

The Royal Reign of Christ

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*A Devotional Study of
the book of the Revelation*

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A Devotional Study of The Book of the Revelation



An Expanded Outline

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 - The third seal revealed a rider on a black horse 6:4
 - The fourth seal revealed a rider on a pale horse 6:7-8
 - The fifth seal revealed an altar 6:9-11
 - The sixth seal was broken to reveal changes in the structure of the earth 6:12-17

INTERLUDE

Before the opening of the seventh seal of the scroll there was the first of six interludes (7:1-17). John is a witness to the sealing of the 144,000 Jews (7:1-8) and a great multitude of Gentiles washed by the blood of the Lamb (7:9-17). The seventh seal was broken (8:1) and then there was silence in heaven for the space of half an hour. Divine preparations were made by seven angels which stood before God. They were given seven trumpets. Another angel was given a golden censer to offer incense with the prayers of the saints (8:3-5) offered upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

- The sounding of the seven trumpets (Rev. 8:6-11:19).
 1. The first trumpet sounded and the earth was smitten with hail, fire, and blood (8:6-7)
 2. The second trumpet sounded and the sea was smitten by a burning mountain that fell into it (8:8-9)
 3. The third trumpet sounded and the rivers of the earth were smitten as a star called wormwood fell into them (8:10-11).
 4. The fourth trumpet sounded and men were smitten. The sun, moon, and stars were affected (8:12-13).

5. The fifth trumpet sounded and men were smitten. The first woe of plagues came forth, a plague of locusts (9:12).
6. The sixth trumpet sounded and yet more men were killed in a great slaughter for the second woe was unleashed in the form of warriors on horseback (9:13-21).

INTERLUDE

During this second interlude (10:1-11:4) John bears witness to a little scroll (10:1-11) and saw two witnesses (11:1-14). Attention was paid to these witnesses.

❖ Their association with the temple	11:1-2
❖ The duration of their ministry	11:3
❖ Their personal protection and power	11:4-6
❖ The termination of their ministry	11:7-10
❖ Their ultimate translation	11:11-14

7. The seventh trumpet sounded to announce the sovereign reign of the Lord over the nations of the earth (11:15-19). The nations resisted with violence the reign of the Sovereign.

- In John's vision there began to appear a series of seven personages 12:1-14:20

1. The first person was a woman clothed with the sun	12:1-2
2. The second person was a great red dragon	12:3-4
3. The third person was a man-child	12:5-6
4. The fourth person was the archangel	12:7-12
5. The fifth person was the woman who brought forth the man-child	12:13-17
6. The sixth person was the beast out of the sea	13:1-10
7. The seventh person was the beast out of the earth	13:11-18

INTERLUDE

After the description of the seven personages John heard various announcements proclaimed (14:1-20) concerning:

❖ The Lamb on Mount Zion and the 144,000	14:1-5
❖ The proclamation of the everlasting gospel by angels	14:6-8
❖ The worship of the beast	14:9-13
❖ The blessed dead and a great harvest	14:14-20

- The third interlude came to an end and the prelude to the seven bowl judgments began as John saw a sea of glass (15:2-4). Angels came out of the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven (15:5-8)

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| 1. The first bowl of boils was poured out | 16:1-2 |
| 2. The second bowl was poured out and there was blood in the seas | 16:3 |
| 3. The third bowl was poured out and there was blood in the rivers, streams, and lakes | 16:4-7 |
| 4. The fourth bowl was poured out and there was scorching heat | 16:8-9 |
| 5. The fifth bowl was poured out and there was darkness | 16:10-11 |
| 6. The sixth bowl was poured out and the Euphrates river dried up in preparation for the battle of Armageddon. | 16:12-16 |

INTERLUDE

During this fourth interlude John observed three unclean spirits came out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet (16:13-16)

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| 7. The seventh bowl was poured out and there was great hail | 16:17-21 |
| • The vision of John entered into a final phase as he bore witness to the seven final judgments | 17:1 |
| 1. The first judgment concentrated on religious Babylon | 17:1-18 |
| 2. The second judgment concentrated on commercial Babylon (18:1-24). An appeal was then made for the people to be separate from the evil system (18:4-8) because anguish was certain (18:9-10). The just judgment caused great joy among the elect of God (18:20-24) | |

INTERLUDE

John enjoyed a fifth interlude as the apostle looked for the Second Advent of Christ (19:1-21) which occurs with a hallelujah chorus (19:1-7), a marriage supper (19:8-10) and the defeat of all the enemies of the Lord (19:11-21).

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| 3. After the interlude John testified to the third judgment in the fall of the false prophet and the beast (19:20) | |
| 4. The fourth judgment John witnessed was the judgment upon those nations hostile to Christ (19:21) | |

INTERLUDE

In this interlude John observes

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| ❖ The binding of Satan | 20:1-3 |
| ❖ The first resurrection | 20:4-6 |
| ❖ A final rebellion | 20:7-9 |

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| 5. The fifth judgment concentrated on the destruction of Gog and Magog | 20:8-9 |
| 6. The sixth judgment dealt with Satan | 20:10 |
| 7. The seventh judgment dealt with the wicked dead | 20:11-15 |

- The vision of John was brought to a conclusion by observing seven wonderful things.

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| ❖ A new heaven | 21:1 |
| ❖ A new earth | 21:2-8 |
| ❖ A new city | 21:9-23 |
| ❖ A new order of nations | 21:24-27 |
| ❖ A river of life | 22:1 |
| ❖ A tree of life | 22:2 |
| ❖ An eternal throne | 22:3-5 |

V. Conclusion: The apostle John closed the book of the Revelation with

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| ❖ Words of comfort | 22:6-17 |
| ❖ Words of warning | 22:18-19 |
| ❖ Words of blessing | 22:20-21 |

The Royal Reign of Christ



Introduction

The word “*revelation*” used as the title for this last book of the Bible is “*apokalypsis*” and means, “*to unveil*.” In the *Revelation* the eternal plan of redemption in Jesus Christ is set forth against the backdrop of violent persecution of the saints and divine judgment of sinners. The purpose of the book is to declare the ultimate triumph of the Church and the destruction of her enemies. This truth alone would be a source of great encouragement to God’s people in the midst of great tribulation.

The Human Author

While all Scripture is written by the Spirit of God (2 Time 3:16) the human author of *Revelation* is the apostle John (Rev. 1:1; 1:4; 1:9; 22:8; 21:2), the son of Zebedee. John refers to himself as a servant of Christ (Rev. 1:1), and a brother and companion in suffering (Rev. 1:9). As an author familiar with the Old Testament Scriptures, John will rely heavily on that source to convey his message.

A Reason for Writing

John reveals that after he had seen his vision he was commanded to write them down while he was still on the island of Patmos (Rev. 1:9,11; 19:9; 22:9,10,18,19). The small, barren, rocky island of Patmos is located in the Aegean Sea about 60 miles from Ephesus. The purpose for writing was to send a circular message to the seven churches in the providence of western Asia Minor: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.



The harbor on the island of Patmos, Greece, where John was exiled.

A Blessing to Receive

For all that take the time to study the book of the *Revelation* a special spiritual blessing will be enjoyed. *Revelation 1:3* “*Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.*” The word blessed is “*makarios*” and denotes happiness. The term is used seven times in *Revelation*.

- **The first blessed** is associated with reading, hearing, and obeying the word of God (1:3). As the word of God was read publicly, privileged people listened and that listening created a holy responsibility.
- **The second blessed** is that of dying in the Lord (14:13). People who die in the sphere of the Christian faith experience great joy. Christians know that to be away from home in the body is to be at home with the Lord.
- **The third blessed** is that of watching (16:15) unto holiness. Sin robs the soul of comfort. Sin destroys inner peace. Sin leaves a residue of guilt, anger, and sadness. Happiness is found in holiness.
- **The fourth blessed** is that of being invited to the marriage supper (19:9). Salvation allows there to be a wonderful time of fellowship with the Father and with the Son and with the Holy Spirit.
- **The fifth blessed** is that of having part in the first resurrection (20:6). The first resurrection is a soulish resurrection whereby the person passes from spiritual death into eternal life (John 5:25).
- **The sixth blessed** is that of keeping the words of prophecy (22:7). For the early Christian the temptation would come to despair that false religions and evil empires would triumph over goodness and the gospel. That temptation is still with us today but it will not happen.

- **The seventh blessed** is that of faithful obedience (22:14). All gospel truth must be translated in acts of obedience. Obedience to the known will of God brings happiness.

A Curse to Consider

For anyone who adds to or takes away from the content of this book, there is a curse. Revelation 22:18-19 *“For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: 19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”*

Anticipated by Christ

Before His death Christ told the disciples the Holy Spirit would reveal to them *“things to come.”* John 16:13 *“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.”*

Guidelines for Interpretation

The first guideline in interpreting the Scriptures is to establish what a particular passage meant to the original reader. Understanding a type of literature called *“apocalyptic”* will help for *Revelation* belongs to that style of writing which is poetic and visionary, expressing its meaning primarily through symbols and imagery.

Apocalyptic Literature

1. The Greek word *“apokalupsis”* means *“an unveiling.”* The purpose of the writer was to unveil a particular meaning by using signs and symbols.
2. Apocalyptic literature as a style of writing appeared in earnest during the period 210 BC-AD 200. These were especially dark days in Jewish history demonstrated by the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes (175-164 BC). Later, there would be the iron fist of such Roman emperors as Nero and Domitian. These difficult times gave birth to apocalyptic literature.
3. As a result of these writing two things happened.
 - First, the virtue of loyalty to one's nation, family, and spiritual heritage was stressed.
 - Second, faith was stimulated. The Jewish community never stopped believing that they were the chosen people of God destined to achieve world supremacy.
4. When the whole history of national Israel challenged these hopes the Jews turned to a scheme of history to continue their beliefs. Time was divided into two ages.
 - There was this present age, which is wholly bad and beyond redemption. There is nothing to foresee but total destruction in the Day of the Lord.

- There was the age to come, which was wholly good, the golden age of God bringing peace, prosperity, and righteousness.
5. Apocalyptic literature had a pattern. Certain themes occurred over and over again.
 - The Messiah was a divine, eternal, figure full of power and glory (Enoch 48:3,6; 62:7; 4 Ezra 13:25- 26).
 - Before the Messiah came Elijah would return to prepare the way for Him (Mal. 4:5,6).
 - The coming of the Messianic Age would be like the agony of birth (Matt. 24:8; Mark 13:8).
 - The last days will be a time of cosmic upheaval (Isa. 13:10; Joel 2:30; 3:15).
 - The last days will be a time of great terror (Zeph. 1:14; Enoch 102:1,3).
 - Human relationships will be destroyed in the last days as honor is turned into shame, strength into humiliation, and beauty into ugliness (Zech. 14:13; Enoch 100:1,2; 2 Baruch 48:31-37).
 - The last days will be a time of judgment as sinners are dealt with (Mal. 3:1-3; Isa. 66:15,16; Enoch 69:27).
 - The Gentiles who had subdued Israel had an uncertain fate.
 - Sometimes the vision was of their total destruction (Isa. 13:19-22; 63:6; 45:14).
 - Sometimes the vision was of the conversion of the Gentiles (Isa. 49:6; 51:5; 45:20-35).
 - Sometimes the vision was of one last gathering of Gentiles against the Jews at Jerusalem (Ezek. 38:14-39:16; Zech. 14:1-11).
 6. Another theme of apocalyptic literature was the re-gathering of scattered Jews to the Holy City (*Baruch* 5:5-9; Isa. 27:12,13).
 7. Then there was the resurrection of the dead (Dan. 12:2,3; Enoch 51:1).
 8. The Jews were to enjoy a New Jerusalem to replace the old destroyed by Babylon.
 9. From the Holy City the Messiah would resign. Some said forever (Dan. 7:27). Others said for only four hundred years (based upon Gen. 15:13 cf. Psa. 90:15).

10. All agreed that in the glorious age to come there would be a united Israel with all the tribes re-gathered (Jer. 3:18; Isa. 11:13; Hos. 1:11). In the age to come the world would be fertile like the Garden of Eden (Isa. 32:15; 51:3; 35:1), all wars would cease (Isa. 2:4), nature would be at peace (Isa. 11:6-9; Hos. 2:18), and there would be no more pain or sorrow (Jer. 31:12; Isa. 35:10; 65:10-22).

Summary

The book of *Revelation* incorporates most if not all of these grand themes but from a significantly different focus point. It is the Church and not national Israel, which becomes the center of attention. As a work of prophecy the book of *Revelation* differs from apocalyptic literature in that it ends with hope. To the apocalyptist the world was beyond hope. For the Christian there is hope in Christ.

Two Methods for Obtaining Knowledge

There are two basic ways to know something. Knowledge can be discovered through the scientific method of observation, hypothesis, experimentation, predictability, and conclusion. As knowledge can be discovered so it can be revealed. The book of *Revelation* represents revealed knowledge because what was unveiled to John concerns the deep things of God which no man knows but the Spirit of God and those to whom He reveals them. 1 Corinthians 2:10 “*But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.*” Chapter one divides itself along these two lines: observation and revelation.

- First, there is an inscription (Rev 1:1,2). *Revelation 1:1-2 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: 2 Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.*
- Second, there is the first of seven apostolic blessings (Rev 1:3). *Revelation 1:3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.*

The other six blessing can be noted.

- *Revelation 14:13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.*
- *Revelation 16:15 Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.*
- *Revelation 19:9 And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.*

- *Revelation 20:6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.*
- *Revelation 22:7 Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.*
- *Revelation 22:14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.*

What Christ will do in time is no mystery for in the last days God has spoken plainly to the Church by His Spirit (Rev. 1:1). The Lord has revealed knowledge His people so they can observe all that has been revealed.

- *Revelation 1:1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John:*

A Message for Mankind

The Son continues to speak to the Church through angels (1:1) which are the messengers of God. They are the ministering spirit to those who are the heirs of salvation (Heb 1:14). From this we observe the divine order: God, Christ, Angels, Man, Nature.

A Glorious Sight of the Sovereign

The vision of Christ is revealed in 1:9-20 as John sees Christ. It is John, not the official apostle, but the companion of God's people in suffering who sees Christ. John sees a magnificent display of divine attributes in Christ for the resurrected Lord has hair that is white. This speaks of the Ancient of Day (Dan. 7:9) in whom there is no decay but glory. The Lord has eyes of fire for piercing and penetrating into the heart of men. His feet are as brass, strong, steadfast and supporting. The voice of Christ is that of many waters. His message can be heard in all the nations. In the right hand of Christ are the seven ministers of the Church that speaks of the security of the saints. Out of His mouth goes a sharp sword piercing the soul (cf. Heb. 4:12). This majestic vision made such an impression on John that he was overcome by what he saw. The Lord touched John and spoke to him words of comfort, words of authority, words of identity (1:18), words of power (1:18b), words of instruction (1:19), and words of interpretation (1:20).

What is needed for the Study of the *Revelation* of Jesus Christ?

Three things are needed for the study of the Book of the Revelation.

- An open heart and an open mind.
- A controlled spirit which is gracious even where there is disagreement.
- A willingness to make some effort to study diligently by comparing Scripture with Scripture.

Basic Presupposition

For centuries the Book of Revelation has been a source of great mystery and great controversy. In recent years a number of publications have exploded on the scene promising to unveil its complex symbolism. Since most start with a futuristic view they are doomed to be unsatisfactory explanations of the Word of God. It should be understood that all Biblical studies begin with certain presuppositions, which tend to lead to certain conclusions. The questions arise.

- Was the *Book of Revelation* written between AD 90-95 or prior to AD 70?
- Is the Book of Revelation to be considered mostly historical and therefore fulfilled or prophetic?
- Should the various symbols be understood as linear or cyclical in nature?

Good people disagree on each of these points. For this study we will suggest that

- the Book of Revelation was written prior to AD 70,
- is mostly historical,
- and reveals a cyclical view of Divine judgment. Revelation presents an essential unity with the Old Testament, the gospels, and the epistles.

The Date of the *Revelation*

Students of the Bible examine external and internal evidence to date a particular book. External evidence is the witness of persons and or events outside the Scripture. Internal evidence is the witness of the document it self. The late date for the dating of *Revelation* is considered to be between AD 90 and AD 95. The early date for *Revelation* is considered to be sometime before the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70.

The Late Date

The primary external witness for a late date is St. Irenaeus (AD 130-202). In fact, St. Irenaeus is the only source for the late date of *Revelation*. All other sources (Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Victorinus, and Jerome) simply quoted from him. With all due respect to Irenaeus, he was not always careful in his critical facts reflected by his statement that Jesus lived to be fifty (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 2:25:5). The particular statement made by Irenaeus to date *Revelation* late is found in Book 5 of his *Against Heresies* (5:30:3.). "*We will not, however, incur the risk of pronouncing positively as to the name of the Antichrist [found in Revelation 13]; for if it were necessary that his name should be distinctly revealed in this present time, it would have been announced by him who be held the apocalyptic vision. For that was seen no very long time since, but almost in our day, towards the end of Domitian's reign.*"

An Analysis of the Evidence

At first, the statement seems conclusive until it is remembered that the great original work of Irenaeus is no longer extant. His writings have come down the centuries from the Latin version with some exception. In the translation there is the question as to whether Irenaeus meant to say that the *Apocalypse* itself belongs to Domitian's reign or that John was seen "*no very long time since.*"

A Compelling Admission

The truth of the matter is that the Domitianic date cannot be established with absolute certainty from any external evidence. Furthermore, there is no direct evidence in *Revelation* itself to establish any exact date for its writing. However, John was told he was to see things which must shortly come to pass. John was writing to seven churches that desperately needed a message from the Lord. There is no good reason not to reject an early date for the writing of the *Revelation* that would give comfort to the people of God that their great enemies, the Beast and the False Prophet, would soon be destroyed. There is no good reason to separate the content of the work so that the events of chapters 1-3 are historical and refer to the Church while the contents of chapters 4-19 refer to those who dwell on the earth (3:10) apart from the Church.



*A bust of the Emperor Vespasian (AD 69-79),
under whom Jerusalem was destroyed.*

The Essential Unity of the *Revelation*

The apostle begins to address the Church in chapter 1:1 and in 1:11 only to conclude his address to the Church in chapter 22:6 and chapter 22:16 thereby indicating an essential unity.



“I am Alpha and Omega”

- *Revelation 1:1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: ...11 Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.*
- *Revelation 22:6 And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done. ...16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.*

Promises to Keep

The essential unity of the *Revelation* to the seven churches is further demonstrated by observing the promises to those who overcome in each of the seven churches in chapters 2:3 and the rewards of chapters 20-22.

The Promise

- *Revelation 2:7. To the Church of Ephesus the promise is given that the saints will be allowed to eat of the tree of life*

The Reward

- *Revelation 22:14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.*

~*~

The Promise

- *Revelation 2:11. To the Church of Smyrna the promise is given the saints will not be hurt by the Second Death.*

The Reward

- *Revelation 20:6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.*

~*~

The Promise

- *Revelation 2:17. To the Church of Pergamos the promise is given that the saints will be given hidden manna to eat, a white stone, and a new name (Rev. 20:15; 21:27).*

The Reward

- *Revelation 20:15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. 27 And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.*

~*~

The Promise

- *Revelation 2:28. To the Church of Thyatira the promise is given that the saints will be given the Morning Star (Rev. 22:16). “ And I will give him the morning star.”*

The Reward

- *Revelation 22:16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.*

~*~

The Promise

- *Revelation 3:5. To the Church of Sardis the promise is given that the saints will be clothed in white raiment and will not have their name blotted out of the Book of Life (Rev. 19:8; 21:27).*

The Reward

- *Revelation 19:8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. 27 And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.*

~*~

The Promise

- *Revelation 3:12. To the Church of Philadelphia the promise is given that the saints will become a pillar in the temple of God and will have the name of God and the name of the city of God (Rev. 21:10).*

The Reward

- *Revelation 21:10 And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,*

~*~

The Promise

- *Revelation 3:21. To the Church of Laodicea the promise is given that the saints will be allowed to sit on Christ's throne (Rev. 22:1-3).*

The Reward

- *Revelation 22:1-3 And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. 2 In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 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 Message for all Seasons

God did had a special message for His people in the first century and so the *Revelation* was written to encourage the hearts of God's people and to illustrate for all the saints of all the ages the rewards of being faithful to Christ. The validity of this observation may be demonstrated by asking for a Christian's response to the following questions.

- *“Christian, do you believe that if you overcome and die in the sphere of the faith that Christ will give you to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God?” (2:7)*
- *“Christian, do you believe that if you overcome and die in the sphere of the faith that Christ will not allow you to be harmed by the Second Death?” (2:11)*
- *“Christian, do you believe that if you overcome and die in the sphere of the faith that Christ will give you to eat of the hidden manna and will give you a white stone, and on the stone there will be written for you a new name, which no man knoweth except he who receives it?” (2:17)*
- *“Christian, do you believe that if you overcome and die in the sphere of the faith that Christ will give you power over the nations (2:26) as well as the Morning Star?” (2:28)*
- *“Christian, do you believe that if you overcome and die in the sphere of the faith that Christ will clothe you in white raiment and He will not blot out your name from the Book of Life? Christ will confess you before God the Father and before the angels)? Do you believe this?” (3:5)*
- *“Christian, do you believe that if you overcome and die in the sphere of the faith that Christ will make you a pillar in the holy Temple of God and the Lord shall write upon you the name of God and the name of the city of God which is the New Jerusalem? “ (3:12)*

- *“Christian, do you believe that if you overcome and die in the sphere of the faith that Christ will grant you permission to sit with Him in His throne?” (3:21)*

To answer "yes" to each of these questions is to find an ancient identity with the Church of all the ages and to anticipate the wonderful message that God has for His people.

The Essential Unity between the Old and New Testament Saints

To press the matter of the essential unity of the saints in the Revelation an appeal is made to the proposition that the saints have always enjoyed an essential unity. This is true of the Old Testament Church as well as the New. The essential unity between the Old Testament saints and the New Testament saints may be found by comparing Scripture with Scripture.

1. The New Testament saints have a heavenly hope. The Old Testament saints have a heavenly hope (Psa. 49:15; Heb. 11:13-16).

- *Psalms 49:15 But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me. Selah. Hebrews 11:13-16 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. 15 And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. 16 But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.*
- *John 14:1-3 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*

2. The Old Testament saints had an earthly hope. The New Testament saints have an earthly hope (Rev. 2:26; 20:6; 21:1).

- *Genesis 12:1-5 Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: 2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: 3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. 4 So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran. 5 And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.*
- *Psalms 37:11 But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.*

- *Matthew 5:5 Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.*
3. The New Testament saints are born again and endwelt by the Holy Spirit. The Old Testament saints were born again and endwelt by the Holy Spirit.
 - *Ezekiel 37:9 Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.*
 - *John 3:5-8 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. 8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*
 4. The New Testament saints constitute the Bride of Christ. Spiritual Israel was also called a Bride (Hosea 2:20; 3:1-3).
 - *Hosea 2:20 I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD.*
 - *Ephesians 5:27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*
 5. The New Testament saints are considered to be a wife (Rev. 19:7). Israel was called the wife of the Lord, however treacherously she may have been.
 - *Jeremiah 3:20 Surely as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel, saith the LORD.*
 - *Revelation 19:7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.*
 6. The New Testament saints know salvation through faith in Christ. The Old Testament saints also expressed faith in Christ as He was revealed to them (Heb. 9:15).
 - *Hebrews 9:15 And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.*
 7. Moses was part of the "Church" in the wilderness (Acts 7:37-38).

- *Acts 7:37-38 This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear. 38 This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:*
8. The New Testament Church is a continuation of the true spiritual seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:29). The Church is the Israel of God (Gal. 6:16) and is part of the commonwealth of Israel (Eph. 2:12).
- *Galatians 3:29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*
 - *Galatians 6:16 And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.*
 - *Ephesians 2:12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:*
9. Joel 2:28 is fulfilled in the New Testament expression of the Church (Acts 2:16-21).
10. The New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34 finds fulfillment in the New Testament expression of the Church (Heb. 8:7- 13).
- *Hebrews 8:7-13 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. 8 For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: 9 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. 10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: 11 And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. 12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. 13 In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.*

Transitional Thought

Having established the essential unity between the Old Testament saints and the New Testament saints and having argued that the message of Revelation is for all saints of all ages, attention can now be turned to another proposition which is this. What Jesus said would happen in AD 70 John saw would happen.

Predictions of Christ during the Mt. of Olives Discourse

1. The Temple of His day would be destroyed so that not one stone would be left on top of another (Matt. 24:2; Mark 13:2; Luke 21:6).
2. False prophets would attempt to deceive the Christian community (Matt. 24:4; Mark 13:5; Luke 21:8).
3. Individuals would dare to claim to be the Messiah (Matt. 24:5; Mark 13:6; Luke 21:8).
4. There would be actual deception of many (Matt. 24:5; Mark 13:6; Luke 21:8).
5. People would hear of wars (Matt. 24:6; Mark 13:7; Luke 21:9).
6. There would be rumors of wars (Matt. 24:6; Mark 13:7; Luke 21:9).
7. Civil unrest would come to the land (Matt. 24:7; Mark 13:8; Luke 21:11).
8. There would be famines (Matt. 24:7; Mark 13:8; Luke 21:11).
9. There would be pestilence (Matt. 24:7; Mark 13:8; Luke 21:11).
10. There would be earthquakes in many places (Matt. 24:7; Mark 13:8; Luke 21:11).
11. There would be fearful sights and great signs (Matt. 24:29; Mark 13:24,25; Luke 21:11).
12. The Christian community would be persecuted (Matt. 24:9) by false accusations before the Sanhedrin (Mk. 13:9; Luke 21:12) by beatings in the synagogues (Mark 9:9; Luke 21:12; by imprisonment (Luke 21:12); by being the object of hate (Matt. 24:9; Mark 13:13; Luke 21:17); by being put to death (Matt. 24:9; Mark 13:12; Luke 21:16).
13. Some Christians were to be brought before rulers and kings of the earth for the cause of Christ (Mark 13:9; Luke 21:12).
14. By being brought before the rulers of the earth the name of Christ would be exalted (Luke 21:13).
15. There would be those who would become offended at the sufferings they had to endure for the sake of Christ (Matt. 24:10).
16. There would be acts of betrayal (Mark 13:12; Luke 21:16).
17. The gospel was to be published among all nations (Matt. 24:14; Mark 13:10).
18. Special grace would be granted to speak in the name of Christ (Matt. 13:11; Luke 21:14,15).

19. Love would grow cold in human hearts (Matt. 24:12).
20. Those that endured to the end of this time period would be delivered out of the great tribulation that would fall upon the rest of the nation (Matt. 24:13; Luke 21:18).
21. The abomination of desolation could be seen as a sign that all these things were about to happen (Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14; Luke 21:20).
22. Those in Judea were to flee to the mountains (Matt. 24: 16; Mark 13:15-16).
23. The flight was to be in haste (Matt. 24:17-18; Mark 13:15-16).
24. Prayer was to be offered that the flight be not on the Sabbath or in the winter (Matt. 24:20).
25. Multitudes would die by the edge of the sword (Luke 21:24).
26. The deportation of many would occur (Luke 21:24).
27. The Gentiles were trodden down Jerusalem (Luke 21:24).
28. False prophets would arise with amazing wonder working abilities (Mark 13:22).
29. False prophets would teach of a secret coming of Christ (Matt. 24:26).
30. The Son of Man would come in judgment suddenly and visibly (Matt. 24:26).
31. The eagles [i.e. the armies of Rome] would be gathered (Matt. 24:28).
32. There would be wonders in the heavens (Matt. 24:29; Mark 13:24; Luke 21:25-26).
33. The sign of the Son of Man [who is] in heaven would appear (Matt. 24:30; Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27).
34. The Son of Man would come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory (Matt. 24:30; Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27).
35. Angels would come to gather the elect (Matt. 24:3; Mark 13:27).
36. The hearts of the saints could be encouraged (Matt. 24:32-33; Mark 13:29-30; Luke 13:28).
37. All that Jesus spoke would come to pass during the generation to which He addressed (Matt. 24:34; Mark 13:30; Luke 21:32).
38. Judgment would come with certainty (Matt. 24:34; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33).

Summary

When Jesus spoke in AD 30 He did not reveal how many years would come to pass before this great judgment on Jerusalem would be realized. We know from the vantagepoint of history that it was forty years which is a biblical generation (Matt. 24:36,42,50; Mark 13:32-37; Luke 21:34-36). "*Watch*" became the important word in the vocabulary of the early church. There was to be a soon coming of Christ in judgment upon the nation of Israel before the death of the last apostle. Those who did not watch, those who became careless in life and with their faith would not be assigned a portion with the saints in the kingdom (Matt. 24:45-51; Mark 13:33-37; Luke 21:34-36).

The Second Coming of Christ

*So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many;
and unto them that look for him shall he appear the
second time without sin unto salvation.*

~*~

Hebrews 9:28

1. The historic position of the Church has embraced
 - the visible bodily return of Christ
 - the general resurrection of all men and
 - the general judgment of all men
2. In addition to these basic unifying beliefs the Scriptures teach other truths about the Second Coming.
 - There is to be but one more coming of Christ and not in phases or stages for such concept renders the term Second Coming meaningless (Heb. 9:28).
 - No one will be able to know the chronology of the future (*chronos*, Acts 1:7; Matt. 24:36; 1 Thess. 5:1) or the seasons.
 - The kingdom of Christ is
 - ❖ a present reality (Matt. 4:17; 5:3; 16:19; Mark 9:1).
 - ❖ spiritual and invisible, not worldly and material (Luke 17:20; John 3:3; 18:36; 1 Thess. 2:12; Col. 1:13).
 - ❖ everlasting (Dan. 2:44; 2 Pet. 1:11).
 - ❖ not the possession of Israel alone. The kingdom has been given to the nations (Luke 12: 32; Rev. 11: 15).

- ❖ to come to an end *"when He shall have delivered up the kingdom of God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and authority and power. For He must reign, TILL He hath put all things under His feet...and when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him"* (1 Cor. 15:24-28).
 - ❖ The Kingdom of Christ will have a final form (2 Tim. 4:1; Matt. 26:29) but it will simply be a continuation of the same kingdom that now is.
3. The Second Advent of Christ will be without warning (Matt. 24:36-39,42) just as the great flood in the days of Noah came without warning.
 4. Christ will call all men from their graves when He comes (John 5:28,29; Acts 24:15).
 5. In that day the heavens and earth will pass away with fervent heat (2 Pet. 3:10).
 6. Since these are the last days (Heb. 1:2; John 6:39; 11:24; 12:48; Acts 2:17; 2 Tim. 3:1; 2 Pet. 3:3; 1 John 2:18) and the earth as we know it will pass away, there is no need to hold to another period of history in the world after these days and the return of Christ.
 7. The great apostasy that precedes the Second Advent is not wholly future since Paul stated that *"the mystery of iniquity"* which causes the apostasy was already at work in His day (2 Thess. 2:7; 1 John 2:18,22; 4:3).
 8. There will never be a period of *"good without evil"* or the separation of the righteous from the wicked prior to the end of this age as Jesus taught (Matt. 13:40,41; 13:49).
 9. The last enemy Christ shall destroy is death. Death defeated comes by the general resurrection when world history comes to an end.

The Royal Reign of Christ

Revelation

Chapter 1

The Fountain of all Truth: Revelation 1:1-4

Revelation begins with God who is the fountain of all truth. Man's responsibility is to reverently wait for truth. In the fullness of time Truth came and His name is Jesus. All revelation is understood and opened by Jesus Christ. Jesus said in John 7:16 *"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."* In John 12:49 the Lord declared, *"For I have not spoken of myself, but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak."*

The revelation that has its ultimate source in God and is opened through Jesus Christ comes to man in a variety of ways to include angels. The Bible says that angels gave the LAW to Moses. Acts 7:53 *"Who have received the LAW by the disposition of angels and have not kept it."* Galatians 3:19 *"Wherefore then serveth the Law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator."* As angels spoke to Moses so angels spoke to John on the isle of Patmos (Rev. 1:1) and gave to him revelation of those things which were to come *shortly* in his lifetime.

The Servant of the Revelation

John is called the servant of God. Several things can be noted about this descriptive title.

1. The word "*servant*" is "*doulos*" and means slave.

- Abraham was the servant of God (Gen. 26:24; Psa. 105:26; Dan. 9:11).
- Jacob was the servant of God (Isa. 44:1,2; 45:4; Ezek. 37:25).
- Caleb and Joshua were the servants of God (Num. 14:24; Josh. 24:29; Judg. 6:49; 2 Chron. 24:6; Neh. 1:7; Psa. 105:26; Dan. 9:11). David was the servant of God (Psa. 132:10; 44:10; 1 Kings 8:66; 11:36; 2 Kings 19:34; 20:6; 1 Chron. 17:4; Ezek. 34:24).
- Elijah was the servant of God (2 Kings 9:36; 10:10).
- Isaiah was the servant of God (Isa. 20:3).
- Job was the servant of God (2 Kings 21:10; Amos 3:7).
- The apostles were the voluntary servants of God (Phil. 1:1; Tit. 1:1; James 1:1; Jude 1; Rom. 1:1; 2 Cor. 4:5).
- All Christians are the servants of God (Eph. 6:6).

2. To be a servant can be a great honor. When Jimmy Carter was President of the United States he would visit in private homes. What an honor to serve a good ruler of the land.
3. The servants of God included many types of people.
 - Kings David and Solomon
 - Lawgivers Moses
 - Rich people Abraham and Job
 - Soldiers Caleb and Joshua
 - Prophets Elijah and Isaiah
 - Shepherds Amos

The Urgency of the *Revelation*

There is a sense of urgency conveyed in the opening words of this book. There are things, which *must* come to pass for history is not haphazard. History had a beginning and history will have an end. Whether time is measured in hundreds, thousands, or millions of years matters little compared to timeless eternity. Human history as we know it will end for God has planned it that way. There are some things that *must come quickly* for time is short. If the correct dating of this book is just prior to the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70 and if the events are to be understood in light of that cataclysmic event then indeed time was very short for the outpouring of God's wrath upon Israel for rejecting His Son.

The Destination

The destination of the *Revelation* is declared to be to the seven churches in Asia. Asia was a province of the Roman Empire. The term is restricted as it really refers to the western seacoast of Asia Minor on the shores of the Mediterranean with Phrygia, Mysia, Caria, and Lycia. Pergamum was the capital of this province. It was once the kingdom of Attalus the Third but he willed his empire to Rome at the time of his death (133 BC).



The Kingdom of Pergamum, situated in modern-day Turkey east of the Aegean Sea, played a significant role in the Ancient Mediterranean stage.

The Number Seven

John writes to the seven churches in Asia. The number seven is prominent in Revelation. it occurs fifty four times. Seven is considered to be the perfect number because it stands for completion. John is really writing to the complete or the whole church. While the primary interpretation of Revelation belongs to the saints of the first century, the spiritual application is for all God's people throughout the ages.

- Seven churches 1:1
- Seven candlesticks 1:13
- Seven stars 1:16
- Seven Letters 2:1-3:22
- Seven Spirits 4:5
- Seven seals 5:1
- Seven trumpets 8:2
- Seven thunders 10:3
- Seven heads 12:3; 13:1
- Seven angels 15:6
- Seven bowels or vials 15:7
- Seven mountains 17:9
- Seven blessings 1:3; 14:14; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 15

Note. The numbers four (4:6; 6:1-8; 9:14) and twelve (7:4-8; 21:12,14; 22:2) are also distinct.

Grace and Peace

Why John wrote specifically to the seven churches of Asia is uncertain. It may be that they were the churches under his immediate sphere of apostolic authority. Because these churches were close to his heart John desired that they know the grace and peace of God. Grace refers to the unmerited favor of God freely bestowed upon unworthy sinners. Those who are the recipients of God's grace enjoy peace with God for the spiritual battles of hostility have ceased. Grace and peace are available to the believers from Jesus Christ. He is very God of very God. Deity is ascribed to Him as the "*One who is, and which was, and which is to come.*" In these few words the essence of the doctrine of Christ is summarized. Jesus Christ is (note Ex. 3:14) alive declares John. Once He was dead, but now He is alive. One day this Living Lord is coming again.

The Seven Spirits

As grace and peace comes from the resurrected Lord, it is also said to come from the "*seven Spirits*" which are before the throne (cf. 3:1; 4:5; 5:6). What do the "*seven Spirits*" mean? One explanation is that the reference is to seven angels, which guard the throne of God. According to Jewish teaching seven angels guard the presence of God (1 Enoch 90:21). The seven spirits are called archangels (Tobit 12:15) and were known as

- Uriel
- Rafael
- Raguel
- Michael
- Gabriel
- Saiquael
- and Jeremiel.

These angels took care of the elements of the earth--fire, air, and water, and were the guardians of the Earth. A second explanation of the seven Spirits is that the words speak of the seven fold gifts of the Holy Spirit. Isaiah 11:2 is cited in support of this understanding. A third possibility is that the reference is to the gifts of the Holy Spirit being given to the churches so that no Church is left without the presence, power, and illumination of the Spirit of God. Whatever the ultimate interpretation, there is no doubt that for John, faith and the revelation of that faith, rested in God the Father (1:1), God the Son (1:2,4), and God the Holy Spirit (1:4). John believed in the trinity.

Seven Churches of the Revelation



- **EPHESUS** refers to a city in Lydia, W Asia Minor. It was located on an important trade route and was the capital of the province of Asia when Rome ruled the world. The city was devoted to the goddess Diana. Paul visited the city (Acts 18:19ff; 19:8ff) and then remained for two years (Acts 19:8,10) to establish a church.
- **SMYRNA** refers to an ancient city on the W coast of Asia Minor. The Ionian Greeks occupied it by the Aeolian Greeks and later. It was destroyed by Alyattes of Lydia (580 BC) but rebuilt by Alexander the Great. It became a leading commercial center and later, part of the Roman province of Asia. Smyrna housed one of the seven churches addressed in the Revelation (Rev. 1:11).
- **PERGAMUM**, was a very important city in ancient Mysia, W Asia Minor, 15 miles from the Aegean Sea. The "*seat of Satan*" that is mentioned may refer to the great altar of Zeus which overlooked the town. Pergamum was the base for the official cult of emperor-worship. The Temple of Asclepius was considered to be a source of healing power.
- **THYATIRA** refers to a city of Lydia, Asia Minor. It was on the road from Pergamum to Sardis. The residents of Thyatira were famous for their skills in dyeing (Acts 16:14). John wrote a letter to the Church of Thyatira (Rev. 1:11).
- **SARDIS** refers to a city W of Asia Minor at the foot of Mount Tmolus on the E bank of the Hermus River, 50 miles E of Smyrna. It was the capital of Croesus. Sardis was conquered (546 BC) by Cyrus of Persia and then later by Alexander, Antiochus, and the Romans who made it part of the province of Asia. It was one of the seven cities to which the letters of Revelation was addressed (Rev. 1:11).
- **PHILADELPHIA** refers to a city of Lydia, in W Asia Minor, about 28 miles SE of Sardis. John addressed the Church that existed in the city (Rev. 1:11).
- **LAODICEA** refers to a city in Asia Minor, near Colossae. It was named for Laodicea, wife of Antiochus II (261-246 BC). At Laodicea a Church of Jesus Christ was established (Col. 2:1; 4:16). The people were wealthy but spiritually poor. Laodicea provided a famous eye salve, but the people needed a spiritual eye salve (Rev. 3:18).

Are There Seven Church Ages?

There is a popular theory that teaches that the seven letters that John wrote to the seven churches in Asia somehow set forth a Divine plan of the Church Age. According to current authors Gary G. Cohen and Salem Kirban, the Church ages may be identified by the following scheme.

•	Ephesus	Apostolic Church	30 - AD 100
•	Smyrna	Persecuted Church	100 - AD 313
•	Pergamos	State Church	313 - AD 590
•	Thyatira	Papal Church	590 - AD 1517
•	Sardis	Reformed Church	1517 - AD 1790
•	Philadelphia	Missionary Church	1790 - AD 1900
•	Laodicea	Apostate Church	1900 - to present

To their credit the authors of *Revelation Visualized* do admit that, "*Both learned and unlearned Bible scholars and students debate whether this prophetic theory is or is not true*" (p. 68). To say the least, the concept of a Divine Plan of the Ages is a very arbitrary division of history and does set dates. The arbitrary division of Church history is reflected by the different schemes that other authors have set forth such as Clarence Larkin who wrote a modest work entitled *The Greatest Book on Dispensational Truth Ever Written*. According to Mr. Larkin the ages predicted by the various letters to the churches may be identified in the following manner.

•	Ephesus	The Backslidden Church	70-AD 170
•	Smyrna	The Backslidden Church to Constantine	170-AD 312
•	Pergamos	From Constantine to the crowning of Boniface III as the universal bishop	312-AD 606
•	Thyatira	From Boniface III to the Reformation	606-AD 1520
•	Sardis		1520-AD 1750
•	Philadelphia		1750-AD 1900
•	Laodicea		1900- present

If John really saw seven Church ages and if we really are now in the Laodicea Church Age of Apostasy then the end of the world is very near indeed! Perhaps the saddest repercussion of this whole prophetic scheme is that there is no hope for any great positive changes to be made in the church.

Three Great Truths About Christ: Revelation 1:5-7

In verse 5 three facts are noted concerning Jesus Christ. He is called the faithful witness, the first begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth.

- **Jesus Christ is the faithful witness to the nature of the Father.** In John 3:11 Christ said, *"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen."* Christ had seen the Father from all eternity. He could testify firsthand to the nature of the Father. It was Christ who revealed that the essence of God was love. *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son"* (John 3:16). Jesus revealed afresh that God is holy. He cannot look upon sin with favor though He knows about all the dark deeds of the flesh. The Cross-of Calvary reveals God's ultimate hatred of sin and the fact that His justice must be satisfied. Christ was also a faithful witness to the will of the Father. It was the Father's will that men should believe in His Son as their Savior. The pleasure the Father found in Christ is proven by the fact that Christ was resurrected out from among the dead.
- **Jesus Christ is the first begotten of the dead.** This does not mean that there were no other resurrections for the Bible records several resurrections. But Jesus occupied the first place (*prototokos*) of those who have been resurrected. In life or in death, in this world, or in the world to come, Jesus Christ has first place. Certainly the Lord is the first to rise from the dead and not die again.
- **Jesus is the Prince (Ruler) of the kings of the Earth** (Psa. 89:27 cf. Matt. 4:8,9). All power in heaven and in earth had been granted to Christ. The scope of His reign is universal. He rules with wisdom greater than that of Solomon. His splendor includes the majesties of heaven. In His administration of justice there is absolute righteousness. It is a glorious and marvelous Personage that is revealed to John.

Our text continues to reveal specific ministries that Christ has done for His own. First, He loved them. Second, He loosened His own from sin. Third, He has made the elect kings and priests unto God.

- **He loved us.** The tense of the verb *"loved"* in the original is not past but present. *"He loves us,"* said John. The love of Christ is not only historical; it is personal and present.
- **He has loosened His own from the power and pollution of sin.** Before salvation sin rules like a tyrant. The soul is compelled to obey. When Jesus comes the dominion of sin is broken as a reigning power. The Christian is taught to reckon himself to be dead unto sin but alive unto God (Rom. 6).
- **The Lord has made His own to be kings and priests unto God.** This is a spiritual and a real truth. It is the fulfillment of prophecy (Ex. 19:6; Isa. 61:6; Heb. 4:16; 10:19-22). The Christian reigns over the deeds of darkness. We interceded for others and worship God.



Finally, our passage reveals three things, which Christ deserves.

- **The Lord deserves all glory.** The word "*glory*" primarily signifies an opinion, an estimate and therefore, the honor resulting from a good opinion. Jesus made the blind to see and people cried, "*Glory!*" Jesus made the lame to walk and people cried, "*Glory!*" Jesus made the dead to live and people cried, "*Glory!*"
- **The Lord possesses all dominion** (Gk. *kratos*) or "*manifested power*." He alone deserves it. Who else could be trusted with such authority?
- **Christ deserves praise for all eternity.** The word "*Amen*" signifies, "*I believe it*" and testifies to the absolute confidence John placed in Christ.

A Timeless Theme

By using the word, "*Behold!*" in verse seven, the apostle's attention is drawn to the great theme of the book that is the approaching judgment of Christ. The Lord is said to come with clouds. Clouds have frequently been used in the Old Testament and the New Testament to indicate divine judgment (Psa. 18:7-15; 104:3; Isa. 19:1; Mark 13:26; 14:62). The text says that the coming judgment is designed for those who pierced Christ and that refers to the Jews of the first century. In every detail leading up to the death of Christ, the Jews were responsible (John 11:53; Matt. 26:4; 27:1; 27:3-9; John 18:39-40; 19:6-8). Peter declared that the Jews were guilty of the death of Jesus (Acts 2:22-23) and so did Steven (Acts 7:52) and Paul (1 Thess. 2:14-15). Jesus had warned that Israel would be judged for rejecting Him (Matt. 24:15,21,30, 34). What Jesus said would happen, John had a vision of it happening and history records that what Jesus said and what John saw did take place.

Come the Conquering Hero: Revelation 1:8-20

The main feature of the first chapter is the Person of Jesus Christ. The apostle has much to say about the Lord by way of what He has done and is doing on behalf of the saints. The apostle goes on to make certain comments about the personal appearance of Christ. Consider first the work of Christ on behalf of the saints. It is said of Christ that the Lord has a message for His people (Rev. 1:1). It is a message of hope. It is also a message of judgment. It is said that the Lord loves His own (1:5). The Lord has honored and exalted His people (1:6). The Lord will walk again with His people (1:7). Finally, the Lord is in sovereign control of His people (1:16). Consider second, the personal appearance of Christ. His hand and his hair is declared to be white like wool, as white as snow. The prophet Daniel spoke of such a personage called the Ancient of Days (Dan. 7:9). The reference is to the eternity of Christ.

