revelation is on the last dispensation, the Christian Age.**
4. **We also see the "holy city", the "new Jerusalem" coming down OUT OF heaven. This holy city is the church.** It is clear that the city is within heaven but separate from it. The church, the faithful and loyal believers, marked with the seal of God. (7:4-8) Some of the descriptions in these last two chapters are about heaven itself. But, some of the pictures painted here are about the whole of heaven.
5. Woodruff applies the remainder of the book as a description of the church here on earth. He argues correctly that the holy city, the New Jerusalem are figurative terms for the church. He writes, "These statements figuratively describe our spiritual situation today under the law of Christ as compared to the situation of those who lived under the law of Moses. Under the law of Moses, the children of Israel experience the pain and sorrow of sin. The law of Moses was a law of spiritual death because it could not provide the forgiveness of sins." (1, 384)

What will heaven be like? If we remain faithful, if we keep our garments white, if we do not bow down to the beast or receive the mark of the beast, we will be with God and receive the reward He has prepared. "This section of Revelation describes, in terms which we can understand, how God views his kingdom, the church. It is a spiritual city whose value and beauty is beyond comparison. Those who are residents of that city are the wealthiest people on earth." (1, 392)

The patriarchs and the faithful of those under the Law of Moses will be in heaven. Jesus is coming back for a pure church to be his bride. Heaven will be the wedding feast. We, the church, are the bride of Christ.

What is the holy city, the New Jerusalem?

Before we can appreciate the beauty described in this chapter, we must understand the symbol of the holy city, the New Jerusalem. (21:2)

I here borrow the outline from Woodruff. (1, 390-392)

21:9 ó The symbol is defined here. The bride, the Lamb's wife, is the church. (Romans 7:4)

21:14 ó The foundation of this city rests on the 12 apostles. (Ephesians 2:20)

21:24 ó Citizens of this city walk in light. (1 John 1:5-7)

21:25 ó The gates are never closed. A person may come into this city at any hour.

21:27 ó Occupants of this city are written in the book of life. (Philippians 4:3)

22:1 ó Tree of life to heal nations. After the judgment, there will be no nations to heal.

22:14 ó To enter this city you must obey the commandments of God. (1 John 5:3)

22:19 ó Our name can be removed from the book of life. We can be removed from the holy city.

God wants us to see the value He sees in the church. óThis city, the church, is the spiritual city built by God. It is the place where those people who have their sins forgiven by the blood of Christ dwell.ö (1, 392)

Christ did not come to set up a physical kingdom. He came to establish his spiritual kingdom, the church. (Matthew 16:18) The tree of life is located in this spiritual kingdom. (22:14) As long as we are in that beautiful city and partake of that tree of life, we shall live spiritually forever.

*1 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.*

- A. John now turns his attention in a new direction. He sees a new heaven and earth. This is not, as some religions teach, a renewed, rebuilt earth. Some believe that the saved will be returned to the earth in a refurbished Garden of Eden. The term ónew heaven and new earthö is not to be understood as two separate things.
- B. 2 Peter 3:13 describes the end of this world and all material things. Then we will ólook for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.ö This cannot be the earth because it has been burned up.
- C. The sea was the thing that separated John from the churches he wanted to visit and encourage. He was trapped on the island of Patmos. The sea represented the great separator, the divider. óTo John on Patmos the sea was the thing which separated him from the things dearest to him, the churches of Asia.ö (2, 212)

*2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*

- A. It is clear that this is not a literal city. It is adorned ready for a wedding. The terms "holy city" and "New Jerusalem" describe the church.
- B. Hebrews 12:22-23 says that the church of the firstborn is the "city of the living God."
- C. Romans 7:4 states that the church is the bride of Christ.
- D. It is important to note that heaven and the church are two separate things. The church is seen as "coming down out of heaven." Heaven is larger than the church. Heaven includes the saved from all ages. Abraham and David will be in heaven, but were never in the church of our Lord.