- His eyes were as flames of fire (Dan. 10:6). This speaks of the ability of Christ to search the conscience.
- His feet were liken unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace. This tells us that the Lord walks in righteousness.

- His voice was the sound of many waters (cf. Ezek. 1:7; 43:2). There is beauty in the babble of many brooks. There is calm in the surge of the sea. There is much grace in the Person of Christ.
- His hand held seven stars, which demonstrates the sovereignty of Christ.
- His mouth opened and from it came a two edged sword (cf. Heb. 4:12). Justice is found in the mouth of the Lord.
- His whole countenance was as the sun shining in its strength. The Lord is clothed in the glory of holiness.

In this vision of Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King, in this unveiling of Christ manifesting the attributes of deity, in this vision of Christ as He comes, the conquering hero, John has given to the Church just what the saints need and that is respect for, honor of, and confidence in Jesus Christ. Whenever the Church has an exalted view of the Lord, she does well and lives well. Whenever the Church loses her exalted view of the Lord, she declines in spiritual strength, power, and zeal. The imagery set forth in this vision manifesting the work of Christ and His Divine attributes will serve as a basis for the message that Christ will speak to the individual churches. The salutation to each Church contains a reference to some characteristic of the Son of Man as described in chapter one.

CHURCH		CHARACTERISTIC	SCRIPTURE
• Ephesus	2:1-7	walking in the midst	1:13,16
• Smyrna	2:8-11	Alpha and Omega	1: 8,14
• Pergamos	2:12-17	sharp sword	1:16
• Thyatira	2:18-29	ryes like fire; feet of brass	
• Sardis	3:1-6	seven spirit are seven stars	1: 4,16
• Philadelphia	3:17-13	the key of David	1:16,18
• Laodicea	3:14-22	He is holy and true	1:11

There is no doubt about it. John is in love with Jesus. It is hard for John to say enough about the Lord but He tries to say something by declaring that Jesus is “*the Faithful Witness*” (Rev. 1:5), “*the First Begotten of the Dead*” (Rev. 1:5), and “*the Prince of the Kings of the Earth*”. Jesus is therefore worthy of glory and dominion forever and ever (Rev. 1:6). Amen.

The Royal Reign of Christ

Revelation

Chapter 2

SEVEN MESSAGES TO SEVEN CHURCHES

Church & Scripture	Commendation	Criticism	Instruction	Promise
Ephesus (Revelation 2:1-7)	Rejects evil, perseveres, has patience	Love for Christ no longer fervent	Do the works you did at first	The tree of life
Smyrna (Revelation 2:8-11)	Gracefully bears suffering	None	Be faithful until death	The crown of life
Pergamum (Revelation 2:12-17)	Keeps the faith of Christ	Tolerates immorality, idolatry, and heresies	Repent	Hidden manna and a stone with a new name
Thyatira (Revelation 2:18-29)	Love, service, faith, patience is greater than at first	Tolerates cult of idolatry and immorality	Judgment coming; keep the faith	Rule over nations and receive morning star
Sardis (Revelation 3:1-6)	Some have kept the faith	A dead church	Repent; strengthen what remains	Faithful honored and clothed in white
Philadelphia (Revelation 3:7-13)	Preserved in the faith	None	Keep the faith	A place in God's presence, a new name, and the New Jerusalem
Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-22)	None	Indifferent	Be zealous and repent	Share Christ's throne

A Letter of Love from the Lord to the Church of Ephesus: Revelation 2:1-7

The history of the Church of Ephesus begins in earnest in Acts 19.



*The theater at Ephesus, in modern Turkey,
as seen from the Arcadian Way.*

It was at Ephesus that Paul discovered twelve of the disciples of John after asking if they had received the Holy Spirit. To receive the Holy Spirit means:

- to know His convicting work
- to experience His converting work
- to enjoy the comfort He brings
- to welcome His indwelling presence.

While the disciples of John knew that the Holy Spirit had been promised, they did not know He had come on a day called Pentecost. Here was a strange and sad situation. There were disciples who had been baptized and yet knew nothing about the Holy Spirit. This is not to diminish the importance of the baptism of John for that baptism called upon people:

- to be sorry for their sins
- to confess their sins
- to turn from their sins.

But the baptism of John did not go far enough. Christian baptism goes farther for it declares that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. After baptizing those who had made a profession of faith (Acts 19:4b-5), Paul went on to preach in the synagogue for three months. Observe:

- **Where he preached.** Paul preached to the lost sheep of the House of Israel.
- **What he preached.** Paul preached the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

- **How he preached.** The apostle used dialogues, logic, persuasion, and boldness to make his points.

And Paul did not fail (Acts 19:10) though there was some initial resistance (Acts 19:9). Still, wonderful things happened at Ephesus.

- Miracles were performed. Diseases were cured and evil spirits departed (Acts 19:12).
- Jewish exorcists found themselves without the power of Jesus to cure demonic possession (Acts 19:13-16).
- The fear of God was instilled in the hearts of many (Acts 19:17).

The Bible says that the fear of God is the beginning of knowledge. What we find is that fear of God is a behavioral and emotional response (Deut. 4:10) that must be taught to each generation (Deut. 14:23; 17:19; 31:13 cf. Psalms 34:11; 56:4). The fear of God will be enhanced by

- a conscious gathering before the Lord
- a visual manifestation of divine power
- a clear hearing of the Law (Deut. 4:9-10)
- an effort to keep the Law
- a returning of part of one's wealth to the Lord (Deut. 14:23)
- reading the Scriptures (Deut. 17:19)
- Remembering how God has dealt harshly with His enemies (Josh. 23-24).

In addition to the fear of God, sanctification followed the preaching of the gospel in Ephesus. Lives were changed and the change was demonstrated (Acts 19:18-19). Finally, the worship of false gods was challenged (Acts 19:23-39). Despite all the success, Paul found it necessary to separate the disciples at Ephesus from the Jewish synagogue (Acts 19:9). The separation

- protected the gospel seed allowing it to grow;
- permitted Paul to speak daily
- fostered a spirit of unity
- included the Gentiles from harm.

Time passed. Paul finally left Ephesus and others took his place as spiritual instructors. The apostle John labored in Ephesus, as did Timothy. Now the Lord wants a word with His church. The inscription of the letter begins with one of the titles given to Christ in His appearance (Rev. 1:12-16) and teaches that the ministers (messenger or angel) of Christ are under His Sovereign control. By addressing the leadership of the congregation the Lord shows great respect for the authority He has ordained. The pastor in turn speaks to the people on behalf of God in this instance. Following the salutation, the Lord, who walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks has a word of commendation. The Church of Ephesus is commended

- for their diligence in duty (Rev. 2:2)
- for their patience in suffering (Rev. 2:2)
- for their zeal against evil (Rev. 2:2) based upon knowledge and not emotion.

And yet, for all the good things the Lord has to say, there are still areas of concern that He will not allow going unchallenged (Rev. 2:4). The saints at Ephesus have lost their first love. The Church had not left and forsaken Christ entirely but the fervent degree of the love was lost. How does this happen? It happens by simple neglect of holy habits that are vital to the soul such as prayer, Bible reading, and worship. It happens by having un-confessed sin in the heart. It happens by allowing the mind to have harsh thoughts about others or about God. The divine way of recovering lost love is found in Revelation 2:5:

- remember
- repent
- perform the first works.

If God's people do not respond to the words of warning there is a measure of Divine discipline to endure (Rev. 2:5b). God will "*un-church*" His people

- by taking away His minister
- by taking away the gospel
- by taking away the unity of the saints.

By way of conclusion to the message to the Church of Ephesus, the Lord declares that He hates the deeds of the Nicolaitans and commends the believers at the Church for hating them too. The word "*hate*" is a strong emotional word and is one not usually associated with the Christian code of conduct. However, there is a right feeling of aversion from what is evil. Some hatred is justified. The question is, "*What deeds did the Nicolaitans perform that were so offensive to God.*" "Who were the Nicolaitans?" The Bible records a man named Nicolas in Acts 6:5. If he is indeed the founder of the Nicolaitans then it is a sad story indeed for Nicolas, a native of Antioch, a convert to Christianity was one of the first seven deacons. Here is a word of warning. It is not how well we start out as Christians but how well we end up. While there is no positive proof that the Nicolas of Acts 6:5 is the founder of the Nicolaitans there is room to pause and consider the possibility and then to take warning.

The teaching of the Nicolaitans consisted in four main beliefs. First, it was lawful to eat things offered to idols. Second, worship of idols should be encouraged. Third, God was not the creator of the world. Fourth, immorality was permissible for where sin abounds, grace does much more abound. Besides, the body is nothing while the spirit is everything. It was right that the Church at Ephesus resist the doctrine and deeds of the Nicolaitans. God has a promise. "*To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God.*" To overcome does not mean that the Church at Ephesus out argues or even stopped the deeds of the Nicolaitans. It does mean that they overcame the temptation to join in the false but popular beliefs and practices. For them and for all who resist evil there is the Tree of Life. The mind goes back to the Garden of Eden. In Genesis 3:24 the Bible tells how God set a cherubim to guard the way of the Tree Of Life. Now, men are invited to eat freely of it.

A Letter of Love from the Lord to the Church of Smyrna: Revelation 2:8-11

Located forty miles north of Ephesus was Smyrna. Placed on the Aegean Sea, Smyrna had a rich and extensive history stretching all the way back to the successors of Alexander the Great who founded the city. Smyrna suffered much from destructive earthquakes. And the Church of Smyrna suffered much from Jewish opposition. In biblical terminology there were those who said they were Jews but were really occupants of the synagogue of Satan. Such language is difficult to understand unless we realize that the Bible teaches there are three types of Jews.

First, there is the racial Jew who has the genes of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the bloodline. Second, there is the religious Jew. This could be anyone who was born of Jewish racial stock and refers to a Gentile proselyte who embraced the way of life prescribed by the Law of Moses. Third, there is the regenerate Jew or the person who had the faith of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob manifested in a love relationship with the Lord. A true Jew in biblical terms is not the racial Jew or the religious Jew but the regenerate Jew. One of the great challenges that faces a large segment of the professing Church is to see that Gentiles are in biblical language part of the spiritual seed of Abraham by faith in Christ (Gal. 3:7-9; 3:28-29). The Church fathers understood this biblical, mystical, spiritual reality. Justin Martyr said, *"As, therefore, Christ is the Israel and the Jacob, even so we, who have been quarried out from the bowels of Christ, are the true Israelite race."* Irenaeus said, *"Now I have shown a short time ago that the Church is the seed of Abraham."* Hippolytus said, *"For it is not of the Jews that he spake the world of old, nor of the city of Zion, but of the church. For all the prophets have declared Zion to be the bride brought from the nations."*

The struggle between Judaism and Christianity is real. If it had been possible Judaism would have destroyed all Christians by physical acts of persecution to include starvation, isolation, loss of income, poverty, and execution. During the days of John, Smyrna's small Christian assembly was the object of much insult. Later Polycarp, who was from Smyrna, would suffer martyrdom (AD 169). Despite the poverty, despite imprisonment, despite the hatred of the world, it was the testimony of heaven that the Church was still rich. It was rich in spiritual blessings. It was rich in faith. It was rich in love. It was rich in hope. To honor the saints the Lord promised a crown of eternal life. The way that the crown of life was won was by being faithful unto death. That is still the way to win the crown of life. Jesus warned about those disciples who turned back from following Him. There is no room in the Kingdom Of God for soldiers who desert their posts, for sailors who abandon their ships, for farmers who do not toil, for fishermen who do not fish, for builders who lay aside the tools of their trade. *"Be ye faithful,"* is still the royal command. *"Even unto death."*

Doctrine of Crowns

1. The Bible speaks of several crowns that will be given as rewards.

- Crown of Life James 1:12
- Crown of Boasting 1 Thess. 2:19
- Crown of Glory 1 Pet. 5:4
- Crown of Righteousness 2 Tim. 4:8

2. There are two words for crown in the bible. One is *diadema* and refers to a royal crown. Another word is *stephano* and has to do with joy and victory.

- There is the joy of victory in the contest of life.
- There is the joy of recognition for faithful labor.
- There is the joy of fellowship at a banquet.

Doctrine of Balaam

1. Balaam was an ungodly prophet who lived at Pethor, a city of Mesopotamia (Deut. 23:4).
2. Although he was identified with the Midianites (Num. 31:8) Balaam possessed some knowledge of the true God. Balaam gave honor to the Lord for his prophetic gifts but in the end he was absorbed with himself.
3. In the year BC 1401, the Israelites encamped in the Plain of Moab. Balak, the king of Moab, united with the Midianites to drive the Israelites away. He wanted Balaam to curse the Israelites for money (Num. 22:5).
4. Despite his initial apprehensions over the lawfulness of cursing the Israelites, Balaam decided to speak whatever the Lord gave him. Balak agreed.
5. Seven altars were prepared, upon each of which Balak and Balaam offered a bullock and a ram. Three times Balaam started to speak against Israel and three times his cursing were turned to words of blessing and magnificent prophecies (Num. 24:17).
6. Realizing that he could not curse the Israelites, Balaam suggested that the Israelites be led into acts of sexual immorality (Num. 31:16). The results are recorded in Num. 25).
7. Balaam's life came to an end when Balaam sided with the Midianites in a pitched battle against the Israelites (Num. 31:8).
8. The Word of God looks upon Balaam as an evil person full of evil deeds. Jude 1:11 warns about the error of Balaam, which believed that God, must in righteousness curse the nation of Israel because of the evil in it. Natural morality gives way to a higher morality based upon the work of Christ at Calvary whereby sinners can be justified in the sight of the Lord.
9. The way of Balaam (2 Pet. 2:15) is the great sin of simony or commercializing the gifts of God.
10. The doctrine of Balaam (Rev. 2:14) is to abandon godly separation in favor of worldly conformity. Balaam taught Balak to corrupt people he could not curse (Num. 31:15,16; 22:5; 23:8) by encouraging them to marry Moabite women and so commit spiritual fornication (James 4:4).

11. The tragedy of Balaam is reflected in that he was a man who could have been used in a positive way in the service of the Lord. His soul was sensitive to spiritual matters and he had contact with God in a most unusual way until the day greed was found in his heart.

A Letter of Love from the Lord to the Church of Pergamus: Revelation 2:12-16

Having written to the Church of Ephesus and to the Church in Smyrna, the Lord turns His attention to the Church in Pergamos.



A general view of the lower city of Pergamum, Turkey

A number of statements can be made about Pergamos.

1. Pergamos had an impressive history of being a capital city for almost four hundred years. In 282 BC it became the capitol of the Seleucid kingdom.
2. Geographically, Pergamos was impressive being built on a tall conical hill.
3. It was a center of culture reflected in its impressive library that contained 200,000 parchment scrolls.
4. Pergamos was a religious center.
 - The altar to Zeus was located here. The altar stood forty feet high and was located on a projecting ledge of rock. It looked like a great throne on the hillside. A frieze was carved showing the battle of the giants.
 - There was the Pergamene god, Asclepios, also called Asclepios the Savior. This god was known for his healing powers. The emblem of Asclepios was the serpent.

- Pergamos was the administrative center for Caesar worship. It was here that Christians had to decide whether or not to take an oath to Caesar or die.

In light of this pagan influence it is easy to understand how the Church might allow the doctrine of Balaam to be taught. Balaam himself was an Old Testament personage who lives in Pethor. He was hired by King Balak of Moab to pronounce a curse on the Israelites who were on their journey from Egypt to the land of promise. Balaam was initially unsuccessful in his attempts to curse Israel for the angel of the Lord intervened. His donkey for his madness rebuked the prophet. After Balaam found he could not curse Israel, the false prophet conceived o the plan to drain the people of God of their spiritual vitality through acts of physical immorality. In this he was successful. Balaam was finally killed along with the leaders of the Midianites and the Moabites when the Israelites defeated these tribes in battle (Num. 22,23,24,31 Deut. 23:4,5; Josh. 13:22; 24:9-10; Neh. 13:2; Micah 6:5; 2 Pet. 2:15; Jude 11; Rev. 2:14). Despite his death, the doctrine of Balaam survived the centuries. The doctrine of Balaam encouraged immorality and idolatry. Fortunately, not every one in Pergamos followed the doctrine of Balaam and the Nicolaitans. As there were great sinners so there were faithful saints such as Antipas. Antipas was a faithful witness. Tradition says that he was thrown into the hollow of a brass bull that had been heated. The saddest part of the historical record is that persecution of the Church was largely Jews hurting Jews. Their non-Christian Jewish brothers were hurting Jewish Christians. The persecution came because of false charges.

- The Christians were accused of being cannibals.
- The Christians were accused of immorality in that orgies were said to be held at the Agape Feasts.
- The Christians were accused of tampering with family relationship.
- They were accused of atheism.
- They were accused of being unpatriotic.
- They were accused of being incendiaries as they foretold a day when the world would end by fire.

Despite the accusation, despite the persecution, some like Antipas were faithful. Antipas represents the best in the Church at Pergamos.

The Hidden Manna and the White Stone: Revelation 2:17

Despite having some that were faithful, the Church of Pergamos was called upon to repent. False doctrine must be forsaken or the saints would find the Savior their sworn enemy fighting against them with the sword of His mouth (Rev. 2:16) which is symbolic for the word of truth. Hebrews 4:12 speaks of the Word of God *"which is sharper than any two edged sword."* Paul speaks of the Sword of the Spirit *"which is the Word of God"* (Eph. 6:17). In 2 Thessalonians 2:8 the promise is given that the Wicked One shall be slain with the spirit of the Lord's mouth. Putting all of this together we find that in the word of Christ there is

- conviction of sin
- invitation to return to God
- assurance of salvation
- utter destruction if there is no repentance.

God is not willing that any of His own should perish. Gracious provision is offered to the church. The Lord promised to give the Church hidden manna to eat. In order to appreciate what the Lord is saying in this passage, the place of manna in Jewish life must be understood. Turning to Exodus 16:11-15 we read how God gave manna to the children of Israel when they had no food to eat in the desert. When the people were established in the land and could grow their own crops they still remembered the faithfulness of God. A pot of manna was put into the oak and kept in the Holy of Holies (Ex. 16:33,34; Heb. 9:4). While the years passed the people always remembered the time that God provided for them. In 596 BC, Solomon's Temple was destroyed and the holy objects were taken away. Still, the memory lived on. A legend developed that the prophet Jeremiah had hidden away a pot of manna in a cleft on Mount Sinai. It was said that when the Messiah came, He would return the pot of manna to the people. To be able to eat of the hidden manna was to enjoy the blessings of the reign of the Messiah.

A second promise the Lord offered to the Church of Pergamos was a white stone. In the stone a new name would be written which no one would know except the person who received it. In the ancient world there were a number of ways that such a white stone would be used. Colored stones were used in working out mathematical calculations. Juries in rendering verdicts used White and black stones. A little tablet called a "*tesserae*" was made of wood or metal or stone. On the tablet was writing which conferred to someone like a victorious athlete a special privilege. One of the most common of the ancient customs was to carry an amulet or charm much like people carry a rabbits foot today. On the precious metal or stone was a sacred name. To know the name of a god was to have power. The Lord may have been telling the Church at Pergamos that in as far as they reject false doctrine, they will have power with Him. The Church could know the name of the Savior, the Lord God Omnipotent.

This message to the Church of Pergamos is still valid today. The Church of Jesus Christ visible or invisible, is either the enemy of Christ or is part of His triumphant reign. Perhaps no clearer picture emerges of the Lord using the Sword of the Word of His mouth against the Church than the Reformation Period. By the Word of Truth men like John Wycliffe, John Huss, Martin Luther, and John Calvin spoke and fought the errors of the worship of relics, indulgences, the obscurity of Scriptures, and simony. From this section of Scripture comes several practical lessons.

- The few can destroy the many (2:15).
- The Lord will not allow His Church to remain corrupt (2:16).
- The saints have spiritual ears as well as physical ears (2:17).
- The ministry of the Holy Spirit is to the Church of Jesus Christ. The Spirit must lead us.

Important Prophets of the Bible

• Noah		2 Peter 2:5
• Abraham		Genesis 20:7
• Isaac		Psalms 105:9,14,15
• Jacob		Genesis 49
• Moses		Deuteronomy 34:10-12
• Joshua		Deuteronomy 34:9
• An unnamed prophet		Judges 6:7-10
• Samuel		1 Samuel 19:20
• David		2 Samuel 23:2-3
• Gad		1 Samuel 22:5
• Nathan		2 Samuel 12:1-15
• Zadok		2 Samuel 15:27
• Heman		1 Chronicles 25:5
• Ahijah		2 Chronicles 12:15
• Iddo		1 Chronicles 25:5
• A man of God		1 Kings 13:1-9
• An old prophet in Bethel		1 Kings 13:21-23
• Shemaiah		2 Chronicles 11:2-4
• Rehoboam		2 Chronicles 13:12
• Azariah		2 Chronicles 15:1-7
• Hanani		2 Chronicles 16:7-10
• Jehu		1 Kings 16:1-4
• Jahaziel		2 Chronicles 20:14-17
• Eliezer		2 Chronicles 20:37
• Elijah		1 Kings 17-19
• Elisha		2 Kings 2:9
• A man of God		2 Chronicles 25:7-10
• An unnamed prophet		2 Chronicles 25:15
• Oded		2 Chronicles 28:9-15
• Obadiah	853-842 BC	2 Kings 8:20-22
• Joel	835-796 BC	Joel 3:4
• Hosea	760-715 BC	
• Amos	767-753 BC	
• Jonah	c.760 BC	
• Isaiah	686 BC	
• Micah	739 BC	Micah 1:1
• Nahum	c. 612 BC	Nahum 3:8-10
• Zephaniah	640-609 BC	Zephaniah 1:1
• Habakkuk	c. 612 BC	
• Jeremiah	627-586 BC	Jeremiah 1:2-3
• Daniel	c. 605 BC	
• Ezekiel	592-571 BC	
• Haggai	520 BC	Haggai 1:1,15;2:1,20
• Zechariah	520 BC	Zechariah 1:1
• Malachi	432 BC	Malachi 1:1

A Letter of Love from the Lord to the Church in Thyatira: Revelation 2:18-29

Moving from the Church of Pergamos, the Spirit of God speaks to the Church in Thyatira. The message to Thyatira is the largest of the seven letters. This may be because Thyatira was the most important of the seven cities. The letter begins with a description of the Son of God. "...who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass." The description is taken from Daniel 10:6. The flaming eyes stand for a blazing anger against sin as well as the awful penetration of a gaze which can strip away outward disguises and look deep within the heart. There is a need for such eyes because man is a master of deceit. Men know how to mask the face and feelings so that true intentions are covered. Men know how to say the right thing to lead someone away from some sensitive spot. Jesus wants the Church to know that no one can deceive Him. Nor shall anyone escape certain judgment for "*His feet are like fine brass.*"

The Church at Thyatira needed to hear this because there was woman in the assembly who was destroying the spiritual vitality of the congregation. Her name is unknown but she had the characteristics of Jezebel. To the Jewish mind there was no greater insult for a woman than to be associated with Jezebel. The original Jezebel was the daughter of Ethbaal, king of Sidon. Jezebel married Ahab, king of Israel (1 Kings 16:31). When Jezebel came from Sidon to Israel, she brought with her pagan gods. With persuasive powers she induced Ahab and the Jews to worship Baal. Her initial ambition was not to replace the worship of Jehovah, but merely to add to worship her god, Baal. When the prophets of the Lord resisted the mixture of worship, Jezebel had them murdered (1 Kings 18:13,19). With blood still dripping from her fingertips, Jezebel provided the scheme to murder Naboth so that her pouting husband Ahab might enter into the possession of the vineyard he coveted (1 Kings 21). Coming under the judgment of God, Jezebel died in such a way that the dogs came and licked her blood. She left behind a name associated with harlotries and sorceries.

Like the original Jezebel of old, the woman called Jezebel in the Church of Thyatira was guilty of great sin. In particular she was teaching the people to eat meat offered to idols and to commit fornication. It is probable that the woman did not start out teaching such things contrary to sound doctrine. Counterfeit prophets and prophetess never do. First, they gain a following by having great intellectual abilities and personal magnetism. Then, slowly but surely they offer new insights into the Scriptures, which makes practical sense. The Jezebel of Thyatira makes practical sense because the eating of meat offered to idols was a serious problem for the Christian community. Paul addressed this issue in 1 Corinthians 8-10.

For many Christians, they simply could not in good conscience agree to fellowship with those who offered meat to idols (Acts 15:29). As a result, the Christians became cut off from social fellowship with non-Christians. There was another problem. By refusing to eat meat offered to idols a Christian could not join any trade guild for all the guilds (unions) had a common meal as a central part of their practice. The meal was often held in a heathen temple. It was a very serious matter. To be cut off from a major part of social life, to be forced to give up one's economic support for a principle was to pay dearly. Then came Jezebel. Apparently Jezebel began to teach the Church that there was no need to cut them off from society or to abstain from guilds. The Church should make money and should not die for a principle. Such a philosophy is easy to embrace and become very tempting. The letter to Thyatira reminds the people of God that principles are important. Commercial success is not more important than the claims of Christ. Not only did Jezebel teach the Church members to compromise their convictions, she also taught them to commit fornication. The reference to fornication may refer to spiritual

unfaithfulness. In the bible, fidelity to God is expressed in the sexual terms of fornication and adultery (Ex. 34:15,16; Deut. 31:16; Matt. 12:39; 16:4).

The passage could also refer to the fact that this woman was encouraging the people to know "*the depths of Satan*" (2:24). Evil does have its own attraction and there are many who are willing to explore the depth of the devil. The sexual instinct, uncontrolled by the Spirit of God will lead a person from one level of perversion to another until the depth of depravity are reached and the soul is saturated with sin. The Lord calls the Christian community to a renewed mind or face certain judgment (2:23). For all who repent, for all who overcome there is a twofold promise. First, the Church shall have power over the nations. There shall be a messianic reign and missionary success. Second, the Church shall enjoy the Morning Star. This may refer to the first resurrection, the conquest of Lucifer, the glory of being righteous (Dan. 12:3), or to Christ Himself (Rev. 22:16). Observe in conclusion from this passage the following.

- It is not the gender of Jezebel that is attacked but the teachings of this woman that led people away from the truth.
- Because of Jezebel, the Church had split into factions. Would the Church follow John or Jezebel?
- Judgment must begin in the House of God (Rev. 2:25).
- The influence of evil reaches far (Rev. 2:23b).

The Royal Reign of Christ

Revelation

Chapter 3

A Letter of Love from the Lord to the Church in Sardis: Revelation 3:1-6

Following the letter to the angel of the Church in Thyatira, John is instructed to write to the Church in Sardis.



The remains of the Temple of Artemis at Sardis, Turkey

For the first time there will be no word of praise. The condition of the Church was very serious. He that hath the seven Spirits of God wanted the people to know how desperate their condition was. The reference to the seven spirits of God represent the Holy Spirit in the fullness of His gifts (Isa. 11:2) ministering to the seven churches identified as the seven stars. The seven churches are under the sovereign control of the Lord Jesus Christ. To His Church at Sardis the Lord begins to speak and says, *"I know thy works...."* It is impossible for Christ not to know the works of His people for He is very God. He is also extremely interested in the activities of each congregation. And as He observes the Lord of glory evaluates what He observes. It was the considered opinion of Christ that the Church of Sardis was living a lie. They had a public reputation for being alive and yet before God were dead. Here is a great paradox. A Church can have many programs that help many people and still be dead in the sight of God. The programs are not wrong but neither do they guarantee life. The people of God must make sure that spiritual life is present by having no sins un-confessed and no sins un-mortified. Sin brings spiritual death.

- Sin is the death of the will. It is possible to listen to the voice of temptation so often that habits are developed which can no longer be broken.
- Sin is the death of feelings. The process of becoming enslaved to sin does not happen overnight. The conscience must be suppressed. Sin "*petrifies the feelings.*"
- Sin is the death of all that is lovely. Sin can take the most innocent and beautiful young girl and turn her in a centerfold model. Sin can take the most promising young man and turn him into a selfish, egotistical person intoxicated with ambition. Sin can take the Church of Jesus Christ and turn it into a sanctuary of Satan.

The Church must be careful to put away sin and then to guard its spiritual life. There are four things that can be done.

- First, the Church is to "*watch.*" Failure to watch can lead to spiritual harm and it can lead to physical harm. The year was 546 BC Sardis was a rich and powerful city, the capital of the ancient kingdom of Lydia. Because of its strategic location high upon a mountain, the people of Sardis thought they could not be harmed. The wealthy King Croesus foolishly embarked upon a war with Cyrus of Persia. Thinking he could defeat Cyrus, King Croesus consulted the oracle at Delphi and was told: "*If you cross the river (Hayls) you will destroy a great empire.*" Croesus crossed the river and indeed destroyed a great empire. His own! Still, the king was not worried. He could still find safety in his city. But again he was mistaken for Cyrus had offered a special reward to anyone who could find an entrance into the city. As it happened, a certain Mardian soldier called Hyeroeades had seen a Sardian soldier drop by accident his helmet over the battlements, and then watched as the soldier made his way down the precipice to retrieve it. It was obvious that if the Sardian soldier could retrieve his helmet then there was a crack in the rock that an agile man could climb up to and over the battlement. That night Hyeroeades led a small band of Persian troops up by the fault in the rock. The battlements were not being watched and Sardis fell. In the year 214 BC history repeated itself. This time the invader was Antiochus III. But once again the people of Sardis had failed to watch properly for the attack of the enemy. For the Christian community watchfulness is to be a constant attitude. "*It is time,*" wrote Paul, "*to awake out of sleep*" (Rom. 13:11). In particular the Christian is to:

- ❖ Watch against the wiles of the devil 1 Pet. 5:8
- ❖ Watch against temptation Matt. 26:41
- ❖ Watch for the coming of the Lord Matt. 24:42,43; Mark 13:37
- ❖ Watch against false teaching Acts 20:29-31

While the Church is watching, she should remember that Christ is watching her.

- The second command of Christ is to, "*strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die.*" In any Church there are certain things which are ready to die because they are not supported and strengthened by the presence and energy of the saints. It takes time and energy and resources for the Church of Christ to know LIFE. There is work to do. We must strengthen the things that remain and who knows. Perhaps God will restore some of the former things.
- The third command for the Church of Sardis is to remember. The Church is to remember the Church is to remember how they first heard the gospel and how it first received the glorious gospel of truth.
- Then fourth, the Church was called upon to repent, to feel sorry for sin, and to turn from sin. Repentance is the sovereign grace gift of God. If a people find himself or herself without this gift, they can seek God and ask for it. The alternative to non-repentance, to non-remembrance, to non-strengthening the work, to non-watching is certain judgment in time as well as in eternity (3:3c). Fortunately, there were a few in Sardis, which had not sinned before God in a grievous manner. They had not defiled their garments by acts of immorality. To them it was given to walk with Christ in white. To walk in white might refer to a time of festivity (Eccl. 9:8), a time of victory, or a period of purity (Matt. 5:8). It could refer to the resurrection or even Christian baptism. Those who over come were also promised not be blotted out of the *Book of Life*. As a concept, the *Book of Life* is mentioned several times in Scripture.
 - ❖ Moses asked not to be allowed to stay in the Book of Life if his people could be saved (Ex. 32:32,33).
 - ❖ The Psalmist hoped that the wicked would be blotted out (Psa. 69:28) of the Book of The Living.
 - ❖ Daniel 12:1 speaks of those who will be delivered in the Day of Judgment.
 - ❖ Paul says that his fellow laborers are written in the Book of Life (Phil. 4:3).
 - ❖ People who are not written in the Book of Life are cast into the Lake Of Fire (Rev. 20:15).
 - ❖ Only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life shall enter into blessedness.

A Letter of Love from the Lord to the Church in Philadelphia : Revelation 3:7-13

The next Church that John addresses is the Church that is found in Philadelphia.



*A Greco-Roman theater in Amman, Jordan,
the site of the ancient Decapolis city of Philadelphia*

Philadelphia was named during the reign of Attalus the Second that ruled in Pergamum from 159-138 BC. Such was the love of Attalus for his brother Eumenes that he called it Philadephos or Philadelphia. When an earthquake destroyed the city, the emperor Tiberius had the city rebuilt. The people were grateful and took on a new name for a while, Neocaesarea, the New City of Caesar. As John writes to the angel [or leader] of the Church in Philadelphia, he ascribes three great titles to the resurrected Christ.

- **Jesus is declared to be "*He that is holy.*"** The word holy (*hagios*) means "*to be different,*" "*to be separate from.*" God Himself is holy. In Isaiah 6:3 the song of the angels was that of saying "*Holy! Holy! Holy is the Lord of Hosts!*" Then there is Isaiah 40:25. "*To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One.*" All through the Old Testament God is the Holy One and now that title is given to Jesus. He is very God of very God and we proclaim it to all the people of the ages.
- **Jesus is declared to be, "*He that is true.*"** The word used here in the original (*alethinos*) means "*to be real as opposed to that, which is unreal.*" John was the great champion of the truth that Jesus was come in the flesh. He was real and what He spoke was about real spiritual truth. The Lord declared of Himself, I am the way, the truth, and the life. To listen to Jesus, to embrace the teachings of Christ is to embrace the truth.
- **Jesus is declared to be, "*He that hath the key of David.*"** In the Bible a key is a symbol of authority. Jesus is represented as having ultimate and final authority. The Lord claimed all authority for Himself in Matthew 28:19. By referring to the key of David, John was drawing upon an Old Testament incident. There was a king named Hezekiah who ruled over Judah from c. 715-687 BC. Hezekiah had a faithful servant called Eliakim who was in charge of his entire house. Eliakim alone would admit those he wanted into the presence of the king. The prophet Isaiah heard God say of Eliakim, "*I will place on his shoulder*

the key of the house of David, he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.” (Isa. 22:22).

For John, Jesus was Eliakim. Jesus alone has the authority to allow entrance into the new Jerusalem, the city of David. In 3:8 the Lord once again asserts His intimate knowledge of the people in the Church in Philadelphia. *"I know thy works,"* He says. The implication is that the Church was performing good works. The Bible makes a distinction between the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19,22) and the good work of the sweet and sovereign Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). The life long objective of the Christian community is to manifest the work of the Spirit or *"good works."* One result of the good works of the Church at Philadelphia was that of the opportunity to do more good for the advancement of the kingdom. *"Behold, I have set before thee an open door."* Observe:

- the sense of urgency to recognize the magnitude of the grace of God. *"Behold!"*
- the sovereign decision of Christ to give the ministry that He has to whom He chooses.
- the absolute hopelessness of man to fight against what God is doing to advance His kingdom.

Observe next why was the Lord so gracious to this church. Three reasons are given.

- Because the believers were so weak in and of themselves. The Lord must build His church.
- Because the believers had a sincere desire to obey Christ and to take Him at His word.
- Because the saints had not denied the name [i.e. the person] of Christ. If the very opportunity for ministry was not enough Jesus had more exciting news. He will make those who say they are Jews but are not to come and worship before the feet of the church. A number of important concepts are brought into focus.

Not all Jews are Jews. Abraham had a spiritual seed. He had a natural seed and he had a religious seed. The natural seed of Abraham includes all that have the genes of Abraham. The religious seed consists of all who embrace the Jewish faith embodied in the Law Of Moses. The spiritual seed comprises those who, like Abraham, believe in God and seen in Christ the promise of the Messiah. It is possible for a person to say, *"I am a Jew because I am of the racial stock of Abraham."* It is possible for a person to say, *"I am a Jew because I observe the Law of Moses."* It is possible for a person to say, *"I am a Jew because, like Abraham, I rejoice in Christ my Savior."* Following the death of Christ, His resurrection, and ascension into heaven, a person could still make claims to being a Jew along racial or religious lines and find himself cut off from fellowship by failing to love Jesus. There are those *"which say they are Jews and are not but do lie."* They lie because they claim to have faith like Abraham but Abraham had faith in Christ. Only those who have faith in Christ are the true spiritual seed of Abraham. Only those who have faith in Christ are true *"Jews."* Dr. William Barclay comments:

“It was the Christian belief that the Jewish nation had lost its place in the plan of God and that place had passed to the Church. A Jew in God's sense of the term was not one who could claim racial descent from Abraham but one of any nation who had made the same venture of faith as he had (Rom. 9:6-9). The Church was the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16). It was, therefore, now true that all the promises which had been made to Israel had been inherited by the Church. It was to her that one day all men would humbly make their submission. The promise is a reversal of all that the Jews had expected: they had expected that all nations would kneel before them; but the day was to come when they with all nations would kneel before Christ.” Until the ultimate expression of glory, God's people will know great trials but the promise made in verse 10 that the Lord will keep those who have kept His commandments. Loyalty has a definite reward. Jesus will keep His own from "the hour of temptation." A proper understanding of this phrase must take into consideration the Jewish understanding of time. The Jews divided time into two ages: “*this age*” and “*the age to come*.”

This Age and the Age to Come (Eternity)

The Jews spoke of movement towards The Age to Come. They believed that just prior to the Eternal Age there would come upon the entire world a final testing. This is referred to as the day of the Lord, the Day of Christ, the Last Day, and the hour of Trial (Temptation). In Revelation 3:11 the saints are encouraged to hold on to what they have so that no one take their crown. The issue is not that someone will steal their reward but they are not worthy to wear it. The Christians could remember that:

- Esau lost his crown to Jacob Gen. 25:34; 27:36
- Reuben, unstable as water, lost his crown to Judah Gen. 49:4,8
- Saul lost his crown to David 1 Sam. 16:1,13
- Judas lost his crown to Matthias Acts 1:25,26
- The Jews lost their crown to the Gentiles Rom. 11:11

To all that overcome the Lord make several promises.

- He will make a pillar in the temple of God. A pillar is a great and honored support. On the pillar rests the weight of the building. Peter, James and John are declared to be the pillars of the early Church (Gal. 2:9).
- He shall go out no more. This translates into a promise of security and a promise of rest.
- The saint will have the name of God written upon the soul. The imagery may refer to several things.

- ❖ In the cities of Asia Minor and Philadelphia, a priestly person of prominence would have a new pillar erected in the Temple in which he served after he died. On the pillar would be inscribed his name as a last honor.
- ❖ Slaves were branded to show to whom they belonged.
- ❖ The reference may be to Numbers 6:22-27 where God told to Moses the blessing which Aaron and the priests were to pronounce over the people. *"They shall put my name upon the people of Israel"* (Num. 6:22-27)." To have the name of God is to have it be known that one is the personal possession of deity.

In addition to having the name of God, the saint is also promised the name of the city of God. According to Ezekiel the name of the re-created city of God is, *"THE LORD IS THERE"* (Ezek. 48:35). Finally, on the faithful Christian, Christ will write His own new name. What that new name is (Rev. 19:2), no man knows. Taking these promises together, the saint can be assured that:

- he belongs to God,
- he will dwell where God dwells and,
- he has the mark which will be his badge to show and to share in the triumph of Christ.

A Letter of Love from the Lord to the Church of Laodicea: Revelation 3:14-17



The smaller of the two theaters at the ancient city of Laodicea in modern Turkey.

The Church of the Laodiceans has the unfortunate distinction of being the only Church addressed without a word of commendation. There is sternness in the tone of the letter that borders on the extreme and yet is really the product of love. The letter begins with three statements that identify the Lord Jesus. He is declared to be the "*Amen*." Two thoughts come to mind.

- In Isaiah 65:16 in the original, God is called the God of truth or "*the God of Amen*." Amen is that special word which is put at the end of a solemn statement for the expressed purpose of affirming its truthfulness. To call Jesus the Amen is to affirm that He is to be believed.
- Often in John's gospel we read how Jesus began a statement saying, "*Truly, truly, I say unto you*" (John 1:51; 3:3,5,11). The Greek for truly is Amen. Here then is a reference to the promises of Christ. And His promises can be relied upon. Jesus is also declared to be the faithful and true witness. In order to be such a witness there are three essential conditions that must be met.
 - ❖ A witness must have seen with his own eyes that of which he speaks.
 - ❖ He must be absolutely honest so that he may repeat with accuracy what he has heard and seen.
 - ❖ He must have the persuasive ability to make an impression to those He speaks to. Jesus Christ met the entire criterion.

The third thing declared about Jesus is that he is the beginning of the creation of God. The Mormons, the Jehovah Witnesses, and others take this verse along with several more passages like Colossians 1:15 to deny the deity of Christ. The problem is that in the English the phrase is ambiguous. It could mean one of two things. The phrase could mean that Jesus was the first Person to be created. If that is true then He is obviously not God. The phrase could mean that He began the creation process. There is no doubt but that it was the intention of John to identify all of creation as having its origin in Christ. John 1:3. "*All things were made through Him and with Him was not anything made that was made.*" To insist on the Lord's part in creation, for John, was to refute the heretics who explained sin and death and disease as being the creation of a false and lesser god. The Christian view is that the God of creation is also the God of redemption. Once again Jesus Christ declares that He knows the works of the professing church. It is His calculated conclusion that the professing saints are neither hot nor cold but barely warm.

To the Laodiceans this was a picture of crude vividness because they understood all too well the nauseating quality of a liquid that was tepid. As a city Laodicea had a water supply problem. Because of its location the city was dependent upon an underwater aqueduct from springs about six miles away. But there was a problem with the water supply. It was neither hot nor cold but tepid and it made people sick to drink it without the water being treated. The Lord's controversy with His people was that as they now existed, they were making Him sick because they were neither hot nor cold. They were indifference and it is this indifference that makes the Lord sick. Indifferent people do not change society. Indifferent people do not change anyone. So

serious is the Lord about this matter of indifference that He makes an amazing announcement, which in effects says this: "*I have more respect for the hardened unbeliever than I have for the professing believer who is lukewarm.*" There are several things, which leads to the spiritual status of indifference.

- When there is material prosperity the Church begins to become lukewarm. Over and over again the Bible warns of the dangers of riches. Even the desire to be rich can lead people into sin (1 Tim. 6:6-11).
- A shift in one's thinking leads to lukewarmness. "*Thou knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.*" When spiritual discernment goes, lukewarmness comes in.

Having identified the problem and explained how the Church got into such a terrible condition, the Lord offers divine counsel. The Church is invited to buy gold tried in the fire so that the people might be truly rich spiritually. The gold tried in the fire may refer to faith as per 1 Peter 1:7. To buy gold is to ask God for more spiritual things.

- **Bible truth.** There are many words and concepts that should be familiar to the Christian such as: deity of Christ sin translation trinity salvation angels Holy Spirit sanctification predestination God the Father inspiration election prayer revelation justification sanctification baptism Great Commission.
- **Spiritual experiences.** It is spiritual gold to have Bible truth stored in the soul and to have rich spiritual experiences of communion with Christ.

If we parents take pity upon our children whom we correct harshly, God will have pity upon those who are His children and who repent of their sins. God will give us spiritual capital that we need if we want faith to know Him, faith to love Him, and faith to serve Him.

The Counsel of Christ

It is natural to want to give counsel or advise to other people. Every person knows what it is like to have someone come up and ask, "*What should I do?*" When advice is asked for, it is either accepted or rejected. The prerogative rests with the individual to accept or reject the counsel recognizing that, sometimes good advice is given, sometimes bad advice is given. Sometimes good counsel is acted upon, sometimes bad counsel is acted upon. Sometimes bad counsel is not acted upon, and sometimes good counsel is not acted upon. As advice can be sought, it can also be offered unsolicited. That is the situation in the Church of Laodicea. The resurrected Lord comes to the Church and offers counsel that is certainly good and wise but unsolicited. The motive for giving unsolicited counsel the Lord's part is one of love. "*As many as I love, I rebuke,*" says Christ. The love of Christ compels Him to say something and thus we love that a facet of biblical love is to have the best interest of someone else at heart. "*I love you,*" says Christ. "*I must counsel you.*"

The counsel of the Lord consists of five things. First the living Lord counsels the Church to buy gold tried in the fire. From 1 Peter 1:7 we learn that gold tried in the fire has reference to the sphere of faith being tested by suffering. That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. Through much tribulation the saints will be tested. That is why the tongue of the slander lashes out. That is why Christians are the objects of hatred and rumors and evil reports. Those who will reign with Christ must suffer with Him.

Second, the Living Lord counsels the Church to buy of Him white raiment or clothing that the saints might be clothed and that the shame of nakedness might be covered. The reference to the purchase of white clothing is significant. The Laodiceans were very proud of the white robes they wore in public. The clothing from Laodicea was famous all over the known world. The Lord draws from this a spiritual lesson. The spiritual robe of righteousness is more important than the luxury articles being worn. It was a shame to Christ for the Church to be without spiritual garments despite their display of wealth. Christ would have His people clothed righteousness. The world watches and wonders at professing Christians caught in spiritual nakedness. God's threat to His people by the prophet Nahum was this: *"I will let nations look upon your nakedness, and your kingdom's shame."* God will let the world look upon the nakedness of the Church unless there is a clothing of righteousness put on. The third counsel of the Lord is that the churches anoint their eyes with eye-salve that they may be able to see. An eyesalve is simply a solution to help the eyes stop burning or watering or itching. We have solutions to help the eyes today and they existed in the ancient world as well. But the eye-salve of old hurt when applied which meant that the people were hesitant to use it. Spiritually, the Laodiceans were hesitant to use the eye-salve. It hurt too much. They did not want to see themselves as they really were. This is understandable. It does take a lot of grace to stand and say to self and to others, *"I am a sinful person. I am a lustful man. I am a proud woman. I am a liar."* It was a long time for Saul of Tarsus to learn to say as Paul the apostle, *"I was covetous."* John and James would have to confess they were angry and ambitious men. Still, the beginning of hope is to see one's self as one really is. *"I want you to see,"* says Jesus. *"I want you to anoint thine eyes with eye-salve."* Spiritually, this means to apply the Word of God for it alone helps us to see ourselves not only as we are but also as we might be. As we look into the perfect law of liberty we see.

There is a fourth line of counseling the Lord gives and that is *"be zealous."* This speaks of intensity of the soul more than it does physical activity. Most of life is really lived in the mind. The Christian is commanded to redeem the time. He is to pray without ceasing and to seek first the kingdom of God.

Finally, the Lord counsels the Church to repent. To repent means to admit the charges are true. To repent means to turn from sin. To repent means to plot a course of conduct that will be different. A Church that is rich may want to consider giving away a large portion of its goods to help others. A Church that is proud of its fine clothing may want to clean out the closets and clothe the naked. A Church that is lukewarm in worship may want to consider being put in the company of the committed. A Church that is not spiritually mature may want to find teaching and material that will help it to grow spiritually. To focus attention on the personal responsibility of the saints the words of 3:20 are offered. Observe from this passage:

- This message is given to the Church not the world. It is given for the purpose of sanctification.
- Christ is pleading with His people. He stands at the door of the human heart and He knocks in condescending love. The Lord takes the initiative in seeking to fellowship with man.

In the twelfth century AD, Saint Bernard lives. He would tell his monks that *"However early they might awake and rise for prayer in their chapels on a cold mid-winter morning, or even in the dead of night, they would always find God awake before them, waiting for them--nay it was He who had awakened them to seek His face."* The word "sup" is a very special word. it is the third meal of the day (*depnnon*), the one people lingered over after a days work was done. To all who will listen to the counsel of Christ, the wonderful promise is made to sit with the Lord in His throne. It is easier to understand this verse when it is realized that the eastern throne was more like a couch than a chair. To sit with Christ is to share His victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil. *"He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."*

Revelation 3:10

- Revelation 3:10 does not teach a pre-tribulational rapture.
- There is many emphasis puts on the word "from" in the phrase, *"will keep thee from the hour of temptation."*
- Well known Greek scholar Henry Alford notes that: *"from (Gk. ek), means 'out of the midst of; but whether by immunity from, or by being brought safely through, the preposition does not clearly define."*
- Had John wanted to teach a Divine deliverance by immunity from tribulation he would have used the more suitable preposition, *"apo"*. The tribulation coming was to be upon the whole world.
- The use of *"ek"* in John 17:15b, Galatians 1:4 and Hebrews 5:7 provides insight into the matter.

Will the Church go Through the Tribulation?

1. One of the more interesting questions being discussed among Christians is whether or not the Church will go through the Great Tribulation period that many believe is still futuristic. The conclusion for many is that the Church will not be part of the tribulation period.
2. The basic question arises because of a presupposition that there is coming in the near future a special seven-year tribulation period in fulfillment of biblical prophecy.

3. This whole question arises because of a second presupposition that the Apostle John represents the Church and the Church is not to be found in Revelation 4-19. Therefore, the reasoning is that the Church will not go through the Great Tribulation.
4. While it is true that John is a member of the visible and invisible Church of Jesus Christ by way of the new birth, nowhere it is plainly stated in Scripture that John is a representation of the entire Church of Jesus Christ. It is very instructive to note that John was in the spirit on the Lord's Day and while his soul was allowed to see a vision his body always remained on earth just as Ezekiel stayed by the riverside during his vision and Daniel remained in Babylon during his vision. To suggest that John somehow represents the whole Church physically taken away before great tribulation is to suggest something that is not specifically taught in the Bible and is not indicated by any true parallel teaching or typology. What is true is that John foresaw the tribulation that would come to the Church of the first century because of the judgment that was coming to the nation of Israel for rejecting the Messiah (Matt. 24; Mk. 13; Lk. 21). It is the principle of Divine discipline on the nations producing a reaction against the people of God that John was allowed to witness.
5. To suggest that the Church is not to be found in Revelation 4-19 is again to ignore a wealth of Scriptural terminology. Consider these facts.
 - The Church of Christ is made up of saints (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2; Eph. 1:1).
 - The saints are referred to in the gospels and in the epistles in a variety of different ways such as:

□ fellowservants	Col. 1:7; 4:11
□ brethren	1 Thess. 1:4; Col. 1:2; 2 Thess. 1:3
□ people washed in the blood of the Lamb	1 Cor. 6:11
□ prophets	1 Cor. 12:28; 14:29; 2 Thess. 2:13
□ the people of Christ	Heb. 2:17; 4:9; 1 Pet. 2:9
□ the servants of Jesus	Eph. 6:6; Phil. 1:1

A careful study of the texts cited will reveal conclusively that there are indeed many descriptive terms for the church.

6. In the book of the *Revelation* the very same descriptive language is used for the people whom John sees in the days of great tribulation. In the critical chapters in question (Rev. 4-19) the Church is very much in view as the righteous are called:

• fellowservants	Rev. 6:11
• brethren	Rev. 6:11
• people washed in the blood of the Lamb	Rev. 3:14
• the dead who die in the Lord	Rev. 14:13
• saints	Rev. 14:12; 15:6; 17:6
• prophets	Rev. 16:6
• called, chosen, and faithful	Rev. 17:14
• His servants	Rev. 19:2,5

The Church and the Tribulation Saints

1. There is no scriptural basis to make a dramatic distinction between the saints of the Church and the saints of any tribulation period.
 - Both the Church and Tribulation Saints are an earthly people (2 Cor. 5:1,4; Rev. 18:24).
 - Both the Church and Tribulation Saints are found in the entire world (Gal. 3:8-9; Rev. 7:9).
 - Both the Church and Tribulation Saints are heavenly people (Phil. 3:20; Rev. 7:9).
 - Grace and the blood of Christ (Eph. 1:7; Rev. 7:14) save both the Church and Tribulation Saints.
 - Both the Church and Tribulation Saints are empowered by the indwelling Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8; 1 Cor. 12:3; Mark 13:11).
 - Both the Church and Tribulation Saints obey the commandments of the God and keep the testimony of Jesus (John 14:21; Rev. 1:9; 12:17; 14:12).
 - Both the Church and Tribulation Saints are called the servants of God (Rom. 6:22; 1 Pet. 2:16; Rev. 7:3; 19:2).
 - Both the Church and Tribulation Saints are united with the Son of Man (Acts 7:56; Rev. 1:13,20b; Matt. 24:30; 25:31).
 - Both the Church and Tribulation Saints are delivered by Christ coming in judgment (Acts 2:34-35; 3:20-21; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; 2:8; Matt. 25:31; Rev. 19:11-21).
 - Both the Church and the Tribulation Saints are included in the Book of Life (Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5; 12:8; 17:8).
2. The conclusion is that the Church and the Tribulation Saints are the same.

The Doctrine of Wrath

1. The word "*wrath*" is used one hundred and fifty times in the Old Testament and forty seven times in the New Testament.
2. In the New Testament the word "*wrath*" is the English translation of three basic Greek words: *orge*, *thumos*, and *parorgizo*.
3. The word *orge* originally referred to any natural impulse, desire, or disposition. It came to signify anger as the strongest of all passions.

4. *Orge* is used of:
 - the wrath of man Eph. 4:31; Col. 3:8; 1 Tim. 2:8; James 1:19,20
 - the displeasure of human governments Rom. 13:4,5
 - the suffering of the Jews at the hands of the Gentiles Luke 21:23).
 - the terrors of the Law Rom. 4:15
 - the anger of Jesus Mark 3:5
 - God's anger with Israel in the desert Heb. 3:11; 4:3
 - God's present anger with national Israel Rom. 9:22; 1 Thess. 2:16
 - God's present anger with those who disobey the gospel John 3:36
 - God's purpose in judgment Matt. 3:7; Luke 3:7; Rom. 1:18; 2:5,8; 3:5; 5:9; 12:19; Eph. 2:3; 5:6; Col. 3:6; 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9
5. The word *thumos* is to be distinguished from *orge* in that *thumos* indicates a more agitated condition of the feelings. *Thumos* is fierce indignation, an outburst of wrath from an inward volcano of feelings. *Orge* suggests a more settled or abiding condition of the mind often with a view to taking revenge.
6. *Thumos* is found eighteen times in the New Testament (Luke 4:28; Acts 19:28; Gal. 5:20; Eph. 4:31; Col. 3:8; Heb. 11:27; Rev. 12:12; 14:8,10,19; 15:1,7; 16:1,19; 18:3; 19:5).
7. *Parorgizo* is used in such passages as Romans 10:19 and Ephesians 6:4. It means "*to arouse to wrath*", "*to provoke*."
8. Concerning the wrath of God, the Bible teaches many the following:
 - There is an eternal wrath to come upon the unconverted which can be avoided by faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (Matt. 3:7; Luke 3:7).
 - Those who do not repent will know the abiding wrath of God (John 3:36; Eph. 5:6; Col. 3:6).
 - The wrath (*orge*) of God is revealed from heaven (Rom. 1:18).
 - The wicked store up more wrath until the day of judgment (Rom. 2:5,8).
 - There is salvation from the wrath of God through Jesus (Rom. 5:9).
 - God Himself makes vessels of wrath (Rom. 9:22).
 - All Christians are to be delivered from the wrath [eternal damnation] to come (1 Thess. 1:10). This is not some temporary deliverance from a limited time period but rather the freedom for all eternity from God's judicial accounting in the final day (1 Thess. 5:9). Salvation, not temporal deliverance is in view in these verses.

- Those who hurt Christians will know the wrath to come (1 Thess. 2:16).
- Beginning in AD 66 the Jews in particular and the Gentiles in general knew about the wrath of God (Rev. 6:16; 6:17; 11:18; 12:12; 14:8; 14:10; 14:19; 15:1; 15:7; 16:1; 16:9; 18:3; 19:15).

What About Old Testament Rapture Types?

1. Enoch, Noah, Lot, Joseph, and Elijah are sometimes presented as types of the Church being caught up before the tribulation period.
2. Such "*types*" are selected in an arbitrary manner and overlook all the Old Testament saints who were preserved through great tribulation such as the three Jewish men in the fiery furnace of Nebuchadnezzar's, Daniel being preserved in the den of the lions, and Jeremiah being preserved amidst the Babylonian captivity.
3. When Enoch was taken by God there was no tribulation on the earth. Noah was not "*raptured*" but was delivered through the tribulation that came to the world. Lot was not "*raptured*" but was taken outside the cities of destruction. Joseph in the midst of the suffering of his people helped to provide for them. Elijah was taken to heaven, not in order to escape any coming tribulation period, but simply because his work was done and the Lord chose to honor him in a very special way.

No Secret Coming

1. The New Testament does not even use the word "*secret*" with reference to the coming of Christ except in one passage and that is to warn against those who will teach falsely and declare the Lord has come again and is in His secret chamber. Jesus said, "*Believe them not!*" (Matt. 24:26).
2. Jesus has promised to return the second time (Heb. 9:28) as a thief in the night (Matt. 24:43; Luke. 12:39; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 3:3; 16:15) which means the Lord will come again at an unexpected time. The hour and date of His return is unknown to all but the Father.
3. The scriptural passages that explicitly uses the phrase "*thief in the night*" do so to indicate the day of the Lord will be unexpected and to warn believers to be alert and to be found faithful in prayer.
4. Those who are sober and alert need never fear the return of Christ. In 1 Thessalonians 5:4 the promise is given to the Church that Jesus will NOT come as a thief to them. When the Lord appears the Church will see Him return in the clouds and will understand and will rise to welcome Him with love. All others will be surprised. How is this possible? Consider.
5. A thief who is being watched can do something as long as deception is used. For example. Imagine a moving van stopping in front of the house of a neighbor that is not well known.

Nothing is really thought of the matter until the neighbor returns, walks into the house and starts to scream, "*Someone stole all my furniture!*" Others saw all the men, the van, and the belongings in the house but it did not dawn on anyone what the thieves were up to. That is the way it will be when the Lord returns. Every eye will see Him, but many will not know or understand who He is or what He is up to until it's too late. Jesus will come back to earth by way of the air (Acts 1) but only the Church will understand so that the Day of the Lord does not take them as a thief.

6. The secret pre-tribulational rapture is so secret that the Church never heard of it for 1,830 years. Though there is debate over who should be credited with introducing the idea of a third coming of Christ a young girl named Margaret MacDonald is a leading candidate.

The Strange Vision of Margaret MacDonald

Margaret Macdonald was a young Scottish girl who had a private revelation in Port Glasgow, Scotland, in the spring (March) of 1830. Margaret was born, January 14, 1815, and was baptized on January 22, 1815. This means she was only 15 years old when she had her revelation that was hidden from all God's people for almost 2000 years! Margaret died on September 14, 1835, having lived a life full of Christian graces all the while longing for more of the Spirit of God. In her revelation Margaret came to understand that a select group of Christians would be caught up to meet Christ in the air before the days of Antichrist. An eye and ear witness, Robert Norton, MD, preserved her handwritten account of her pre-tribulation rapture revelation in two of his books, and said it was the first time anyone had ever split the Second Coming of Christ into two distinct parts, or stages (*The Restoration of Apostles and Prophets; In the Catholic Apostolic Church; Memoirs of James and George Macdonald of Port-Glasgow*, 1840).

Margaret's new revelations were well known to those who visited her home, among them John Darby of the Brethren. In the September 1830, issues of *THE MORNING WATCH*, the new revelations of Margaret were being presented. The early disciples of the pre-tribulation interpretation often called it a new doctrine. For example, one of the earliest Brethren leaders, Robert Gribble, confessed in the early 1830's that he had adopted "*a new view of unfulfilled prophecy*" (*The Origins of the Brethren*, Harold H. Rowdon, p. 149). John Darby advocated a subtle introduction of the doctrine of the new pre-tribulation rapture view. "*I think we ought to have something more of direct testimony as the Lord's coming, and its bearing also on the state of the church: ordinarily, it would not be well to have it so clear, as it frightens people. We must pursue it steadily; it works like leaven, and its fruit is by no means seen yet; I do not mean leaven as ill, but the thoughts are new, and people's minds work on them, and all the old habits are against their feelings....*" (*Letters of John N. Darby*, pp.25-26). It is important to realize that this whole doctrine is new, as Darby admitted not just rediscovered truth. What was not new was the setting of dates. Darby himself was a date setter at one time. In his *Etudes sur l'Epitre aux Hebreux*, published in Lausanne, Switzerland, about 1835, Darby writes on page 146: "*There are excellent brethren in all countries who have sought to calculate these dates...some have fixed 1844, others 1847; I myself have made several calculations in the times past, and in the same sense.*"

The Pre-tribulation Revelation: In the Words of Margaret MacDonald

"It was first the awful state of the land that was pressed upon me. I saw the blindness and infatuation of the people to be very great. I felt the cry of Liberty just to be the hiss of the serpent, to drown them in perdition. It was just 'no God.' I repeated the words, Now there is distress of nations, with perplexity, the seas and the roaring, men's hearts failing them for fear—now look out for the sign of the Son of man. Here I was made to stop and cry out, O, it is not known what the sign of the Son of man is; the people of God think they are waiting, but they know not what it is.

I felt this needed to be revealed, and that there was great darkness and error about it; but suddenly what it was burst upon me with a glorious light. I saw it was just the Lord himself descending from Heaven with a shout, just the glorified man, even Jesus; but that all must, as Stephen was, be filled with the Holy Ghost, that they might look up, and see the brightness of the Father's glory. I saw the error to be, that men think that it will be something seen by the natural eye; but 'tis spiritual discernment that is needed, the eye of God in his people. Many passages were revealed, in a light in which I had not before seen them. I repeated, 'Now is the kingdom of Heaven like unto ten virgins, who went forth to meet the Bridegroom, five wise and five foolish; they that were foolish took their lamps, but took no oil with them; but they that were wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.' 'But be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is; and be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit.'

This was the oil the wise virgins took in their vessels--this is the light to be kept burning--the light of God--that we may discern that which cometh not with observation to the natural eye. Only those who have the light of God within them will see the sign of his appearance. No need to follow them who say, 'See here, or see there, for his day shall be as the lightning to those in whom the living Christ is. Tis Christ in us that will lift us up--he is the light--'tis only those that are alive in him that will be caught up to meet him in the air.'

I saw that we must be in the Spirit, that we might see spiritual things. John was in the Spirit, when he saw a throne set in Heaven.—But I saw that the glory of the ministration of the Spirit had not been known. I repeated frequently, but the spiritual temple must and shall be reared, and the fullness of Christ be poured into his body, and then shall we be caught up to meet him. Oh, none will be counted worthy of this calling but his body, which is the church, and which must be a candlestick all of gold. I often said, Oh, the glorious inbreaking of God which is now about to burst on this earth; Oh, the glorious temple which is now about to be reared, the bride adorned for her husband; and Oh, what a holy, holy bride she must be, to be prepared for such a glorious bridegroom. I said, Now shall the people of God have to do with realities--now shall the glorious mystery of God in our nature be known--now shall it be known what it is for man to be glorified.

I felt that the revelation of Jesus Christ had yet to be opened up--it is not knowledge about God that it contains, but it is an entering into God— I saw that there was a glorious breaking in of God to be. I felt as Elijah, surrounded with chariots of fire. I saw as it were, the spiritual temple reared, and the Head Stone brought forth with shouting of grace, grace, unto it. It was a glorious light above the brightness of the sun that shone round about me. I felt that those who were filled with the Spirit could see spiritual things, and feel walking in the midst of them,

while those who had not the Spirit could see nothing--so that two shall be in one bed, the one taken and the other left, because the one has the light of God within while the other cannot see the Kingdom of Heaven.

I saw the people of God in an awfully dangerous situation, surrounded by nets and entanglements, about to be tried, and many about to be deceived and fall. Now [after this] will the wicked be revealed, with all power and signs and lying wonders, so that if it were possible the very elect will be deceived. This is the fiery trial that is to try us. —It will be for the purging and purifying of the real members of the body of Jesus; but oh it will be a fiery trial. Every soul will be shaken to the very center. The enemy will try to shake in every thing we have believed--but the trial of real faith will be found to honor and praise and glory. Nothing but what is of God will stand. The stony-ground hearers will be made manifest--the love of many will wax cold. I frequently said that night, and often since, now shall the awful sight of a false Christ be seen on this earth, and nothing but the living Christ in us can detect this awful attempt of the enemy to deceive--for it is with all deceivableness of unrighteousness he will work--he will have a counterpart for every part of God's truth, and an imitation for every work of the Spirit.

The Spirit must and will be poured out on the church, that she may be purified and filled with God--and just in proportion as the Spirit of God works, so will he--when our Lord anoints men with power, so will he. This is particularly the nature of the trial, through which those are to pass who will be counted worthy to stand before the Son of man. There will be outward trial too, but 'tis principally temptation. It is brought on by the outpouring of the Spirit, and will just increase in proportion as the Spirit is poured out. The trial of the Church is from Antichrist. It is by being filled with the Spirit that we shall be kept. I frequently said, Oh be filled with the Spirit—have the light of God in you, that you may detract Satan--be full of eyes within--be clay in the hands of the potter--submit to be filled, filled with God. This will build the temple.

It is neither by might nor by power, but my Spirit, saith the Lord. This will fit us to enter into the marriage supper of the Lamb. I saw it to be the will of God that all should be filled. But what hindered the real life of God from being received by his people, was their turning from Jesus, who is the way to the Father. They were not entering in by the door. For he is faithful who hath said, by me if any man enters in he shall find pasture. They were passing from the cross, through which every drop of the Spirit of God flows, to us. All power that comes not through the blood of Christ is not of God. When I say, they are looking from the cross, I feel that there is much in it--they turn from the blood of the Lamb, by which we overcome, and in which our robes are washed and made white. There are low views of God's holiness, and a ceasing to condemn sin in the flesh, and a looking from him that humbled himself, and made himself of no reputation. OH! it is needed, much needed at present, a leading back to the cross.

I saw that night, and often since, that there will be an outpouring of the Spirit on the body, such as has not been, a baptism of fire, that all the dross may be put away. Oh there must and will be such an indwelling of the living God as has not been--the servants of God sealed in their foreheads--great conformity to Jesus--his holy image seen in his people--just the bride made comely, by his comeliness put upon her. This is what we are at present made to pray much for, that speedily we may all be made ready to meet our Lord in the air—and it will be. Jesus

wants his bride. His desire is toward us. He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry. Amen and Amen. Even so come Lord Jesus."

A Summary of the Vision

Margaret MacDonald believed that the catching up or Rapture would be seen only by believers filled with the Spirit. This would be a secret coming. When she spoke of *"one taken and the other left"* it was not a separation of believers and unbelievers but rather of Spirit-filled believers being taken while non Spirit believers are left to endure tribulation. The major point to recognize is that Margaret believed some Christians are to be taken in Rapture before the Wicked One or Antichrist is revealed. She found support for her views in the teaching of Edward Irving.

The Very Interesting Edward Irving

Edward Irving was born on August 4, 1792, in Annan, Scotland. He entered Edinburgh University when he was thirteen years old and received an MA in April 1809, when he was sixteen. Irving was licensed a Presbyterian minister in June of 1815 at age twenty-three. Four years later he was the assistant to Dr. Thomas Chalmers in his parish in Glasgow, Scotland. In 1822, at age thirty, Irving became pastor of the Caledonian Chapel (Presbyterian) at Hatton Garden in London. His fame as a great orator spread throughout the entire region. During these early years of the 1800's there was a revival of pre-millennialism. Interest in prophecy was acute. It was during this period that Irving discovered Manuel de Lacunza's book, *The Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty* (1812), and in 1826 translated this Spanish work into English. Lacunza had written the book under the pen name of Juan Josafat Ben-Ezra. He believed that the coming Antichrist would not be a person but a corrupted Roman Catholic priesthood.

In addition to prophecy, Irving also came to believe as early as 1828 that the spiritual gifts of the apostolic age belonged to the Church of all ages. If they were not being used it was because of lack of faith. Combining the two major thoughts Irving began to write in a prolific manner that the coming of Christ was imminent and would be preceded by the end time outpouring of the apostolic gifts. Irving, who has been called *"The Father of Modern Pentecostalism,"* would not have been amazed to learn that a charismatic revival had broken out in some small towns in western Scotland. A delegation from Irving Church was sent to investigate. The delegation returned and gave a glowing report, which created much excitement. Throughout the autumn of 1830 prayer meetings were held in London to seek an outpouring of the Spirit. One such meeting was held in the home of J.B. Cardale, the leader of the Albury delegation to Scotland. There was a measure of success as the first known case of speaking in tongues in London was recorded. The person who spoke in tongues on April 20, 1831, was Cardale's wife and this is what she said: *"The Lord will speak to His people--the Lord hasteneth His Coming--the Lord cometh."*

Speaking in tongues and prophesying became regular features in the Regent Square Church until finally the Trustees of the Church filed a complaint against Irving with the Presbytery of London. The Church trial of Edward Irving began on April 26, 1832. Irving was found guilty of violating the order of services allowed by the Presbyterian structure and was removed from his church. On Sunday morning, May 6, 1832, the Trustees locked Irving and a large part of his congregation out of the building. The minister and his people began to meet in a building in Gray's Inn Road. The Catholic Apostolic Church had been born. Irving himself never prophesied nor spoke in tongues. He was finally deposed from the ministry altogether by his hometown presbytery of Annan for teaching that when Christ became incarnate he fully assumed

sinful nature so that his sinless life depended on the power of the Holy Spirit, not on an innately sinless human nature. This trial took place March 13, 1833. On December 7, 1834 Edward Irving died and was buried in a crypt in Glasgow Cathedral. He was forty-two years old. Following Irving's death other men arose to carry on the novel thoughts he embraced. Among the most successful was John Darby.

John Nelson Darby

John N. Darby was born on November 18, 1800, in London England. He entered Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland, in 1815 when he was fourteen and graduated four years later with a law degree. Turning to religion, Darby became a deacon in the Anglican Church in 1825. In 1826 he was ordained a priest and served in that capacity in County Wicklow located south of Dublin. Darby began to hold informal home worship services. Out of these gatherings came the Brethren movement. In 1827 Darby had a terrible accident. A horse threw him against a doorpost. During a long convalescence period Darby had plenty of time to meditate upon the Bible. During this period Darby formulated his prophetic views of the Rapture being a separate phase of the coming of the Lord. This belief was rooted in a division of human history into dispensations.

Doctrine of a Dispensation

1. The English word *dispensation* translates the Greek *oikonomia* and occurs in the following passages:

- *1 Cor 9:17 For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.*
- *Eph 1:10 That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:*
- *Eph 3:2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:*
- *Eph 3:9 And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery [i.e. oikonomia], which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:*
- *Col 1:25 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God;*

2. *Oikonomia* also occurs in the following passages where it is rendered stewardship:

- *Luke 16:2 And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.*
- *Luke 16:3 Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? For my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed.*

- *Luke 16:4 I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.*
3. In the best Greek texts of 1 Tim 1:4 the term is found: Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying [i.e. *oikodomen*] which is in faith: so do. Greek scholar W.E. Vine summarizes the meaning of the word "*dispensation*": *oikonomia* primarily signifies "*the management of a household or of household affairs*" (*oikos*, "*a house*," *nomos*, "*a law*"); then the management or administration of the property of others, and so "*a stewardship*," (Luke 16:2-4); elsewhere only in the epistles of Paul, who applies it
 - to the responsibility entrusted to him of preaching the gospel, (Cor. 9:17) (RV, "*stewardship*," "*dispensation*")
 - to the stewardship committed to him "*to fulfill the Word of God*," the fulfillment being the unfolding of the completion of the divinely arranged and imparted cycle of truths which are consummated in the truth relating to the Church as the body of Christ, (Col. 1:25) (RV and KJV, "*dispensation*"); so in (Eph. 3:2), of the grace of God given him as a stewardship ("*dispensation*") in regard to the same "*mystery*"; (c) in (Eph. 1:10) and (Eph. 3:9), it is used of the arrangement or administration by God, by which in "*the fullness of the times*" (or seasons) God will sum up all things in the heavens and on earth in Christ. In (Eph. 3:9) some mss. have *koinonia*, "*fellowship*," for *oikonomia*, "*dispensation*." In (1 Tim. 1:4) *oikonomia* may mean either a stewardship, or a "*dispensation*".

Note: A "*dispensation*" is not a period or epoch (a common, but erroneous, use of the word), but a mode of dealing, an arrangement or administration of affairs. cf. *oikonomos*, "*a steward*," and *oikonomeo*, "*to be a steward*." (Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words)
 4. Professor Charles Hodge points out the double use of the word: (1) with respect to one in authority, it means a plan or scheme; (2) with respect to one under authority, it means *a stewardship or administration*.
 5. The theological interest of the term belongs to the plan or scheme of God in the outworking of redemption.
 6. God's covenanted purpose with sinful man has always been one of grace; but the covenant of grace was based on a double plan, or, in the words of Holy Scripture, God's plan was revealed in two dispensations.
 7. The first was the Mosaic dispensation, which can be called the "*Old Covenant*," and the second is the "*New Covenant*."

8. When Paul uses the word dispensation he is speaking of the distinction between the way the grace of God was made known before the coming of Christ under the Old Covenant and the way the grace of God is being manifested now that the redeeming work of Christ has been accomplished.
9. Under the Mosaic or Old Covenant (dispensation) the gospel was presented in types and shadows in the form of priest, altar, sacrifice, tabernacle and mercy seat.
10. Faith in these provision of God's grace, which in turn expressed itself in conformity to the demands of his holy law, was the plan by which God prefigured the saving work of Christ and also justified the penitent saints of OT times.
11. Under the New Covenant (dispensation) souls are saved by the redemptive work of Christ (Heb. 9:9,12).

Additional Thoughts on the Term Dispensation

1. C.I. Scofield may be credited with making popular the concept that, *"A dispensation is a period of time during which man is tested in respect of obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God."* With this definition in mind Scofield divided up the Bible according to seven dispensations.
 - Innocency
 - Conscience
 - Human Government
 - Promise
 - Law
 - Grace
 - Kingdom
2. W.E. Vine, who is not unsympathetic to Scofield's theology, correctly challenges Scofield's definition of a dispensation being a period of time as he writes that, *"A dispensation is not a period of epoch (a common, but erroneous, use of the word), but a mode of dealing, an arrangement or administration of affairs"* (*Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*).
3. Strong's Dictionary provides additional information. *oikonomia* primarily signifies *"the management of a household or of household affairs"* (*oikos*, "a house," *nomos*, "a law"); then the management or administration of the property of others, and so *"a stewardship,"* (Luke 16:2-4); elsewhere only in the epistles of Paul, who applies it
 - to the responsibility entrusted to him of preaching the gospel, (1 Cor. 9:17) (RV, *"stewardship,"* KJV, *"dispensation"*);

- to the stewardship committed to him *"to fulfill the Word of God,"* the fulfillment being the unfolding of the completion of the divinely arranged and imparted cycle of truths which are consummated in the truth relating to the Church as the body of Christ, (Col. 1:25) (RV and KJV, *"dispensation"*); so in (Eph. 3:2), of the grace of God given him as a stewardship (*"dispensation"*) in regard to the same *"mystery"*;
 - in (Eph. 1:10) and (3:9), it is used of the arrangement or administration by God, by which in *"the fullness of the times"* (or seasons) God will sum up all things in the heavens and on earth in Christ. In (Eph. 3:9) some mss. have *koinonia*, *"fellowship,"* for *oikonomia*, *"dispensation."* In (1 Tim. 1:4) *oikonomia* may mean either a stewardship in the sense of administering a household.
4. The word *"dispensation"* is used only four times in the Authorized Version (1 Cor. 9:17; Eph. 1:10; 3:2; Col. 1:25).
 5. According to Vine a dispensation (*oikonomia*) primarily signifies the management of a household or a household of affairs (*oikos*, a house; *nomos*, a law). The word came to refer to the management or administrative of the property of others, and so to a stewardship (cf. Luke 16:2,3,4; *oikonomos*, a steward; *oikonomeo*, to be a steward).
 6. The apostle Paul used the word dispensation in 1 Corinthians 9:17 in the sense of having the responsibility or stewardship entrusted to him of preaching the gospel. The RV recognizes this concept and translates the word *"stewardship."*
 7. In Colossians 1:25 the apostle feels the responsibility of the stewardship committed to *him* *"to fulfill the Word of God."* The fulfillment being the proclamation of the truths relating to the Church as the body of Christ.
 8. Writing to the saints at Ephesus (Eph. 3:2) Paul speaks of how God gave to him as a stewardship (dispensation) the mystery of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ.
 9. In Ephesians 1:10 and 3:10 the word is used of the arrangement or administration by God, by which in *"the fullness of the times"* (or seasons) God will bring to a conclusion and sum up all things in heaven and on earth in Christ.
 10. The English word dispensation translates the Greek *oikonomia* and occurs in the following passages:
 - 1 Cor 9:17 *For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.*
 - Eph 1:10 *That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:*
 - Eph 3:2 *If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:*

- *Eph 3:9 And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery [i.e. oikonomia], which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:*
 - *Col 1:25 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God;*
 - *Oikonomia also occurs in the following passages where it is rendered stewardship:*
 - *Luke 16:2 And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward.*
 - *Luke 16:3 Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed.*
 - *Luke 16:4 I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.*
11. In the best Greek texts of 1 Tim 1:4 the term is found: *Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying [i.e. oikodomen] which is in faith:*

The Latter Days

1. The word that is translated "*latter*" in the Bible simply means "*future*" or "*later on*." It is used thirty nine times in the Old Testament and three times in the New Testament.
2. The expression "*latter days*" refers to sometime "*later*" from the viewpoint of the speaker.
3. How much later is determined in part from when the Bible declares something to be fulfilled as the following references illustrate.
 - In Numbers 24:14 Balaam told Balak what the Israelites would do to the Moabites "*in the latter days*" (cf. Micah 6:5).
 - In Deuteronomy 4:30 Moses tells the people that when they are in tribulation "*in the latter days*" that they should turn to God (Deut. 31:29 cf. Judges 2:19,20) which they did.
 - Knowing his people well Moses predicted that "*in the latter days* [i.e. after his death] the people would turn from God and they did (Deut. 31:29 cf. Judges 2:19,20).
 - Jeremiah spoke harsh words to the priests of Jerusalem and told them that the anger of the Lord was against them yet "*in the latter days*" they would come to understand why (Jer. 23:20; 30:24). The harsh judgment of God, the Babylonian captivity, and the deliverance from that captivity.

- In the "*latter days*" God promised a deliverance of the Moabites from captivity (Jer. 48:47) as well as the Elamites (Jer. 49:39).
- Ezekiel's prophecy of the Jews being delivered "in the latter days" (Ezek. 38:16) finds a historical fulfillment.
- Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream of an image or as verse 29 says, "*what should come to pass hereafter.*" All that Daniel saw--four successive world empires--came into existence before the first advent of Christ (Dan. 10:14).

4. The term "*latter*" is used to describe other things in the Bible.

- "*the latter sign*" (Ex. 4:8).
- "*the latter end*" (Num. 24:20; Deut. 8:16; 32:29; Ruth 3:10; 2 Sam. 2:16; Job 8:7; 42:12; Prov. 19:20; Isa. 41:22; 47:7; 2 Pet. 2:20).
- "*the latter rain*" (Deut. 11:14; Job 29:23; Prov. 16:15; Jer. 3:3; 5:24; Hos. 6:3; Joel 2:23; Zech. 10:1; James 5:7).
- "*the latter husband*" (Deut. 24:3).
- "*the latter years*" (Ezek. 38:8).
- "*the latter times*" (Dan. 8:23; 11:29; 1 Tim. 4:1).
- "*the latter house*" (Hag. 2:9).
- "*the latter growth*" (Amos 7:1).

4. To summarize, the specific passages which uses the term "*latter days*" are Numbers 24:14; Deuteronomy 4:30; 31:29; 38:16; Daniel 2:28; 10:14; Hosea 3:5).

5. All of these passages refer to something that would happen in the future from the viewpoint of the speaker.

6. All of these passages find historical fulfillment.

The Russian Non-connection of Ezekiel 38 - 39

- **MAGOG.** A people and country listed among the sons of Japheth (Gen. 10:2). They are thought to have lived at the N extremity of the biblical world. Josephus identifies them with the Scythians.
- **MESHECH.** A people mentioned in the Table of Nations (Gen. 10:2) as descendants of Japheth. Assyrian records mention Mushki as a people in the mountains on the N borders of Assyria. Herodotus places the Moschi SE of the Black Sea.
- **TUBAL** The son of Japheth who, with his brothers Javan and Meshech traded in slaves and vessels The tribe which descended from Japheth settled near Meshech.

- **PERSIA.** Has reference to a land bordered by Media on the N, the Persian Gulf on the S, Elam on the W, and Carmania on the E. It followed Babylon as the second world empire. During the reign of Cyrus the Great, Persia defeated Babylon in 539 BC. Following the conquest the Jews in the land were allowed to return home to Palestine (Ezra 1:1-3). Susa or Shushan was the place of the royal palace (Neh. 1:1; Esther 1:2). Cambyses II (530-522 BC), the son of Cyrus reigned after his father. He committed suicide and the Persian Empire fell into civil war. Lesser kings of Persia include Ahasuerus (Xerxes 486-465 BC) who is mentioned in Esther 2:16,21 and King Artaxerxes. Nehemiah was his cup-bearer (Neh. 2:1-8).
- **ETHIOPIA.** Ethiopia is the normal reference to that which is called in the Hebrew tongue Cush which was located in E Africa. It was known to the Jews (Isa. 8:1; 45:14; Zeph. 3:10). In Genesis 2:13 in reference to the Garden of Eden, Cush is mentioned as an Asiatic place. But in all other places the word refers to those Arabians of an African country.
- **LIBYA.** Libya is the name first applied by the Greeks to all Africa W of Egypt. Later the term was restricted to the area between Egypt and the Roman province of Africa. Under Rome, Libya was divided into two parts: Libya Inferior, or Marmarica, and Libya Superior, or Cyrenaica.
- **GOMER.** A son of Japheth whose descendants settled in Asia Minor S of the Black Sea.
- **TOGARMAH.** The term refers to a N country (Ezek. 38:6) where the descendants of Japheth lived (Gen. 10:3).
- **SHEBA.** Refers to the land in SW Arabia, or in Africa near the Straits of Babel-mandeb. The people were merchants. When the Queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, she traveled to Jerusalem to see for herself and to test Solomon with difficult riddles (1 Kings 10:1-13; 2 Chron. 9:1-12).
- **DEDAN.** These descendants of Ham formed an Arabian tribe which located W of the Persian Gulf.
- **DEDAN.** These descendant of Shem formed an Arabian tribe which located E of the N sector of the Arabian Gulf (Red Sea).
- **TARSHISH.** Tarshish is a Phoenician word meaning "smelting plant" or "refinery." One Tarshish was Tartessus in S Spain, near Gibraltar. Another was in Cilicia, the later Tarsus.
- **VALLEY OF HAMMON-GOG.** A valley E of the Dead Sea. Literally, the word means, "*the multitude of Gog.*"
- **HAMONAH** is the figurative place where the multitudes of God are to be buried (Ezek. 39:16).

- **BASHAN.** Bashan is the trans-jordan territory extending N from Gilead to Mt. Hermon. Before the Israelites conquered the area it was ruled over by Og (Num. 21:33; Deut. 3:1; Josh. 12:5; 13:11). The half-tribe of Manasseh occupied the territory (Josh. 13:30; 17:1,5; 21:6; 22:7; 1 Chron. 5:23), and later still the tribe of Gad (1 Chron. 5:11,16). It was a fertile land and became famous for its rich pastures (Deut. 32:14; Ezek. 39:18; Mic. 7:14).

The Prophecy of Ezekiel 38-39: A Prelude

There are three parts to this study. First, a summary of the vision of chapters 38-39 in its historical time frame. Second a presentation of the historical fulfillment of this event. Third, an alternative to the futuristic view of a Russian connection.

The Setting of Ezekiel 38-39

Sometime between the years 592-570 BC the prophet Ezekiel had a vision of the future of Israel. He foresaw the holy city being destroyed. He foresaw the Temple of Solomon plundered. It all happen in 586 BC Then Ezekiel foresaw the restoration of Israel based upon the faithfulness of God (Lev. 26:40-45; Deut. 30:3) from the nations of the earth (Ezek. 6:6-9). Israel would be re-gathered from the Babylonian exile. And yet, in the restoration Israel would still have enemies. Some of these enemies would be known and some unknown. One such enemy would be Gog. The derivation of the word "Gog" is unknown. It may be a reference to a particular ruler of the people who lived in Magog. Josephus has identified Magog as the land of the Scythians, the region N and NE of the Black Sea and E of the Aral Sea. It is at this point that the temptation for some is to go to a modern day map, find as many of the ancient biblical places as possible, transpose modern day countries for the ancient places and then proceed to explain the Bible with modernistic countries in mind and assign a future fulfillment of the prophetically portions of the passage. For example, one futuristic author who has a widely used reference Bible identifies the geographical places in Ezekiel 38-39 in the following manner. Magog, the region N and NE of the Black Sea and E of the Aral Sea is thought to be Russia. Meshech and Tubal are identified as Turkey. Persia is the modern Iran and Ethiopia is equated with Northern Sudan. Liby and Gomer is associated with the E part of Turkey and the Ukraine. The house of Togarmah is said to be the part of Turkey near the Syrian border. Sheba and Dedan consist of the Arab people. Tarshish is declared to be located in the S part of Spain near Gibraltar. The Valley of Hamon-Gog refers to a valley E of the Dead Sea.

Instead of thinking in terms of ancient places and locations, instead of finding meaning to the people to whom Ezekiel ministered to, instead of finding a historical fulfillment, God's people are told to view these verses as speaking to modern day Iran, Turkey, Syria and Spain and to look for a future battle with Russia. It really is a creative way to interpret the Bible and it does make for some interesting concepts but it is not right to wrongly divide the Word of Truth. We submit that God knows how to spell and if modern day Iran, Turkey, Syria, Spain and Russia were meant God would have easily identified them by their name.

Geographical places are not the only thing transposed by those determined to find some future battles in ancient prophecies. The very weapons of warfare Ezekiel saw are also modernized and given to Gog for his invasion of Israel. When the Word of God is interpreted in context and in the historical time period in which the prophecy was given, it is obvious that Ezekiel foresaw a battle to take place in the land of Israel. Observe the distinctive features of the now ancient battle.

- All of the invading soldiers who made up the armies of this passage were to be found riding on horses (38:15). According to Ezekiel 27:14 the house of Togormah, which is included in the invasion, was in possession of horses and traded them in Tyre.
- The time of this invasion is described as a time when Israel was dwelling in peace (38:11) and in un-walled villages (Lev. 25:29,31 cf. Deut. 3:5).
- The purpose of the invasion against Israel was to possess the resources of the land including the cattle (38:11-13).
- The weapons of warfare are ancient weapons (38:4,5; 39:9).
- The ancient weapons would be used as firewood (39:9,10).
- The battle would take place when people used wood for fuel (39:9,10).

Summary

If the prophecy of Ezekiel 38-39 is still futuristic then several things must happen. First, huge armies of the world will have to go back to depending upon horses. In Ezekiel's vision every soldier is riding a horse. Second, Israel will have to be at rest and dwelling in safety. Also, cities in other areas will have to have walls built around them again for protection in order for Israel to be compared to them and so be called a "*land of unwallled villages*." Third, major nations must return to using ancient and primitive weapons of warfare made of wood such as bows, arrows, and spears.

The Historical Background of Ezekiel 38-39

In the year 597 BC, Ezekiel, whose name means "*God strengthens*," was taken with other hostages by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon. There he settled in his own house in a village near Nippur, along the river Chebar which was one of the royal canals of the king's. It was located SE of the city of Babylon. The village was known as Tel-abib meaning, "*mound of ears of grain*." Its exact location is unknown today. While in exile Ezekiel prophesied for at least twenty-two years (1:2 cf. 29:17-21). The message of Ezekiel to the people in exile was that of hope after judgment. This son of a priestly family (1:3) kept before the people the promises of God. Chapters 1-24, written before the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC, anticipated the outpouring of divine judgment upon the city and the Temple while chapters 38-48 contained prophecies of the restoration of Israel.

The question arises as to whether or not the prophecies of Ezekiel find historical fulfillment. Particular present interest is focused upon chapters 38-39 as being still futuristic. Many people have been taught to understand these chapters as referring to Russia. The basis for this is threefold. First, there is a prior belief in a futuristic understanding of these passages before they are even studied. A specific mindset is brought into the interpretation of these verses. Proper biblical exegesis demands a reading out from the text. Second, Russian now occupies the fact that part of the region referred to in the passages.

Third, the similarity of words. For example, there is a belief that the word "*rosh*" (Heb. chief) is but another way of saying "*Russia*." The reality is that the Hebrew word *ro'sh* is a very common word and appears in the Old Testament over 600 times. It is very doubtful that the term could mean Russian only in Ezekiel. Once it is assumed that Gog is the head or leader of Russia, the assumption can next be made that Meshech means "*Moscow*!" It does not even matter that Moscow was only first mentioned as such in ancient document in AD 1147, when Moscow was still small village.

Tubal is next said to mean "*Tobolsk*" but this is based only on a similarity in sound and nothing more. Tobolsk was founded in AD 1587. Gomer is said to mean "*Germany*!" This entire attempt to find modern day places in ancient prophecies to fit into a popular prophetic scheme is unfortunate. Perhaps a good starting point to understanding Ezekiel 38-39 is to remember that the prophecy is only part of a much larger vision which predicts the restoration of Israel under the government of the Messiah. Ezekiel draws a detailed picture of the new form of the kingdom of God. He also sees in prophecy Gog and Magog and so foretells an attack on the part of the heathen world upon the restored kingdom of God.

The Second Coming of Christ: Is it Imminent or Impending?

1. The concept of Christ coming at any moment tends to heighten the level of expectation, which leads in turn to date setting and false hopes.
2. There is much Scriptural evidence to support not an imminent return of Christ but an impending return.
 - The Great Commission (Matt. 28:19,20) implies a long period of time.
 - The parable of Matthew 13. The growth of the seed is a time consuming process.
 - Paul expected to die (2 Tim. 4:6-8).
 - Jesus predicted that Peter would suffer the death of a martyr (John 21:18-19).
 - Judgment was to come upon Israel (Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21).
 - The very sayings of Christ indicate a large interval of time. Jesus spoke of a "*man traveling into a far country,*"; "*after a long time the Lord of those servants cometh*" (Matt. 25).
 - There must first come apostasy and the Man of Sin (2 Thess. 2:1-3).
 - There are many exhortations for the saints to watch and be ready (Matt. 24 and 25; 1 Cor. 1:7; Col. 3:4; 1 Thess. 3:13; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; 1 Pet. 1:13; 4:13; 1 John 2:28). These exhortations are for the Second Advent of Christ. Those who divide the Second Advent into two phases or stages do properly apply these passages to the second stage, which leads to a problem. If the Rapture takes place in Stage I, seven years prior to Stage II, why the need to watch? People will know exactly when the coming of the Lord will be.

The Early Church

1. In the second century there was a work written known as the *Didache*. In the *Didache* there is a section entitled "*The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*" which is often quoted to support the idea that the early Church believed in an imminent return of Christ. The *Didache* (II, 16) reads: *Watch for your life's sake. Let not your lamps be quenched, nor your lions unloosed; but be ye ready, for ye know not the hour in which our Lord cometh.*"
2. What is not quoted from the *Didache* is the rest of chapter 16, which teaches a post tribulation view and not imminence: *"; for the whole of your faith will not profit you, if ye be not made perfect in the last time.... Then shall appear the world-deceiver as the Son of God, and shall do signs and wonders. ...Then shall the creation of men come into the fire of trial, and many shall be made to stumble and perish; but they that endure in their faith shall be saved from under the curse itself."*
3. There is not one person that can be cited between the first century and 1830 who ever held to a pre-tribulational rapture view. Those who did hold to an imminent return of Christ always embraced a post-tribulational coming. They were convinced during periods of pressure that they were probably in the tribulation and that Christ must return soon.