*3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.*

- A. The tabernacle is another reference to the church that is, to faithful Christians.
- B. As the tabernacle under the old law represented the presence of God, so the church is the dwelling place of God in the Christian Age. (2 Corinthians 6:16)

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

- A. Heaven is often described by what is NOT in heaven. God will remove the "former things." The list includes:
  - Tears are wiped away
  - No more death
  - No sorrow
  - No crying
  - No more pain
- B. We often use the term "passed away" to describe death. It is not the person who has died. All the former things have died.
- C. We are reminded that heaven will be heaven because of the things that are NOT there. For persecuted Christians, just to be in a place with no pain, suffering, persecution or the threat of death would be heaven.

*5 Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." 6 And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. 7 He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.*

- A. Some believe this is the Father. I believe the speaker here is the Jesus.
- B. Jesus is described in similar language in chapter 1. He is true and faithful. He is the alpha and omega. He is the giver of the water of life. He is God. We will be joint-heirs

with Christ. (Romans 8:17) Christians will overcome. We have overcome the world, sin, temptation and persecution.

- C. The things that are made new will replace the former things. Instead of pain, sorrow, and crying, there will be joy. Instead of death, there will be eternal life. Instead of tears of grief there will be tears of great joy.

*8 But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”*

- A. Those who have not overcome are listed here. Like other lists of sins (Galatians 5 and Romans 1) this list is not an exhaustive one. The list is suggestive of the sins for which eternal punishment will be meted out.
- B. This list is a “Who’s Who in Hell.”
- Cowardly ó Those afraid to act
  - Unbelieving ó Atheists and others who rejected the gospel
  - Abominable ó Sins which are abhorrent to God
  - Murderers ó This group includes killers, haters, abortionists and all who take human life on purpose
  - Sexually immoral ó All kinds of immoral sexual behavior
  - Sorcerers ó Those who had their faith in potions, spells, drugs, psychic readers, taro cards, and superstitions invented by men
  - Idolaters ó All who worship and serve things, people, positions, and powers more than they seek to serve Jehovah
  - All liars ó All who love or make a lie (22:15)
- C. All of these will suffer the same fate as Satan. They will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone.
- D. For these unbelievers, this will be the second death. They died physically. Now they will die spiritually.

*9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, “Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.”*

- A. We now meet one of the angels that poured out the bowls of the wrath of God. He now invites John to see the bride, the wife of the Lamb of God.
- B. The Lamb of God is Jesus. (John 1:36)
- C. The bride is the church. John is invited to see the church now. Not the church on earth with it hypocrites and pretenders. Not the church with flaws and imperfections. But the church with no spots, no wrinkles, no blemishes. This is the church pure, all dressed and prepared for the wedding feast.

*10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,*

- A. John was taken to a great and high mountain. The church is so widespread that you need a high vantage point to take it in.
- B. The phrase *ōin the Spiritō* is inserted to show that this is still part of the vision. He is not literally taken off Patmos to some high mountain. He is given a spiritual view of the grand and glorious church.
- C. Repeated from verse 2, John sees the church coming down out of heaven. Heaven is bigger than the church. The church is a part of heaven.

*11 having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.*

- A. The church, the true and faithful church, has the glory of God. The church was planned and built by God.
- B. The church was designed to spread the light of the gospel. (Ephesians 2:10)
- C. We are not sure about the jasper stone, some believe it might be the diamond. It is bright, precious and clear as crystal.

*12 Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:*

*13 three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west*

- A. The church is further described as having a high wall with 12 gates. There is an angel at each gate.
- B. The 12 gates have the names of the 12 tribes of Israel written on them. There are three gates on each side of the holy city. You can approach the city (church) from any direction and find access.
- C. The wall of a literal city was its primary defense against attack from the outside. If one is inside the wall, there is safety and protection. God has promised to protect those who are His. He offers security and safety to the church.
- D. NOTE: This is not heaven. This city came down out of heaven. John is describing the church, the bride of Christ.