The Royal Reign of Christ

Revelation

Chapter 4

The Four Living Creatures of Revelation 4

The early Church fathers found much symbolism in the Four Living Creatures of Revelation with the Four Gospels.

The Scheme of Irenaeus (AD 170)

Gospel	Symbolism	Meaning
John	Lion	The Son of God in royal power
Luke	Ox	The priestly work of Christ
Matthew	Man	The incarnate Christ
Mark	Eagle	The gift of the Holy Spirit

The Scheme of

Athanasius		Victorinus	Augustine	
Matthew	Man	Matthew Man	Matthew	Lion
Mark	Ox	Mark Lion	Mark	Man
Luke	Lion	Luke Ox	Luke	Ox
John	Eagle	John Eagle	John	Eagle

"It may be said that on the whole Augustine's identification became the most commonly accepted, because they fit the facts. The lion best represents Matthew, because in it Jesus is depicted as the Lion of Judah, the One in whom all the expectations of the prophets came true. The man best represents Mark, because it is the nearest approach to a factual report of the human life of Jesus. The ox best represents Luke, because it depicts Jesus as the sacrifice for all classes and conditions of men and women everywhere. John is best represented by the eagle, because of all birds it flies highest and is said to be the only living creatures which can straight into the sun; and John of all the gospels reaches the highest heights of thoughts."

~*~

William Barclay

A Door in Heaven: Revelation 4:1

The seven letters to the seven churches have now been delivered according to John's account. The Lord of Glory has addressed particular churches with a particular message for each. Now He will speak to His people as a whole and declare unto them things that must soon follow. Prior to discussing the specifics of this chapter two popular concepts, which surround verse one should be considered. The first teaching is that John represents the church. Since he is caught up to heaven then the Church must be caught up to heaven thereby escaping the tribulation period, which is described. That is the teaching. There should be a response to this line of reasoning.

1. Nowhere is it ever stated in scripture that John, the apostle of Jesus Christ is symbolic of the whole Church of Jesus Christ. It is a quantum leap to go from one man to the Church universal without foundation.
2. John never left earth. The Bible says (4:2) that John was "*in the spirit*." To be consistent, the popular teaching based upon typology should say that the Church is "spiritually" caught up like John was so that during the tribulation period the BODY of the saint remains on earth while the soul enjoys the raptures of heaven.
3. The whole concept of "*Come up hither*" is familiar to Scripture. We find this concept in Ezekiel 3:12-14 and yet no-one has ever taught that Ezekiel represents the Church being raptured into heaven and escaping tribulation even though he saw a great time of judgment for the wicked world of his day.
4. It was not long before John was back on earth (13:1). What should be made of this? Should it be taught that the Church returns to earth during the tribulation period?

In understanding the book of the Revelation boundaries need to be established. The boundaries are easy to recognize. In Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21 Jesus declared that there would be a time of great tribulation as God judged Israel for rejecting His Son the Messiah. Jesus declared that the generation He was addressing would not pass away before all things He had spoken were fulfilled.

In agreement with that initial prophetic utterance, John received a fuller revelation of things, which must shortly come to pass dealing with the time period AD 66-67. If it is kept in mind that what John saw has historically we shall look to the scriptures for understanding as to why great tribulation came upon Israel. What must be set aside is the concept that John represents the Church as a whole being taken out of the process of judgment (tribulation). The historical record cannot be set aside. There is a second popular teaching based upon 4:1 which is the idea that the Church is not mentioned in chapters 4-19, therefore, the Church must not have anything to do with this events of the tribulation period. The question is raised, "*Will the Church go through the tribulation?*" The response to this teaching is that the Church is found in the questionable chapters of Revelation 4-19. Observing the terminology used for the Church in Matthew through Jude and then noting the same terminology is found in Revelation easily proves this.

Matthew-Jude**Saints**

Romans 1:7
1 Cor 1:2
Eph 1:1

Fellowservants

Col 4:11
Col 1:7

Brethren

1 Thess 1:4
Col 1:2
2 Thess 1:3

People washed

in the blood
1 Cor 6:11

**Called, chosen by
God, faithful**

Eph 1:4
2 Thess 2:13

The servant of Jesus

Eph 6:6
Phil 1:1

**Those who sleep
in the Lord**

1 Thess 4:14

Prophets

1 Cor 12:28
1 Cor 14:29
1 Cor 14:32
Eph 2:20

Revelation 4-19**Saints**

Rev 14:12
Rev 15:3
Rev 17:6

Fellowservants

Rev 6:11

Brethren

Rev 6:11

People washed

in the blood
Rev 17:14

**Called, chosen by
God, faithful**

Rev 17:14

His servants

Rev 19:2,5

**The dead who died in
in the Lord**

Rev 14:13

Prophets

Rev 16:6

It would not be consistent to use the same terminology for the Church in Revelation 4-19 that is found in the rest of the New Testament and then deny that the Church exists on earth during The Great Tribulation period Jesus spoke of and John saw visualized. Too much has been made over the absence of a specific term for the church, “*ekklesia*”, while ignoring the many other references to the Church in Revelation 4-19. If the absence of the specific term for the church, “*ekklesia*”, means that the Word of God does not speak of or to the Church directly then the following books of the Bible must also be for someone other than the present people of God

because the specific terminology, ekklesia, is not found in them either. The word Church is not found in MARK, Luke, John, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, or Jude. No one would suggest that these books be discarded as not speaking directly to the Church simply because a specific term is not found. The great tribulation Jesus referred to is today a historical fulfillment. Once it was future, from AD 30 - AD 70, but fulfillment came as Jesus predicted.

Before the Throne: Revelation 4:1-5

To be ushered into the presence of any human dignitary is an experience that most people do not soon forget. Those of us who have had even a fleeting glimpse or touches of an exalted personage remember in detail the circumstances that surrounded the moment. It is no wonder that John remembered in detail and writes precisely of the glory of being ushered into the throne room of heaven. In the sphere of spiritual realities John records that he saw in heaven, *"a throne and One sat on the throne."*



*Revelation 4 A rainbow surrounds the throne of God.
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The throne itself did not impress John as much as the One who sat on the throne and the things that were associated with the throne such as the living beasts, a sea of glass, elder statesmen and the natural elements of thundering and lightening. This is not to suggest that the throne itself was not important for indeed it was. In fact, the throne of God is a common picture in the Bible. The ancient prophet wrote, *"I saw the Lord sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right hand and on His left hand."* (1 Kin 22:19). The Psalmist said, *"God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of His Holiness."* (Psa. 47:8). Isaiah declared that he saw, *"the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple"* (Isa. 6:1).

In the book of the *Revelation* the throne of God is mentioned in nineteen of the twenty-two chapters [in chapters 2,8,9 it is not mentioned]. It is reported that when the great musical genius Handel was asked how he had come to write the Messiah, his answer was, "*I saw the heavens open and God upon His great white throne.*" Focusing upon the Great Personage seated upon the majestic throne John gropes for adequate words to describe His appearance for, "*He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone.*"

It is important to note that in describing the Great Personage on the throne John avoids any reference to God in a human form. As George Swete notes, "*He rigorously shuns anthropomorphic details.*" Rather, the Lord is described in the flashing of the colors of precious stones. In the Bible the way to understand or to see God is in terms of light. 1 Timothy 6:16 refers to Christ at God and declares that He, "*only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see, to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen.*" Psalms 104:2 reveals that God has covered Himself with light as with a garment. John tells us that the light itself is as beautiful as what one would see by looking at the most precious stones such as jasper, sardian, and emerald. These precious stones which speak of the great glory of our great God was to be found in the breastplate of the High Priest (Ex. 28:17). They are present in the foundation of the Holy City (Rev. 21:19).

- **Jasper.** The jasper today is an opaque stone but in the ancient world it was a translucent rock crystal, more like a diamond.
- **Sardian.** The sardian, so called because it was found mainly by the city Sardis was blood-red. It may respond to modern carnelian. The blood-red sardian stands for His avenging wrath manifested in full fury at the Cross.



Precious stone and gold jewelry, including a necklace of carnelian (the dark red stone), dating to the 14th century B.C. and excavated at Deir el-Balah, near Gaza, Israel.

- **Emerald.** The emerald was probably the green emerald. Those who like to find spiritual thoughts in the Bible have suggested that the jasper stand for the unbearable brightness of the purity of God. The gentle green of the emerald speaks of His great mercy. There is comfort for the heart in these spiritual observations.

In a circle around the throne John saw twenty-four other thrones and upon each throne there was seated an elder who was clothed in a white garment and who wore a golden crown upon the head. These twenty-four elders appear quite often in the Revelation (4:4,10; 5:8,14; 11:16; 19:4) and they are not silent.

- They cast their crowns before the throne 4:10
- They worship and praise God 5:11,14; 7:11; 11:16
- They bring the prayers of the saints before God 5:8
- When John is sad, one of the elders encourages him 5:5
- One of the elders acts as an interpreter of one of the visions 7:13

A number of suggestions have been offered as to the identity of the elders. Based upon the following passages, it has been suggested that the elders are simply a representative for a council surrounding God (1 Kings 22:19; Job 1:6; 2:1; Isa. 24:23). It may be that the Jewish imagery here is really of a Babylonian origin for the Babylonians had 24 star gods. Worship of the stars was strong in the religion of Babylon. It has been suggested that the 24 elders correspond to the 24 priestly orders (1 Chron. 24:7-18) each serving in due time. Certainly there are some similarities for the Levites—praised God with harps and cymbals (1 Chron. 25:6-31 cf. Rev. 5:8); the priests worshipped so do the elders; the priests were 24 courses in number so there are 24 thrones; the priests offered prayers on behalf of the saints so do the elders (5:8)

Another possibilities is that the 24 elders represent the 12 patriarchs of the 12 tribes of Israel plus the 12 apostles. The unity of the patriarchs and the apostles is found again in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:12,14). The 24 elders may be a symbolic representation of all the faithful people of God in all the ages. Consider that,

- the white robes are the robes promised to all who are faithful (3:4).
- the crowns (*stephanoi*) are the crowns promised to all who are faithful unto death (2:10).
- the thrones are those which Jesus promised to all who love and follow Him (Matt. 19:27-29).

Why the number 24? Perhaps the answer lies in realizing that in Israel there are 12 tribes; in the Church there are Jews and Gentiles. If the number is doubled we have the Church in its totality. What is certain is that,

- heaven is a real place
- God Almighty is majestically glorious
- God is worthy of all praise
- the whole church, Jew and Gentile, Old Testament and New Testament, adore Him and rule with Him. Herein is the Church glorious and triumphant. Let the word go forth that the things that are to be begin with a vision of God.

A Sea of Glass: Revelation 4:6-11

As John continued to gaze upon the majestic scene in heaven his eyes beheld the beautiful rainbow which surrounded the throne of God. In appearance the rainbow had the color of a green emerald. The reference to the rainbow would remind a person familiar with the Old Testament of two things. First, the rainbow would remind a reader or listener of the covenant God made with Noah after the flood (Gen. 9:11-17). In biblical terms a covenant is a gracious under-taking entered into by God for the benefit and blessing of men, in particular men of faith who had received the promises of God and committed themselves to the obligations which the undertaking involves. Genesis 9 records the covenant God made with Noah. The specific proposals involved the following.

- Noah and his family were to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth.
- There was to be a dramatic dishonoring between man and animal resulting in fear (Gen. 9:2)
- Man was allowed to eat animal meat as well as vegetables.
- Man was not to eat blood (Gen. 9:4).
- Murderers were to be executed (Gen. 9:5-6).
- Never again would the earth be destroyed by water in a universal manner.

The sign that God used to confirm His covenant with Noah was the rainbow in the sky. Every rainbow today is a reminder of the faithfulness of God in keeping His word. When John saw the rainbow around the throne of God he was reminded of the God who keeps His word. John might well have been reminded of Ezekiel's vision as well where that great prophet also saw the glory of God and a rainbow around His throne (Ezek. 1:28). In addition to the rainbow, John saw twenty-four elders clothed in white robes wearing crowns of gold. The lightening and thunder and voices that emanated from the throne impressed John. Once again the mind turns to the Old Testament. Ezekiel saw lightening come out of the fiery veil around the throne (Ezek. 1:13). The psalmist writes of the voice of the thunder of God being heard in heaven (Psa. 77:18). Job observed that God sends His lightening to the ends of the earth (Job 37:4). However, the most familiar scene is the description of Mt. Zion. When the Law was given the Bible says, "*that there were thunders and lightning, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled*" (Ex. 19:16). John also saw before the throne something, which defied description. It could only be compared to a great sea of glass. Scholars have given a great deal of thought to the image of a sea of glass before the throne of God and where John might have found such a scene before. Several things have been suggested.



Glass vessels from the Roman period.

1. In the Old Testament period many Jews thought of the heavens as forming a vast dome arching over the earth. Beneath the dome was the earth. Beyond the dome was the dwelling place of God. The floor of this dwelling place was a kind of a great sea. On that sea God set this throne (Psa. 104:30). *"God layeth the beams of His chambers in the waters."*
2. Another possibility for the sea of glass is bound up in John's identity with the Aegan Sea that surrounded the isle of Patmos. It may be that when the great apostle looked down upon the sea from the heights of Patmos it was like a sea of glass.
3. Then there is another interesting thought. It is said that Solomon in his palace had a floor of glass that looked so much like a sea that when the Queen of Sheba came to visit she picked up her skirts thinking she had to wade through water (Koran, *Sura 27*).

Whatever the origin of the scene, Dr. William Barclay observes three things that the shining glass does.

1. It symbolizes something precious (Job 28:17). Today, glass is common place but in the ancient world it was rare and as valuable as gold.
2. It represents dazzling purity.
3. It symbolizes immense distance and therefore reverences for God.

By way of review, what does this entire mean?

- Heaven is real.
- Heaven is a place that defies human's ability to describe it.
- Heaven is a place for the people of God who love God and who enjoy light, righteousness, and worship.
- Heaven is full of strange sights and sounds that still have literal, spiritual meaning for the saints. Heaven is our home.

- The focal point of heaven is the sovereign rule and reign of God.

Moving from the majestic throne encircled by twenty-four elders and rainbow and the sea of glass before the throne, John is witness to the appearance of four beasts or creatures. These creatures are like nothing John has ever seen before for the living creatures

- Had many eyes all around their bodies.
- The first beast looked to John like a lion.
- The second beast appeared like a calf.
- The third beast had a man's face.
- The fourth creature appeared like a flying eagle.

In addition to this unusual appearance the four living creatures had each of them six wings. They did not sleep day or night but cried, "*Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.*" What is to be made these four strong living creatures. Are they real? Are they literal? Are they symbolic? Does God really have such strange creatures flying around His throne day and night? Does the vision of John set forth the literalness of heaven or does John see and communicate spiritual truths in a more concrete manner. Certainly God is able to establish heaven as He sees fit and it may very well be that there exists in another dimension of time and space a literal throne encircled by a rainbow with twenty-four elders and a sea of glass. And around the throne are literal living creatures that do not rest but cry. "*Holy, holy, holy.*" Certainly God has made some strange and hideous looking creatures here on earth and they too glorify Him. How cockroaches and eels and gelia monsters glorify the Lord, I am not sure but they do. Everything has been made by God and for His good pleasure. Therefore, to find strong living creatures in heaven should not surprise us but they can teach us.

1. They teach us the value of being near the throne and the Lamb. Whenever we find the Living Creatures they are near the throne (Rev. 4:6; 5:6; 14:4).
2. They teach us to be the willing servants of God. The Living Creatures have specific duties to perform (6:1; 6:7; 15:7).
3. The Living Creatures teach us to constantly praise the Lord (4:8; 5:9; 5:14; 7:11; 19:4).
4. They teach us that the throne of God is sacred and is to be watched and guarded at all times.
5. The Living Creatures teach us that all of nature engages in worship of God. The Living Creatures represent noblest, strangest, wisest, and swiftest in nature (cf. Psa. 19:1,2; 103:22; 148).

The Doctrine of the Backslider

1. Definition: to backslide is to revert to sin or wrongdoing; to lapse morally or in the practice of religion. It refers to the lapse of the nation of Israel into paganism and idolatry.
2. The term "*backslider*" is found in only three Old Testament books: Proverbs, Jeremiah, and Hosea.
3. The word in all of its forms is used only 17 times.
 - *Prov. 14:14 The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways: and a good man shall be satisfied from himself.*
 - *Jer 2:19 Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord GOD of hosts.*
 - *Jer 3:6 The LORD said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Hast thou seen that which backsliding Israel hath done? She is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot.*
 - *Jer 3:8 And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also.*
 - *Jer 3:11 And the LORD said unto me, The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah.*
 - *Jer 3:12 Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the LORD, and I will not keep anger for ever.*
 - *Jer 3:14 Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion:*
 - *Jer 3:22 Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the LORD our God.*
 - *Jer 5:6 Wherefore a lion out of the forest shall slay them, and a wolf of the evenings shall spoil them, a leopard shall watch over their cities: every one that goeth out thence shall be torn in pieces: because their transgressions are many, and their backslidings are increased.*
 - *Jer 8:5 Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? They hold fast deceit, they refuse to return.*

- *Jer 14:7 O LORD, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name's sake: for our backsliding are many; we have sinned against thee.*
- *Jer 31:22 How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter? For the LORD hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man.*
- *Jer 49:4 Wherefore gloriest thou in the valleys, thy flowing valley, O backsliding daughter? that trusted in her treasures, saying, Who shall come unto me?*
- *Hosea 4:16 For Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer: now the LORD will feed them as a lamb in a large place.*
- *Hosea 11:7 And my people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt him.*
- *Hosea 14:4 I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him.*

4. The Hebrew words for backslider is:

- *meshuwbah* (mesh-oo-baw) (Jeremiah 3:6); apostasy
 - *suwg* (soog) (Proverbs 14:14); a primitive root; properly to flinch, i.e. (by implication) to go back, literally (to retreat) or figuratively (to apostatize)
 - *showab* (sho-bawh) (Jeremiah 3:14); apostate, i.e. idolatrous
 - *showbeb* (sho-babe') (Jeremiah 31:22); apostate, i.e., heathenish or (actually heathen)
 - *sarar* (saw-rar') (Hosea 4:16) a primitive root; to be torn away, i.e. (morally) be refractory
5. The backslider is considered by God to be an apostate and an apostate does not have eternal life. An apostate has never had eternal life even though there has been a measure of gospel light. Like a dog returning to his vomit, like a pig returning to his wallowing in the mud, the backslider, the apostate, the wolf in sheep clothing will show his true nature with the passing of time.
 6. By the grace of God a backslider can enjoy a genuine conversion experience by turning to God according to gospel terms.
 7. It is a false assurance of salvation for a person to believe that he can LIVE as a backslider and still go to heaven.

The Royal Reign of Christ

Revelation

Chapter 5

The Lion and the Lamb: Revelation 5:1-7

The scene and the setting for this chapter is chapter four. In John four John has been invited to enter into the very hallways of heaven as the angel said, *“Come up hither and I will show thee things which must be hereafter.”* The first thing John saw was the glorious throne of God. It sparkled in brilliant colors of light. There were flashes of lightening and peals of thunder. There were voices and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God. There was a sea of glass before the throne as well as four living creatures. And there were twenty-four elders, which worship the Lord as they cast their crowns before the throne saying, *“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for thou hast created all things and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”* The focus of John's attention shifts in chapter five from the majestic display of splendor of things surrounding the throne to the Person on the throne. In particular John observes that in the right hand of God was a scroll, a book, written on both sides. The scroll was sealed with seven seals. The right hand was considered by the ancients to be the hand of power and might. Whatever the scroll contained was secure in the hands of the Lord. This scene teaches us:

- the absolute sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ
- the authority of Jesus. None else in heaven was competent to handle the important scroll.
- the detail that the scroll contained for it was written on both sides. The truth is conveyed that the Lord takes care of the details of life.

As John focused his attention on the scroll in the hand of the Lord, he suddenly heard a strong angel calling with a loud voice, *“Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose the seals thereof?”* The question is more rhetorical in nature than a search for an answer for the reality is that neither angels nor man nor animal nor any created thing is worthy to open the scroll or even to look upon it. The secret things belong to the Lord. The reason that John was so disturbed by this fact was that the scroll contained the will of God. There is a parallel to be found in life. Under Roman law the will of a person was sealed with seven seals observed by seven witnesses. The will could only be opened when all seven witnesses or their legal representatives were present. The scroll John sees is God's final settlement of the affairs of the universe. John longs to know the will of the Lord (5:4) and is not disappointed for one of the elders said unto him, *“Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judaea, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.”* From this passage we can observe several things.

1. No one can frustrate the Plan of God. John had been told he would be shown things to come. Now it seemed as if that promise would not be fulfilled. However, what God proposes God dispose and the will of the Lord will be made known.

2. There is someone who is worthy to receive the message of God even the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. Here is a great challenge for every teacher, pastor and person who loves. There must be someone capable of receiving the message.
3. The Christian must "*weep not*" but rejoice. Remember how Jesus comforted people in the days of his flesh. To the widow of Nain who was mourning her dead son the Lord said, "*Weep not*" (Luke 7:13). To Jairus and his family who was distraught over the death of their little girl Jesus said, "*Weep not*" (Luke 8:52). Now to John come the comforting words of Christ in heaven. Hear Him as He say, "*Weep not.*"

Henry Swete observes that the tears of John were really unnecessary. Had John had more sufficient knowledge he would not have cried. So often that is true of us. A situation presents itself and we become fearful and weep because we do not see things as God sees them. There is another thought in our passage and that is the right of Jesus to open the scroll. He has prevailed to open the book and to loose the seven seals. Jesus is the triumphant One over the cross, over death and over the grave. He has prevailed so that He is able to know the secrets of God. He is able to reveal the secrets of God. He is able to control the secrets of God. Jesus Christ is sufficient for all these things because He is the Lamb that was slain.

Here in 5:5-6 we have a majestic picture of Christ for the Lamb slain has seven horns and seven eyes. The seven horns speak of the perfect omnipotence of Christ. In other places in the Bible horns are often used to symbolize power (Deut. 33:17; 1 Kings 22:11; Psa. 75:4; Zech. 1:18). Horns are also used as symbols of honor (Psa. 89:17; 112:9; 148:14). All knowledge, all power in heaven and on earth, and all honor belongs to Christ. The seven eyes stand for the omniscience of God (Zech 4:10). Here then is the fulfillment of the hopes and dreams of the true spiritual Israel.

- Jesus is the Lion of the tribe of Judah.
- Jesus is the Root of David.
- Jesus is the Lamb slain.
- Jesus is invested with all power and all knowledge.

Therefore, with holy boldness will the Lord take the book from the hand of the Father (5:7).

A Song Sung in Heaven

The Four Living Creatures and the Twenty-four Elders sang:

*"Thou art worthy to take the book,
and to open the seals thereof:
For thou wast slain, and hast redeemed
us to God by thy blood out of every
kindred, and tongue, and people, and nations:
And hast made us unto our God kings
and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."*

Then the Angels and the Four Living Creatures and the Twenty-four Elders sang:

*“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain
to receive power, and riches
And wisdom, and strength, and honor,
and glory, and blessing.”*

Next, every Creature, which was in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them sang:

*“Blessing, and honor, and glory and
power, be unto Him that sitteth
upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for
ever and ever.”*

Finally, the Four Living Creatures sang:

“Amen”!

The Day the Heavenly Host Sang: Revelation 5:8-14

As Jesus Christ comes forward to receive the sealed scroll from the Personage on the throne, all of creation breaks forth in glorious praise. The greatest chorus of praise in the universe comes in three waves. First, there is the song of praise from the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures (5:8). Second, there is the praise of a multitude of angels (5:11). Finally, John sees every created creature, in every part of the universe joining in a song of praise. As there are three groups singing so there are three stanzas to the heavenly music. The first stanza, sung by the twenty-four elders and the four living creature, accompanied by harps (cf. Psalm 33:2; 98:5; 147:7) contain these words. *“Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: For thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood Our of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nations. And has made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”* As the wonderful words fill the air, the angels join the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures to sing the second stanza saying with a loud voice, *“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, And wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.”*

Finally, all of creation joins in singing the third stanza saying, *“Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever, and ever. And the four living creatures sang, Amen!”* While the twenty-four elders fell down and worshipped Him that liveth for ever and ever. In analyzing this tremendous sang of glory the first thing that impresses us is who is doing the singing it is not surprising that the twenty-four elders sing for they represent the redeemed of all the ages both Jew and Gentile of the Old Testament and New Testament period. However, it is interesting that the four living creatures join the twenty-four elders. Another interesting observation is that the song takes place while the singers carrying a harp and a golden bowl full of incense, which are the prayers of saints. The harp was the instrument used to sing the Psalms (Psa. 33:2; 98:5; 147:7).

The golden bowls represented the prayers of God's people on behalf of others (Psa. 141:2). Here is the picture of intercessory prayer, at least that is how many have come to understand the imagery. The prayers of the saints on earth are changed to the care of the twenty-four elders in heaven. The ancient Jews liked very much the idea of heavenly intermediaries and wrote about it in the literature. For example, in the Testament of Dan (6:2) we read, *"Draw near to God and to the angel that intercedeth for you, for he is a mediator between God and man."* The Catholic Church has also made much to do about intermediaries in heaven, especially Mary and the canonized saints. The Biblical response is bound in 1 Timothy 2:5. *"For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."*

The Bible does not say that the twenty-four elders presented the prayers of the saints to God in an official capacity. The prayers of men while recognized, need no assistance. The ear of God is open to catch the faintest whisper of any call for help. There is another observation about the song and that it is a new song (5:9). In the original there are two words for new. There is the word *"neos"* which means new in point of time but not in quality much like a new car on an assembly line. There is the word *"kainos"* that means new in point of quality. It is the word *"kainos"* that is used by John. Jesus Christ comes to give us a quality to life, which consists of new joy, new strength, and new peace. In the book of the Revelation there are many new things.

- There is a new name 2:17; 3:12
- There is a new Jerusalem 3:12; 21:2
- There is a new song 5:9; 14:3
- There are new heavens and a new earth 21:1
- There is a great promise that all things shall be made new 21:5

Returning to 5:9-10, we have the words of the first stanza and they tell us some wonderful things concerning the death of Christ. First, it was a sacrificial death. Jesus was slain as a substitute for all who shall ever be saved. He literally took the place of you and me and all who shall be saved. Jesus was a perfect substitute for He was without sin. Second, it was a liberating death. Jesus came to deliver us from the power of sin, the domain of Satan, and the curse of the Law. Third, it was a definite redemption. One of the great theological questions of all times that has been endlessly debated is the question, *"For whom did Christ die?"* The biblical answer is that Jesus Christ accomplished something definite at the Cross-of-Calvary.

1. He redeemed us. Jesus did not provide a potential redemption. He actually redeemed us (1 Pet. 1:19). The purchasing price was His own precious blood.
2. Jesus has made us kings and priests. This is a spiritual reality.
3. And we shall reign on the earth. The Christian does reign on the earth even now by faith as we assist in the pulling down of bad governments, bad laws, and set up a spiritual kingdom that circles the globe. The reign is spiritual but real with materialistic overtones for the Church does own buildings and property. But these things do not constitute the essence of the reign of the saints. Rather, there is the essence of triumph that is found in victorious Christian living regardless of the circumstances of life. *"In the world, said Jesus, you shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33).

Because of what Christ has done it is only proper that all power be ascribed to Him (5:12) as well as the unsearchable riches (Eph. 3:8). To Him belongs the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:24) and the strength of God to disown the Evil One. To Him belongs the glory (John 1:14). Now wonder believers bless His holy name. No wonder all of heaven and earth join in singing the song of heaven (5:13).

Revelation 6 and Matthew 24

The Six Seals

The Olivet Discourse is found in Matthew, Mark, and Luke but not in the gospel of John. It may very well be that Revelation is John's expanded commentary on the Olivet Discourse. Consider the following parallel between what Jesus said and what John saw in his vision of the Revelation.

First Seal

- **Jesus said** there would be wars and rumors of war (Matt. 24:6).

John saw *"a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering and to conquer (Rev. 6:2).*

~*~

Second Seal

- **Jesus said** that nation would rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom (Matt. 24:7).

John saw *"another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat there on to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword (Rev. 6:3-4).*

~*~

Third Seal

- **Jesus said** that there would be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places (Matt. 24:7).

John saw *"a black horse: and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say,, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see that thou hurt not the oil and the wine" (Rev. 6:5-6).*

~*~

Fourth Seal

- **Jesus said** that there would be much sorrow during this period (Matt. 24:8-12).

John saw *a pale horse: and his name that sat upon him was Death and Hell followed him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth" (Rev. 6:7-8).*

~*~

Fifth Seal

- **Jesus said** that the saints would be killed (Matt. 24:9).

John saw the altar *"and under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony, which they held" (Rev. 6:9-11).*

~*~

Sixth Seal

- **Jesus said** that in the days of great tribulation the sun would be darkened, and the moon would not give light, and the stars would fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens would be shaken (Matt. 24:29).

John saw *"a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind (Rev. 6:12-13).*

Here is some internal evidence that the *Book of the Revelation* should be dated prior to the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. Here is internal evidence for an *early* dating of the *Book of the Revelation*.

The Royal Reign of Christ

Revelation

Chapter 6



*Revelation 6 The four horsemen,
the souls of the martyrs, and the cosmic scroll.
Painting by Joe Maniscalco. Copyright © Joe Maniscalco.*

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: Revelation 6:1-2

By way of review we want to reiterate that the presupposition that is guiding our study is that the Lord showed to John things which must shortly come to pass (Rev. 1:1). There is a sense of urgency to the Revelation that would have been meaningful to John and to his generation if they were facing persecution for their faith and if God was about to unleash His fury upon mankind in judgment. When we look at the historical record we find that the saints were persecuted and needed comforting. We find also that God was about to release His wrath upon the Jews in Jerusalem in particular. Forty years before the event, Jesus Christ Himself had warned of the impending judicial divine judgment (Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21). The beginning of the end of Israel may be found in the year AD 66. It was in AD 66 that a Jewish revolt took place against the overbearing and careless Roman procurator Gessius Florus. From May through November the Jews reacted against his reign. The situation for the Roman procurator became unmanageable. As a result Neapolitanus, a Roman military tribune, was sent from Antioch by Cestius Gallus, the Roman governor of Syria, to try to calm the Jews. But the Jews refused to be pacified and in the battle, which followed the Jews actually, gained the upper hand for the moment against the troops of the governor of Syria. Cestius actually had to order a retreat, which he did amidst great rejoicing by the Jews. However, Rome was far from through showing her military might to the Jews. When word reached Nero in Rome about the explosive situation unfolding in Israel, Nero made a fatal decision. He commissioned a seasoned general, Vespasian to put down the revolt against imperial Rome and to restore the *Pax Roman*. The stage was set for the excesses of hostilities on both sides. Rome officially declared war on the Jews in February, AD 67, when Vespasian received his commission from Nero. It was no question of who would win the contest. The Jews could not even dare to think they would be able to destroy all the legions of the Roman army but with war fever raging the people were willing to try.

Shortly after Vespasian received his orders from Rome he landed his troops north of Jerusalem. He went forth "*conquering and to conquer*" (Rev. 6:2). But the conquest was not to come easily to Rome for the Jews in Jerusalem turned into a formidable foe. Also, the political chaos into which the Roman Empire fell helped to delay the Day of Judgment. It was in AD 68 that Nero committed suicide and power vacuum of leadership was created. Galba (AD 68-69), Otho (AD 69), and Vitellius (AD 69), all made a bid for power in one year's time to sit on the imperial throne of Rome but were all overthrown. Finally, Vespasian left the Jewish problems to his son Titus and returned to Rome to rule as Emperor. While Vespasian brought stability back to government his son, General Titus found he had a major problem with the Jews. He decided that one good way to force the Jews into submission was to surround the city with soldiers and starve the people into submission or at least weaken their will to resist invasion. For forty two months, from 1260 days, for three and one half years, the Roman army made war with Israel and during that awful time period, the four horsemen of the apocalypse rode. The ride of the horsemen was foretold in the vision of John as recorded in our passage. Before examining the interpretation of this passage, several general observations should be made.

1. What John sees is what Jesus foretold in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21.
2. The turbulent action of Revelation begins with this portion of the vision. Remember that the book of *Revelation* is in reality amplification and an explanation of the seals of the scroll in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne and only Jesus Christ can break the seal. Therefore, back of all history is God in Christ.
3. The origin of this portion of the vision can be found in Zechariah 6:1-8. In the vision of Zechariah there are four horses which are let loose upon the earth to exact vengeance upon Babylon and Egypt and all the nations that have oppressed God's people. In John's vision, the four horsemen are set loose to ride again.
4. Each of the horsemen represents forces of destruction and is the agent of wrath.
 - On the White Horse rides Conquest 6:1-2
 - On the Red Horse rides War 6:3-4
 - On the Black Horse rides Famine 6:5-6
 - On the Pale Horse rides Pestilence 6:7-8

Because Israel had rejected the Lord and His Anointed, because Israel had persecuted the apostles and the saints, because Israel had not repented Israel would hear the hoofbeats of the four horsemen of the apocalypse. Beginning AD 66 the first horseman was riding and by AD 70 all the horses of the apocalypses were prancing back and forth across the land of Palestine and Jerusalem for there was conquest and war and famine and pestilence in the land. Looking at each horseman in particular, John saw the Lord as the Lamb of God open the first seal on the scroll. There was the sound of thunder and one of the four living creatures said, "*Come!*" The Authorized Version has the words "*come and see*" but the older manuscripts have the single word "*come*." The command is not for John to "*come and see*" but rather for the rider of the first horse to come and he does. As John witnesses the scene he beheld, "*a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.*"

Who is this personage on the white horse with a bow and a crown and power to conquer? As early as Irenaeus the effort was made to identify the first rider as Jesus Christ or at least the positive progression of the gospel. One author writes, *"The color of the horse would suggest heavenly purity; the crown suggest royalty; the bow represents His means of overcoming His enemies; He goes forth to a continued victorious march for God. The progressive advance of the cause of Christ will continue until every foe vanquished. The victorious rider on the white horse represents the victorious course of the gospel."* (Ray Summers). As appealing as this thought is there is more to be said against this identification than for it.

- The White Horse rides with the other three not in contrast to them. Together, they convey calamities.
- The Lamb is the one who has opened the seal in distinction to the vision itself. The picture presented is not that of Christ the victor but of the terrors of the wrath of God being poured out.

To those who first heard what John saw, a definite mental picture might have been formed in their mind. There was one enemy whom the Romans feared: the Parthians who dwelt on the Far Eastern frontiers of the Empire. The Parthians were the scourge of Rome and for good reason. It was in the year AD 62 that an almost unprecedented event had occurred. The Parthian king Vologeses I defeated Roman general and his army forcing him to surrender. The Parthians rode white horses and were the most famous bowmen in the world. In cryptic but understandable language John was telling the Church that if God so desired he could send at any moment a military power to conquer the forces of Rome or the forces of Judaism represented by the Zealots. By presenting this picture of militarism and conquest John is not trying to make military conquest to be something glamorous. Just the opposite. He is painting a picture of horror, not for the Church but on behalf of the church. God Almighty has a controversy with those who have hurt His people. During the Spanish Civil war of the 1930's a journalist told how he suddenly realized what war was. He was in a Spanish city in which the opposing parties were waging guerrilla warfare. He saw walking along the pavement a little boy, obviously lost, and bewildered and terrified, dragging along a toy which had lost its wheels. Suddenly there was the crack of a rifle shot, and the little boy pitched on the ground, dead. That is war. God has a controversy with those who hurt His people. That is the message that will be communicated time after time after time to the Church in order to encourage them. The rulers of Rome, the leaders of Judaism would have been wise to listen to the prophet of God on the isle of Patmos. He was warning them that almighty God had called forth the first horse of the apocalypse to ride.

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: Revelation 6:3-6

As the Four Horsemen are called to ride across the stage of human history, divine justice is satisfied and the martyred saints are vindicated. Beginning with Stephen, Christians were dying for the cause of Christ. Within days after the glorified resurrected Savior ascended into heaven, the full fury of Judaism was turned against the small sect of Christian community. The high priest along with the Sanhedrian and the council had decreed that Jesus of Nazareth was not the Messiah. They determined that He was not the King of the Jews but was an impostor, a blasphemer and was worthy of death. That was the official and final verdict. Members of the Sanhedrian such as Saul of Tarsus was willing to travel any distance and use whatever force was

necessary to stop the spread of the faith of people being in Jesus Christ. By imprisonment, by stoning, by starvation, by fear and intimidation, the called out ones would be exterminated. But the blood drops of the martyrs became the seed of the Church from which grew a multitude of new converts. The more intense and bloody the persecution the more powerful the early Church grew. Men, women, and children were slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony, which they held. As Jesus Christ watched the persecution of His people from heaven, He stood in honor to welcome them to their heavenly home. He also moved to exact vengeance upon Judaism and Rome. To encourage the Lord in His holy vow, the martyred saints cried out in heaven itself for their blood to be avenged on those who dwelt upon the earth (6:9-10). From this scene we learn something about the redeemed, glorified saints in heaven.

- Heaven is not a place where the affairs of life are forgotten. If anything, heaven is the place where the petitions of the saints grow louder for there is a greater sense of justice.
- In heaven there is righteous indignation. The saints wanted justice to be administered immediately. The Divine response was to allow the Four Horsemen to ride.

The First Rider on the White Horse was Conquest. He went forth conquering and to conquer. Suddenly, the Second Living Creature cried, "*COME!*" and the Second Rider on the Red Horse went forth. The purpose of the Second Rider was to take peace from the earth. History records that it happened. For all the fame of the *Pax Romana*, there were periods of great bloodshed and violence on a massive scale within the confines of the Roman republic. Several events can be noted that took place between AD 30 to AD 70. It was the year AD 61 in Britain that there arose the rebellion connected with the name of Queen Boadicea. The Romans crushed the rebellion, Boadicea committed suicide but over 150,000 men perished in the conflict. Then there is the matter of the civil war in Rome. From AD 30 to AD 70 no fewer than eight men ruled the Imperial Empire. The men who ruled came to the throne and kept the throne by keeping the edge of their sword whet with the dripping blood of their would be rivals.

As Roman fought Roman so Jew fought Jew. Brother fought against brother, and neighbor against neighbor. There was religious unrest illustrated by the persecution of Jewish leaders towards Jewish Christian. There was political unrest as the general public wanted to be free from the rulers of Rome. They did not like the humiliating laws such as the one that compelled a Jew to carry the burden of a Roman citizen one-mile. Contributing to the religious and political unrest in Palestine were a group of nationalist called The Zealots. These violent fanatics were willing to assassinate any Roman they could kill. As the year AD 70 approached, it seemed as if peace was taken from the earth. People by the hundreds of thousands took a sword to kill one another. The Rider of the Red Horse heard the Divine summons and he responded. What is to be made of all of this? By way of interpretation, when we ask, "*What does this mean?*" "Who is John writing to and why?" the immediate answer is obvious. John is writing in symbolic language to the seven churches in Asia. Why? He has a message for the suffering saints. He wants them to know that God will protect His own. If they are killed for the faith, God will avenge them. The heavenly horsemen will ride and they did ride so that this portion of prophecy is fulfilled. That is the nature of biblical prophecy. Biblical prophecy is not open ended but specific and relevant. It always has an ending so that the prophet can be tested. This general

principle as set forth in Deuteronomy 18:20-22 does not removed all the difficulties of prophetic interpretation.

One area of concern regards prophecies that require a long period of time for fulfillment. For example. There is some long range prophecies that have been made. Ezekiel, Daniel, Jeremiah and others made pronouncements against certain nations such as Ammon, Assyria, Babylon, Edom, Egypt, Greece, Moab, Persia, Philistia, Phenicia, Rome, and Syria (Damascus). In the name of the Lord, the prophets of God foretold the certain destruction or victories of these nations in world affairs. The prophets of God made pronouncements with reference t specific individuals such as Tiglath-pileser III, Sennacherib, Ashurbanipal, Jehoicachin, Zedekiah, Nebuchadnezzar, Ben-Hadad II, and Hazeal.

From the vantage point of time it is easy in many cases to recognize what the prophets said would happen and what the historical records says did happen. In some of these cases many years passed between the prophecy and its fulfillment. The scriptures recognize the concern that people feel when prophecies are not quickly fulfilled. Tension is created. Habakkuk 2:3 says, *"The vision is yet for the appointed time, and it hasteth toward the end and shall not lie; though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not delay."* Certainly, the Messianic prophecies once fell under this area of concern. Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah and many others all made predictions that transcended the centuries until the fullness of time when God brought forth His Son. They could make prediction that was far reaching because their own authority was firmly established in the day in which they lived. Moses could speak of the Great Prophet that would come (Ex. 18:15) because he had established the truthfulness of his character. The people remembered that when Moses predicted that on a specific day God would furnish food in the desert for more than 600,000 men, it came to pass (Num. 11:21-22). When Isaiah made predictions against Edom, Moab, and Ammon and the events came to pass he could make prophetic utterances that would transcend the centuries because so many of his other prophecies had been fulfilled. Concerning the fulfillment of Old Testament prophesies two things should be kept in mind.

- The New Testament interprets the Old Testament.
- When this is done, the scriptures are to be accepted and believed.

In Matthew 11:1-10 Jesus taught that John the Baptist fulfilled the prophecy of Malachi 3:1. The New Testament interpreted the Old Testament. Another example of this principle is Acts 2:16 compared to Joel 2:38-30. Peter plainly states that what is taking place is the fulfillment of predictive prophecy. A third illustration is Hebrews 8:8-13 which can be compared to Jeremiah 31:31. The new covenant to Israel is given to the true, new Israel, the Church of Jesus Christ. When the question is asked as to how to identify the fulfillment of prophecy, the answer in part is twofold: look to the history books and believe the New Testament statements. These simple solutions will help to solve most of the concern over prophetic passages. A few predictions are still enigmatic (Isa. 19:2,4). Other predictions have no historical parallels. There is still room for study, which should not be surprising considering the vast number of passages to work with. According to one author, of the 23, 210 verses in the Old Testament, 6, 641 are prophetic (28 %) while of the 7,914 verses in the New Testament, 1,711 are prophetic (21.5%). Of the 31,124 verses in the Bible, 8,352 are prophetic (27%).

For our study, the argument is being made that much of the once prophetic material has been fulfilled. There are certain things yet to be fulfilled such as the Second Advent of Christ, the general resurrection of the dead, the transformation of a privileged generation so that they will not see death, the judgment seat of Christ, the judgment of fallen angels and the creation of a new heaven and a new earth. In the book of the *Revelation*, there are some things that are predicted that must still come to pass but we cannot ignore the now historical fulfillment of much of the scripture. We must not forget that, The Apocalypse was composed to inspire endurance against Roman persecution (Rev. 17:6,18) on the part of Christians from the churches of Asia Minor (cf. 1:9-11; 14:2). John himself had been banished to the island of Patmos, SW of Ephesus, and his rally cry is for the Asian saints to "*be faithful until death*" and so receive the Lord's crown (Rev. 2:10).

As John writes he is not only a predictor of events but also a forth teller of the will of God. He calls the churches to repentance and he warns the nations of the earth that if they dare to hurt the saints the Four Horsemen of Divine Judgment will ride across the land. There is the First Rider on a White Horse. The Man With A Bow went forth conquering and to conquer. There is the Second Rider on a Red Horse. The Man with A Sword went forth to war and to take peace from the earth. There is the Third Rider on a Black Horse. The Rider carried a Pair of Scales in his hand and he went forth to induce famine. The Jews were no strangers to famines. God had warned the people that if they were disobedient He would send a famine (Rev. 26:26; Ezek 4:16). As the Sovereign over nature, the Lord knows just what to do.

As John sees the situation, the famine is very severe and causes extreme hardships but it is not desperate enough to kill. There is wheat—at an inflated price; and the wine and the oil are not affected. History records that in the days of Nero there were desperate famines in the land. The rich became richer and the poor became poorer. One event is recorded of a ship, which arrived in Italy from Alexandria. A large crowd had gathered to greet in hunger the ship they thought carried corn. A riot broke out when it was discovered that the cargo was not corn but a special kind of sand from the Nile delta. The sand was to be used in the arena for a gladiatorial show. While the poor starved the rich made sure they had the best entertainment their money could buy. What did Rome care if the Jews had to work a whole day just to buy enough corn to eat for the day with no money left over for the other necessities of life. Time would pass and the scarcity of food that the Jews discovered also affected the Roman citizens as well. In the midst of civil war, in the midst of political unrest it is difficult to establish a sound agricultural market. The Rider of the Black Horse would find it easy to induce famine.

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: Revelation 6:7-8

After witnessing the Rider on the Black Horse, John watches as the fourth seal is broken and the Fourth Rider was commanded to, "*COME.*" On him was Death and Hell. The Fourth Rider was allowed to slaughter 1/4 of the earth's population with hunger, death (by pestilence), and wild beasts. Concerning this passage of scripture, the following points can be observed.

- The word for pale is *chlores* and refers to a color of green. It was a Pale-Green Horse that John saw representing all that is sickly, putrid, and gangrened.

- As a whole the Four Horsemen reflect the four terrible judgments God has always visited upon the nations of the Earth. Ezekiel 14:21 declares, *"For thus saith the Lord God, How much more when I send my four soon judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast?"* (Lev. 26:21-26).

John testifies to a traditional, not futuristic, picture of God's wrath. The Four Horsemen of conquest, war, famine, and pestilence express the Lord's sovereignty over nature and His rule of the nations with a rod of iron. The reference to hell in 6:8 demands more attention. The word is better-translated *"hades"*.