*14 Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.*

- A. The city has 12 foundations. The church was built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. (Ephesians 2:19-20)
- B. The gates were labeled with the names of the 12 tribes of Israel. The 12 foundations are also labeled with the names of the 12 apostles.

*15 And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall.*

- A. The angel who was serving as John's guide asked him to measure the city, the gates and the wall.
- B. The measurements are made with a golden reed. The measurements are figurative and not to be taken as literal.

*16 The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal.*

- A. The city is a cube. The three dimensions are equal. The length, width and depth are the same.
- B. The measurement is 12,000 furlongs. In modern measurements a furlong is about 220 yards. 12,000 furlongs would be about 1,500 miles.
- C. This would make the city 1,500 mile long and wide. It would also make the city have walls that are 1,500 miles high.
- D. I believe that the number, like most numbers in Revelation, should be taken in its figurative sense. The number 12 is the number that represents organized religion. The 12 tribes of Israel represent Judaism. The 12 apostles represent the New Testament church.
- E. If you take this number and multiply by 1,000, the number of completeness, you have the sum completeness, the grand total of all who have ever lived lives of faithful obedience to God. Thus, 12,000 represent the total of all who have been obedient to God. Remember this is the spiritual city, the New Jerusalem.

*17 Then he measured its wall: one hundred and forty-four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel.*

- A. Since the height of the wall is described in the previous verse, it is clear that this verse is measuring the thickness of the wall.
- B. The wall is 144 cubits thick. This would be about 72 yards in thickness.
- C. Again, I do not believe we should take this a literal. The number 144 is the total of 12 multiplied by 12 (12 X 12 = 144).
- D. Since 12 is the number for organized religion, we are looking at a multiple of Judaism times Christianity. This is similar to the number 144,000 in 14:1.
- E. The measure of a man means that this was a measurement which man could understand.

*18 The construction of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass.*

- A. The wall is of jasper (perhaps diamond) and the city is pure gold.
- B. The gold is so pure that it is clear like glass. In our understanding of the terms clear as glass and pure gold are not synonyms. How can it be both?
- C. I would remind you that John is attempting to describe that which is beyond our ability to describe. He is trying to paint a picture of what we can not even imagine.

*19 The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, 20 the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysolite, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst.*

- A. The walls are decorated with all kinds of precious stones.
- B. The 12 foundations (labeled with the names of the 12 apostles) are made of precious stones.
- C. We are not sure of the meaning of some of these terms. Here is what we do know. These are precious stones. They are used to decorate, thus, are brilliant and beautiful.

*21 The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.*

- A. The gates on which are the names of the 12 tribes of Israel are now described.
- B. The 12 gates are made of 12 pearls. Each gate was one pearl.
- C. The street (singular) of the city is of such pure gold that it is clear like glass.

*22 But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.*

- A. Under the Law of Moses the tabernacle, and later the temple, represented the presence of God.
- B. Now, the presence of God is in the hearts of his people. (2 Corinthians 6:16-17) God has promised to dwell with us, walk with us, and be our God.
- C. There is no need for a temple. We ARE the temple of God. (Ezekiel 37:27; 1 Corinthians 3:17) God is present in His people.

*23 The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.*

- A. The church is not dependant on external light sources. God is the light. The sun is not needed to shine. We do not need stars or the moon.
- B. God's glory lights up or lives. Jesus is the light of our life. (John 8:12)
- C. The primary task of the church is to take this light into a world dark with sin.

*24 And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it.*

- A. People from all nations shall flow into the church. (Isaiah 2:2)
- B. The church is the body of the saved. Kings cannot bring their glory and power into heaven for eternity. They can, when converted, bring their glory into the church.

*25 Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there).*

- A. The church is a pure place. It is safe from sin. There is no darkness of sin allowed in the church. Those in the church have been forgiven and died to a life of sin.
- B. Walled cities always closed their gates at night. If you were outside the city when the gates were closed, you could not enter. However, in the church it is never night. There is never a time when the opportunity to obey the gospel and be immersed is closed.
- C. I have baptized people at all hours of the day and night. The invitation to obey the commands of God is never closed. You can enter the church at anytime.