When the Heavens Fall: Revelation 6:9-17

Before we examine the text of the passage we want to review the presuppositions that are guiding our understanding.

1. Revelation was written prior to the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70.
2. Revelation was written for the expressed purpose of warning the churches to be found faithful and that the churches should be comforted. The resurrected Lord will judge those who dared to hurt His saints which was being done by the non Christian Jewish community and by the Roman Empire.
3. What John saw in the Revelation is a simplification of what Jesus predicted would happen to His generation in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21.
4. John saw things that must shortly come to pass. Jesus said, *"This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled."*
5. What Jesus predicted were days of vengeance (Luke 21:22) to be visited upon national Israel for their rejection of the Son of God as the Messiah. Either what Jesus predicted came to pass or it did not. We contend that what Jesus said would happen to Israel in particular and the nations of the Earth in general did happen in AD 70. The wrath of God was poured out upon the Earth. The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse rode. There was a time of great tribulation.

One major argument against a historical fulfillment of the words of Christ in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 are the words of Jesus who said of the tribulation period that, *"For then shall be great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be."* The common argument is this. Since the Jews have known greater tribulation than what took place in AD 70 then the words of Christ must still be futuristic. It is pointed out that while one million Jews were killed in AD 70, more than six million were killed during World War II. The result of this type of thinking is that a large portion of Christians believe that the four and one half million Jews in Israel today are doomed for yet another Holocaust. Depending upon which prophetic expert is read, two out of three Jews of some generation, perhaps ours, is doomed to liquidation. It is inevitable. A more biblical and historical response to this type of thinking is, *"Not necessarily."* To begin with, the words of Jesus in Matthew 24:21 are a figure of

speech, a hyperbole, used many times in the Bible to describe great judgment and calamity. The use of hyperbole is well illustrated in the following passages.

- Consider 2 Kings 18:5. In this passage Hezekiah is declared to be the godliest of all the kings of Judah. No one after him, no one before him was as godly. However, when we turn to 2 Kings 23:25 we read of King Josiah who came right after Hezekiah. King Josiah is also declared to be the most godly king of Judah. There is a terrible contradiction unless we understand the language of hyperbole.
- Consider Exodus 10:14 cf. Joel 1:4-7
- Consider Exodus 11:6 cf. to the Holocaust of AD 70.
- Consider Ezekiel 5:9. God promised Israel that He would not bring another calamity upon Jerusalem like the one He brought in Ezekiel's day. But He did in AD 70.
- Daniel 9:12 and Joel 2:2 uses proverbial and hyperbolic language.

We believe that the language of Matthew 24:21 can have a historic fulfillment when properly understood. However, there are some ways in which the language can be taken more literally.

- The nature of the tribulation that the Lord Jesus had in mind in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 is without equal in history. Why? Because no other crime can be heinous as killing the Lord of Glory (1 Cor. 2:8 cf. Luke 24:20; Acts 3:12-26; 1 Thess. 2:15; Luke 11:50-52; John 18:15; Matt. 27:24-26; Luke 11:14-15; Matt. 12:31-32; 1 Thess. 2:14-16).
- By linking the nature of the crime to the great tribulation of AD 70 it is obvious that no other generation will be given the chance to kill the Lord Of lords.
- The great tribulation was confined mainly to Israel. There is no other time in Jewish history that the Jews suffered as severely as they did in their own land as in AD 70. One reason why the Jews of Europe wanted to create the modern state of Israel was to have a country with borders that offered some protection.
- The fact that both the political and religious institutions were destroyed at once may account for the language of Christ.

In this final analysis there is no reason to push the predictions beyond the boundary that Jesus established in Matthew 24:34. In the book of the *Revelation* when John sees the resurrected Lamb opening the seven seals on the heavenly scroll, when John is a witness to the calling forth of the Four Horsemen to ride, when John is assured that the martyred saints will be avenged, when John beholds the heavens falling, he is merely amplifying what Jesus predicted would happen to a specific generation doomed to days of vengeance. As John saw the Lamb open the fifth seal, he saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God and for the testimony, which they held. Jesus had warned His followers time and again that they would

suffer persecution if they dared to be His true disciples (Matt. 24:9; Mark 13:9-13; Luke 21:12,18). People, like Saul of Tarsus, actually believed that they were doing God a favor by persecuting the Christians.

In the vision John noticed that the souls of the saints went to heaven and resided under the altar. That there is an altar in heaven is an interesting concept to study (Ex. 25:9,40; Num. 8:4,5). The souls beneath the altar would remind one of the fact that the lifeblood of the saints were poured out as an offering to God (cf. Phil. 2:17). The good life, the godly life in Christ is an offering to God. The words of 6:10 present a disturbing picture for some because what is recorded is a cry in heaven for justice and vengeance to be administered to those on earth who have killed the body of the saints. Are the words of 6:10 the reflection of a Christ like spirit? The answer is yes if Jesus Christ is presented as He really is. Though a God great of love, Jesus is also a God of justice and justice can be harsh. The justice of Christ is manifested in His anger (Mark 3:5), in His actions (John 2:15) and in His pronouncement of judgment (Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21), and eternal destruction (Matt. 5:22; 5:29; Luke 12:5; Luke 16). God has placed within the human heart a sense of fairness and righteousness. There is a holy anger to express without apology. For those who are found faithful in the service of the Lord even unto death, two things are given:

- a white robe of righteousness and
- a period of rest.

The apostle John sees something else in his vision and that is the fact that their brethren through the process of persecution would join the souls under the altar. This is not surprising. The story of Christianity is the story of violence and suffering. Leaving the scene of the Fifth Seal John observes the Lamb opening the Sixth Seal. As soon as the Seal was opened, John saw that, *"There was a great earthquake..."* (6:12- 7). The words of Christ in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 had predicted this (cf. Matt. 24:7). Jesus had spoken about the sun being darkened, the moon not giving its light and the stars falling from heaven (Matt. 24:29). What should be said about this?

1. It is obvious that John and Jesus are talking about the same time period which are the events surrounding the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. The purpose that Jesus said Jerusalem would be judged was for rejecting the Messiah. The purpose John sets forth for the judgment is to avenge the saints.
2. Both John and Jesus speak of great cataclysmic events characterized by the heavens falling. History records that there was a time when the sun became black as sackcloth and the moon became as blood. There was a time when the stars of heaven fell upon the earth even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken out of a mighty wind. There was a time when the heavens departed as a scroll when it rolls together and when every mountain and island moved out of its place. There was a time when the kings of the earth and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondsman, and every freeman, hid themselves in the dens and rocks of the mountains. History records that these things happened not once but several times including AD 70. Notice the apocalyptic language of the following passages.

- Obadiah 1-21
- Moab Jer. 48:1-47
- Ammon Jer. 9:26; 25:21; 49:6; Dan. 11:41; Amos 1:13; Zeph. 2:8,9
- Pentecost Acts 2:16-21 cf. Joel 2:28-30
- Jerusalem Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21

For John to appeal to earthquakes and a darken sun and the falling of stars and the folding of the heavens was for him to appeal to familiar language to Jews. The prophets had spoken of the great wrath of God in terms of earthquakes (Amos 8:8; Ezek. 38:19; Joel 2:10; Haggai 2:6); a darken sun (Amos 8:9; Isa. 13:10; 50:3; Ezek 32:7; Joel 2:31); falling stars (Isa. 34:4); folding of the heavens (Isa. 13:13; Psa. 102:25,26). Apart from the familiar, terrible language of the prophets representing God's strong dealings with the nations of the earth, history does record that during the time of AD 66 to AD 70 there were unusual events in the sky. There were earthquakes and the kings of the earth were afraid of what was happening to the world. By way of continual application consider,

- Even under judgment and the wrath of God men do not repent (6:15-16).
- Men try to hide from God but there is not hiding place except in the Ark of Salvation, which God Himself has provided in Jesus Christ.
- There is and there should be universal fear of God.
- Judgment is universal. No one shall ever escape Divine justice. Those who are in Christ have found to be judged at Calvary.

Revelation 6 and Matthew 24

The Olivet Discourse is found in Matthew, Mark, and Luke but not in the gospel of John. It may very well be that Revelation is John's expanded commentary on the Olivet Discourse. Consider the following parallel between what Jesus said and what John saw in his vision of the Revelation.

- **First Seal.** Jesus said there would be wars and rumors of war (Matt. 24:6). John saw *"a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering and to conquer."* (Rev. 6:2).



Revelation 6:2

*The victorious rider of the white horse appears
after the first of the seven seals is broken.*

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- **Second Seal.** Jesus said that nation would rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom (Matt. 24:7). John saw *"another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat there on to take peace from the earth and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword."* (Rev. 6:3-4).
- **Third Seal.** Jesus said that there would be famines, and pestilence, and earthquakes in divers places (Matt. 24:7).



Revelation 6:3-6 The riders of the red and black horses appear after the second and third seals are broken.

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- John saw *"a black horse: and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say,, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see that thou hurt not the oil and the wine"* (Rev. 6:5-6).



A Roman period scale used to weigh gold and silver, reconstructed using the original parts.

- **Fourth Seal.** Jesus said that there would be much sorrow during this period (Matt. 24:8-12). John saw a pale horse, *"and his name that sat upon him was Death and Hell followed him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth"* (Rev. 6:7-8).



The ghastly rider of the pale horse appears when the fourth seal is broke.

Painting by Joe Maniscalco. Copyright © Joe Maniscalco.

- **Fifth Seal.** Jesus said that the saints would be killed (Matt. 24:9). John saw the altar *"and under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony, which they held"* (Rev. 6:9-11).
- **Sixth Seal.** Jesus said that in the days of great tribulation the sun would be darkened, and the moon would not give light, and the stars would fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens would be shaken (Matt. 24:29). John saw *"a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind."* (Rev. 6:12-13).

The Royal Reign of Christ

Revelation

Chapter 7

The Sealing of 144,000 Saints: Revelation 7:1-8

Our study has brought us through the first six chapters of the book of the Revelation. In the first three chapters there were seven messages to the seven churches of Asia. In Chapter four we examined the majestic scene of the throne of God encircled with a rainbow. From the throne proceeded thundering and voices and lightening. Before the throne of God was a sea of glass. Nearby were four living creatures. In chapter five John saw in the hand of the sovereign of the universe a scroll with seven seals. As each seal was broken and the scroll unrolled something happened.

- The First Seal brought forth conquest [cold war] 6:1-2
- The Second Seal brought forth-open warfare 6:3-4
- The Third Seal brought forth famines 6:5-6
- The Fourth Seal brought forth death 6:7-8
- The Fifth Seal brought forth martyrdom 6:9-11
- The Sixth Seal brought forth geological and astrological disturbances 6:12-17

When the Seventh Seal is broken and the scroll is unrolled John sees the beginning of a second scene of judgments but only six in number. However, between the Sixth Seal and the Seventh Seal there is a heavenly interlude to show how God, in the midst of the wrath He is pouring out on the world will protect and seal the righteous. In the day of the wrath of God when He judges the nations of earth, it is obvious that Christians are caught in the middle. They do not deserve the fury of God's anger and yet they are caught up in the circumstances of life. Since men cannot see the God of heaven, they curse and kill His people, which moves God to further anger as He avenges His own. As John describes the outpouring of Divine judgment on Judaism and on Rome, he recognizes there will be a backlash. The saints will suffer martyrdom (6:9; 6:11). However, that is not the end of the story for God will seal His own. That has always been the practice of God. In the midst of judgment God will so move to protect His own. Not by taking them out of the world, but by keeping them in the world and brining them through the judgment. Consider the historical precedents.

- Noah and his family were brought out of great tribulation that fell upon the world, not by being translated into heaven but by being sealed inside the safety of an Ark.
- When God delivered Lot and His daughters from the wrath that fell on Sodom and Gomorrah, He did not translate them but gave Lot and his family a word of warning and sent holy angels to guide them to safety.
- When the Jews were in the land of Egypt and God judged the land, the faithful were not translated but protected by being sealed wit the blood of the Lamb.

- In AD 70, when Jerusalem fell to the Roman soldiers God delivered His people, not by translating them but by helping them to flee as the Christians remembered the words of their Lord and obeyed His instructions.

There is not a single passage in the New Testament, which promises that God's people will not be caught up in the judgment that falls upon nations or will be exempt from persecution. What is taught is that despite the pressures of this life the eternal status of the saints is secured for in time the Lord does seal His own. But the saints will come out of great tribulation (7:14). In chapter seven several great truths are taught.

- The mighty powers of the holy angels are under control (7:1-3). Angels are subject to authority. When the angel from the East bids the Four Angels holding the elements of nature in their hands to be still, the Four Angels obey.



Revelation 7 Angels hold back the four winds of strife.

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- Judgment is delayed in part till the servants of God have been sealed in their foreheads. As Satan seals his own in their foreheads by the number 666, God also identifies His own in their foreheads (7:3). What does that mean?

To begin with, it is interesting to note that the angel with the seal of the Living God comes from the East. It may be that the angel stands for life and the light that God gives to His people (as the sun rises in the East). It may also be that John has the angel of deliverance coming from the same direction as the star which told of the birth of the Savior (Matt. 2:12). Observe also that it is the Seal of the Living God, which John sees. The Living God is contrasted with the dead gods of the heathen (note Isa. 44:9-17). The Living God is also a source of comfort and encouragement for in times of trial and tribulation God will show His strength to His enemies (Josh. 3:10).

There is more. In the Living God only is there a soul relationship that satisfies (Psa. 42:2). What a great privilege it is to believe that God exists and we can know Him. Because God does exist He will mark His own in their forehead. Obviously, this is a symbolic reference here that contains a much needed spiritual lesson. The origin of this picture may be found in Ezekiel 9. In that prophetic vision, there is a man with an inkhorn who marks the forehead of those who will be spared the slaughter of judgment (9:1-7). Focusing upon the Seal itself it can be noted that Eastern kings wore a signet ring. The seal was used to authenticate documents that came from the hand of the king. There was an attempt to prevent forgery and distortion. When Joseph was appointed to be Prime Minister, Pharaoh gave him a signet ring to represent the authority, which was delegated to him (Gen. 41:42). Ahasuerus gave his signet ring to Haman and then to Mordecai (Est. 3:10; 8:2). After Daniel was placed in the lion's den the stone which covered the den was sealed (Dan. 6:17) as was the tomb of Jesus (Matt. 27:66). To seal something was to indicate source or possession. God sealed the saints. In the early Church the picture of being sealed by God was connected with the physical act of water baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the mark to be placed on the forehead was for the entire world to see. God has an easily identifiable mark for His own.

Concerning the sealing of the 144,000 it can be observed that the 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of Israel do not represent the redeemed of all the age for the 144,000 are merged with the great host of saints which cannot be counted (7:9). The 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of Israel does represent a completed number of those who would be preserved during the great tribulation of those days (AD 70). The number of those saved would not be small but great. By referring to the 12 tribes by name it must be kept in mind that the early Church saw itself as the real Israel. National Israel had lost faith. National Israel had been set aside. All the gospel privileges and promises belonged to the Church (Rom. 2:28,29; 9:6,7; Gal. 3:29; 3:3). According to John, the twelve tribes are Juda (which comes first thereby supplanting Reuben as firstborn), Reuben, Gad, Asher, Nephtalim, Manasseh, Simeon, Levi, Issachar, Zabulon, Joseph, and Benjamin. The tribe of Dan is omitted perhaps because of its connection with idolatry (cf. Gen. 49:17; Judg. 18:30; 1 Kings 12:29). Examining this passage as a whole, Dr. William Barclay observes there are three elements in this picture. There is a warning (7:1-2). Sin brings judgment. There is an assurance. The saved are sealed. There is a promise. God will avenge His own.

The Saints Before the Throne: Revelation 7:9-17

After hearing the number of the 144,000 being sealed John witnesses a great multitude of people which no man could number. From all the nations of the earth people have come to faith and the promise made to Abraham is fulfilled (Gen. 15:5; 32:12). Here we find the saints standing before the throne as part of concentric circles.

- Angelic host of Twenty Four Elders
- Four Living Creatures
- Saints of God
- Throne of God

The martyred saints are standing before the Lamb clothed with white robes and palms in their hands. Both the white robes and the palms speak of victory. Roman generals would wear white on their victory parades and people would lay down palm branches for the horse to tread upon. The scene is one of great joy for the people cry with a loud voice saying, "*Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.*" Here is a great passage equating Jesus Christ with God. From all the nations comes the sound of Babel in reverse so that all speak the same thing in praising the Redeemer. Praise of God is joined by holy angels and the twenty-four elders, and the four living creatures that fell on their faces saying, "AMEN." The word "AMEN" means "*I believe it.*" The thought is an affirmation of what shall be said as blessing is ascribed to God. All of creation should bless or speak well of God for providence is great. Glory is ascribed to God. Glory speaks of the majesty of God. There is a sense of awe and dread that is associated with God. Wisdom is ascribed to God. God is the fountain of all wisdom and all knowledge. God knows all that shall ever be known first.

Thanksgiving is ascribed to God. There is an emotional thanksgiving, which enjoys the gifts of God. There is a rational thanksgiving, which remembers that behind every gift there is a giver and the greatness of the gift depends upon the integrity of the giver. Honor is ascribed to God. We honor God by having exalted thoughts about Him. We dishonor God when we have mean, unworthy thoughts about Him. To think of His goodness, His kindness, His love, to meditate on His holiness, His justice, and His mercy is to honor God. Power is ascribed to God. Many people have desires and aspirations but no power to achieve them. God not only will but He has the power to perform His will. Might or strength is ascribed to God. The ability of God to sustain what His power produces is manifested in the creation and in the new creation as well. This attribute of God, recognized by the heavenly host never diminishes. They are forever and ever. As John listens to the wonderful praise, one of the elders spoke to him. "*John,*" he asked. "*Who are these people dressed in white robes? And where did they come from?*" The question seemed to John to be inappropriate. "*Sir,*" said John. "These are they which came out of [the] great tribulation." Letting scripture interpret scripture, the only other time the phrase "*great tribulation*" is used, it is used by Jesus in Matthew 24:21 in the context of the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 and the events that surrounded that destruction. Many Christians between the years AD 30 and AD 70 died as our passage indicates. Those who died experienced a Divine chemistry for their robes were made white by being dipped in the blood of the Lamb. Those who died belonged to the true Church of Jesus for only the Church is found washed by the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 1:5).

The concept of being washed in blood is offensive to many people. Historically, the Christian community would have understood what John was saying because there was a well-known blood bathing ceremony. It was not associated with the Church but with the Mystery Religions of the early centuries. Perhaps the most famous of these Mystery Religions was Mithraism, whose devotees worshipped the god Mithra. Mithraism was in many ways the favorite religion of the Roman army. In Britain there are relics of the chapels where people met for worship. The most sacred part of Mithraism was the taurobolium, the bath of bull's blood. The poet Prudentius has described it. "*A trench was dug, over which was erected a platform of planks, which were perforated with holes. Upon this platform a sacrificial bull was slaughtered. Below the platform knelt the worshipper who was to be initiated. The blood of the slaughtered bull dripped through on to the worshipper below. He exposed his head and all his garments to be saturated with blood; and then he turned round and held up his neck that the blood might trickle upon his lips, ears, eyes and nostrils; he moistened his tongue with the blood which he then*

drank as a sacramental act. he came out from this certain that he was “renatus in aeternum”, reborn for all eternity.”

John contended that the martyred Christian have also been washed in the blood. Not the blood of bulls but in the blood of the Lamb. Not in a religious ceremony but in a life giving experience. What do the saints do in heaven? They serve God night and day in His holy Temple. What specific service do they render? The text does not say but there is holy work to be done in time and in eternity. And there is a great promise that God shall dwell among His people. All the Old Testament symbols of the Tabernacle and the Temple were designed to teach that God would dwell among His people. Then came Jesus. The apostle John (1:14) says that He tabernacled (dwelt) among us. In heaven, He who sits upon His throne in the Temple also dwells among His people. The people who are occupied with the Person of Christ shall hunger no more. Sometimes the people of God know physical hunger on earth. Paul says that he knew what it was like to go hungry. But in heaven the people do not hunger physically or spiritually for they can feast moment by moment on the Bread of Life. The people who are occupied with the Person of Christ shall thirst no more. In the life of David we find that he became thirsty for a cup of cool water. But in heaven there is no thirst either physical or spiritual for all can drink from the Fountain of Living Waters. Nor is there any pain for God Himself shall tenderly and gently wipe away all tears. To be near God, to have God dwell among His people forever, to be in a place where the pressures of life and the sins, which tarnish the soul, are removed, this is heaven.

The Royal Reign of Christ

Revelation

Chapter 8

The Sounding of the Seven Trumpets

1. The coming of hail, fire and blood, through which a third part of the trees and all the green grass are withered (Rev. 8:7).
2. The flaming mountain cast into the sea whereby one third of the sea becomes blood (Rev. 8:8).
3. The fall of the star Wormwood into the waters whereby the waters became bitter and poisonous (Rev. 8:10,11)
4. The smiting of one third of the sun and the moon and the stars, bringing darkness (Rev. 8:12).
5. The coming of the Angel who unlocks the pit of the abyss from which comes the smoke out of which comes the demonic locusts (Rev. 9:1-12).
6. The loosing of the four angels bound in the Euphrates and the coming of the demonic host from the E (Rev. 9:13-21).
7. The announcement of the final victory of God of the rebellious anger of the nations (Rev. 11:15).

The Seventh Seal: Revelation 8:1-5

John has seen many things in his vision. The prophet of the Lord has walked through the heavenly door to behold the throne of God and those who surround the throne as living creatures, angels, elders and saints. John has watched as the four horsemen of the apocalypse rode. Now he must witness more of the mysteries and the majesty associated with heaven for the seventh seal of the scroll is in the hand of the Sovereign of the Universe. It is about to be broken. When the seventh seal was broken John states that a dramatic silence filled the celestial place (Rev. 8:1) for half an hour. The silence may be attributed to the terrible events that were about to be unleashed on earth much like a calm before a great storm or the silence on the eve of a great military battle. The silence may be attributed to something else namely the importance of the place of prayer before God. John sees seven angels with seven trumpets (Rev. 8:2) but they were not allowed to sound forth the trumpet judgments.

First the prayers of the saints had to be heard and for that, all of heaven had to be silent. The music of worship, the thundering and the lightening grew silent in order for God to hear the prayers of the saints. John sees in his vision a holy angel standing by the heavenly altar, having a golden censer. To the angel incense was given that he should offer the sweet smelling fragrance of that with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar, which was before the throne. In Jewish thought this holy angel who was making prayer for the people of God was Michael. The

Hebrews believed in a nameless angel called The Angel of Peace who interceded for Israel and for all the righteous. Our text does not say that the angel prayed only that he performed priestly duties while standing at the altar. Concerning this golden altar before the throne several things should be observed.

- The altar appears often in the vision of heaven (Rev. 6:9; 9:13; 14:18).
- The altar must be identified as the altar of incense and not the altar of burnt offering.
- The altar of incense stood before the Holy Place in the Temple (Lev. 16:12; Num. 16:46) which indicates that God wants His people near to Him in fellowship.
- The altar of incense was a small piece of furniture measuring only 1 1/2 feet by 1 1/2 feet and 3 feet high being overlaid with gold. The spiritual lesson is that it is not the long or large prayer that will avail much but the fervent prayer of a righteous man. The wood overlaid with gold speaks of the humanity of our Lord enhanced by His deity so that He is able to function as our great High Priest (Heb. 7:25; 8:1).
- There were four horns on the altar of incense located at the four corners. These were made of wood overlaid with gold. Horns are associated in Scripture with power, which serves to remind the saints that there really is power in prayer. In addition, horns are associated with salvation (Luke 1:60; 2 Sam. 22:3). The gospel is the power of God unto salvation.
- The horns on the altar were sprinkled with blood from the brazen altar once a year on the Day of Atonement. We must never forget the privilege of prayer comes through the shed blood of Christ.
- The altar of incense was hollow but covered over with a gold plate, and around it was a little railing to keep the burning coals from falling off. The Lord protects our prayers; like His sheep; none are lost.
- The altar of incense was placed according to divine plan in the Tabernacle. Our prayers are directed according to Divine sovereignty so that we always pray, *"Not my will but thine be done, O Lord."*
- The one major difference between the altar of incense in heaven and the altar of incense in the Tabernacle is that the altar of incense in the Tabernacle was before a veil. In heaven there is no barrier. The saints have direct access to God.

Not only did the angel take the prayer of the saints to God, he proceeded to fill the censer with coals from the altar and dash them to the ground. This act became the prelude to more terror being unleashed characterized by thunder and earthquakes. This is not the first time in Scripture that prayer is associated with cataclysmic events (2 Sam. 22:8; Ezek. 10:2; Isa 6:6).



*The main street of the Roman Decapolis city of Hippus
(Susita in Hebrew, both meaning, "horse") on the East Side of the Sea of Galilee.*

*An earthquake knocked down the columns,
which is why they are all lying in roughly the same orientation.*

The result of this angelic activity mixed with the cries of the people of God is that *"the prayers of the saints return to the earth in wrath"* (H.B. Swete). We might object to the concept of the prayer for vengeance from the lips of a Christian but there is a sense of justice that God puts into our hearts and justice demands satisfaction. We must not forget that the Church was caught up in the great tribulation Jesus spoke of such as the world has not seen nor shall ever be.

Seven Trumpet Judgments: Revelation 8:6-13

The dramatic silence of half an hour ends in John's vision as seven angels prepare to blow on their seven trumpets. These angels with trumpets were known to the Jews as *"Angels of the Presence"* for they stood before God. Names were assigned to them. There was Uriel, Raphael, Raguel, Michael, Sariel, Gabriel, and Remiel (Tobit 12:15). In Hebrew thought these seven angels were equivalent to archangels. They enjoyed a special honor for they "stood before God" (8:2). These angels were always ready to be dispatched on a Divine service whether it was a ministry of mercy or a ministry of judgment. According to the narrative the angels were to be sent on a ministry of judgment represented by the very fact that they had a trumpet. In the Bible, trumpets are often associated with judgment. The final day of the Lord will come with the blast of a trumpet (Isa. 27:13; Joel 2:1; 1 Thess. 4:16; 1 Cor. 15:52,53). Seven angels with seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. Each trumpet blast brought forth a tremendous amount of pain and destruction to the inhabitants of the earth. When the first angel sounded the trumpet blast there followed *"hail and fire mingled with blood"* which rained upon the earth. The result was that the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up (Rev. 8:7).



*Revelation 8:7 The first angel blows his trumpet.
Painting / Copyright © by Joe Maniscalco.*

With the second trumpet blast destruction would fall upon the sea (Rev. 8:8,9). The third trumpet blast would bring destruction upon the fresh water rivers and springs (Rev. 8:10,11). The fourth trumpet blast would fall upon the heavenly bodies (Rev. 8:12). In trying to understand these first four fearsome judgments the Jews had something to identify with as they remembered the plagues, which fell on Egypt when Pharaoh refused to let, God's people leave the land of bondage.

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|----------------------|--|
| • The First Trumpet | Ex. 9:24 cf. Rev. 8:7 |
| • The Second Trumpet | Ex. 7:20,21 cf. Rev. 8:8,9 |
| • The Third Trumpet | Zeph. 1:3 cf. Rev. 8:10,11; Ex. 15:23
Deut. 29:17,18 cf. Rev. 9:11; Jer. 9:14,14; 23:15 |
| • The Fourth Trumpet | Ex. 10:21-23 cf. Rev. 8:12 |

When we keep in mind the violent, political upheaval that took place between AD 66 and AD 70 it is easy to find a literal fulfillment of John's vision. For example, the land of Palestine during this period was devastated so that wood became scarce. One reason why wood could not be found was that up to 500 people a day was being crucified during one phase of the struggle (Rev. 8:7). Volcanoes did erupt (Rev. 8:8) which killed off fish, polluted streams, made the water bitter (Rev. 8:9,10,11) and turned the sky blood red in color. The stars fell from the heavens in unusual numbers. While the Christian community was vindicated the inhabitants of the earth knew misery upon misery. It seemed the pain and suffering would never end for John saw a great eagle flying through the midst of heaven crying with a loud voice, "Woe! Woe! Woe!" Once more there was a dramatic pause in the Divine narrative. John saw an empty sky and a lone eagle speaking as nature declared that more judgment was to come.

The Royal Reign of Christ

Revelation

Chapter 9

The Army from Hell: Revelation 9:1-12

One of the great temptations when interpreting the book of Revelation is to view its contents in contemporary terms. This temptation is not reserved for 20th century prophetic students. The practice is very old. Several hundred years ago there lived a godly preacher by the name of Matthew Poole. Like other Puritan ministers such as Matthew Henry, Mr. Poole believed that Revelation 9 predicted the apostasy of Boniface III. The "*star*" which fell according to 9:1 was the apostasy of Boniface who in 606 reserved the title "*Universal Bishop*" for the bishop of Rome. In this manner Boniface III greatly enhanced the prestige and power of the Bishop of Constantinople. The Protestants of that period had very strong feelings against the Roman Catholic Church and they lost no opportunity to interpret the Bible in such a way as to attack Rome.

Modern Bible students are just as guilty of misusing the Bible to explain contemporary events. For many years the great enemy of God was Communist Russia. Students of prophecy find Russia starting World War III. If the Lord tarries future Bible students will succumb to the same temptation to focus their attention on the morning newspaper instead of the eternal Word of God. Obviously it is not possible for John to have had in mind everyone and everything that has been attributed to him. In context, either John had Boniface III in mind or he did not. Either John had Arius in mind or he did not. Either John had the Turks in mind or he did not. Either John had the Russians of the 20th century in mind or he did not.

To assist our understanding of this passage, we must remember the historical setting. Israel was under the dominion of Rome and desperately wanted to be free. It was not going to happen for the wrath of God was being poured out upon the land. Israel had rejected the Messiah. Israel had dared to crucify the Son of God. Israel had cried and pleaded that the blood of Christ be upon their head. Their foolish prayer was heard. Jesus had stated plainly that great tribulation would be poured out upon the nation before the generation He spoke to vanished (Matt. 24:34). Beginning in AD 66 the full fury of the wrath of God began to be unleashed. What Jesus said would happen the apostle John saw would happen.

In his vision of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, John saw the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse ride. He witnessed the scenes of Divine wrath in the Seal Judgments and then in the Trumpet Judgments. In the Trumpet Judgments John saw nature itself being used by God to administer discipline upon those who were the enemies of the saints (Rev. 8:1-13). John now beholds the picture of terror once more as it mounts in its awful intensity. The terrors coming upon the people of the earth are beyond nature; they are demonic. John watches in fascinated horror as a fallen star opens the abyss. In biblical imagery and in Jewish thought a star was a living thing representing some great personage. In Revelation 1 we *that "the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches"* (Rev. 1:20). To this fallen angel a key was given to the abyss. A key represents power or authority. Who is this fallen angel? The most famous of all the fallen angels is Lucifer. Authority or power was given to Lucifer.

- Lucifer has no independent authority. As a creature he too is subject to the Sovereign.
- Lucifer received his evil authority and he uses it. To Lucifer it is better to reign in hell than to serve in heaven. Lucifer has always wanted to be like the Most High God.
- Lucifer, being given permission, opened the door to the black abyss and when he did, *"there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit"* (Rev. 9:2). Commenting on this scene Matthew Henry wrote, *"The devil carries on his designs by blinding the eyes of men, by extinguishing light and knowledge and promoting ignorance and error. He first deceives men, and then destroys them; wretched souls follow him in the dark, or they durst not follow him."*

Jesus said that men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. Many years ago I lived in New Orleans, LA. There is a world famous spot in New Orleans called Bourbon Street. Billy Graham visited the place once and called it the pit of hell. It is interesting that during the daytime Bourbon Street is rather quite. The French Quarters host tourists with traditional gift shops, jazz musicians, street entertainers, and many restaurants. Everything is very lovely during the daytime. Then the darkness comes and suddenly the streets are noisy with the sounds of sin. Barkers stand in the doorways and offer free drinks to lure people inside to watch the strippers on stage. Prostitutes openly call to their customers. There is music and laughter but it is all the noise of the damned. The devils smoke fills the air and the sunrays of the glorious gospel light are darkened. In this part of hell, Satan reigns. Walk just a few blocks down Canal Street and you will find large churches but they are not always seen by reason of the smoke of the pit.

As John continued to look, in his vision he saw not only the smoke from the abyss but he saw that, *"there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth."* The reference to locusts is a reference to demons. In the Jewish mind of John the demons took on the shape of the most hideous, the most destructive, and the most powerful creature known--the locust. William Barclay sets forth several facts about the locusts and why the Jews feared them so much. *"The locusts breed in desert places and invade the cultivated lands for food. They may be about two inches in length, with a wingspan of four to five inches. They belong to the same family as the household cricket and the grasshopper. They will travel in a column a hundred feet deep and as much as four miles long. When such a cloud of locusts appears, it is as if there had been an eclipse of the sun and even great building less than two hundred feet away cannot be seen. The destruction they cause is beyond belief. When they have left an area, not a blade of grass is to be seen; the trees are stripped of their bark. Land where the locusts have settled looks as if it had been scorched with a bush fire; not one single living thing is left. Their destructiveness can best be appreciated from the fact that it is recorded that in 1866 a plague of locusts invaded Algiers and so total was the destruction which they caused that 200,000 people perished of famine in the days which followed. The noise of the millions of their wings is variously described as like the dashing of waters in a mill wheel or the sound of a great cataract. When the millions of them settle on the ground the sound of their eating has been described like the crackling of a prairie fire. The sound of them on the march is like the heavy rain falling on a distant forest. When they move, they move inexorably on like an army with leaders. People have dug trenches, lit fires, and even fired cannon in an attempt to stop them but without success; they come on in a steady*

column which climbs hills, enters houses and leaves scorched earth behind. There is no more destructive visitation in the world than a visitation of locusts, and this is the terrible devastation which John sees, although the demonic locusts from the pit are different from any earthly insect.”

From the symbolism of the locust a number of observations can be made about demons and demonic activity.

1. Demons are under the immediate leadership of Satan himself who is called in the Hebrew tongue ABADDON (destruction) and in the Greek tongue APOLLON (the Destroyer).
2. Demons are limited by the sovereign will of God. They were commanded,
 - not to hurt the vegetation which would have been their normal diet (Rev. 9:4).
 - not to hurt the elect of God which had been sealed in their foreheads (Rev. 9:4b).
 - to only torment the non-Christian community (Rev. 9:5).
 - Demons are powerful creatures of darkness which is why so many people became enslaved to sin in the form of pornography, drugs, alcohol, anger, money, power, and all the other works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21).
- A. The power of demons is manifested by:
 - the symbol of authority in the crowns of gold (Rev. 9:7).
 - the show of wisdom in the faces of men (Rev. 9:7).
 - the allurements of beauty reflected in the ornamental hair (Rev. 9:8).
 - their strength as the teeth of lions .
 - their armor of iron defense (Rev. 9:9). Moses' body became the focal point of one angelic power struggle according to Jude 9. Michael did not contend with the demonic Lucifer but invoked the name of the Lord.
3. Demons are mean, vicious, evil spirit creatures reflected in their power to hurt men but not to help them.

The composite picture of this portion of the vision of John is that in response to the prayers of the saints (Rev. 8:4) God moves to avenge His own. Nature is turned on evil people and with the trumpet blast of the Fifth Angel an army from hell goes forth to torment sinners. History records that men do not respond well to messages of threat and destruction. Still, there is a word of warning from God for those who have ears to hear. Flee from the wrath to come. Look at what God has done historically to those who kill the prophets and crucified His Son and repent.

The Evil That Men Do: Revelation 9:13-21

As the wrath of God was being poured out upon the earth between AD 66-70 it grew in intensity. Initially the demonic host was not allowed to kill but only to injure men. But now there is the unleashing of a demonic cavalry to destroy a third part of the human race. According to

one estimate there were about 70 million souls in the Empire in AD 70 which means that John envisioned about 23 million people perishing under divine wrath in the space of one year, one month, one day, and one hour.



*Rock drawings at Mt. Carcom in the central Negev,
depicting snakes, scorpions, and a lizard.*

Revelation 9:10

According to the vision four angels previously bound in the great Euphrates River would be set free to lead a demonic army of horsemen which numbered 200 million strong. The horses themselves were horrible creatures for the heads of the horses looked more like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths came forth fire and smoke and brimstone. The tails of the Calvary was also different for the tails of the horses was not hair but like serpents with heads to bite. This horrendous beast of a horse-like creature that John saw was well protected. The creature had on a colored breastplate of fiery red and smoky blue and sulfurous yellow. What does this all mean? It is hard to tell fully but some things are known. The Euphrates River was the boundary for the nation of Israel. God promised Abraham, *“To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates.”* (Gen.15: 18).



*A flock of sheep fording the Euphrates River.
Revelation 9:14:*

The angels are sent to judge the whole land of Israel. As a people of the covenant they had rejected the Messiah. Now they would be judged fully. By using the imagery of a Calvary, John may have been instilling a sense of dread of foreign invaders for the Parthians, who dwelt beyond the Euphrates were the most dreaded Calvary in the world. It had attacked Rome in 53 BC and again in AD 62. John saw a vast host of 200 million which means they were beyond numbering like the chariots of God (Psa. 68:17). The Calvary seems to be well protected and armored in flame as they move to judge mankind. It would be logical to think that in the face of divine wrath anyone who survived would be willing, even anxious to repent of sins and to get right with God. However, 9:20-21 declares that the rest of the people not killed by the plagues did not repent but kept on sinning. History is filled with examples of the hardness of the human heart to include the carnage of World War I, World War II, Vietnam, Korea, and the Iraqi war. Despite the holocaust, Germany is not better. Despite the atomic bomb, Japan has not turned to God.

So strong is the power of sin that men cannot and will not repent apart from Divine grace. There is much praise given to the freedom of man's will but man in his natural state is free only to sin. Man's free will has made him a slave to sin bound in bonds stronger than steel. Notice the absolute foolishness of the unrepentant. They worship that which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk. Lest anyone think that idolatry is something of the past or is done only by primitive people, consider the words of Carl Sagan in all his modern day wisdom and sophistication. *"All that every was, is, or shall be is the universe [cosmos]."* Modern man still worships matter. Modern man is educated, cultivated and praising that which can neither see nor hear nor walk.

Sin not only enslaves and blinds perception to truth but it refuses to apologize for evil (Rev. 9:21). Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts. So depraved is the human heart of man that despite wholesale judgment there is no repentance. If men do not repent neither will God cease the judgments of His wrath. It is all very said. After seven seal judgments, after six trumpet judgments, the earth still remains steadfast in sin. Men are judged because they have sinned against God and hurt His servants. But the voice from the altar (Rev. 9:13) reminds all of the power of prayer and the justice of the resurrected Savior. It is important to see in these verses, not an apocalyptic timetable but a message for God's people. John was writing to his seven churches a great letter of hope and encouragement in the midst of tribulation. Over and over he emphasized that Jesus Christ would triumph over the rulers of this world and that the prayers of the saints would be heard.

The Royal Reign of Christ

Revelation

Chapter 10

The Seven Voices of God: Revelation 10:1-11

The verses in chapters 10:1-11:14 form an interlude between the sounding of the sixth and the seventh trumpets. The sixth trumpet blast has been sounded but the seventh is silent until 11:15. In between the sixth and the seventh trumpets are terrible sights to see. This part of the vision finds John viewing a mighty angel who comes straight from the presence of God and the resurrected Christ. He is clothed with a cloud. Psalm 104:3 declares that the clouds are the chariots of the Lord for. *"God maketh the clouds His chariots."* The mighty angel has a rainbow upon his head. According to Ezekiel 1:28 the rainbow is part of the glory of the throne of God. The light of the face of the angel shining through the cloud causes the rainbow for His face shines as the sun. The face of Jesus was like this once before (Matt. 17:2) on the Mount of Transfiguration. The voice of the angel speaks and sounds as the roar of a lion. The lion's roar is often used in the Bible to speak of the voice of God (Joel 3:16; Hos. 11:10; Amos 3:8). "The Lord roars from Zion and utters His voice from Jerusalem."

As the angel comes forward he plants one foot on the sea and one foot on the land. The sum total of the universe, represented by the sea and the land, are His to command. The authority of the angel is equal and firm. In His hand the angel carries a little scroll. It is unrolled and ready to be read. What is about to be given to John is a revelation within the revelation. When the angel speaks, seven thunders sound. This may be a reference to the seven voices of God found in Psalm 29. In Psalm 29 the strength of God is celebrated in a thunderstorm in Lebanon. Thunderstorms can be terrifying as the floodgates of heaven are open and power is poured forth in the form of thunder and lightening. Dark clouds cover the earth as the rain descends in torrents, sweeping down the mountainsides. Such expression of majesty and power demands that glory be given to God. Three times this very command is given. C.H. Spurgeon comments. *"These vehement repetitions resemble a series of thunderclaps; one seems to hear the dread artillery of heaven firing volley after volley, while peal on peal the echo follows the sound."* The thunder reflects the voice of God. Three things are said about the voice of God in Psalm 29.

- **First**, the voice of God is universal (29:3), *"the voice of the Lord is upon the waters."* The prophet said there would come a day when knowledge of the Lord would cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.
- **Second**, the voice of God is powerful (29:4). Sometimes fear will silence a voice. Sometimes disease or sickness will make one unable to speak but always the voice of God is powerful and full of majesty.
- **Third**, the voice of God is effective. When God speaks things happen as the voice of the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon as a small twig (29:5). The voice of God controls the flames of fire. That awesome voice can shake the desert and yet be so tender as to make the deer to calve. Men are wise to listen to the thunder in a storm and associate the power represented with God. A holy fear of the Lord will be

cultivated as naturally as men grow afraid of a violent storm. It was Suetonius who wrote that the Roman emperor, Augustus Caesar, was so terrified when it thundered, that he wrapped sealskin around his body hoping to protect if from the lightening. Augustus would conceal himself in a secret corner of a room till the storm was over. The tyrant Caligula was known to sometimes cover his head or hide himself under a bed when it stormed.

The thunders that sounds serves to remind Christians that part of the spiritual experience of many people have been to hear the voice of God such as Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:8), Abraham (Gen. 22:11-12), Moses (Ex. 19:19), Samuel (1 Sam. 3:11), Paul (Acts 9:4), and John (Rev.1: 15). Against the solemn skies in the book of the Revelation, the command goes forth for men to give unto the Lord the glory due His name. When John heard the seven thunders he began to record what was said (Rev. 10:4) only to be immediately stopped. There are some things that God will share with individuals that He does not want widely known until He deems it to be revealed (cf. Dan. 8:26; 12:4,). In obedience to the will of the Lord, John stopped writing and kept watching as the Mighty Angel made an announcement and affirmed it with an oath. What the Mighty Angel affirmed was that no time was left. There was not more opportunity for delay. About to burst upon the scene was a fearsome Personality with awesome destructive terror. The stage was set for the ultimate showdown between good and evil. As John saw it, history was moving towards the inevitable triumph of God.

In Revelation 10:8-11, there is recorded the joy and the sorrow of the Messenger of God. The joy is found in taking the revelation of the Lord and making that message a vital part of life. The word of God is sweet (Psa. 19:10; 119:103). This is true spiritually and, for a Jewish child learning his Hebrews alphabet, it was true literally. There was a Jewish custom that was used to help young children learn. The letters of the alphabet would be made from flour and honey. Then, when the child was able to identify the letters correctly, he was able to eat them much like alphabet cereal today. Words formed from sugared cereal can be very sweet. As the Word of God can be sweet, it can also be very bitter as it pronounces judgments upon individuals.

The Royal Reign of Christ

Revelation

Chapter 11

The Doctrine of the Kingdom of God: General Observations

1. The Disciples of Christ can understand the spiritual nature of the kingdom of God (Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10).
2. Entrance into the kingdom demands moral purity (Mark 9:47) by way of the new birth (John 3:3,5).
3. The kingdom of Christ is identified and associated with the kingdom of David (Mark 11:10 cf. Acts 2:29-36).
4. Man can get near the kingdom without ever entering into it (Mark 12:34).
5. There shall be no end to the kingdom of Christ (Luke 1:33).
6. Those who turn away from Jesus are not fit for the kingdom of heaven (Luke 9:62).
7. The kingdom of God will not and did not come with signs (Luke 17:20).
8. The kingdom of God is within (or better "*in the midst of*") the hearts of men (Luke 17:21).
9. Jesus appointed His disciples a kingdom in Luke 22:29 so that they could share in the royal rule. He also gave them thrones and they judged the tribes of Israel by proclaiming the gospel (Matt. 19:28).
10. Jesus said that His kingdom was not of this world (John 8:36).
11. The apostles proclaimed the kingdom message after the resurrection of Christ (Acts 1:3; 1:6 cf. 8:12; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23; 28:31).
12. By much tribulation the saints enter into the kingdom (Acts 14:22).
13. The kingdom is a present reality (Matt. 5:3; 12:28; 19:14; Mark 10:15; 12:34; Luke 7:28; 17:20,21).

The Doctrine of the Kingdom of God: According to the Gospel

1. The word "*kingdom*" may be defined as the rule or reign of God that is recognized in the hearts and operative in the lives of God's people, effecting their complete salvation, their constitution as a church, and finally a redeemed earth.
2. The kingdom belongs to those who are poor in spirit (Matt. 5:3; Luke 6:20), and who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness (Matt. 5:10).
3. John announced that the kingdom of heaven, which speaks of its ultimate source and origin, was at hand in the days prior to the revealing of Christ (Matt. 3:2; 4:17,23).
4. Those who are least on earth are the greatest in the kingdom (Matt. 5:19; 11:11; 18:1-4; Luke 7:28).
5. Christians are to pray for the rule of God to be more evident on earth (Matt. 6:10; Luke 11:2).
6. The highest priority in life is to seek the rule and reign of God in every detail (Matt. 6:33; Luke 12:31).
7. As Jesus first presented the kingdom concept, He made it clear that only those who desire the will of God shall enter into His kingdom (Matt. 7:21-22).
8. Old Testament saints are part of the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 8:11).
9. Jesus preached the gospel of the kingdom wherever He went (Matt. 9:25; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:43; 8:1; 9:11).
10. The disciples were told to declare the kingdom of heaven was at hand (Matt. 10:7) to the Jews first (Luke 9:2).
11. The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence (Matt. 11:12) which means that the kingdom of Christ will be vigorous and forceful. The kingdom of God cannot be stopped from spreading.
12. The kingdom of God comes in power to cast out evil (Matt. 12:28).
13. The kingdom of heaven is compared to a man (Matt. 13:24), a grain of seed (Matt. 13:31; Mark 4:26; 4:30), leaven (Matt. 13:33), a treasure (Matt. 13:44), a merchant (Matt. 13:45), and a net (Matt. 13:47).
14. To speak of the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, and the kingdom of Christ is to speak of one and the same thing.
15. To the disciples were given the keys or authority to the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 16:19).

16. Some in the days of Christ saw the Lord coming in His kingdom glory (Matt. 16:28; Mark 9:1; Luke 9:27).
17. The kingdom of heaven is characterized by forgiveness, grace, mercy, and justice (Matt. 18:23).
18. Supreme sacrifices can be made and sometimes must be made for the sake of the kingdom (Matt. 19:12).
19. Little children are a welcomed part of the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 19:14; Mark 10:14-15).
20. The proud and the rich have a hard time entering into the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 19:23; Mark 10:23-25).
21. Many are called to the kingdom of heaven but few are chosen (Matt. 20:1,16).
22. Even the most wicked of people are welcomed to the kingdom based upon repentance (Matt. 21:31).
23. The kingdom of God was taken from the Jews and given to the Gentiles (Matt. 21:43).
24. The religious leaders of Israel shut people out of the kingdom of heaven with false teaching (Matt. 23:13).
25. The gospel of the kingdom of heaven is to be preached in all the nations before Jesus returns the second time in glory (Matt. 24:14).
26. The kingdom of heaven demands that its citizens be always in service, and watchful for the return of the King (Matt. 25:1 cf. Matt. 13).
27. When Jesus returns the second time (Heb. 9:28) faithful citizens shall continue to be part of His kingdom (Matt. 25:34).
28. Some day Jesus plans to return His kingdom to His Father (Matt. 26:29 cf. 1 Cor. 15:24).
29. The kingdom has come. The invitation is "*Come to the kingdom.*" How? By receiving entrance as a grace gift (Luke 12:32). Eat the Bread of Life. Drink from the wells of Living Water. Live with the Rule of God in your life Come. All things are now ready. The Bride and the Spirit say come. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.

The Doctrine of the Kingdom: According to the Epistles

1. The kingdom of God is not physical but spiritual which means it is concerned with the things of the Spirit (Rom. 14:17).
2. The power of the kingdom of God to change lives does not consist in words but in demonstration of the Spirit (1 Cor. 4:20).
3. Evil people who are non-repentant shall not inherit the kingdom of God in time or in eternity (1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5).
4. Jesus is even now to rule until He has put down all His enemies and then shall He give the kingdom back to the Father (1 Cor. 15:24).
5. Flesh and blood as it now exists shall not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 15:50).
6. Christians are even now members of the kingdom of Christ (Col. 1:13).
7. Believers are fellow workers in the kingdom of God (Col. 1:14).
8. Entrance into the kingdom is based upon Divine effectual calling (1 Thess. 2:12).
9. Christians suffer because they are members of the kingdom of God (2 Thess. 2:12).
10. There is a future day of judgment at the appearance of Christ which shall usher in eternal righteousness (2 Tim. 4:1).
11. Believers enter a heavenly expression of the kingdom at the point of death (2 Tim. 4:18).
12. The kingdom of Christ is characterized by righteousness (Heb. 1:8).
13. The kingdom is permanent (Heb. 12:28).
14. The poor of this world are heirs to the kingdom (James 2:5).
15. The Apostles considered themselves to be part of the kingdom (Rev. 1:9).
16. The kingdom of God brought the downfall of Satan (Rev. 12:5-10).
17. The kingdoms of this world are to be conquered by Christ (Rev. 11:15).

A Temple and Two Witnesses: Revelation 11:1-14



*Looking north along the Street of Curetes at Ephesus in modern Turkey.
The Romans paved extensive road systems in their
Empire, allowing for faster, easier travel.
Revelation 11:8:*

Chapter 11 is a continuation of the same vision that John beheld in chapter 10:1. The symbolic act of eating the Word of God (10:8-11) is followed by the command to preach before many people, and nations, and tongues, and kings. If Revelation was written prior to the fall of AD 70 then Revelation 10:11 takes on tremendous significance for it promised John not only that he would soon be free from his imprisonment but also that his preaching ministry would be large and effective.

The scene shifts in chapter 11 from heaven back to earth. A new command is given. John is given a rod ($1000 = 6 \text{ cubits} = 9\text{ft}$) with which he is to measure the Temple of God, the altar, and them that worship there. John is not to measure the court of the Temple area for that part is given to the Gentiles who shall dominate the area 1,260 days or 42 months or $3 \frac{1}{2}$ years. What does it all mean? We would suggest that in John's vision the Temple is still very much in existence that means that at that time it had not been destroyed. By implication this becomes to many a powerful argument for the early dating of the Revelation. Had the Temple area been destroyed, had the Gentiles already trodden under foot the court area for 42 months then the theme of this verse would have been meaningless which is that God will protect His people, the church, which is the Temple of God. The measuring of the Temple like the sealing of the saints (7:2,3) is for the purpose of protecting the faithful one's from the demonic terrors about to descend upon the Earth. God will always protect his saints, not in the sense of excluding them from suffering but in the sense that after the danger passes the Church lives on.

The sense of danger just outside the inner Temple area of security has a historical basis. In AD 70 when the Roman army was attacking the city of Jerusalem, the Jews began to retreat. Fighting was taking place in the Court of the Gentiles, the Court of the Women, the Court of the Israelites, and the Court of the Priests which contained the altar of burnt offering made of brass, the altar of incense made of gold, and the Holy Place. In this court only the priests could come. As the fighting grew fierce, the Zealots urged their fellow citizens to fall back to the priestly court for their God would stop the Gentiles (Romans) advance. For John, there was a spiritual reality for the true Temple of God, the Church (1 Pet. 2:5; Eph. 2:20,21; 1 Cor. 3:16 cf. 2 Cor. 6:16) would be protected. No harm would come to them. The terror will only last for a limited time reflected in the 42-month period. It is not difficult to trace the origin of the phrase 42 months. It goes back to the reign of terror when Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria, dared to force Greek language and Greek culture and worship on the Jews. When the Jews resisted a blood bath followed. There was a great slaughter of Israelites that was finally stopped by the efforts of Judas Maccabees and his followers. Waging guerrilla warfare, the Maccabees won some stunning victories. Finally, Antiochus and his soldiers were driven out of the land and the Temple was restored. But that whole terrible time lasted 42 months, from June 168 BC to December 165 BC. Today, the Jews still celebrate Hanukkah to commemorate this period of restoration and cleansing. The phrase 42 months was stamped upon the ancient Jewish mind as a time of terror, suffering, and martyrdom. In the midst of the physical suffering there was to be spiritual suffering as well for God would send His two prophets. Clothed in sackcloth, commissioned to preach for 3 1/2 years the prophets did not offer hope but condemnation. Who are these two witnesses?

- If the passage is allegorized the two witnesses then would be the Law and the Prophets or the Law and the Gospels, or the Old Testament and the New Testament.
- It has been taught that the two witnesses are Elijah and Enoch for these two men never died (Gen. 5:24; 2 Kings 2:11).
- It has been suggested that the witnesses are Moses and Elijah who appeared with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mark 9:4). Moses and Elijah exercised the power attributed to the two wildernesses. The two witnesses had power to devour their enemies (2 Kings 1:10,12; Hos. 6:5). They could stop the rain from falling (Rev. 11:6 cf. 1 Kings 17:1). The two witnesses could turn water into blood (Ex. 7:14-18) and smite the earth with plagues.

There is more for the people of the Earth than the two witnesses in general and by the Beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit. Power is given to the Beast to overcome the two witnesses and to kill them. The dead bodies of the witnesses lie in the street of Jerusalem for 3 1/2 days then (Rev. 11:8) there is an incredible resurrection of the two witnesses (Rev. 11:11) and their translation into heaven (11:12). If these two witnesses are considered to be literal personalities then a number of questions arise. Who are they? Are they historical? Are they yet future persons? Depending upon one's prophetic pre-suppositions a certain interpretation will follow. Only one thing is clear when reading the commentaries, no one is certain how to interpret this very difficult portion of Scripture. The temptation arises to leave the passage alone. However, there is a wonderful spiritual truth to be found in the text and we offer it for your consideration.

To begin with, we would suggest that two literal persons are not in view here but rather personified representatives of two functions of the church. We believe that John employs symbolic language and plainly says so in 11:4 as he writes, *"these are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth."* Allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture we find that these symbols employed by John are a re-interpretation of Zechariah 4:2-3 and 6:11-13. In Zechariah, the two olive trees represent the king [Zerubbabel] and the high priest [Joshua]. For John, it may very well be that the two-witnesses/olive trees represent the priesthood and the kingship that God has bestowed upon the church. John has already taught that the Lord has, *"made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father"* (Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6).



John has already taught that the Church is a Lampstands in a dark world (Rev. 1:12,20; 2:5). As Lampstands, the Church is empowered with the Holy Spirit to be a prophetic witnesses (Rev. 4:5; 5:6) cf. (Zech. 4:6). The church, like the two witnesses are under the special protection of God so that no one can hurt them (Rev. 11:5). Anyone who tries is devoured in the same manner that Elijah destroyed the messengers of an idolatrous king (2 Kings 1:2-17 cf. Jer. 5:14). As the Church is under Divine protection and enabled with the power of the word to defend herself so the Church pronounces judgment just as Moses pronounced judgment upon Egypt (cf. 11:6 to Ex. 7:14-19).

Despite its awesome capabilities the Church is also the object of spiritual satanic persecution represented by the Beast from the Abyss (11:7) which makes war against the Church [the two witnesses]. Here is another good argument that more is at stake here than just two men. As Gerhard A. Krodel notes, *"One can hardly make war against only two persons. The witnesses represent the Church and its prophetic [forth-telling] preachers."* History records that the seed of the Church is the blood drops of its martyrs [witnesses].



A bronze statue of the Emperor Hadrian, found near Scythopolis (Old Testament Beth Shean), Israel. Hadrian ruled from AD 117 to 138, after Revelation was written, and sparked the Bar-Kokhba Revolt by his oppressive policies.

As Jesus died in an apostate city, Jerusalem, represented spiritually by Sodom and Egypt, is the place where His followers also suffer (Rev. 11:8). The world rejoiced when it looked as if Christ and the Christians might be destroyed. Satan has his pagan holidays of celebration just as the Church celebrates the resurrection. Evil men make merry upon the earth and rejoice, and send gifts one another as Herod and Pilate became a friend over the death of Jesus. But God is not to be defeated. The Church through bloody and battered shall rise again (Rev. 11:11) and shall ultimately ascend into heaven (1 Thess. 4:16). Meanwhile, the judgment of God (Rev. 11:13) which falls upon the world lead men to repentance.

The Sovereign Reign of Christ: Revelation 11:15-19

One of the great truths of Scripture is that Jesus Christ is prophet, priest, and king. The prophetic and priestly offices of Jesus are more readily conceded but there is still a discussion concerning the kingly office of Christ by many Christians. Two distinct schools of thought prevail. There is a belief that the kingly office of Jesus is still to be held in the future. Many years ago I was sitting in a barber shop in Rogers, Arkansas. The owner was a firm believer in the Dispensational, millennium reign of Christ. He was convinced that one day in the future Jesus Christ would be king and rule the nations of the earth. Speaking to another man in the shop, the owner called out his name and said, *"Do you think Jesus is a king. I don't. He is not my king. He is my Savior. He is a prophet and priest. Someday He will be king but not now."* I wanted to ask, *"Then who is your king? Who are you subject to? Who is your Master?"* The barber was not alone in his theological position. The idea of a future one thousand years reign of Christ ruling in Jerusalem from the restored throne of David in a restored Temple with restored animal sacrifices is a fascinating concept that obscures the spiritual reality that belong to the Church. The biblical alternative to Jesus some day becoming sovereign kings is that Jesus is even now King of all kings and Lord of all lords. He is even now exercising royal sovereignty. The evidence is set forth beginning in the gospels.

- Jesus Christ was born a legal heir to the throne of David and therefore was brought forth into the world a natural king of Israel. The wise men from the East understood this for they came to Herod and asked pointedly, *"Where is He that is born king of the Jews?"* (Matt. 2:2). The wise men were not mistaken in applying the royal title of king to the baby Jesus. They understood prophecy. They realized that Herod was only an appointed political king but now One was born king.
- Thirty three years later another political appointee, Pontius Pilate the governor, asked Jesus specifically, *"Art thou the King of the Jews?"* And Jesus said unto him, *"Thou sayest"* (Matt. 27:11). Pontius Pilate understood what Jesus meant for Pilate ordered a sign to be hung over the cross saying, *"This is Jesus, the King of the Jews."*
- The kingship of Christ is further manifested by the people of His day who acknowledged His royalty (Luke 19:38). The multitudes called Him a king (cf. John 12:13). Nathanael called Him a king (John 1:49). The people who tried to force Jesus into a political position recognized Him as king (John 6:15). The apostle Paul called Jesus a king (1 Tim. 1:17) as did the apostle John (rev. 17:14; 19:16).

There is no doubt from Scripture that as Jesus was a prophet and a priest, He was a king. He was born a king, He acted as a king with royal authority, dignity, grace and charm. He remains to day in His resurrected glorified body king forever and ever. The office of a king demands that there be a kingdom to rule over. The Bible recognizes several types of kingdoms or spheres of influence and power.

- There are earthly kingdoms in the sense of many nations each with its own political powers (Gen. 10:10).
- There are spiritual kingdoms of good and evil. Satan has a kingdom of darkness consisting of fallen angels called demons and unregenerate men. God has a spiritual kingdom consisting of the elect angels and regenerate men.
- There is an animal kingdom of nature.

Despite the various spheres of influence and power the Bible makes it clear that God is still the sovereign of the universe (Psa. 103:19). He rules in the affairs of men. He rules over the kingdom of darkness. There is not a bird or a sparrow, there is not a man or beast that is out from under His immediate and direct supervision. It is possible to rebel against the doctrine of the Divine sovereignty of God. Sometimes the rebellion comes from outside the Church reflected in the Renaissance, which followed the Reformation period. Men wanted to throw off the old order of a well-structured universe. They wanted to exchange the Divine Law of God for the natural Law of man. Not all rebellion against the Divine sovereignty of God is outside the Church. When it is taught that Satan has been bound, the retort is made that Satan must then have a long chain for he seems to be doing so much damage. When it is taught that Jesus is now the sovereign of the nations the remarks come that He is not doing a good job. Despite the skepticism without and within the Church the evidence abounds that Jesus Christ is indeed the Ruler of all nations.

- Jesus Himself declared that all power had been given to Him in heaven and in earth. Matthew 28:18 fulfills the vision of Daniel 7:13-14.
- Peter declared that God the Father has exalted the Lord to sit at His right hand, the hand of power and authority (Acts 2:33). The Lord Jesus wields His power as King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Tim. 6:15).
- The Lord Jesus rules the nations with a rod of iron as He avenges His own elect. He protects them as He sees fit.
- The Divine permission to allow sin to be manifested does not take away from the sovereignty of Christ.
- The reign of Christ will continue until all of His enemies are placed under His feet (1 Cor. 15:25).

- The reign of Christ is present, pervasive (over good and evil), and prevailing (over all enemies).

When John writes in Revelation 11:15 that the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, He is declaring not only an ultimate consummation but also a present reality. Here is comfort for the people of God. Our Lord and Savior reigns. If God the Son so chooses to let Rome be led by godless men, that is His Divine prerogative. If the Son so chooses to let empires rise and fall, cultures come and go, pain and suffering manifest itself, so be it. The truth is that the Lord God omnipotent reigns. If the nations become angry (Rev. 11:5), Jesus still reigns so that the Church can continue to worship (Rev. 11:16-17). There will be a final day of reckoning when the righteous are rewarded and the wicked receive their just rewards (Rev. 11:18). It takes great faith to believe in the Sovereign reign of Jesus Christ over the nations of the Earth. To increase faith the Lord often gives evidence of His Divine sovereignty in a dramatic way as He did in 1989 with the collapse of Communist Russia. Other godless nations are tottering on the brink of self-destruction. Therefore, let the word go forth that, *“The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever.”*

The Royal Reign of Christ

Revelation

Chapter 12

An Unholy Trinity

The Unholy Father: Revelation 12:3-4

- *Rev 12:3 And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.*
- *Rev 12:4 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.*

The Unholy Son: The Beast out of the Sea: Revelation 13:1-10

- *Rev 13:1 And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and up his heads the name of blasphemy.*
- *Rev 13:2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.*
- *Rev 13:3 And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.*
- *Rev 13:4 And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?*
- *Rev 13:5 And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.*
- *Rev 13:6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.*
- *Rev 13:7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.*
- *Rev 13:8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*

- *Rev 13:9 If any man have an ear, let him hear.*
- *Rev 13:10 He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.*

The Unholy Spirit: The False Prophet: Revelation 13:11-18

- *Rev 13:11 And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.*
- *Rev 13:12 And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.*
- *Rev 13:13 And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men,*
- *Rev 13:14 And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.*
- *Rev 13:15 And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.*
- *Rev 13:16 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:*
- *Rev 13:17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.*
- *Rev 13:18 Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.*

The Line of Roman Emperors

- Julius Caesar 49-44 BC
- Augustus 31 BC - A D 14
- Tiberius A D 14-37
- Galius Caligula A D 37-41
- Claudius A. D. 41-54
- Nero A. D. 54-68
- Galba A. D. 68 June - January AD 69
- Otho AD 69
- Vitellius A D 69
- Vespasian A D 69-79
- Titus A D 79-81
- Domitian A D 81-96
- Nerva A D 96-98

*This is not a complete list of the Roman Emperors
but only a list of those that affect the study of the
book of Revelation*

A Panorama of the Conflict of the Ages: Revelation 12:1-17

There are several majestic figures in this chapter which must be identified.

- **The Woman.** She is clothed with the sun on her body, the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars. The Woman is very pregnant and about to give birth. Who is she? Perhaps the best illustration is that the Woman is spiritual Israel. In the Old Testament Israel was considered to be the Bride of God (Isa. 54:5), "*For thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of Host is His name.*" As the wife of Jehovah, Israel was the mother of His son, the Messiah.



Revelation 12: Albrecht Dürer's "Woman of Revelation."

- The Red Dragon.** This great Red Dragon is declared to have seven heads and ten horns. Seven crowns sit upon his seven heads, which speaks of political authority and power. The powerful tail of this dragon is seen to rake across the canvas of heaven and cast to the earth a third of the diamond studded sky. Despite wracking havoc in the universe the Red Dragon has a murderous intent to destroy the baby whom The Woman will soon deliver. The Red Dragon is the devil, Lucifer, the fallen angel of God. The concept of a Red Dragon was well known to the ancient world. In Babylon, where the Jews were once exiled for 70 years, in the temple of Marduk, the creating god, there was a great image of a red-gleaming serpent that represented the defeated dragon of chaos. In the Old Testament the dragon appears as several things. It appears as Rahab (Isa. 51:9). It appears as Leviathan (Psa. 74:12-14). It appears as behemoth (Job 40:15:24).



Revelation 12:7-9

The dragon (or Devil) is thrown down to earth from heaven.

Painting / Copyright © Joe Maniscalco.

- **The Man-Child.** From Psalms 2:9 it is plain that the man-child is the Messiah for He is to rule the nations with a rod of iron (12:5).
- **The Archangel Michael.** In Jewish thought Michael was the great champion of the people of God (Dan. 10:13; 10:21; 12:1). Being an elect angel confirmed in holiness, Michael and his angels fought against Lucifer and his angels and prevailed. Here is a marvelous passage of Scripture for in it we have a glimpse of civil war in heaven. Just when the great angelic conflict first began is not certain. It may have taken place prior to creation or more likely after the creation of the world. Only one thing is certain about the timing. The angelic warfare did occur prior to the fall of man for is Lucifer who tempted Adam and Eve to join him in his revolt against God. Several things can be said about Satan.

❖ He lost the war in heaven	12:8a
❖ He lost his position in heaven	12:8b
❖ He was cast out into the earth	12:9
❖ He retained the ability to deceive the whole world	12:9
❖ His angels (demons) were cast out with him	12:9
❖ His exile was witnessed by Christ	Luke 10:18
❖ His power on earth was broken by Christ	Rev. 12:10 cf. Luke 10:17
❖ He still stands to accuse the saints before God	12:10
❖ He knows that his time is short	12:12
❖ He has declared war on spiritual Israel	12:13
❖ He has turned to making war with the Church	12:17
❖ He has a tremendous amount of anger	12:12

The composite picture of this chapter can be reduced to these great truths.

1. There is person of God. There always have been a people of God and there shall always be a holy people. The wife of God in the Old Testament was spiritual Israel just as the Bride of Christ is the Church of the New Testament.
2. The people of God shall always be persecuted. Satan will make sure of that. He stands to accuse the saints relentlessly before God day and night. This means that the devil reminds God of the sins of the church.
3. The Church has sinned. The Church does sin. Still, the Church overcomes the accusations of the Devil by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony. By appropriating the substitutionary work of Christ, by living a renewed life, the accusation of the devil is nullified. Because of the certain triumph of faith the Church can ever rejoice (Rev. 12:12).

4. In the midst of this cause for rejoicing there should be a realistic respect for the angel called Lucifer who is angry because he knows that he has but a short time. Here is good news indeed. Sin had a beginning, sin shall have an end. While sin still exists the people of God shall be persecuted but,
 - They shall always be protected (12:14,16). Sometimes the protection comes in a marvelous way. History records that in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes, many people who were devote Jews *"who sought after justice and judgment went down to the wilderness to dwell there"* (1 Maccabees 2:29).
 - They were safe. Many years later, in the days just prior to the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70, certain Christians crossed the Jordan river into Perea and dwelt safely in a town called Pella (cf. Mark 13:14). In these historical manifestations of divine protection there is comfort for the church. God has a people for Himself. His people shall be persecuted by demonic forces and by spiritual principalities. But they will ultimately be protected, not by translation but by the blood of the Lamb and by a holy life that does not fear death.

The Royal Reign of Christ

Revelation

Chapter 13

The Beast

The Beast out of the Sea

Rev. 13:1-10

First Beast

Daniel 7:4

Third Beast

Daniel 7:6

The Beast out of the Earth

Rev. 13:11-18

Second Beast

Daniel 7:5

Fourth Beast

Daniel 7:7

Anti-Christ and the Man of Lawlessness: The Historical Development

1. As a general principle it may be stated that behind the idea of Anti-Christ is the concept of a power in the universe that is opposed to God. As Christ is the incarnation of all that is good, Anti-Christ is the incarnation of all that is evil.
2. The struggle between good and evil is found in many religions of the world. The Babylonians believed in the struggle of Marduk the creator with Tiamat the dragon.
3. The idea of an evil dragon is found in Jewish thought in such passages as Isaiah 51:9; Psalms 87:4; 89:10. The dragon reappears in Revelation 12:9.
4. The most obvious Anti-Christ figure is the fallen angel Satan, the devil (Isa. 14:12). However, Satan will always remain an angel while it appears that there is to be a visible figure upon earth into which the very essence of sin is incarnated. This Man of Lawlessness to appear is the Son of Perdition, a description once given to Judas Iscariot (John 17:12 cf. 2 Thess. 2:3).
5. The best historical representative of Anti-Christ for the Jews prior to AD 70 would have been Antiochus Epiphanes who invaded Palestine and captured Jerusalem. Antiochus was the eighth ruler of the house of the Seleucids, 175-164 BC A ruthless man of war, Antiochus either killed or sold into slavery 80,000 Jews. He offered a pig sacrifice on the holy altar in the Temple and there established an image of himself. He turned the rooms of the Holy Place into public brothels. The Maccabees restored the Temple but to the Jews Antiochus was the incarnation of all evil.

6. The idea of a visible figure upon earth of evil incarnate is found in the Man of Sin or the Man of Lawlessness in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12. Paul had already taught the Church something about the Man of Sin according to 2 Thessalonians 2:5. What Paul taught has not been preserved.
7. In context, there was a growing rumor in the early Church that the Second Advent of Christ was drawing very near (2 Thess. 2:2). The increase of excitement caused some believers to live in a nervous state of anticipation. Some were afraid to meet the Lord. The idle found an excuse to stop working. Paul wanted to put an end to the rising expectation of the soon coming of Christ.
8. Paul knew by revelation that the coming of Christ and the resurrection of the saints (2 Thess. 2:1) was not imminent as was being taught because certain specific things had not happened. Before the Second Coming of Christ there must first be (1) a falling away (2 Thess. 2:32), and the (2) revealing of the Man of Sin, the Son of Perdition (2 Thess. 2:3). The Man of Sin will exalt himself above God and claim the worship, which belongs to God. Furthermore, the Man of Lawlessness will perform lying signs and wonders which will deceive many (2 Thess. 2:9).
9. At the time Paul was writing there was something which was restraining this final manifestation of the evil person called the Man of Lawlessness (2 Thess. 2:7).
10. The obvious question is, *"Who is the Man of Lawlessness?"* Other questions follow. *"Is the Man of Lawlessness a historical person?" "Who is he?" "Is the Man of Lawlessness still to come?"*
11. If the passage in 2 Thessalonians is considered to be futuristic then the Man of Sin must still be revealed before the Second Coming of Christ.
12. Perhaps the greatest argument for a still future view of a coming Man of Lawlessness is that 2 Thessalonians 2:8 says that he will be destroyed by the presence of Jesus Christ.
13. There is a reason why the Church has not come to a united position on the view of a Man of Lawlessness. Part of the problem is that every generation has viewed itself as the fulfillment of prophecy that means that people look at current events and argue that their generation is the apostate generation and that the Man of Sin is present. For example, in the first century Rome was believed by some to be the restraining force, Judaism was the apostasy, and the Pope was the Man of Lawlessness. In more recent days there is the popular concept that the restraining force is not government but the Holy Spirit, communism is the apostasy, and some current political leader is the Man of Lawlessness. The end of all of this is total confusion.

Summary

The Bible does teach that there is coming, prior to the Second Advent of Christ, some sort of general apostasy and the revealing of a Man of Lawlessness who will hold power in the Temple. He will persuade the people of the earth to worship him and not God. So powerful will this person be that he will deceive many by godless doctrines and by false miracles (2 Thess. 2:10). God will allow people to believe a lie (2 Thess. 2:11) because they do not love the truth. At the Second Advent of Christ, when the saints are resurrected (2 Thess. 2:1), the Lord shall destroy the Man of Lawlessness with the Spirit of His mouth. Any effort in a generation to identify the current generation as being in a state of apostasy and the Man of Lawlessness should reconsider Paul's words (2 Thess. 2:1-2). The apostle warned the Church NOT to become unsettled by prophetic utterances, by clever arguments, or by spurious letters or writings that the Day of Christ was imminent. That advice is still valid today. Since Satan cannot totally destroy the hope of the resurrection he can try to undermine people's faith in the Christian message by raising false expectations only to have them dashed to pieces. This has been done time after time in recent years.

The Doctrine of Anti-Christ

1. The biblical doctrine of Anti-Christ is found in the epistles of John for the word only appears in the writings of this apostle.
2. Four verses set forth the biblical teaching. Anti-Christ is:
 - someone who denies that Jesus is the Christ (1 John 2:22)
 - someone who denies the Father and the Son (1 John 2:23)
 - every spirit that does not confess Jesus (1 John 4:3)
 - a reference to all those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the Anti-Christ (2 John 7)
3. What John describes as Anti-Christ is far different from the modern day concept illustrated by the fortune teller Jeane Dixon. On February 5, 1962, Mrs. Dixon claimed to have received a vision about a coming world religious and political leader. *"A child, born somewhere in the Middle East shortly before 7 A.M. (EST) on February 5, 1962, will revolutionize the world. Before the close of the century he will bring together all mankind in one all embracing faith. This will be the foundation of a new Christianity, with every sect and creed united through this man who will walk among the people to spread the wisdom of the Almighty Power."*
4. To add to the confusion, some students of prophecy have combined the characteristics of Daniel's *"prince who is to come"* (Dan. 9:26; 7:7-8, 19-26; 8:23-25), the abomination of desolation (Matt. 24:15; Dan. 9:27), Paul's Man of Lawlessness (2 Thess. 2:3), John's Anti-Christ doctrine personified (1 John 2:18-22; 4:3; 2 John 7), and the *"Beast"* of Revelation 13:11-18).
5. According to one popular theory, Anti-Christ will have the personality of a John F. Kennedy, the eloquence of a Winston Churchill (Rev. 13:5), the raw crowd appeal of an Adolf Hitler (Dan. 7:20; 8:23), and the cunning wisdom of a Franklin Roosevelt (Dan. 8:25).

6. According to the popular theory Anti-Christ will come to prominence as part of a ten-nation confederation within the boundaries of the old Roman Empire. The European Common Market has become a favorite subject of discussion for those longing to see a revived Roman Empire. It is taught without any foundation except speculation, that the coming Anti-Christ will gain control through force the nations of Europe, defeating at least three nations on the field of battle. He will talk of peace (Dan. 8:25) which will attract an apostate Christianity (1 Thess. 5:5). Anti-Christ will then make a seven-year covenant with the Jews to protect their land and their security. However, in the midst of the covenant period, Anti-Christ will break his word and turn hostile to the Jews. He will make war with Israel and defeat the nation (Rev. 13:17; Dan. 7:21). Fortunately, the rule of Anti-Christ is scheduled to last only three and one half years (Dan. 7:25). Still, two thirds of the Jews living in Palestine during this period will be killed (Zech. 13:8-9). Since he hates God, the Anti-Christ will blaspheme God and His tabernacle (Rev. 13:6). As a counterfeit Christ, the resurrection of Jesus will be attempted to be duplicated by the Anti-Christ who is to receive a mortal head wound. In November, 1963, John F. Kennedy became a prime suspect for Anti-Christ. At least for a few days. Anti-Christ is to set himself up as God in the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem (2 Thess. 2:4). The False Prophet who is also to appear will erect an image of the Anti-Christ which will live and speak (Rev. 13;14-15). The world will be made to wear on their foreheads or on their hands a dreaded sign of the Anti-Christ, six hundred and sixty six.

- In order for such a fantastic theory as this became popular several things must happen. First, a wonderful messianic prophecy in Daniel 9 concerning the Lord must be reinterpreted so that the Prince who should come is not Christ, as the Church has taught for 2000 years but Anti-Christ! Second, the entire historical context of Daniel, Matthew, and Revelation has to be ignored. Finally, the time frame established by John for his vision must be set aside. John informed his readers no less than ten times when the events he wrote about in Revelation were to be fulfilled.

◆ The events " <i>must shortly take place</i> "	Rev. 1:1
◆ " <i>For the time is near</i> "	Rev. 1:3
◆ " <i>I am coming to you quickly</i> "	Rev. 2:16
◆ " <i>I am coming quickly</i> "	Rev 3:11
◆ " <i>The third woe is coming quickly</i> "	Rev. 11:4
◆ " <i>The things which must shortly take place</i> "	Rev.22:6
◆ " <i>Behold, I am coming quickly</i> "	Rev. 22:7
◆ " <i>Yes, I am coming quickly</i> "	Rev. 22:20
◆ " <i>For the time is near</i> "	Rev. 22:10
◆ " <i>Behold, I am coming quickly</i> "	Rev. 22:12

Based upon this scriptural language it is not reasonable to believe that the biblical passages anticipated 2000 years in the future before the fulfillment of the events of the prophecy.

The Head Wound That Did Not Heal: Revelation 13:1-10

Perhaps the easiest way to understand this chapter is to consider it as a whole before looking at specific details. In context, John has seen civil war in heaven whereby the forces of Satan were cast out. Knowing that his time is short Satan turns to persecuting Jesus Christ and His servants. In John's day this was done in two ways symbolized by the two beasts of the vision. The First Beast that John beholds comes from the sea.



Revelation 13 The beast out of the sea.

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The Beast symbolically stands for the Roman Empire. This is determined by comparing scripture with scripture. The Jewish mind of John turned naturally to the beastly empire first described by Daniel the prophet. In Daniel 7:3-7 there is a vision of four powerful beasts that came out of the sea. The four beasts represent four great world empires. A lion with the wings of an eagle represented Babylon. A bear with three ribs represented Media. A leopard with four wings represented Persia. The fourth beast with iron teeth and ten horns represented the Greek Empire. It should be noted that there is a more popular interpretation of the four Beast of Daniel. They are identified:

- The First Beast represents the Babylonian empire
- The Second Beast represents the Media-Persia. empire
- The Third Beast represents the Greek empire
- The Fourth Beast represents the Roman empire

The critical point is the understanding of the Second Beast. Should the Medes and the Persians be united in one empire or recognized as two historical empires? As far as the history books go there is indeed a close identity between the Medes and the Persians. One reason for this is that the Median empire did not last long at all. Historian Will Durant comments, "*Its tenure was too brief to permit of any substantial contribution to civilization, except in so far as it prepared for the culture of Persia.*" Despite its brevity, history records that, "*Media was an ancient country in what is now Northern Iran. It became the center of a large empire in the 500's*

BC Media was the homeland of the Medes, a nomadic people. The Medes settled in Media in the 900's BC, when the Assyrians under King Shalmaneser III invaded Media. This was the first of many Assyrian invasions of Media. The Medes reached the peak of their power under Cyaxares, who reigned from 625 to 585 BC Cyaxares defeated Assyria and built an empire that included parts of what are now Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Astyages, the son of Cyaxares and the last Median king, was defeated by Cyrus the Great of Persia about 550 BC Cyrus incorporated Median lands into the Persian Empire and made Media a Persian province.” Jacob J. Finkelstein

For John, the Beast, which he saw rise out of the sea, embodied all the base characteristics of previous empires. John's Beast was like a leopard (Daniel's third Beast) with bear's feet (Daniel's second Beast) and a lion's mouth (Daniel's first Beast) which is the say that for the apostle the Roman Empire included all the terrors and fears associated with all the evil empires which had gone before. The Beast, which John saw, had seven heads and ten horns.



Revelation 12

The seven-headed dragon awaits the birth of the pregnant woman.

These heads and horns could easily stand for the rulers and emperors of Rome. The emperor's were:

- Julius Caesar 49-44 BC
- Augustus 31 BC - AD 14
- Tiberius AD 14-37
- Caligula AD 37-41
- Claudius AD 41-54
- Nero AD 55-68
- Vespasian AD 69-79
- Titus AD 79-81
- Domitian AD 81-96

Note. Between AD 68-69 there was a period of 18 months in which three men tried to rule Rome: Galba, Otho, Vitellius. On the heads of the Beast were blasphemous names. The emperors took titles of deity unto themselves. For example, Nero has inscribed on his coins, "*The Savior of the World*." In order to enforce worship of themselves the emperors of Rome created an elaborate organization of magistrates and priesthood. A Second Beast symbolizes this whole provincial organization in John's vision (13:11-18). There came a day when Christians were forced to say either, "*Caesar is Lord*" or die. Many choose death. John encouraged death to blaspheming the name of the Lord. Here then is the larger picture of Revelation 13. There is a savage Beast symbolic of Rome and there is another savage Beast symbolic of the organization of Caesar worship. Together these Beasts would seek to devour the Christian community. What hope did the sheep have against the ravenous Beasts. To the early Church the power of the Beast from the sea and the Beast from the land was awesome. The freedom that was given to the Beast from the sea to do evil.



Revelation 13
An Imperial Roman coin celebrating the victory in Judea
in AD 70-71 depicting a weeping woman symbolizing Judea,
inscribed "Judea Capta."

1. He was given power (Rev. 13:4) which had its origin in the Dragon or Satan.
2. He was allowed to be worshipped (Rev. 13:4).
3. He was allowed to boast for it was said of him (Rev. 14:4), "*Who is like unto the Beast? Who is able to make war with him?*"
4. He was permitted to open his mouth in blasphemy against God and to insult the saints of God in heaven (Rev. 13:6).
5. He was given power to make war with the saints and to overcome them (Rev. 13:7).
6. He was given authority to expand his reign over all races and languages and nations (Rev. 13:7).

7. He was allowed to receive the adulation of all that had not their names written in the *Lamb's Book of Life* (Rev. 13:8).

The one emperor who embodied all of this evil was Nero. That Nero is the Beast personified is suggested by 13:3. According to John one of the seven heads was wounded only to be restored to life. In this passage the “*Nero redivivus*”, or “*Nero resurrected*” legend is symbolized.

“*Nero Redivivus*”: “*Nero Resurrected*”

1. Nero was the son of Cnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus who was notorious for the evil he did. One occasion Ahenobarbus killed a freeman who simply refused to drink more wine. On another occasion he deliberately ran over a child while in his chariot on the Appian Way. In a fight in the Forum, Ahenobarbus gouged out the eye of a Roman soldier.
2. Agrippina, the mother of Nero, was no better. When Ahenobarbus knew he was to be a father he sneered that nothing but a monstrous abomination would come from himself and Agrippina. He was right.
3. At the age of three, Agrippina was banished by the emperor Caligula (A.D. 37-41). Nero was placed in the care of his Aunt Lepida who in turn entrusted his education to two slaves, one a barber and the other a dancer. Nero developed a love for poetry and music as he learned to play the fiddle.
4. When the emperor Claudius took the throne (AD 41-54), Agrippina returned from her exile. She had one burning ambition and that was to make her son emperor. Warned by fortune tellers of disastrous results she replied, "Let him kill me, so long as he reigns."
5. Agrippina went to work to make Nero emperor in this way. She encouraged Claudius to adopt Nero as a son. Claudius already had two children, Octavia and Britannicus.
6. After Claudius adopted Nero, Agrippina began an educational career for her son. She enlisted the as tutors the services of the famous philosopher Seneca, and the gallant soldier Afranius Burrus. Britannicus, the natural heir was neglected.
7. Five years later Nero at age sixteen was ready to become emperor according to his mother. In order for this to happen Claudius had to be disposed of. Agrippina saw to that personally by poisoning a dish of mushrooms and serving it to Claudius. While the emperor lingered on his deathbed, Agrippina tickled his throat with a poisoned feather to hasten his demise.
8. There was only one thing left to do and that was to produce Nero as the next emperor instead of Britannicus. Bribing the army to support Nero did this easily enough.

9. For five years Rome enjoyed prosperity as Nero kept busy with hobbies such as painting, sculpture, music, poetry, and the theater. Seneca and Burrus governed the empire.
10. Unfortunately for Rome, the day came when Nero decided he wanted to rule the empire. He was twenty-one years old. Despite his power, Nero delighted in petty, personal acts of crime. At night he would roam the streets with other young men to attack all he could find. His cruelty grew as he murdered Britannicus believing him to be a possible rival.
11. The sexual lust of Nero was boundless. He was an open homosexual. In a public ceremony he married a young boy named Sporus and took him on a bridal tour of Greece. He then took Poppaea Sabina for himself. It did not matter to Nero that she was already the wife of his closet friend Otho. In a rage Nero kicked Sabina when she was pregnant. This was the court of Nero: extravagance, greed, murder, immorality, and crime.
12. Besides his personal insatiable lusts, Nero had a passion for building. In AD 64 a great fire broke out in Rome. The city burned for a week. Historians tend to agree that if Nero did not start the fire, he was not opposed to seeing Rome burn. Very little was done to extinguish the blazes. Perhaps Nero wanted to rebuild Rome from the ruins.
13. The fires and rioting associated with this event had to be blamed on someone. Nero suggested that the Christian community was responsible. Did not the Christians talk about the earth being destroyed by fire? Sadistic persecution broke out among the people of God for no other reason than that they bore the name of Christ (1 Pet. 1:1-7).
14. The insanity of Nero grew. Seneca was forced to commit suicide. Burrus was murdered when he drank from a cup of poison Nero had sent to him as a cure. Agrippina tried to control the madness of her son until finally Nero turned on her.
15. Nero tried to kill his mother by poison, by causing her house to collapse, by ship wrecking her. She survived all these attempts.
16. Nero finally sent Anicetus to stab his mother to death. When Agrippina saw the dagger she pulled off her dress and cried, "Strike my womb because it bore a Nero!"
17. Such madness could not last. Rebellion in the army broke out during the reign of Nero led by Julius Vindex in Gaul [France] and Galba in Spain. The Senate took hope and declared that the Emperor Nero was a public enemy. Nero fled the city and found refuge in a little villa. There he committed suicide. For John, Nero was nothing but a BEAST. When the BEAST afflicted himself, many thought that he was only wounded and had not died. The hope of his death was thought to be too good to be true.

Lessons From a Madman

The spiritual lessons from the life of Nero must not be forgotten.

- The future is fully known by God who will sometimes reveal some of it to His prophets.
- Evil is allowed a tremendous amount of expression.
- However intense evil may be it is still under the sovereign control of Christ.
- Suffering is the fate of God's people. There is a price to pay for the Christian virtues of endurance, patience, love for Christ, and honesty. The greatest acts of kindness and self-sacrifice are often found in the pits of suffering.
- Only the grace of God and the presence of the Holy Spirit reminding the believer of the Words of God can be of comfort in some situations. We would do well to pray for the fullness of the Spirit and the power He brings into our lives.

The Beast from the Earth: Revelation 13:11-18

By way of review, in Revelation 13:1-10, John sees a Beast from the sea which may refer to the Roman empire in general and to Nero in particular. The Beast had seven heads corresponding to the seven emperors beginning with Julius Caesar and ending with Domitian. The seven emperors together with three other rulers, Galba, Otho, and Vitellius make up the ten horns. The wounded head restored to life suggests the concept of Nero redivivus or Nero resurrected. For John, the Roman Empire was beastly in nature reflected symbolically by the leopard, bear, and lion. Rome had not always been beastly. The apostle Paul in the early part of his ministry received much help from the Roman government. The strong protective arm of Rome saved Paul from mob action in Philippi (Acts 16), in Corinth (Acts 18), in Ephesus (Acts 19) and in Jerusalem (Acts 21-22). Paul taught the Christian community that all authority was ordained of God and should be obeyed (Rom. 13:1-6). The apostle taught that prayers must be made for rulers (1 Tim. 2:1).

Peter instructed the Christian community to be good citizens and to fear God (1 Pet. 2:13-17). Now, in the Revelation, things have changed because the nature of government changed. The emperors had grown too proud, taking upon themselves blasphemous names. Questions once asked of Almighty God (Ex. 15:11) were now asked of Rome (Rev. 13:4). Caligula (AD 37-41) who was a madman took worship of himself seriously. He demanded that the Jews erect an image of himself in the Holy of Holies in the Temple of Jerusalem. An army was formed to march against the Jews to enforce the royal decree when Caligula died suddenly. The years would pass and the cult of Caesar worship would grow. For John, in the midst of all the madness of men, there was comfort in the thought that whose names are written in the book of life of the Lamb would be faithful. Here is both the preservation of the saints (Rev. 17:8 cf. Eph. 1:4) and the perseverance of the saints. Those who are born of God will not apostatize but will remain faithful to the end. In verse 10 John combines two passages to make several points. One of the two quotations is from Jeremiah 15:2 where Jeremiah is commanded to tell the people that all who are for death will go forth to death, all who are for the sword will go forth to the sword etc. The point is that there is no escaping the decree of God. The second part of Revelation 13:10 is a

quotation from the words of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:52). Peter had wanted to defend Jesus against arrest by the use of the sword but the Lord would not let him saying, *“Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.”* Dr. William Barclay suggests three things that Revelation 13:10 might teach.

- If the Christian faith means imprisonment, the Christians must accept it without complaint.
- Christianity can never be defended by force. Using the violence of man cannot defend the gospel of love.
- There are weapons of spiritual warfare that the Christian can use. The two weapons are patience whereby the believer courageously accepts the worst in life and there is faith that speaks of fidelity that will never waver in devotion to the Master.

Considering the Second Beast, several things can be said about him.

- He had two horns like a lamb (13:11)
- He spoke in the same manner as the Dragon (13:11) in that he speech was blasphemous and persuasive.
- He exercised excessive force (13:12) to create a climate of worship.
- He performed miracles (13:13) imitating the power of Elijah.
- He encouraged idolatry (13:14)
- He made the idol to speak (13:15)
- He caused all to be marked (13:16)
- He had the number of a man which is 666 (13:18)



*Revelation 13 The beast out of the earth.
Painting Copyright © Joe Maniscalco.*

The first question that arises is how can a Beast do all these things? The answer is that the Beast merely represents a human figure. Once more the identity of the Beast is given in cryptic language for the number of the Beast is the number of man and his number is 666 (13:18). Concerning this mark of the Beast it should be noted that what is in view here is a parody of holy things. The lamb is a parody of the Lamb Of God. The mark of the Beast on the right hand and on the forehead is a parody, a mocking of God's holy commands. In the Law was commanded that a Jew keep the Law close to his heart (Ex. 13:1-10; 13:11-16; Deut. 6:4-9; 11:13-21). The Jews took the commandments quite literally by writing the Scriptures on little strips and then placing them in phylacteries, which were worn on the left arm, and on the forehead.