*26 And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it.*

- A. This opportunity to become a citizen in the holy city is open to people of all nations. It is not limited to one race, nation or language.
- B. Peter said that in every nation if one believes and obeys God is accepted into the city.

*27 But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.*

- A. The church must remain pure. We must not allow sin or anything that defiles us to enter our lives.
- B. We must purge out the old leaven. We must separate from sin. öCome out from among them and be separate.ö

# Revelation 22

## Introduction

Those who are faithful in the church will be rewarded with eternal life with God and with Jesus in Heaven. The preceding chapter describes the church, the holy city, the New Jerusalem. Now we move to view Heaven itself.

*1 And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.*

- A. The water of life is symbolic of the gospel. Jesus promised that all who drink of this water would never thirst. (John 4:14)
- B. The gospel of Jesus Christ comes from the throne of God in Heaven.

*2 In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*

- A. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve had access to the Tree of Life. (Genesis 2:9) Eating of this tree would allow them to live a physical life forever. Now, the Tree of Life offers spiritual life for eternity.
- B. What does the Tree of Life represent? I make two observations.
  - 1. Christ is our Tree of Life. Christ is represented by several different symbols in the book of Revelation. He is the Lion of Judah, the Lamb of God, the Alpha and Omega, the morning star, and the Tree of Life. Each of these symbols, and several others, are used to emphasize a different aspect of our Lord.
  - 2. This tree is in the church. This Tree of Life is present now in the church. Notice these points.
    - The number 12 represents organized religion. This tree yields 12 fruits. As people obey the gospel the tree is producing fruit.
    - The leaves were for the healing of the nations. If John is describing our eternal state in Heaven, how can it heal the nations? The nations will end when this world ends at the second coming. The healing of nations must take place while the nations still exist. The leaves of this tree represent the healing power of the gospel in individual lives and in the nations of the world.
    - The Tree of Life is Christ. He is healing the nations. He is yielding fruit for God as people obey the gospel. This tree is described in Ezekiel 47:12.
- C. Today, right now, we have access to the Tree of Life. We can drink of the water of life. We, the faithful Christians, are on this street (the narrow way that leads to life) and we have access to the water and tree.

*3 And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.*

- A. It is clear to me that the curse was the curse of the Law of Moses. This law was one of sin and death. There was a curse on all under this law. Only by living a perfect life could one find righteousness. Christ came to earth, lived a perfect, sinless life, and removed the curse. (Galatians 3:23-26)
- B. The throne of Jesus is in the hearts of Christians. (2 Corinthians 6:16) God promised to dwell in us, walk in us, and be our God.
- C. When the Lamb of God is on the throne of our heart, we will serve Him. (7:15)

*4 They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.*

- A. There are two general views on the idea of us being able to see His face.
  - Some believe that this refers to when we are in Heaven and are with Jesus in a personal, face-to-face, able to see what is now invisible. (1 Corinthians 13:12)
  - I believe this is also to be understood in a symbolic way. When we sin we are separated from God. God hides his face from us. (Isaiah 59:2) But when we obey the gospel and are forgiven, we are restored to a face-to-face relationship with our God. He knows us and hears our prayers. (1 Peter 3:12)
- B. Those who see His face are those who wear His name. They have the seal of God. The seal of God identifies them as His.

*5 There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.*

- A. Jesus promised that those who walk in the light would never walk in darkness because we are in the light of Christ. (1 John 1:7; John 8:12)
- B. We are also promised that we will reign forever. Certainly our presence with Christ will continue in eternity. But the reign is with Christ in His Kingdom. It is clear that at the second coming, Christ will turn over the kingdom to God. (1 Corinthians 15:24)
- C. This fits what is stated in 20:4 about our living and reigning with Christ during the Christian Age.