There is another way to understand the mark of the Beast. It is a matter of record that sometimes its owner branded a slave in the ancient world. This usually happened if the slave ran away or was guilty of some serious misconduct. The mark was called a stigma. The mark of the Beast may mean that all who worship the Beast are his property. It was also the custom in the ancient world for loyal soldiers to brand themselves with the name of their general much like people today in the military wear tattoos. This mark of the Beast may indicate that those who worship the Beast are devoted to him. Also in the ancient world on the contracts, there was a mark, a *charagma*, a seal bearing the date and the name of the Emperor. The mark of the Beast may indicate that those who worship the Beast may accept his authority. The people who burned a pinch of incense to Caesar was given a certificate to that effect. the mark of the Beast may be the certificate of worship. A Christian could only obtain such a certificate spiritually by renouncing his faith.

The complete picture here teaches how evil can totally dominate the soul of a person. A man can so abandon himself to the works of the flesh that he really does become the property of Satan, devoted to him, under satanic authority, without genuine faith, and happy in the evil that is committed. Jesus told certain religious people, "*You are of the devil and the lust of your father you will do.*" Those who do not follow Christ do not consider themselves slaves of the devil nor workings out his lusts by they are and they do. The worship of the emperor of Rome is really no different than the blind allegiance millions give to political personalities today. Rules of nations desire and demand the adulation of the masses and often receive it. From this passage one thing

is clear. The early Christians who refused to worship the beastly system of Rome were persecuted. They could not buy or sell and suffered economic hardships just like the Jews in Nazi Germany were controlled by certain documents. In Israel today, the Arabs are given green cards in order to transact business. It is very possible that Nero instilled some form of economic hardships against the Christian community. For John, his actions were beastly. *"Do not worship him,"* exhorted John. *"Do bow before the one whose number is 666."*

The Number of the Beast: Dr. William Barclay

The suggestions as to the meaning of 666 are endless. Since it is the number of the beast, many have twisted the language of Scripture to fit his own arch-enemy; and so 666 has been taken to mean the Pope, John Knox, Martin Luther, Napoleon and many another. Dr. Kepler provides us with an example of what ingenuity produced during the Second World War. Let A = 100; B = 101; C = 102; D = 103 and so on. Then we can make this addition:

H = 107
I = 108
T = 119
L = 111
E = 104
R = 117

and the sum is 666! Very early we saw that the Revelation is written in code; it is very clear that nowhere will the code be more closely guarded than in regard to this number which stands for the arch-enemy of the Church. The strange thing is that the key must have been lost very early; for even so great a Christian scholar as Irenaeus in the second century did not know what the number stood for....The chapter itself gives us by far the best clue. There recurs again and again the mention of the head that was wounded to death and then restored. We have already seen that the head symbolizes the Nero redivivus legend. We might well, therefore, act on the assumption that the number has something to do with Nero. Many ancient manuscripts give the number as 616. If we take Nero in Latin and give its numerical equivalent, we get:

N = 50
E = 6
R = 500
O = 60
N = 50

The total is 666; and the name can equally well be spelled without the final N, which would give the number 616. In Hebrew the letters of Nero Caesar also add up to 666. There is little doubt that the number of the beast stands for Nero; and that John is forecasting the coming of Antichrist is the form of Nero, the incarnation of evil, returning to this world.

The Biblical Usage of the Word "*Eternal*"

1. Old Testament promises were considered to be "*eternal*" or "*everlasting*" but only for the duration of time God decreed to deal with Israel. The vantagepoint of time teaches this more clearly.
2. In 2 Chronicles 7:16 God promised to live in the Temple built by Solomon forever. However, in 586 BC the Temple was destroyed. It was rebuilt by Herod the Great and destroyed again in AD 70 so that today the Temple
3. In certain passages of the Old Testament such as Exodus 40:15 and Numbers 25:13 it is declared that the house of Aaron would constitute an everlasting priesthood. The book of Hebrews makes it clear that the Aaronic priesthood came to an end with the ministry of Christ.
4. In Genesis 13:15 and again in Genesis 17:8 the promise is made that the land of Canaan would be for Abraham and his seed an everlasting possession.
5. The challenge comes to understand why such promises would be made.
6. There is a sense in which every eternal or everlasting promise does not end but goes through various forms. For example, the Law, the Sabbath, circumcision, the kingdom, the priesthood, and the land pass from the temporal to the eternal in a spiritual sense.
7. Is not the Law of God still written on the hearts of all that believe in Christ? Does not the New Testament Church observe a Christian Sabbath on Sunday? Has God not wrought a circumcision of the heart? Is the Church not a kingdom and a royal priesthood sure to possess the land of promise in heaven? Has Christ not fulfilled all the promises made to national Israel and become their Deliverer (Luke 1:30-33, 76,77; 2:25,30)? Is Jesus not the One through whom the Abrahamic covenant was to have its main fulfillment (Gal. 3:16)? It can be argued that the original realities themselves do remain but in new forms.
8. The development of the original promises continue from
 - their inception until the first advent of Christ,
 - from that advent until the Second Coming, and
 - from the Second Coming into the eternal state which will have no end.

The Royal Reign of Christ

Revelation

Chapter 14

One Hundred and Forty-four Thousand Singing Saints: Revelation 14:1-7

There are a number of images that John sees in this chapter. The vision presents several things:

- a Lamb standing on Mt. Zion surrounded by 144,000 saints having the Father's name written on their foreheads (Rev. 14:1)
- a voice from heaven and the voice of harpers playing with their harps (Rev. 14:2)
- the singing saints before the four beasts and the twenty four elders (Rev. 14:3)
- a flying angel having the everlasting gospel unto them that dwell upon the earth. There is only one gospel even that of salvation by grace through faith alone.

Observe from the narrative

- The duration of the gospel. It is called everlasting. As long as men shall live the gospel shall be preached. Eternity itself will never forget the good news of the redemption of lost sinners.
- The object of the gospel. It is to go to every nation, and kindred, and tongue and people.
- The content of the gospel. The message is simple enough: fear God, give Him glory, and remember that judgment is come, and worship the creator.
- The urgency of the gospel (Rev. 14:7) for the angel cries with a loud voice.

The symbolic figures of the passage have been largely identified. The Lamb is the Lord Jesus Christ. There is but one final Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world.

- Mount Zion is the earthly Jerusalem, the counterpart of the heavenly Mount Zion wherein dwelleth the righteousness of God.
- The 144,000, is the Church completed, the true spiritual Israel made of 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes.
- The Father's name on the forehead speaks of the personal possession of God. Known to Him is His own.

- The majestic voice and the melodious voices of the harpers harping with their harps represent the beauty, serenity, and peace of the heavenly abode.
- The four beasts are the four living creatures who protected the Royal Throne.
- The twenty-four elders speak again of the completed church.

The only real challenge to understand Revelation 14 is in verse 4 where we have the words explaining who the 144,000 are, "*These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins.*" It is possible that the reference is to spiritual adultery. Many times in the Old Testament it is lamented that the people of Israel went "*a whoring*" after strange gods (Ex. 34:15; Deut. 31:16; Judges 2:17; 8:27,33; Hos. 9:1). Unfortunately, the passage in Revelation 14:4 does not read as if it is to be understood in a metaphorical manner. Honesty compels an understanding that exalts celibacy and virginity. History records that the idea soon appeared in the early Church that the highest Christian life was possible only if marriage was renounced. One of the leading Church fathers, Origen, had himself castrated to ensure virginity. There is on record a Roman trial at which the Christians are charged with being "*the people who impose upon silly women and tell them that they must not marry and persuade them to adopt a fanciful chastity*" (Ruinart: *Acts of the Martyrs*, 27 April, AD 304). While the Church must hold a high view of celibacy, it is not the only view of the Church on sexuality.

- In Matthew 19:4-6 Jesus glorifies marriage and warns that what God has joined together, no man should put aside.
- The apostle Paul idealized marriage and compared it to the relation between Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:22-23).
- The gospel warning foretold that in the latter times the doctrine would be taught not to marry (1 Tim. 4:3). The Roman Catholic Church still teaches this doctrine today.

Returning to Revelation 14:4, it can be said that the 144,000 speaks of the Church and purity of life. It is said of them that:

- They follow the Lamb where-ever He goes.
- They were the redeemed from among men. Redemption is the great theme of the Bible. Sinners saved by grace are the greatest story ever told.
- They were entirely sanctified. In their mouth was found no guile or deceit. It is the greatest hope of every professing believer to be without sin. Someday that hope will be realized. Sin had a starting point and sin will end. In heaven the Church stands faultless before the throne of God.

How is that possible? It is only possible by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to the account of His own. By the work on the Cross Jesus paid the penalty for sin. He suffered our hell that we might have His heaven. He exchanged His righteousness for our sinfulness. It is as wonderful as that. No wonder the redeemed want to stand close before the throne of God for salvation is of the Lord.

How To Populate Hell: Revelation 14:8-13

John's vision continues with the announcement that, *"Babylon is fallen, is fallen that great city."* The question is, *"Who or what is Babylon?"* Prior to the outbreak of the Iraqi in 1991, a very popular teaching was that ancient Babylon was being revived. The thinking was that ancient Babylon revived would become the dominating political force in the world. Saddam Hussain was certainly doing all he could to encourage that concept among the Arab countries. It is no secret that Saddam has a love affair with the past. For years he has spent untold millions rebuilding the ancient city down to the last details. The war, Operation Dessert Storm put an end to all his dreams. There will be no revived Babylonian Empire. As intriguing as the possibility is, John did not have the end of the twentieth century in mind when he beheld his vision. Simply enough, John foretold the doom of the Roman Empire of the first century in which he lived.

Historically, the original Babylon fell to Cyrus the Persian. It was one of the most shattering events of ancient history though the prophets of Israel foretold it. Isaiah cried, *"Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground."* (Isa. 21:9) Jeremiah said, *"Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed: howl for her; take balm for her pain, if so be she may be healed."* (Jer. 51:8). For John, Rome was his modern day Babylon ripe for divine judgment. As Babylon was a golden cup in the hand of the Lord (Jer. 51:7) making all the earth drunken so Rome was also a corrupting force luring the people of the world into immorality. To find a modern day parallel we need look no further than our own country. America, founded upon pure, clean, Christian concepts of morality, is today the leading exporter of child pornography to the rest of the world according to the Presidential Commission on this matter headed by Dr. James Dobson. Like Babylon of old, like ancient Rome, America is making all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her immorality. The principle of Revelation 14 is that any nation or any person that influences others to do evil will not escape the avenging wrath of God. Modern day prophets would do well to cry, *"America is fallen is fallen, that great nation, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her immorality."*

At this point in the narrative John sees a third angel declaring God's ultimate judgment upon individuals who worship the Beast and receive his mark of authority on their bodies. Observe,

1. Hell is the ultimate expression of the wrath of God (14:10). It is a just expression of Divine anger.
2. Hell is the place of no mixture of mercy with judgment, it is the place of total fury.
3. Hell is a place of endless torment.
4. The agony of hell is known to the holy angels and to the Lamb. Once the Christians were thrown to the lions while the world sat in the bleachers and watched. In eternity, it is the ungodly that shall suffer while the holy angels and the Savior who suffered looks on.

5. Hell is a place where the smoke of the torture ascends us forever and ever. The Jewish mind would recall the Old Testament account of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrha. Genesis 19:28 says that, *"the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace."*
6. Unlike Sodom and Gomorrha the eternal death, the second death offers no relief by day or night. Time ceases in eternity. The concept about an eternal unceasing place of torment for the wicked has troubled many people. It has been argued:
 - ❖ The punishment does not fit the crime. Eternal torment for sin is said to be too harsh a penalty to have to pay. The response is that men do not consider sin as horrible as God does.
 - ❖ It has been suggested that the concept of eternal punishment go against the ethical teachings of Jesus. The response is that the whole concept of hell is ethical for it declares that there is justice in the world. For God not to punish sin would be unethical. It would make God unjust and even unmerciful towards those who have suffered. To turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to acts of brutality and cries of pain is wrong.
 - ❖ It has been suggested that God will one day redeem all of mankind. In response, it can be said that neither the plain language of Scripture nor the vision of John offers any hope for such a possibility as nice as that concept appears to be.

The lessons of this passage become compelling and terrifying: Turn or burn. Those who will not worship the Lamb shall suffer the fate of the damned and the doom of the Beast. God really means what He says. Despite this truth, unbelief hardens the heart so that apart from Divine grace even the knowledge of destruction does not deter sin. Like men who into mortal conflict know that death and destruction is certain and awaits them, still they go. In contrast to those who worship the Beast are the saints (14:12) who patiently endure as they obey the gospel commands. One day they shall be able to rest from their labors.

A Time of Harvest: Revelation 14:14-20

The final vision of this chapter is that of judgment. The one to execute the judgment is one like the Son of Man. The Jewish mind understood this expression because it came from the prophet Daniel (Dan. 7:13,14). *"I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of Man, came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him."* Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy and John's vision. He wears a golden crown symbolic of His purity [gold] and kingly office [crown]. In His hand is a sharp sickle. The work He is about to perform demands a perfect tool. Nothing dull or blunt will do. In addition to the Son of Man, John sees an angel with a sharp sickle. He is encouraged by another angel from the altar which had power over fire to execute the sickle. Here is a scene of Divine judgment visualized in two familiar Scriptural metaphors (note Joel 3:13; Matt. 13:24-30; 24:37-43). There is a judgment in terms of a grain harvest (Rev. 14:15-16) and there is judgment in terms of a winepress (14:17-20). The Son of Man uses His

sickle in the grain harvest while the angels gather vines to pour them into a winepress. Concerning this judgment John declares,

1. It is an act of God. This is a point that most men in our generation never realize. We have an amazing capacity to view death and destruction in natural terms instead of supernatural consequences. Read any current history book on the origin of WWI, WWII, Korea, Vietnam etc. and you will find many reasons as to why wars are fought but not one thought will be said attributing war to the justice of God. This generation does not think in such terms. Another generation did. President Abraham Lincoln saw the Civil War in terms of God exacting just payment from the country for the sweat of the black laborers (Abraham Lincoln, Vol. IV, p. 92-93).
2. Concerning this judgment John declares that in the act of Divine justice, there is no mercy. John sees a sharp sickle, a determined hand, and blood flowing for 200 miles as high as the bridle on a horse. Here is destructive on a magnificent scale for the entire nation for 200 miles was the length of Israel. There is a river of blood in John's vision and no mercy. It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the Living God.
3. John also sees holy angels encouraging the Son Of Man to execute justice (14:15). The elect angels understand that evil has to be dealt with not only in heaven but also on Earth. So close do the holy angels identify with the affairs of this earth that they encourage the resurrected glorified Lord to execute judgment. Not only do the holy angels encourage the Son Of Man but they participate in the judgment. Regarding the relationship of angels and men the Bible teaches two clear things.
 - Angels shall take part in the final judgment that brings human history to a close.
 - The saints shall judge the angels (Matt. 13:41-42; 1 Cor. 6:3).
 - As the angels assist in the execution of judgment they encourage each other in the task they are assigned (Rev. 14:18). Holy angels love for justice to be exacted. They inspire and encourage each other in the holy task.

The events of John's vision do have a historical fulfillment in AD 70 for there is a general judgment in view here and not one limited to the Gentiles. In the civil war of AD 70 Jews and Gentiles died together in a great slaughter. Mostly Jews died for the power of Rome was great but the Jews put up a tremendous resistance. By way of application, it is safe to see in John's vision the principles of current and future fulfillment. Notice 14:20 in particular. The Jews have always believed that at the end of time, the Gentile nations would be brought just outside the city of Jerusalem and judged (Joel 3:2,12; Zech. 14:1-4). This may very well happen. This portion of the vision of John is concluded. It is a horrible, breath-taking scene of carnage and destruction because of Divine justice. There is a way of escape from the Divine destruction. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.

The Royal Reign of Christ

Revelation

Chapter 15

Preparation for the Last Plagues: Revelation 15:1-8

Following upon the vision of the fall of Babylon John sees seven angels preparing to pour out upon the earth the seven last plagues of the wrath of God.



Revelation 15 Angels bring the seven last plagues.

Painting / Copyright © Joe Maniscalco.

The angels are in heaven remind us that heaven is a fixed geographical location where God dwells. From heaven the Lord looks upon the earth and He rules with a sovereign hand over the affairs of men. Witnessing the angels in their holy preparation for a terrible work of Divine wrath are the saints who had gotten the victory over the Beast and over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name. In historical context the Beast is a reference to Rome and the Emperor worship that was demanded from the citizens of the evil empire including the Christians. The victory for some of the saints came through natural death having been faithful to the end by fleeing the cities. The victory for others came in the form of martyrdom whereby even torture did not cause a denial of Christ. John sees the victorious saints in their heavenly bodies standing on the sea of glass holding the harps of God. The reference to a sea of glass mingled with fire may be an allusion to the brazen (laver) sea in the Temple, in which the priests were to wash.

Another thought is that the image of a sea of glass mingled with fire refers to the Red Sea that stood solidified while the Israelites went through and the pillar of fire reflected light upon the waters. This latter suggestion is based upon the fact that the saints sing the song of Moses the servant of God (15:3). Here is a wonderful passage that stresses the unity between the Old Testament saints and the New Testament saints. In heaven the truth is known. There is but one people of God and they all say the same thing. The Song of Moses is recorded in Exodus 15:1-19. Here in Revelation 15 the essence of the Song of Moses is sung stressing:

1. The great and marvelous works of Almighty God. Just as God brought Israel from the land of Egypt, so God will bring His Church from the oppressive environment of Judaism and the Roman Empire.
2. The justice and correctness of the ways of God is stressed. It is all very sad that God must use force and violence, death and destruction in order to exact justice but He will.
3. The fear of God is stressed. Biblical fear of God includes a genuine terror of His power to destroy, a fearful dread causing a frown on His face, and a longing to obey Him. When the power of God is displayed, when the holiness and justice of God is revealed, when the beauty of obedience is known, *"who shall not fear thee O Lord, and glorify Thy name?"*
4. The holiness of God is stressed. Moses and the children of Israel sing *"Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonder?"*

John hears the martyred saints declare in their song of the Lamb that only the LORD is holy. In the absolute sense this is true. Neither the angels, nor man, nor the animals possesses the essential holiness that God possesses. The holiness of God is His glory. Perhaps as none other, Stephen Charnock has written on the holiness of God. Some of his points can be shared in summary.

The Doctrine of the Holiness of God: *Stephen Charnock*

1. The holiness of God is the attribute, which has an excellency above His other perfection.
 - The angels as this one for the angels cry *"Holy sound out none of the other attributes of God! Holy! Holy! is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory"* (Isa. 6:3; Rev. 4:8).
 - God swears by this attribute in order to affirm what He says. *"Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David."* (Psa. 89:35).
 - Holiness is the beauty and glory of God (2 Chron. 20:21) and teaches men to praise the beauty of holiness.
 - Holiness is the very life of God (Eph. 4:18). Once we were alienated from this life of God. Now we share in His life.
2. Positive and negative statements better understand the holiness of God.
 - The holiness of God negatively is a perfect and unpolluted freedom from all evil.

- Positively, the holiness of God is that integrity of the Divine nature whereby there is a conformity, in the affection and action to the Divine will. For God to know what is right and to do what is wrong is impossible. He is always God blessed forever (Rom. 9:5).
3. There is more. The holiness of God cannot be diminished, dimmed, or overshadowed (James 1:17). *"He is the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness or shadow of turning."*
 4. Nor can the holiness of God ever approve of any evil done by another. Psalm 5:3 says, "He hath no pleasure in wickedness." "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity" (Heb. 1:13).

By manifesting His holiness, by displaying His power, all nations will come and worship before the Lord. After hearing the Song of Moses being sung, John looked and fastened his gaze upon the Holiest of Holies (the Temple of the Tabernacles). From this inner sanctuary came forth seven angels clothed in pure white linen with a golden girdle around their chest. This was the dressing of the high priests when they went to inquire of the Lord. The picture presents the angels duly commissioned from the presence of the Lord. There is such a thing as a holy and righteous judgment. The wearing of the golden girdles around the breast reminds one of the same attire of the Son of Man (Rev. 1:13).

If there is a lesson it may be that once the love of Christ which flowed from His bosom was free. Now, that love is bound up. Not love but justice now will be exacted. As the seven angels come forth John sees one of the four beasts give unto the seven angels seven bowls of the wrath of the eternal God. When that happened the heavenly temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and no one was allowed to enter into the temple until the judgment was fully executed. The angels prepared to administer the last plagues.

The Royal Reign of Christ

Revelation

Chapter 16

The Armageddon of Revelation 16



: *The Valley of Armageddon (also called the Plain of Esdraelon and Jezreel Valley in the Bible) as seen from Mt. Carmel.*

1. In John's vision seven bowls of judgment are poured out upon the earth. In the sixth bowl judgment the Euphrates River is dried up and an invasion from the East is prepared. If there is a historical allusion to an invasion it might be a reference to the Parthians, which were feared by Rome.
2. John sees that the False Prophet [the Second Beast From the Land, Rev. 13] gathered the kings of the earth into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.
3. There is in both Jewish and Christian theology a concept of a final conflict between God and the forces of evil. There is also in Jewish and Christian theology the concept of an ongoing struggle between God and the forces of evil. Psalms 2:2 says that, "*The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and His anointed.*"
4. The symbolic place where good and evil fight in the Jewish mind is a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.
5. Armageddon may be connected with the name Megiddo. Megiddo is in the Plain of Esdraelon, which was part of the Great Highway from Egypt to Damascus.

6. Megiddo is one of the great battlefields of the world. It was at Megiddo that

- Deborah and Barak defeated Sisera and his chariots (Judges 5:19-21).
- Ahaziah died by the arrows of John (2 Kin. 9:27).
- King Josiah was killed in battle with Pharaoh Necho (2 Kin. 23:29,30), a tragedy which the Jews never forgot (Zech. 12:11). Megiddo, as a battlefield, was familiar to the student of Jewish history. For John it was the place where evil would be destroyed.

7. If John was communicating to the saints a contemporary message it was simply this:

- There is an unholy trinity of father [the Dragon] son [Beast From The Sea] and Holy Spirit [Beast From the Land /False Prophet]
- The unholy trinity has an objective, which is to war against God. Certainly the Emperor of Rome with their Caesar worship, energized by Satan would fit this description.
- The False Prophet energized by Satan will fight on the field of battle where so many conflicts between good and evil have taken place. There on the field of battle righteousness shall triumph.

8. The key thought to this section is that righteousness shall triumph. Though men do not repent at the judgments of God the judgments still stand. Though men collect themselves to fight against the Lord, it does not matter.

9. The words of 16:15 become very important. In the hour of temporal judgment, the people of God must be found faithful lest there be shame. God's people must keep their garments.

10. What are the garments that must be kept but the robe of righteousness. The Lord would have His people to be holy. Not only is moral purity in view but the essential faith that makes up Christianity.

11. When all is going well it is easy to have faith in God. But when a nation is put under the rod of divine discipline, faith is challenged. Jesus asked, *"when the Son of man cometh, will He find faith on the earth?"*

12. To lose faith is to lose the robe of righteousness. It is to walk naked and to be exposed to shame.

13. Our text says, *"They shall see his shame."* Angels see the shame of the soul that has lost faith. Other professing Christians see the shame of the one who has not kept the faith. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit sees the shame of the Christian who puts his hand to the plow only to turn back. The unbelieving community shall see the shame of the one who walked naked, and without the robes of righteousness.

14. By way of application, the Church at the end of the twentieth century seems to be witnessing a renewal of the pouring out of the bowl judgments. it is impossible to watch the news on television and not behold
- people with grievous sores such as ailes (Rev. 16:2)
 - the pollution of our seas so that living creatures die (Rev. 16:3)
 - the pollution of the sources of water such as rivers and streams (Rev. 16:4)
 - the breakdown of the ozone layer and the terrible droughts of Africa caused by a scorching sun (Rev. 16:8)
 - the emptiness of religion (Rev. 16:10)
 - the threat of war (Rev. 16:12). To keep watching for the coming of the Lord, to maintain a vital faith in the face of so much heartache and destruction is to receive a blessing from the Lord.
15. It is hard not to question the foundations of the Christian faith in the evidence of so much disease, death, and destruction. The old questions keep arising. *"Why does a sovereign God allow so much evil?"* *"Why doesn't God do something to intervene and to stop the violence, to give food to the hungry, to cure the suffering."* Faith cries out, *"Lord, I believe! Help my unbelief!"* The gospel exhortation says, *"Blessed! Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments."* The simple questions to the Church are still the same. "Are we watching for Christ? Do we love His appearance? Are we keeping our garments of faith and righteousness white?"
16. In trying to understand this passage and stay within a historical context, 16:15 does present a challenge for it clearly is a reference to the Second Advent of Christ. There is much value in believing in the doctrine of believing that Jesus is coming again.
17. The doctrine of the Second Coming is a motivation for faithfulness. It is a stimulus for faith for there is hope. It provides a holy fear. It is a source of great comfort. It causes the saints to rise above present circumstances. The Church must never think that it shall escape tribulation. Neither should it be afraid at the judgments of God poured out nor the hostility that judgment produces (Rev. 16:11).
18. Christianity was born amidst great persecution. Today, the Church in Africa, the Church in Europe, the Church in China would understand and appreciate so much the comfort and exhortation of 16: 15 as life is lived out in the midst of death, carnage, and destruction.
19. The words of Revelation 16: 15 are designed to comfort and challenge God's people in a world gone mad. We need such words today.

The Ten Plagues of Egypt Compared to the Sounding of the Seven Trumpets in Revelation 16

• Water turned into blood	Ex. 7:20-25	Rev. 16:3; 16:4
• Fogs	Ex. 8:5-14	
• Lice	Ex. 8:6-14	
• Flies	Ex. 8:20-24	
• Plagues	Ex. 9:3-6	
• Boils	Ex. 9:8-11	Rev. 16:2
• Thunder and hail	Ex. 9:22-26	Rev. 16:17-21
• Locusts	Ex. 10:12-19	
• Darkness	Ex. 10:21-23	Rev. 16:10
• Death of first born	Ex. 12:29-30	

The Seven Last Plagues: Revelation 16:1-16

In chapter 15 preparation was made for the execution of the last plagues. Holy angels, as flaming ministers of God, gathered themselves to perform the will of the Lord. Patiently yet poised they wait for the sovereign of the universe to express His will. Suddenly, the command is given. With a great voice of judgment the angels are sent their various ways to pour out the seven bowls of the wrath of God upon the earth. Immediately the angels obey. Without comment or objection they hasten to perform what God has decreed. The First Angel went and poured out his bowl judgment upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men that had The Mark of the Beast and upon them which worshipped his image. In context The Mark of the Beast was the seal of ownership spiritually stamped by those who engaged in emperor worship. he pouring forth of judgment demands several observations.

- The plagues were similar to the plagues of Egypt. Sins, which are alike, will bring like punishment.
- The justice of God is administered by degrees. Rome was not built in a day and it would not be destroyed in a day.
- The universe suffers because of the sin of man for the plagues affect the air, land, and seas. Creation groans and suffers through the offenses of men.
- These last judgments are wider in scope than ever before. In Egypt only that nation suffered.

In the plagues of the seven trumpets, a third of the earth suffered but now, all come under Divine wrath. The rest of the angels and their judgments are self-explanatory. The Second Angel poured his bowl of wrath upon the sea, which became as the blood of a dead man, hard and congealed so that no life could live in the water. The Third Angel poured his Bowl of Wrath upon the rivers. The Fourth Angel poured his bowl upon the sun, so that it scorched men. The Fifth Angel caused darkness while the Sixth Angel caused the Euphrates to dry up for the advance of an army from the East. The Seventh Angel caused the air to be polluted.

It is interesting that man at the end of the twentieth century is extremely concerned about the ecology because we discern these very things happening. Recently a world conference was held in *Rio De Jerno* on the environment. World leaders attended and many signed an agreement to help save the environment. Today scientist warn about the breakdown of the ozone layer causing the sun to scorch man (Rev. 16:9) producing cancer on human and a greenhouse effect on the globe. Today environmentalists protest the pollution of the air. On top of Mt. Washington there are pictures of how the pollution from the coal companies once blotted out the sun over Pittsburgh. Today the cry is sounded around the globe for nations to stop polluting our oceans, seas, and rivers. What we consider the price of progress may form a Divine point of view not progress but the outworking of judgment. In addition to the plagues there are a number of fascinating insights that are presented for consideration. In Revelation 16:5 and in 16:7 the righteousness of God is declared. When terrible things happen on earth it is not uncommon for people to become angry at God. *"If God is so powerful, why does He allow the innocent to suffer?" "How can a loving God do this?" "God is not good or He would have stopped this event."* The truth of the matter is that there is so much sin in the nations of this world, there is so much evil in the life of every person in this world that whatever he chooses to do by way of judgment is just and He would remain absolutely righteous.

In Revelation 16:6 the basis for the outpouring of the bowls of judgment is stated. Simply enough, in the historical context, God avenged the blood of the saints. Before God, the saints are worthy of massive retaliation. President Theodore Roosevelt had such a protective attitude towards Americans. Once, when an American was captured by the Arabs, Roosevelt mobilized all of the armed forces, the Navy, the Marines, and the Army and told the Arabs in very specific terms to let our people go. The Arabs got the message and the Americans came home. So precious are the saints that those who hurt them will wish they had not. Consider how great the love of God is for His own. While the saints and the New Testament prophets of God might suffer as the Old Testament prophets did, of whom the world was not worthy, God will avenge the blood of His elect who cry to Him.

Despite the harshness of the judgment, despite the number of the judgments, men still do not repent (Rev. 16:9). We are no different today. Despite all the judgments that plague our nation, for the most part our churches remain empty, our knees do not bow in prayer, our hearts feel no fear of God, our eyes remain dry, our lives are barren, and God is simply not sought. With a shrug of the shoulders men say, *"That's life,"* or worse, they blaspheme the God of heaven because of the pains and the sores (Rev. 16:11). But they do not repent. The plagues in judgment by the Sixth and Seventh Angel calls for a little special treatment. In Revelation 16:12 reference is made to the water of the Euphrates River being dried up that the way of the kings of the East might be prepared. What does all this mean? For those who take a futuristic view, the reference is to a coming fight with China. Until recently, one popular system of prophetic interpretation taught that Russia would mobilize for warfare. It is all very interesting but there is no truth to prophetic system. Like Russia, China is not mentioned in the Bible. Any identity of the kings of the East has to be read within the text. We cannot be too harsh on the modern day prophets because every generation has been tempted to interpret those passages in light of contemporary events. During the time of Matthew Henry the popular belief was that John predicted the destruction of Turkish power and its empire. Others see the Euphrates to be symbolic of the decline in power of the Pope, or to be the fall of Islam (Mohammedan). Perhaps there is a simple understanding.

First, John may have as the background for this part of the vision a historical event. Herodotus (1:91) writes that when the Persian king named Cyrus captured Babylon, he did so by drying up the Euphrates. The Euphrates flowed right through the center of Babylon. Going up the river Cyrus had his army deflect the course of the river into a lake. The level of the water dropped and in the end the channel of the river stretching through Babylon became a dry road. The Persians used the road to enter Babylon and the city was conquered. John was reminding his audience that the Lord has a way to make even the mightiest of empires fall. To the East of Rome, beyond the Euphrates River lived the Parthians, the great cavalry force Rome feared. The rumor spread that Nero had not died but gone to Parthia and it was from Parthia that *Nero redivivus* was to return. In John's vision it was from across the Euphrates River that death and destruction and judgment was to come.

In Revelation 16:13 John suddenly see the three main enemies of God and of the church. Here is the unholy trinity consisting of the Dragon [Satan] (12:3,9), the First Beast [Roman Empire with its Caesar worship] (Rev. 13:1), and the False Prophet [the Second Beast of the Lamb] (Rev. 13:11-18; 19:20). Out of the mouth of these evil forces comes unclean spirits like frogs. Revelation 16:14 explains that the unclean spirits are the spirits of demons. The words uttered, like plagues, are unclean, empty, and associated with the power of darkness. The unholy trinity has an agenda. They call an international council of war. Their objective is to wage battle against God Himself. The leader of this unholy trinity is the False Prophet who convinces the kings of the earth and the people of the earth to gather together in a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon. This is the first time that the title False Prophet has been presented in the Revelation and must be commented upon. To begin with, since John does not introduce him, there is the assumption that the audience already knows the identity of the False Prophet. The concept of a False Prophet in general was well known to the Jews. The Old Testament warns of the appearance of false prophets and forbids people to listen to him regardless of how impressive his credentials might be. Deuteronomy 13:1-5 details the punishment for the False Prophet. It was easy to identify a false prophet logically for he had to be 100 % correct 100 % of the time. Furthermore, the prophet had to make his prediction prior to an event. Emotionally, it is not so easy to identify a false prophet for people can easily be led astray.

The Sanhedrian had the responsibility to examine any person who claimed to be a prophet of God. That is why Jesus came under such close scrutiny. The Lord Himself warned that there would be false Christ's and false prophets. History records that many arose claiming to be the Messiah. In trying to establish the identity of the False Prophet of Revelation 16, two other passages of scripture must be considered Revelation 19:20 and 20:10. Revelation 19:20 declares that the False Prophet is captured along with the Beast. He is described as the one who had performed miracles before the Beast and deceived all whom had the mark of the Beast and worshipped its image. This description fits the Second Beast of Revelation 13:13,14, the Beast from the Land for he too does great wonders and deceives those who dwell on the earth. It may be that the False Prophet is simply the Second Beast from the Land (Rev. 13:13,14). If that is true then the False Prophet symbolizes any organization that seeks to make men worship another man and forsake the worship of the Lord Jesus. For John the False Prophet would have been the attempt to foster Emperor worship. Because the text leaves the forces of the earth gathered at a place called Armageddon, we shall leave them there too. There will be occasion to say more about Armageddon in chapter 19. We can turn our attention to the seventh angel and the seventh plague.

The Seventh Bowl: Revelation 16:17-21

There is a recurring theme throughout the last seven plagues and that is how man is able to lock his heart against God. In Revelation 16:9, in 16:11, in 16:14, and in 16:21, we read of those under Divine judgment warring with God and daring to blaspheme the name of God. This is both an exhilarating concept and a fearful expression. It is not hard to understand the natural propensity of individual to react rather than to respond to correction. Who has not felt anger at being given a ticket by a policeman for speeding--even when the law was violated! Who has not felt the hot flush of humiliation and resentment when being corrected--even if the correction is justified and done in a kind and gracious manner. There is something about the human heart that does not want to be told what to do and yet the Sovereign of the Universe tells man to repent. In particular the Lord is demanding that national Israel repent over crucifying Christ. Rome is to repent of her persecution of the church. The Emperor is to repent of the cult worship. But neither Israel nor Rome will repent. Rather the people of the earth join together to shed the blood of the New Testament saints and the New Testament prophets (16:6). The Roman Empire during the days of John chose to be energized by Satan rather than by the living God.

The Unholy Trinity was preferred to the Holy Father, Son, and Spirit. Is it any wonder that God moved against the Evil Empire of Rome with its hostility towards heaven and its hatred of the Holy One. First one form of judgment was poured out and then another. The final judgment was the pollution of the air. When the air is polluted, the very life of man is attacked at its source. John saw such a judgment upon the people of his day that it seemed as if nature was at war with man. Many years ago there was a movie made named *Frogs*. While not an academy award winner the movie had as its advertisement, "*The day nature struck back.*" In the terrible sights and sounds of John's vision nature struck back. Not nature by itself but nature controlled by a sovereign God for after the air was polluted, John heard God Himself say from the throne, "*It is done.*" What was done? The judgment upon the nations of the Earth. Earthquakes followed the verdict. In re-constructing this scene a comparison and contrast comes to mind surrounding the events at Calvary. At Calvary the ultimate form of anger was poured out by men upon Christ. In John's vision the full fury of the wrath of God was poured out upon those who dared to hurt the Lord and His anointed.

At Calvary Christ cried out, *It is finished!* In John's vision the Father declares, *It has occurred!* At Calvary there was an earthquake and the dead lived (Matt. 27:52-53). In John's vision there was an earthquake and the living died. The Great City of Rome was divided into three parts. Rome thought herself indestructible. Rome thought she could rule the world forever. Roman emperors really believed they were gods. The true God reminded imperial Rome and the foolish emperors that mortal man and the glory he builds is meaningless compared to the splendid Sovereign of the universe. John predicted that God would take the Roman Empire and so completely destroyed it that it would be as if island fled away, and the mountains were not found. Hailstones weighing a 100 lb. would be visible evidence of the wrath of God. The presence of hailstones in the vision of John is well-grounded in Hebrew history. Devastating hail was part of the plague on Egypt (Ex. 9:24). When Joshua fought with the five Amorite kings at Beth-horon, there came such a great hailstorm upon the enemy that more died by them than by the sword (Josh. 10:11). Isaiah warned of God's judgment in the hailstorm (Isa. 28:2). Ezekiel speaks of God pleading with men through the weapons of nature (Ezek. 38:22). And yet for all of this men did not repent but blasphemed God because of the plague. There are some spiritual lessons to be learned in all of this.

- The nations of the Earth are not innocent but guilty before God. When God allows evil to be unleashed we know that the sins of the people have overflowed the cup of mercy. God is dealing with the nations of the earth and He is calling them to repentance.
- Men will not repent until they are finally broken. Hatred breeds hatred. Violence breeds violence. Cruelty begets cruelty. The cycle will not end until people grow weary of sin and hurting each other. Then they will begin to call upon the name of the Lord.
- By understanding the justice of God in allowing war, we also see the full expression of the depth of depravity. It takes a cold heart to kill a baby (*Newsweek* p. 24 August 17, 1992). It takes a very cynical heart to sell the advertisements displayed between the scenes of death. Few are calling for people to repent and call upon the Lord.
- There is an end even to the fury of God (Rev. 16:17). Divine wrath can and shall be satisfied.

The Royal Reign of Christ

Revelation

Chapter 17

Mystery Babylon the Great: Revelation 17:1-18



Revelation 17

Babylon, the great prostitute, rides the seven-headed dragon.

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- *Rev 17:1 And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, laying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:*
- *Rev 17:2 With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.*
- *Rev 17:3 So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.*
- *Rev 17:4 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:*
- *Rev 17:5 And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.*
- *Rev 17:6 And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.*

- *Rev 17:7 And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.*
- *Rev 17:8 The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.*
- *Rev 17:9 And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.*
- *Rev 17:10 And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.*
- *Rev 17:11 And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.*
- *Rev 17:12 And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.*
- *Rev 17:13 These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.*
- *Rev 17:14 These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.*
- *Rev 17:15 And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.*
- *Rev 17:16 And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.*
- *Rev 17:17 For God hath put in their hearts to fulfill his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.*
- *Rev 17:18 And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.*

The Majestic Women of Mystery and Murder: Revelation 17:1-11

Bible commentators agree that in some ways chapter 17 is very difficult to understand. There are two main personages set forth in the Woman of Mystery and Murder and the Beast. Several things are stated about the Woman.

- The Woman sits upon a scarlet colored Beast symbolizing her power and authority (Rev. 17:3).
- The Woman is arrayed or clothed in purple and scarlet and is adorned with all kinds of ornaments (Rev. 17:4a).
- The Woman holds in her hands a golden cup, full of abominations (Rev. 17:4b).
- The Woman has on her forehead a name, which is an accurate description of her character (Rev. 17:5).
- The Woman is drunk with the blood of the saints (Rev. 17:6).



The interior of the Coliseum at Rome showing the stands for the audience and the area beneath what would have been a floor, where prisoners and animals were kept. The Coliseum was the site of many executions of Christians.

Who is this Woman? For John the Great Whore of this vision was majestic imperial Rome. “*And the Woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the Earth.*” Obviously, Rome reigned over the kings of the earth and for John, Rome was nothing less than a great whore. Such language sounds harsh to our sensitive ears but in the Bible, harsh language is often used, not only to shock but also to communicate. John wants his readers to realize how evil Imperial Rome had become in the sight of God. Calling upon Old Testament images of ancient Babylon (Rev. 17:1 cf. Jer. 51:13). John presents Rome as a wealthy courtesan, dressed in all her glory to seduce men. Just as the prostitutes in the public brothels wore upon their foreheads a frontlet giving their names, so the Woman wore her name (Rev. 17:5).

For John, not only had Rome encouraged sexual immorality, she had also become drunk with the slaughter of the saints having drunk their blood (Rev. 17:6). Something must be done to challenge this majestic woman and something will be done. John sees that the Great Whore is to be destroyed by the invasion of a confederation of ten kings. To remain faithful to the image, it is as if the Great Whore is to be destroyed by her lovers turning against her (Rev. 17:16). It is interesting that John makes a connection between immorality and the persecution of the saints. Turning attention to the Beast, a number of things are stated.

- The Beast is the color of red or scarlet Rev. 17:3
- The Beast is full of names of blasphemy Rev. 17:3
- The Beast has seven heads and ten horns Rev. 17:3
- The Beast carries the Great Whore Rev. 17:7
- The Beast was and is not and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit only to go back to perdition Rev. 17:8
- The Beast inspires wonder and worship from all people except the redeemed of God Rev. 17:8
- The Beast is a place and a person Rev. 17:9
cf. 17:11

The Beast

AS A PLACE

The seven heads are seven mountains (Rev. 17:9) Rome was built upon seven hills.

AS A PERSON

On the seven mountains are seven kings of which the Beast is the 8th who goeth into perdition.

- The Beast is a power and speaks of Rome itself (Rev. 17:11). The text says that he is an 8th. There are other things to observe about the Beast.
- The Beast will share power with ten kings but only for a very short time (Rev. 17:12).
- The Beast will receive power from the kings of the coalition (Rev. 17:13).
- The Beast shall lead others in an attack against the Lord Jesus Christ (Rev. 17:14).
- Suddenly, the Beast shall be the object of attack and shall be hated and devoured (Rev. 17:16).

What do the Woman and the Beast with the Ten Kings mean? It has been suggested that the reference here is to a future European Common Market. There has been a lot of speculation about a United Europe and some very clever schemes have been advocated to declare that Bible prophecy is being fulfilled. When Napoleon tried to force upon Europe his Continental System there were prophetic students declaring he was the Beast of his generation.

As time marches on and the European Common Market terminology joins the dustbin of history, the message of Revelation 17 will continue. It is this message that must be remembered and the message is that God will destroy all corrupting influence. Perhaps the most powerful argument against a futuristic interpretation of this passage is found in the fact that John makes a veiled effort to identify the Beast in 17:10. John notes that there are seven kings five are fallen and one is but he will reign only for a short time. The 8th Beast is characterized by being one that was, and is not. He is of the 7th and goeth into perdition. The question comes, *"Was there any person during this time period that will easily fit this description?"* Dr. William Barclay suggests that beginning the count of the kings with Augustus and ending with Domitian solve the riddle.

"They [the heads] are also seven kings. Five have fallen; one at present exists; another has not yet come, and, when he shall come, he must remain for a short time. The Beast, which was and, is not, is itself the eight. It proceeds from the series of the seven, and it is on its way to destruction. Five have fallen. The Roman Empire began with Augustus; and the first five emperors were Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero. These, then, are the five who have fallen. We have already seen that after the death of Nero there were two years of chaos in which Galba, Otho and Vitellius followed each other in quick succession. There were not in any real sense emperors and cannot be included in any list. One at present exists. This must be Vespasian, the first emperor to bring back stability to the empire, after the chaos following the death of Nero; he reigned from AD 69-79. Another has not yet come, and, when he shall come, he must remain for a short time. Titus, whose reign lasted for only two years from 79-81, succeeded Vespasian. The beast which was, and is not, is itself the eighth. It proceeds from the series of the seven, and is on its way to destruction. This can only mean that the emperor who followed Titus is being identified with Nero redivivus and Antichrist; and the emperor who followed Titus was Domitian."

Can Domitian reasonably be identified with the evil force, which Nero redivivus personified? We turn to the life of Domitian written by Suetonius the Roman biographer remembering that Suetonius was not a Christian. Domitian, as Suetonius tells, was an object of terror and hatred to all. We get a grim picture of him at the beginning of his reign. "He used to spend hours in seclusion every day, doing nothing but catch flies and stab them with a keenly-sharpened stylus.

Any psychologist would find that a curiously revealing picture. He was insanely jealous and insanely suspicious. He formed a homosexual attachment for a famous actor called Paris. One of the pupils of Paris so much resembled his teacher that it was not unreasonable to suppose that he was his son; the lad was promptly murdered. Hermogenes, the historian, wrote things that Domitian did not like; he was executed, and the scribe who had copied the manuscript was crucified. Senators were slaughtered right and left. Sallustius Lucullus, governor of Britain, was executed because he allowed a new type of lance to be called Lucullan. Domitian revived the old punishment of having his victims stripped naked, fixed by the neck in a fork of wood and beaten to death with rods. He put down a civil war that broke out in the provinces. Suetonius goes on: "After his victory in the civil war he became even more cruel, and, to discover any conspirators who were in hiding, tortured many of the opposite party by a new form of inquisition, inserting fire in their privates and he cut off the hands of some of them.

He was so suspicious that he never gave prisoners a hearing in private, and, even when he heard them with his present guards present, they were chained. He so feared for his own life that he had the passages and colonnades through which he moved tiled with phlengite stone, which is like a mirror, so that he could see anyone who was moving behind him. Finally, on 18 September, AD 96, he was murdered in the bloodiest circumstances. To all this we may add a final fact; it was Domitian who first made Caesar worship compulsory and who was, therefore, responsible for unloosing the flood-tides of persecution on the Christian Church. It may be that John saw in Domitian the re-incarnation of Nero. Others did precisely the same. Juvenal spoke of Rome being "enslaved to a bald-headed Nero" (Domitian was bald) and was exiled and finally murdered for his temerity. Tertullian called Domitian "a man of Nero's type of cruelty," and "a sub-Nero," a verdict which Eusebius repeated." (Revelation, Barclay, pp. 139-141)

As attractive as the explanation is, there is another possibility. If the Line of Roman Emperors begins with Julius Caesar and not Augustus then the seven kings would be as follows.