*6 Then he said to me, "These words are faithful and true." And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place.*

- A. The angel assures John that what he has seen is assured. It is true. It will happen. God keeps His promises. (2 Corinthians 1:20)
- B. As we near the end of Revelation we are reminded of the promise at the beginning, these are things that MUST shortly come to pass. (1:1)
- C. It is clear that the vision of Revelation was to begin shortly. It does not mean that all would be completed in a year or two. It does mean that they would begin to happen.

*7 "Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."*

- A. Some try to argue that the angel and not Jesus spoke these words. In my view, it does not matter, because angels were messengers who spoke what was given them by Jesus.
- B. Many find a difficulty with the term *ōshortlyö* when it has been 2,000 years since this promise was given. I believe there are two issues that must be discussed.
  - 1. Meaning of *ōshortlyö* ó In our understanding of time, measured in days, months and years, 2,000 years is a long time. We must remember that God does not work on our clock and calendar. A day is like a thousand years. There fore, to God, it has been a couple of days. No time at all.
  - 2. Meaning of *ōcomingö* ó Is this the second coming in which the world ends? Is this a promise of Jesus to come again and end the world, as we know it?  
OR Could this coming be the coming in answer to prayers? Could it be that Jesus will come into the hearts of the obedient to give them protection and guide them providentially? The preceding verse promised that these were *ōthings which must shortly take place.ö* I believe the *ōcomingö* here is the coming to work out the matters promised and predicted in this book.

*8 Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. 9 Then he said to me, "See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God."*

- A. As the vision comes to an end, John assures us that he has recorded what he saw and heard. John was there. Revelation is not a figment of John's imagination.
- B. John began to worship the angel who delivered the message. He is immediately told to arise. Angels are not to be worshipped. They worship and serve the same God we do. Angels are fellow servants. (See also 19:10)

*10 And he said to me, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand."*

- A. It is clear to me that John is told not to close and seal this book. It is not God's intention to record this vision and then keep it hidden and closed. God intended that the book be read publicly. (1:3)
- B. Things will be starting to happen soon. God is ready to begin fulfilling these things.

*11 He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still."*

- A. There are several explanations of this verse. I think the key is to keep it in the context of the previous verse. Verse 10 told John not to seal the book. In the statement that follows God explains that there will be no change in those who read this book.
- B. Woodruff states, *ōThose who are unjust will still be unjust; those who are filthy will continue to be filthy; those who are righteous will remain righteous, and those who are holy will still be holy.ö* (1, 414)
- C. Woodruff also comments, *ōThose who were unjust before this revelation was given to John would still be unjust after it was given. The same would be true for those who*

were filthy, righteous, or holy. This revelation did nothing to change the way one renders obedience to God's will. (1, 4:14)

- D. This book does not introduce a new plan of salvation. All who obey the gospel as taught in Acts and the epistles will be saved. God has not given a new message, a new method of salvation.

*12 "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.*

- A. Keep the faith. Remain faithful even in times of persecution. Here is the reason.
- B. When Christ comes for the second time, he will bring the reward with him. You will be judged by the deeds done in your body, good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:10)
- C. When Christ comes again, this world and the things done in this life will end.

*13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last."*

- A. Christ uses the same description at the beginning and the end of this book.
- B. Alpha and Omega α are the first and last letters in the Greek alphabet. With our alphabet we would say, "Everything from A to Z."
- C. Beginning and end α Christ was before the beginning of creation. He will continue when this planet melts with fervent heat and the elements are burned up. (See 1:8)

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

- A. Again, similar statements were made at the beginning of the book. (1:3) The first of the "blessed" statements was to pronounce a blessing on all who read, heed and obey the commands of this book.
- B. The obedient have the Tree of Life. The obedient are allowed to enter the city (the church). Heaven (the reward that Christ will bring) will be given to those who are in the holy city, the New Jerusalem.

*15 But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.*

- A. In the city are the obedient. Outside are all others.
- B. John gives another short list similar to 21:8.

*16 "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star."*

- A. Jesus explain that he sent his angel to reveal these things to the churches.
- B. Jesus identifies himself as the Root and Offspring of David. Jesus was involved in the creation of man. Therefore, Jesus was the root, the origin, of David. In his earthly blood line, Jesus was of the offspring of David. Christ is both the origin and the descendent of David.

- C. Jesus is also the bright and morning star. The morning star is the bright star that can still be seen as the day dawns. Even though the sky has become light, this star is still visible.

*17 And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.*

- A. The door to the city is always open. The invitation to come to Christ is not closed here on earth.
- B. Jesus stands at the door of our heart and knocks, waiting for us to open. (3:20) Jesus invites all to accept the invitation for salvation. (Matthew 11:28-30)
- C. Are you thirsty? Jesus offers the water of life. Are you hungry? Jesus is the bread of life. Are you facing death? Jesus offers the Tree of Life. Are you weary? Jesus offers spiritual rest.

*18 For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.*

- A. NOTE: This warning is specific to the book of Revelation. However, similar statements are made elsewhere in the Scriptures. They are inspired of God. We, finite humans, do not have the knowledge or power to alter, revise, add to, take from, or substitute anything written here. (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Proverbs 30:6)
- B. With the warning comes a promise. If you add to the things written here, God will add the plagues that are recorded in this book.

*20 He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!*

- A. Again Jesus promises to come quickly. He knows that Christians are suffering. He will respond with speed and in accordance with the plan of God.
- B. Just as Jesus promises to begin fulfilling the prophecies of this book, the prayer of the first century Christians was, "Come, Lord Jesus."
- C. In 1 Corinthians 16:22, Paul ends this letter to the church at Corinth with the word "Maranatha." Maranatha is a transliteration of an idiomatic expression. This phrase means "Come now. Come quickly. I am ready, come and get me. This word was a common prayer of the persecuted church.
- D. The implication of the prayer was to say "o
- Lord, I am tired of the suffering and pain.
  - Lord, I am ready for you to come and take me away from this evil world.
  - Lord, come with vengeance on these wicked persecutors.

- Lord, come with love for your faithful servant.
- Lord, come with your arms open for me.

*21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*

- A. God will bless us as we read publicly this book.
- B. God's grace will shine on us as we listen, study and understand this book.
- C. Christ will be with you as you obey the commands of this book.
- D. Amen and Amen.

## Concluding Remarks

“The pageant is over, and the final curtain has been drawn. John has seen and has shown his audience the picture of God’s care over them in their conflict, the certainty of their triumph over the terrible conditions of the day, and the glory which is beyond the grave which is opening before them.” (2, 217)

We have reached the end of the Revelation of God. With the close of this book of prophecy, the pen of inspiration is laid down. We now have the will, the mind, and the plan of God. It has been revealed. Now the task is ours. We must read, study, listen, understand and then obey the teachings contained in this volume. We must review our notes and continually try to make the application of the principles taught.

“But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.” (10:7) The things that were a mystery, matters not clearly understood, are now unambiguous. We have been reminded that God knows about our pain and suffering. God is aware of the evil and wickedness in the world. God will not allow this human suffering to continue forever. There will come a time when the patience of God will end. There will come a point where longer delay would not help. When the world refuses to repent; when God warns about judgment; when man is made aware of the terror of an eternal Hell; AND he refuses to repent ó God has no choice but to bring this world to an end.

I concur with the conclusion of Woodruff. “Revelation is written in beautiful symbolic language which is the culmination of symbolism used throughout the Scripture. I sincerely believe the book can be understood if we always remember to let the Bible be the final authority for interpretation.” (1, 436)

Ray Summers ends his commentary with these words. “Who can read this book which breathes the atmosphere of victorious faith and courageous trust in God, with the unfailing assurance in the fulfillment of his purpose and the victory of the Christ of the cross and the empty tomb, without shouting with the people of the book ó

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain,  
And has redeemed us to God by his blood,  
To receive power, and riches, and wisdom,  
And might, and honor, and glory,  
And blessing, and dominion,  
Forever and ever,  
Amen.” (2, 218)

NOTE: The praise of the Lamb of God is from 5:12.

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