- Julius Caesar 49-44 BC
- Augustus 31 BC.- A.D.14
- Tiberius AD 14-37
- Galius [Caligula] AD 37-41
- Claudius AD 41-54
- Nero AD 54-68
- Galbo AD 68-69; he reigned from AD 68 June—January 69

With this understanding the five fallen kings are Julius Caesar, Augustus, Tiberius, Galius, and Claudius. The one king who is would be Nero, the sixth ruler and Galba, the seventh ruler would be "*he that must continue a short space.*" But who is the eighth ruler who is the Beast? One possibility is that the reference is to Otho (AD 69) a historical person. Another possibility is that the eighth ruler refers not to a literal, corporeal reappearance of Nero but to a moral and symbolic return of Nero in the sense of corrupt Rome itself. Perhaps a modern day illustration would be to think of Nazi Germany. The mind immediately thinks of Adolf Hitler but also to a whole state of evil which characterized Germany from 1933-1945. For John, Nero was a Beast but so was Rome itself. The two were intertwined. It should be noted that in the original there is no definite article before the word eighth (17:11). This may be significant. It is possible that John is shifting from a particular individual to the revival of the Empire itself. Consider the facts.

- When Nero committed suicide two major interrelated historical situations presented themselves to the world: first, the Julio Claudian line of emperors perished from the earth causing second, the Roman empire to be hurled into civil war of such ferocity and proportions that it almost destroyed the empire.
- These civil wars would, to all appearances, strike the citizens of the empire—Christian and pagan alike—as being the very death throes of the Roman Empire.
- The seven—headed Beast (Rome), before the world's startled eyes, was toppling to its own death as its sixth head (Nero) was mortally wounded.

- Finally, after a time of grievous Civil War, the ascending of Vespasian to the throne revived the Empire. By the fact that Vespasian was made Emperor in an orderly manner and was confirmed by the Senate, the mortal wound of the Beast was healed and in the new Imperial Family of the Flavians the Roman Empire was restored to its old and firm power. And yet for John, it would not last but would ultimately go into perdition or destruction.

The Conclusion

The conclusion of this part of the vision is that John sees judgment upon the Great Whore and judgment upon the Beast. Though both personages have great evil power and authority it is limited and directed and finally destroyed. For a people persecuted this will be of great comfort. When people are hurting they cannot be comforted enough that everything is going to be all right. God is the God of comfort. There may come a day when the Church will read Revelation with renewed understanding. The Book will be read, not out of sensationalist speculations in mind but for the constant comfort it offers those suffering for their faith.

The Majestic Woman of Mystery and Murder: Revelation 17:12-18

As with so much in the book of the Revelation, scripture is allowed to interpret itself. John is told plainly that the Ten Horns that he saw on the scarlet colored Beast are Ten Kings. Several things are stated about the confederation.

1. For the present the Ten Kings have no kingdom. The implication is that they will receive a kingdom but for the moment they are without regal authority.
2. The Ten Kings are given power to rule with the Beast one hour [i.e. a short period of time].
3. At first the Ten-King alliances have a single mind and willingly gave their power and strength unto the Beast [i.e. Rome].
4. Like so many others the confederation will make war with the Lamb.
5. The Lamb shall overcome His enemies.
6. In time, the confederation shall turn on the Beast and devour her (Rev. 17:16).
7. All the evil that the confederation does is under the sovereign control of almighty God (17:17).

Spiritual Lessons

When all of this is put together, a number of spiritual lessons are learned.

1. The saints and the martyrs share in the final triumph of God (Rev. 17:14). This has been the hope of the prophets of old and the expressed belief of the apostles of Christ (Matt. 20:21; Mark 10:37). Here is a noble thought. The saints and martyrs shall assist Christ to win His victory over evil and to share in the glory of His eternal reign of righteousness.
2. Evil is intrinsically self-destructive. In Revelation 17:16 there is the picture of the Ten Horns rising violently against The Harlot. Even though The Harlot had been their mistress the Confederation devoured her flesh. History is filled with similar examples. Prior to the outbreak of WW II Hitler signed a secret treaty with Stalin of Russia. Then, in the winter of 1940/41 he invaded Russia. Hitler had signed a treaty with Italy. Then he invaded Italy. Japan talked peace while sailing to bomb Pearl Harbor. And so it goes. Nations eat the flesh of other nations as political and military cannibal (Micah 3:3).
3. Evil shall be burned. In the Old Testament terrible vengeance was manifested in burning. The most heinous sins were dealt with in this way (Lev. 20:14). The daughter of a priest who had been guilty of sexual immorality was burned (Lev. 21:9). Rome was a harlot and was worthy of destruction.
4. Evil has a divisive power. It is the nature of goodness to promote harmony and symmetry. It is the nature of evil to be disruptive and divisive.
5. Evil powers, though working out their own purpose are in fact working out the purposes of God (17:17). Here is a great mystery and yet as R.H. Charles notes, *"Even the wrath of man is made to praise God."*

For those to whom John wrote it was a source of great comfort to realize that Rome would some day fall. Rome would someday be destroyed and devoured. Rome would not be allowed to hurt the people of God and go unpunished.

The Royal Reign of Christ

Revelation

Chapter 18

The Death of a Nation: Revelation 18:1-24

There are three major themes found in chapter 18.

- The Certain Destruction of Babylon [Rome]
- The Sanctification of the Church
- The Seduction of other Nations by Rome

These themes are interwoven into the fabric of history but reading carefully, it is easy to recognize the individual threads of thought that form the historical tapestry. The certain destruction of Babylon [i.e. Rome] is declared in Revelation 18:1-2. John sees another angel, different from the seven angels with the seven last bowls, came down from heaven. The angel possesses great power to affect the course of human history. As the angel moved, the earth became bright with his glory. There is no need to see this angel as the Lord Jesus. Angels are given great power. Jesus possesses all authority in heaven and on earth. The principle behind this passage is very revealing. As there is a lower form of life than man called animals, so there is now a higher form of life than man called the angels. And the angels have influence over the affairs of mankind when under Divine authority.

As John looked and listened, he heard the angels cry with a strong voice, a voice of authority and certainty saying, "*Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean bird and hateful bird.*" Heaven had witnessed what Rome had become: demon possessed. In addition to the demonic influences the angel declares that Rome has become sexually promiscuous and wasteful (Revelation 18:3). Much has already been said about the sexual licentiousness of Rome. There were temple prostitutes and public brothels. Homosexuality was rampant and divorce was as common as the changing of clothes. John's vision was by no means an exaggeration of reality. His denunciation of the sexual openness was not that of a religious fanatic but the concern of a righteous man. Even some Romans were appalled by the things about what they wrote as reflected in the works of Tacitus.

To this can be added the *Satires of Juvenal* and the *Lives of the Caesars* by Seutonius (see also *Roman Society From Nero To Marcus Aurelius* by Samuel Dill and *Roman Life and Manners* by Ludwig Friendlander). The Talmud had a saying that ten measures of wealth came down into the world. Rome received nine and the rest of the world one. In the first century the world was pouring its treasures into the lap of Rome. A long period of peace, the safety of the seas, and the freedom of trade had guaranteed that Rome would enjoy unprecedented wealth. Everything flowed into Rome.



Revelation 18:12

A decorated ivory box from Megiddo.

Ivory was much prized in the ancient world.

From the ruler to the ruled there was great luxury for Roman citizens. The Roman historian Suetonius describes his empire. Of Caligula he writes: *'In reckless extravagance he outdid the prodigals of all times in ingenuity, inventing a new sort of baths and unnatural varieties of food and feasts; for he would bathe in hot or cold perfumed oils, drink pearls of great price dissolved in vinegar, and set before his guests loaves of meats of gold.'* He even built galleys whose sterns were studded with pearls. Of Nero Suetonius tells us that he compelled people to set before him banquets costing 20,000 pounds. 'He never wore the same garment twice. He played at dice for 2,000 pounds a point. He fished with a golden net drawn by a cord woven of purple and scarlet threads. It is said that he never made a journey with less than a thousand carriages, with his mules shod with silver.' Drinking pearls dissolved in vinegar was a common ostentation. Cleopatra is said to have dissolved and drunk a pearl worth 80,000 pounds. Valerius Maximus at a feast set a pearl to drink before every guest, and he himself, Horace tells, swallowed the pearl from Metalla's ear-ring dissolved in wine that he might be able to say that he had swallowed a million sesterces at a gulp. It was an age of extraordinary gluttony. Dishes of peacocks' brains and nightingales' tongues were set before the guests at banquets. Vitellius, who was emperor for less than a year, succeeded in spending 7,000,00 pounds mainly for food. Suetonius tells of his favorite dish: *"In this he mingled the livers of pike, the brains of pheasants and peacocks, the tongues of flamingoes, and the milk of lampreys, brought by his captains and triremes from the whole empire from Parthia to the Spanish strait."* Petronius describes the scenes at Trimalchio's banquet: *'One course represented the twelve signs of the zodiac.... Another dish was a large boar, with baskets of sweetmeats hanging from its tusks. A huge bearded hunter pierced its side with a hunting knife, and forthwith from the wound there issued a flight of thrushes which were dexterously captured in nets as they flew about the room. Towards the end of the meal the guests were startled by strange sounds in the ceiling and a quaking of the whole apartment. As they raised their eyes the ceiling suddenly opened, and a great circular tray descended, with a figure of Priapus, bearing all sorts of fruits and bon-bons.'*

In the time when John was writing a kind of insanity of wanton extravagance, to which it is very difficult to find any parallel in history, had invaded Rome. Other nations saw the wealth of Rome and tried to emulate her. For Rome there was a saturation point of sin. Her sins reached unto heaven and God began to move to remember and reward her iniquities. John's prayer was that God would reward Rome in the same manner that she had treated the Church (18:6). This feeling of just retribution is not foreign to the Scriptures. The Psalms record several imprecatory prayers such as Psalms 58 and 59. For John and for the saints Rome was so corrupt, so wicked and so immoral that she had double a form of Divine discipline due to her. To the charges of sexual immorality and wanton extravagance John notes that Rome, as a nation was full of pride. How much she hath glorified herself and lived deliciously! Rome thought she was immune from the normal sorrows of life and the daily responsibilities. She said in her haughty arrogance, "*I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.*" What did it matter to Rome if the people of Jerusalem and other parts of the empire suffered to keep her soft and spoiled. There is still such a thing as moral accountability. Because of her sexual looseness, because of her demonic attachment, because of her wastefulness, because of her pride, because of her detachment from life Rome shall be surprised with certain death (18:8). Rome shall know mourning and famine and fire. All that Rome imposed upon the Church shall be imposed upon her. The death of this nation shall cause sadness to the other kings of the earth who loved her. This spirit, this sense of loss continues to this day. The lamentation for Rome is eloquently set forth in the massive work by Edward Gibbons *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

In Revelation 18:11-24 the Bible tells us that many will weep at the funeral of the Roman Empire. The merchants of the earth would weep because their best market had ceased to exist (18:11). The prostitute and the party lovers would weep for the freedom of their passions could no longer be openly displayed (18:14). At the funeral of the Roman Empire, while many wept from all over the world, others would be dancing at the graveside. The saints in heaven are also commanded to rejoice for God has avenged His own (18:20). In Rome was the blood of the prophets and the saints. Now that blood has been avenged. While the Roman citizens engaged in open sins against every commandment of God, the Lord sanctified the citizens of heaven. God has called His people to be different. Chapter 18 is really a marvelous chapter as it sets forth the certain destruction of Rome, the sanctification of the Church and the willing seduction of other nations by Rome.

General Observations on Revelation 18

1. John's vision deals with contemporary events of the first centuries.
2. Though it took 410 more years before Rome finally fell and was sacked, according to the Divine time clock, it was but one hour.
3. The Song of Doom for Rome has certain Old Testament parallels in ancient Babylon (Isa. 13:19-22), Edom (34:11-15), Babylon (Jer. 50:39; 51:37), and Nineveh (Zeph. 2:13-15).

4. When Rome is destroyed, the Christian community is called to come out so as not to share in her doom. Abraham was so called (Gen. 12:1). Lot was called (Gen. 19:12-14). Moses was so called (Num. 16:23-26). Isaiah called Israel (Num. 48:20). Jeremiah called Israel (Num. 50:8; 51:6,45). Paul so called the Church (2 Cor. 6:14,15). The calling out is not so much physical but a spiritual aloofness maintained in the very heart of the world's traffics (Rom. 12:1,2).



Revelation 18:24

Christians are slaughtered in the streets.

The Royal Reign of Christ

Revelation

Chapter 19

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb

1. The thought of marriage showing forth the relationship between the Lord and His people is rooted in the Old Testament. *"I will betroth thee unto me forever. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord."* (Hosea 2:19,20) *"For thy Maker is thine husband: the Lord of hosts is His name."* (Isa. 54:5)
2. The symbolism of marriage permeates the gospels.
 - Matthew 22:2 speaks of the marriage feast.
 - Matthew 22:10 sets forth the bridechamber and the wedding garment.
 - Mark 2:19 teaches of the friend of the bridechamber
 - Mark 2:19 and Matthew 5:1 speaks of the bridegroom
 - John 3:29 comments on the friends of the bridegroom.
3. In the epistles that he writes Paul presents the converts of Corinth as a pure virgin to Christ (2 Cor. 11:2).
4. The relationship of husband and wife reflects the relationship between Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:21- 23).
5. In the marriage relationship there are four essential ingredients: love, intimate communion, joy, and fidelity (faithfulness).
6. As the Church is presently branches of the vine, a holy nation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people, living stones with Christ as the Chief Cornerstone, sheep under the watchful eye of the Shepherd, and members of the Body of Christ, so the Church is declared to be even now the Bride of Christ. The marriage of the Lamb is come and the wife, the church, has been arrayed in fine linen, clean and white. The symbolism is explained "for the fine line is the righteousness of the saints (19:8).
7. The clothing of the Church is in sharp contrast to the scarlet and gold of the Great Harlot. Where as Rome was mean and cruel, haughty and stained with sin, the Church is kind and humble and clothed in righteousness. No wonder John writes, *"Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb."*

8. The idea of a Messianic banquet was a central Jewish idea. It was believed that when the Messiah came, there would be the marriage feast. Christian theology teaches that the Messiah has come and the Messianic Banquet is a present reality. All men are called unto the feast (Luke 14:23). Here then is a glorious scene. The Great Whore is dead. The heavenly host unites with nature and the Church to sing the praises of God. There is joy for the marriage of the Lamb is a present reality. The Bride of Christ is lovely and blessed for the Banquet of Life is ready and the invitations have been sent. When John heard the heavenly chorus and when he saw the mighty angel of God he fell at the angel's feet to worship. but the angel would not allow it. "*John, do not do this for I am thy fellow-servant. Worship God for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*"
9. In certain sections of Judaism, angels had an exalted place and for good reason. The angels were the messengers of God. The angels were the protectors of men. The angels were honored above earthly creation endowed with more power, more wisdom, and more speed than man. The temptation was real for the angels to be worshipped. Constantly does man have to be reminded not to worship other men, not to worship nature, not to worship false gods [Zeus, Apollo, *sex etc.*] and not to worship angels but to worship God. "*For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*"
10. This is an unusual phrase and can mean either of two things. It can mean the witness, which the Christian bears towards Christ. In the first century many people were dying because of their faith. They were bearing witness by life and by lip to the spirit of prophetic truth that Jesus is the Messiah (Acts 3:12; 10:26). The second thing the testimony of Jesus may mean is the witness Jesus Christ gives to men. Jesus said many things about Himself who must be true or He is a liar. There is no other alternative.
11. After this period of conversation with the angel, John saw heaven opened and he beheld a stunning, prancing, majestic white horse. On the white horse sat One who was called Faithful and True. The reference is to Jesus Christ. No one else could be called Faithful and True except a member of the Trinity. The vision is that of the Warrior Messiah. John describes Him in detail.
- His eyes were as a flame of fire.
 - On His head were many crowns.
 - He had a hidden name written: "*The Word of God.*"
 - He was clothed with a vestry dipped in blood.
 - This was not His blood but that of His enemies.
 - The Warrior Messiah was not alone for a great army followed Him all upon white horses and clothed in fine linen, clean and white.
12. The description of the Warrior Messiah continued. John noticed that out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword. The purpose of the Word sword was to slay the nations.
13. The Warrior Messiah rules the nations with a rod of iron.
14. On the vestry and on the thigh of the Warrior Messiah was a name written.

Invitation to a Wedding: Revelation 19:1-21

In the book of the *Revelation* there are two vast multitudes in heaven. There are the martyred saints (Rev. 7:9; 18:20; 18:24) and the angels (Rev. 5:11). The angelic host praises God and sings, "*Alleluia, Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God.*" The word "*hallelujah*" is a very common word in religious vocabulary even though it appears only four times in the Bible (Rev. 19:1,3,4,6). "*Hallelujah*" literally means, "*praise God.*" It is derived from "*halal*," which means "*to praise*" and "*Jah*" which is the name of God. In the Old Testament many of the Psalms begin with the translation of this Hebrew word such as Psalms 106, 111, 112, 113, 117, 135, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150. The series of Psalms from 113-118 were called the Hallel, the Praise of God. God is praised because to Him belongs salvation, glory, and power. Dr. William Barclay writes that these great attributes of God should awaken a response in man. Salvation should awaken gratitude; the glory of God should awaken the reverence of man; the power of God should awaken the trust of man. The elements of true praise are gratitude, reverence, and trust. God is praised in particular because He has exercised His justice by destroying the Great Whore [Rome] who did corrupt the Earth with her sexual activities. God is praised because he avenged the blood of His servants at her hand. When John saw the heavenly vision Rome was still in power. Yet, in the Divine economy the future was as certain as the present. Rome was judged because she taught others to sin. Rome deserved to be destroyed but even justice must be according to righteous standards. God alone is perfect in administering righteous judgments for three reasons.

- He alone can look at inward motives as well as outward actions.
- God alone can judge without prejudice.
- God alone has the wisdom to discern exactly what needs to be corrected and the power to apply justice.

The angels in heaven rejoice when God judges evil on earth and when God judges evil on earth and when He avenges the death of the saints. Not only do the angels sing praises to God but in Revelation 19:3-5 the realm of nature combines with the Church to shout Alleluia. The twenty-four elders [12 patriarchs and 12 apostles] and the four beasts [corresponding to the four living creatures of lion, ox, man, and eagle] are happy that the smoke of Babylon rises forever and ever. The fall of Rome is today a historical event. In heaven it is an eternal memorial event. The Jews would understand this for in Jewish culture there is the celebration of God's great redemptive acts memorialized in such yearly feasts as Purim, Yom Kipper, Rosh Hashana, and Hanukkah. Heaven too immortalizes historical events. The rejoicing is due in part to the fact that never again will Rome rise from her ruins. This is proved by comparative language used on Edom by the prophet Isaiah (Isa. 34:9,10) and also by the passing of time. Rome will never rise again as a world power. As John listens he hears the voice of a cherubim coming from the throne saying, *Praise our God, all you His servants.* (cf. Ps. 135:1,20).

In the Revelation there are two sets of people called the servants of God. There are the prophets (Rev. 10:7; 11:18 22:6) and there are the martyrs (Rev. 7:3; 19:2). The combination refers to those who praise God by lip and by life. Here is a marvelous scene indeed. The angels praise God. Nature praises God. The redeemed of the earth praises God. And then, there is a final shout of praise, *"like the din of a vast concourse, the roar of a cataract, the roll of thunder"* (H. B. Swete) the alleluia chorus is declared (Rev. 19:6).

"Let us be glad and rejoice."

With these words the command of Christ is fulfilled (Matt. 5:12) and the marriage of the Lamb to His bride is come. What does this mean? When a person is saved does he await being married to Christ or is a person married to Christ at the moment of salvation? Is the marriage of the Lamb a present reality or is it a future event to be realized? Consider the evidence that the marriage of the Lamb is a present reality.

The Marriage of the Lamb

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King of Kings and Lord of Lords

The most challenging question is that of timing. When would the Lord be revealed riding a Warrior Messiah? I realize that the most popular interpretation of this passage is to connect it with the Second Advent of Christ. Whatever prophetic fulfillment there may be I would also argue for a historical analysis. Consider the context. In John's vision relatively few if any of the judgments had fallen when he wrote. From a Divine perspective the future is as clear as the present and as certain. Still, John had yet to see realized all of the vision themes. Consider the enemy of the Warrior Messiah. It was the Beast [Rome] and the kings of the Earth and their armies that gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse and His army. It was the False Prophet who performed miracles so that million would receive the mark of the Beast. Rome with its Caesar worship, these were the great enemies of the Warrior Messiah.

Consider the fate of the Beast and the False Prophet. These both were cast alive into a life of fire burning with brimstone. Not only were Rome and its attending Caesar worship destroyed but so were the legions of this evil empire (19:21). In context the scene of chapter 19 is not futuristic. As much as it can be observed that in a vision form a historical reality was foretold. The historian Edward Gibbons was right—Christianity did destroy the evil Roman Empire with all of its greed and corruption. The principles of the Church challenged and defeated the proud rulers who wanted to be worshipped above God. There are wonderful spiritual truths for the people of God.

- Jesus Christ is alive and is in heaven.
- From heaven the Lord rules even now over the nations with a rod of iron.
- Any entity that seeks to hurt the church, Christ will ultimately and finally be destroyed.

To try to go beyond the scope of the general vision, to press too closely for a literal understanding in a highly symbolic book is to court disaster. It is not necessary for Jesus to ride a literal white horse. It is not necessary for Him to have a tattoo or written upon His thigh a name. It is not necessary for a literal sword to proceed out of His mouth to destroy His enemies. The truth remains beyond the symbolic details that the resurrected Lord is Sovereign.

The Mark of the Beast: Revelation 19

1. The concept of being marked by the Beast is found in the following passages. Revelation 13:16; 13:17; 14:9; 14:11; 15:2; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4.
2. The mark of the Beast finds its roots in normal activity. In the ancient world it was the custom to mark certain people.
 - Sometimes its owner branded a slave. This usually happened if the slave ran away or was guilty of some serious misconduct. The mark was called a stigma. The mark of the beast may mean that all that worship the Beast are his property.

- Sometimes loyal soldiers would brand themselves with the name of their general much like people wear tattoos. The mark of the Beast may indicate that those who worship the Beast are devoted to him.
 - On the contracts of the ancient world there was a mark, a *charagina*, a seal bearing the date and the name of the emperor. The mark of the Beast may indicate that those who worship the Beast accept his authority.
 - In the ancient world, the people who burned a pinch of incense to Caesar were given a certificate to that effect. The mark of the Beast may be the certificate of worship. A Christian could only obtain such a certificate spiritually by renouncing his faith.
3. The mark of the Beast teaches how evil can totally dominate the soul of a person. A person can so abandon himself to the works of the flesh that he really does become the property of Satan, devoted to him, under his authority, without genuine faith, and marked for destruction.
 4. Jesus told certain people, You are of your father the devil and the lust of your father you will do. Satan marks them.
 5. The mark of Satan is a parody of holy things. The lamb is a parody of the Lamb of God and the mark of the Beast on the right hand and on the forehead is a mocking of God's holy marks of identity. In the Law it was commanded that a Jew keep the Law close to his heart (Ex. 13:1-10; 13:11-16; Deut. 6:4-9; 11:13-21). The Jews took the commandments quite literally by writing the scriptures on little strips and then placing them in phylacteries that were worn on the left arm and on the forehead. For the Beast to mark his own is to copy or counterfeit what the Lord did for His own.
 6. The early Christians who refused to worship the Caesar, as the beastly system demanded were persecuted. They could not buy or sell and so suffered economic hardships.

A Throne in Heaven

*“The Lord hath prepared His throne in the heavens:
and His kingdom ruleth over all.”*

~*~

Psalms 103:19

Earthly Kingdoms

Kingdoms of Nature

Genesis 10:10

Genesis 20:9

Numbers 24:7

Numbers 32:33

Subject to the Sovereign

1 Samuel 13:13
 1 Samuel 28:17
 Daniel 4:17
 Daniel 4:25

Subject to the Sovereign

Exodus 3:1-22
 Exodus 7 - 11
 Mark 4:37-41

Kingdom of Heaven

Kingdom of God
 Kingdom of Light

Includes the reign of God
 over the elect angels and
 the regenerated of the saints.

Kingdom of Darkness

Includes the reign
 of God over fallen
 Angels (demons) and un-
 regenerate souls

Subject to the Sovereign

Luke 22:29
 John 3:2
 2 Timothy 4:18
 Hebrews 12:28

Subject to the Sovereign

Matthew 17:18
 Revelation 20:10

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The Royal Reign of Christ

Revelation

Chapter 20



Revelation 20:11-15

*Michelangelo's painting of the Last Judgment
in the Sistine Chapel at the Vatican in Rome.*

The Abrahamic Covenant

Part of the Abrahamic Covenant as recorded in Genesis 15:18-21 involved a piece of real estate (cf. Ex. 23:31; Josh. 1:3,4). There is a teaching, which argues that the Jews have never occupied all the territory that God promised Abraham but should some day possess the land. In contrast to this popular belief is the clear teaching of the Bible that states God has already kept His word and the Jews have occupied the land promised to Abraham. The following passages should be studied.

- *Deuteronomy 1:7, 8* Turn you, and take your journey, and go to the mount of the Amorites, and unto all the places nigh thereunto, in the plain, in the hills, and in the vale, and in the south, and by the sea side, to the land of the Canaanites, and unto Lebanon, unto the great river, the river Euphrates. Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them.

- **Deuteronomy 11:24** *Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours: from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the river Euphrates, even unto the uttermost sea shall your coast be.*
- **Joshua 21:43-45** *And the LORD gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. And the LORD gave them rest round about, according to all that he swore unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand. There failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass.*
- **Nehemiah 9:7,8,24** *So the children went in and possessed the land, and thou subduedst before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and gavest them into their hands, with their kings, and the people of the land, that they might do with them as they would.*
- **Nehemiah 9:8** *And foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give it, I say, to his seed, and hast performed thy words; for thou art righteous:*
- **Nehemiah 9:24** *So the children went in and possessed the land, and thou subduedst before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and gavest them into their hands, with their kings, and the people of the land, that they might do with them as they would.*
- **Jeremiah 32:21-23** *And hast brought forth thy people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs, and with wonders, and with a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with great terror; And hast given them this land, which thou didst swear to their fathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey; And they came in, and possessed it; but they obeyed not thy voice, neither walked in thy law; they have done nothing of all that thou commandedst them to do: therefore thou hast caused all this evil to come upon them:*
- **2 Samuel 8:3** *David smote also Hadadezer, the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to recover his border at the river Euphrates.*
- **1 Kings 4:21, 24** *And Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the river unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt: they brought presents, and served Solomon all the days of his life. For he had dominion over all the region on this side the river, from Tiphshah even to Azzah, over all the kings on this side the river: and he had peace on all sides round about him.*

NOTE: Tiphseh (Thapsacus) is identified as being on the Right Bank of the Euphrates above its junction with the Balikh. The Balikh is a tributary of the upper Euphrates. Gaza was the southern most of the five Philistine cities (Genesis 10:19) on the main road between Mesopotamia and Egypt at the junction with a trade route from S Arabia. It is wonderful to realize that all the promises of God made to Abraham have been kept. The Lord is a covenant keeping God. The conditions of the covenant made to Abraham are set forth in Genesis 12:1-3; 13:14-18; 15:1-21. The major parts of the covenant include the following provisions.

1. ***"I will make of thee a great nation."*** God promised to make of Abraham a great nation. This was fulfilled in a twofold way. First, by natural posterity. The seed of Abraham would be as the dust of the earth and as the stars of the heavens (Gen. 17:20). Second, by spiritual prosperity. The Church enjoys the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gal. 3:6,7,29).
2. ***"I will bless thee."*** God promised to bless Abraham in a very special way. This provision was fulfilled as Abraham enjoyed tremendous personal wealth (Gen. 13:14-18; 15:18-21; 24:34,35).
3. ***"And make thy name great."*** Next to Christ God has made the name of Abraham the most honored named in scripture and in human history.
4. ***"And thou shalt be a blessing."*** Abraham was a blessing to his own generation and to the nations of the earth for through him came the Messiah (Gal. 3:14).
5. ***"I will bless them that bless thee."*** Every nation that has honored the Jews have been honored by the Lord.
6. ***"And curse him that curseth thee."*** History abounds with examples of how nations, such as America, have been blessed by their treatment of the Jews and how those nations, such as Nazi Germany, have suffered by mistreating the Jews.
7. ***"In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed."*** Those nations of the earth that turn to Christ have been blessed. Those who embrace the faith of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are honored.
8. The conclusion of this matter is that the Abrahamic Covenant and all of its provisions have been fulfilled.

The Doctrine of the Millennium Reign of Christ

1. This doctrine is not taught anywhere else in the New Testament but was a prevalent concept among the early Church especially from those who were influenced by Jewish sources.
2. The origin of this doctrine is found in Jewish expectations about a coming Messianic Age.
3. The general belief was that the kingdom of the Messiah would last forever (Dan. 7:14,27).

4. After 100 BC there came a change. It was felt that the present world system was so evil that it would have to be destroyed. The Messiah would have a limited reign before the final consummation. Some said that the reign would last 40 years. Others argued for 100, 600, 1000, and even 7,000 years. 2 *Esdras* is very definite. My Son the Messiah shall be revealed, together with those who are with him, and shall rejoice the survivors for four hundred years (7:28,29).
5. The most common view was that the reign of the Messiah would be for 1000 years corresponding to creation (Psa. 90:4; 2 Pet. 3:8).
6. The Jews conceived of the reign of the Messiah in very materialistic terms. Israel would rule over the nations. Jerusalem would be the capital of the world. There would be no more diseases or untimely death. The earth would produce abundantly (2 *Baruch* 29:5,6). Women would have no pain in childbirth.
7. It is not surprising that the early Church would be influenced by Jewish expectations. It is not surprising to find a widespread belief of a millennium reign of Christ along materialistic Jewish expectations.
8. The Church divided into two camps. Those who embraced the Jewish belief and those who did not.
9. Among the Church fathers that embraced the Jewish concept was Justin Martyr (b. 100 AD-163 [or 167]).
10. For Justin Martyr it was an essential part of orthodox belief, although he agreed that there were good Christians who did not accept it. 'I and others, who are right-minded Christians at all points, are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be build adorned and enlarged as the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and other declare' (*Dialogue With Trypho*).
11. Irenaeus also held firmly to a belief in a millennium upon the earth [b. 130 AD-?] (*Against Heresies* 5:32).
12. One of his reasons was the conviction that, since the saints and the martyrs had suffered upon earth, it was only just that upon earth they should reap the rewards of their fidelity.
13. Tertullian also insisted upon the coming of a millennium (BC160 AD - ?) as did Papias (second century).
14. Papias, the second century collector of so much material upon the Gospels, insisted that Jesus taught the doctrine of the Millennium, and he hands down as the words of Jesus a passage which foretells the wondrous fertility of the earth which is to come: "*The days will come in which vines shall grow each having ten thousand shoots, and on each shoot ten thousand branches, and on each branch against ten thousand twigs, and on each twig ten thousand clusters, and on each cluster ten thousand grapes, and each grape when pressed*

shall yield five and twenty measures of wine. And when any of the saints shall have taken hold of one of their clusters, another shall cry, I am a better cluster; take me, bless the Lord through me. Likewise also a grain of wheat shall produce ten thousand heads, and every head shall have ten thousand grains, and every grain then thousand pounds of fine flour, bright and clean, and the other fruits, seeds and the grass, shall produce in similar proportions, and all the animals, using these fruits which are products of the soil, shall become in their turn peaceable and harmonious, obedient to man in all subjection."

15. Despite these men of faith and influence other men of equal stature who lived at the same time dismissed the Jewish concept that had infiltrated the church. Men such as Eusebius (c. 263-340). Eusebius almost contemptuously dismisses Papias's report. 'I suppose he got those ideas,' he says, 'through a misunderstanding of the apostolic records, not perceiving that the things said by them were said mystically in figures. For he seems to have been of very limited understanding' (*Eusebius: The Ecclesiastical History* 3:38).
16. Why did people reject early on the idea of a physical Millennial reign. Dr. Barclay explains. *'One of the things which brought discredit upon Millenarianism was the fact that it undoubtedly lent itself to a materialistic interpretation in which it offered physical as much as spiritual pleasures. Eusebius tells how the great scholar Dionysius had in Egypt to deal with a certain much-respected bishop called Nepos who taught a 'millennium of bodily luxury upon this earth' (The Ecclesiastical History 7:24). Cerinthus, a heretic, deliberately taught a millennium of 'delights of the belly and sexual passion, eating and drinking and marrying' (Eusebius: The Ecclesiastical History 3:28).*
17. Origen (AD 185-251 or 254 died) also rejected the idea of a Millennium. Origen rebuked those who looked for bodily pleasure in the Millennium. *"The saints will eat, but it will be the bread of life; they will drink, but it will be the cup of wisdom."* (*De Principiis* 2.11.2,3).
18. St. Jerome also opposed the Millennium (347-420). Jerome spoke contemptuously of *'these half-Jews who look for a Jerusalem of gold and precious stones from heaven, and a future kingdom of a thousand years, in which all nations shall serve Israel'* (*Commentary on Isaiah* 60:1).
19. Augustine (b. November 13, 354 AD-August 430) is credited with striking the deathblow to the Millennial teaching of the early church. At one time he had embraced the concept but saw in the scriptures the value of focusing on spiritual blessings. H.B. Swete summarizes the position of St. Augustine. 'He had learned to see in the captivity of Satan nothing else than the binding of the strong man by the stronger than he which the Lord had foretold (Mark 3:27; Luke 11:22); in the thousand years, the whole interval between the First Advent and the last conflict; in the reign of the saints, the entire course of the kingdom of heaven; in the judgment given to them, the binding and loosing of sinners; in the first resurrection, the spiritual share in the Resurrection of Christ which belongs to the baptized' (Augustine: *The City Of God* 20:7). Augustine spiritualized the whole idea of the Millennium.

20. The influence of Augustine in this area is reflected in the fact that for the most part the Church is silent as to Millennial expectations until the Jewish dreams took root in England and spread to America. A critical year in this discussion is 1830. From that year on to the present hour the Jewish millennial expectations have taken deep root in the church. But as it was in the first centuries, so it is today. Millennial expectations are widespread but not universal.
21. Once more the material has found favor over the spiritual. Once more the Jewish hopes of Israel to be glorious among the nations is being articulated. Once more it is being denied that Jesus is a king and is in fact the King of kings. Once more preparation is encouraged to rebuild a third Temple to house the glory of God and to reinstate animal sacrifices. If Satan cannot tarnish the Church of her essential glory he can promote the giving of her glory away by demeaning her self image or by suggesting Israel is really he favorite of God.

The Doctrine of Hell



Revelation 20:13-14
Souls in torment, from Jean,
Duc de Berry's 15th century "Book of Hours".

1. The term "*hell*" is the English translation of the Greek word *Gehenna* which represents the Hebrew Ge-Hinnom referring to the Valley of Topet that was located E or SE of Jerusalem.
2. There was a time in Israel's history when the false gods of Baal and Moloch were worship with human sacrifices in the Valley of Topet (Jer. 19:5; 32:35 cf. Psa. 106:38; Jer. 7:31). Ahaz (2 Kings 16:3) and Manasseh (2 Kings 21:6) engaged in this evil practice. Drums were beaten by those who worshipped to drown out the cries of the infants who were made to pass through the fire to Moloch.
3. The Valley of Topet was viewed by the more righteous kings of Judah (2 Kings 23:10) as a defiled place. The altars to the false gods were torn down. The filth of the city was poured into the Valley of Topet and burned.
4. Jesus viewed the Valley of Topet as vividly descriptive of the very gate of the pit of hell, a place of eternal punishment for the wicked.
5. From the teachings of Christ several characteristics of hell are set forth.
 - Hell is a place of fire (Matt. 5:22). Whether the fire is literal or symbolic of intense suffering may be debated. Conservative Christian thinking has held to a literal fire even for a spiritual entity and certainly for the resurrected body of the damned that will be fitted for destruction.
 - Both the body and soul of the unconverted will go into hell (Matt. 5:29).
 - Man is to fear God who has the power and authority to destroy both soul and body in hell (Luke 12:5; Matt. 10:28).
 - Sin is to be dealt with in a radical way to minimize the punishment of hell (Matt. 18:9; Mark 9:42; 9:45; 9:47).
 - It is possible to teach in such a way as to make another person a proselyte of hell (Matt. 23:15).
 - There are religious teachers who can not and will not escape the damnation of hell (Matt. 23:33).
 - The destructive nature of hell is found in an uncontrolled tongue (James 3:6).
 - Hell is a place of torment (Luke 16:24).
 - Hell is a place without mercy (Luke 16:24).
 - Hell is a place of separation (Luke 16:26).
 - Hell is a place of conscious, rational existence (Luke 16:27).

- Hell is a place of unanswered prayer (Luke 16:27).
- Hell is a place of remembrance (Luke 16:25).
- Hell is a place without hope (Luke 16:26).
- Hell is a place where there is the noise of weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 13:42).
- Hell is a place of eternal punishment (Matt. 25:46).
- Hell is a place of destruction (Phil. 3:19; 2 Thess. 1:9; Heb. 10:39).
- Hell is a palace of darkness (2 Pet. 2:17; Jude 13).
- Hell is described as a Second Death (Rev. 2:11; 20:6).
- Hell is described as a Lake of Fire burning with brimstone (Rev. 19:20).
- At the end of time Death and the Grave (Hades) will be cast into the Lake of Fire (Hell) which is the Second Death (Rev. 20:14).

6. The Old Testament Hebrew word *Sheol* refers to the world of the spirits of the departed. The Greek words *Gehenna*, *hades*, and *tartaros* are translated hell in the New Testament.

The Sphere of the Dead

Hebrew (Sheol)	Greek	Paradise	Tartaros
	Hell	Great Gulf	The deepest abyss
	Hades	Lake of fire	
	Gehenna	The Second Death	
	Hades	The Pit	
	Gehenna	Destruction	
SHEOL (HELL)	GEHENNA	HADES (HELL)	TARTAROS
Deut. 32:22	Matt. 5:22	Matt. 11:23	2 Pet. 2:4
2 Sam. 22: 6	Matt. 5:29	Matt. 16:18	
Job 11: 8	Matt. 10:28	Luke 10:15	
Job 26: 6	Matt. 18: 9	Luke 16:23	
Psa. 9:17	Matt. 23:15	Acts 2:27	
Psa. 16:10	Mark. 9:43	Acts 2:31	

Psa. 18: 5	Mark 9:45	Rev. 1:18
Psa. 55:15	Luke 12: 5	Rev. 6: 8
Psa. 86:13	James 3: 6	Rev. 20:13
Psa. 116:3		Rev. 20:14
Psa. 139:8		
Prov. 5:5		
Prov. 7:27		
Prov. 9:18		
Prov. 15:11		
Prov. 15:24		
Prov. 23:14		
Prov. 27:20		
Ezek. 31:16		
Ezek. 31:17		
Ezek. 32:21		
Ezek. 32:27		
Amos 9: 2		
Hab. 2: 5		
John 2: 2		

The Millennium Reign of Christ Future or a Present Reality?: Revelation 20:1-3

There is much controversy as to how to understand the teaching of these verses. Some believe that the best understanding is to think in symbolic terms of spiritual realities. For example, the Bible teaches that Christians are even now kings (Rev. 1:6), priests (Rev. 1:6 cf. 1 Pet. 2:9), and seated with Christ in heavenly places (Eph. 1:3). The Bible teaches that Elijah has come just as the prophet said (Mal. 4:5 cf. Matt. 11:14) even though the fulfillment is found in John the Baptist. The point becomes clear. The Christian community consists of a spiritual people who must recognize the spiritual dimensions of the New Testament (Gal. 3:29 cf. James 1:1). To press certain statements of the Bible for a literal interpretation is to invite disaster as the Jews did with Christ (John 6:45-52). Returning to Revelation 20 several things must be kept in mind.

- The passage does not fully explain itself. Other scripture must interpret this passage.
- Obscure passages of scriptures must not be allowed to teach a major doctrine unless a more clear passage confirms the truth contained therein.
- The passage is filled with symbols, numerology, figures of speech, and poetic language. Such language cannot be overlooked. Eternal truths can be conveyed in the veiled language of drama.
- In a normal style of writing, the literal interpretation of a passage is to be favored unless the context or other known passages of Scripture demand a figurative or spiritual interpretation.

In the apocalyptic style of writing just the opposite is true. Ezekiel, Daniel, and Revelation cannot be appreciated if the tools of the artist are separated from his work. Upon examination Revelation 20 falls into four main divisions each of which contains a central thought. The first division deals with the binding of Satan (Rev. 20:1-3). It is obvious that the key, the abyss, the chain, and the sealing are figures of speech. Satan is not literally a dragon and a serpent for the poetical language is explained (Rev. 20:2). Satan as a spirit creature cannot be bound with literal chains and yet something definite is being taught here. Satan is to be bound. Nowhere does John fix the exact time of this event. John only states that Satan is bound and shut up till some period [1000 years, millennium] is fixed. The reason for his binding is also stated, *"that he should deceive the nations no more"* (Rev. 20:3).

Several questions arise: *"Is there any teaching in the New Testament that teaches Satan has been bound?"* The answer is, *"Yes!"* Is there any passage that declares that Satan's power has been limited? The answer is, *"Yes!"* The First Advent of Christ and His broke the power of Satan crucifixion. In John 12:31 Jesus pronounced sentence upon Satan. *"Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out."* In Hebrews 2:14 the writer tells us that Jesus died that, through death he might destroy him that hath the power of death, that is the devil. When Christ came He broke the power of Satan. He limited the power of the devil. Obviously Satan still has some power just like a dog chained to a tree can still bite but the power of Satan is limited. In particular it is stated that the devil *"should deceive the nations no more."* In Matthew 28:19,20, the Lord said. *"All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations."* There is abundant evidence that at the First Advent of Christ, Satan was bound as Jesus said He would be and John saw that he was. The key passage is Luke 9:1. Jesus sent the Twelve on a preaching mission. He gave them, *"power and authority over all demons."* The Lord also sent out seventy disciples on a similar mission. They returned rejoicing that, even the demons are subject unto us through thy name (Luke 10:17).

In response the Lord said He saw Satan fall from heaven. He went on to say to the seventy disciples, *"Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy."* (Luke 10:19) There is still more evidence for the binding or limiting of the power and authority of Satan by Christ in Matthew 12:22-29. In this passage the enemies of the Lord have accused Him of casting out demons by the power of Satan. In response Jesus declares that the performing of miracles proves that He has established His own kingdom (Matt. 12:28) and He has bound Satan (Matt. 12:29). Consider something else. Following the Temptation of Christ, Jesus commanded Satan to depart. His command was immediately obeyed (Matt. 4:10,11). Paul refers to the Cross-of Christ as, *"Having spoiled the principalities and powers"* (Col. 2:15). The apostle John states that, *"for this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil."* (1 John 3:8). Hebrews 2:14 says that through His own death Christ destroyed the devil. In light of this body of information, it is not hard to understand that Revelation 20:1-3 teaches about a binding of Satan. This binding of Satan is a present reality, not a future event. The Bible does teach something that is futuristic about Satan and that is there will come a time when His chains shall be taken. When that happens Satan will be allowed one last great offensive action. But even in that endeavors Satan is limited to a little season. Here is a great truth. Let no Christian fear. Satan is bound. There is comfort in this for the people of God.

The Millennium Reign of Christ? Revelation 20:4-6

By way of review several things have been noted.

- Revelation 20 is filled with symbolic and poetical language. Satan is called a dragon and a serpent. There is a key and a chain in the hand of an angel to bind him.
- Revelation 20:1-3 teaches the binding of Satan. Turning to other passages of Scripture we find that at the first advent of Christ, Satan's power was broken. He is now bound (Luke 10:17,19; Matt. 12:22-29) in some sense.
- The reason Satan has been bound is that he should deceive the nations no more (20:3).
- Prior to the Second Advent will be set free to express himself but only for a little season. What he shall do in this little season is detailed in 20:7-9. The ultimate fate of the devil is given in 20:10.

The conclusion of comparing Scripture with Scripture is to see that the binding of Satan is a present reality. What then is to be said about the second great division of this passage found in 20:4. Is the 1000-year, is the millennium reign also a present reality or some futuristic expectation? To begin with, John states what he saw.

- John saw a number of thrones. How many John saw is not stated but the implication is that of a large number.
- John saw a certain group of people sitting on the throne. He is very specific. It is the martyrs who sit on the throne. They are singled out for special honor because
- They were beheaded for the witness of Jesus.
- They had not worshipped the Beast [Rome].
- They had not worshipped his image.
- They had not received the mark of the Beast upon their foreheads in their hands.
- John saw this very special group of martyred saints alive in heaven and reigning with Christ.

They [the martyred saints] reigned with Him for a thousand years. In as we stay close to the text we are forced to conclude that John has a very focused truth in mind here. He is telling the Church as a whole that those particular saints who have died for the cause of Christ at the hand of Rome are alive in heaven, sitting on thrones, and reigning with Christ. Such a message was comforting for the saints of the first century and is still comforting for the suffering Church today. For John the spiritual reign of the martyred saints with Christ was a present reality. For John the reign was to last a thousand years.

Why the specific number? The answer may be very simple. Psalm 50:10 says that the cattle on a thousand hills belongs to God. Job 9:3 says that a man cannot answer God once in a thousand times. Paul said of the Corinthian saints that they had ten thousand instructors. Peter spoke of one day with the Lord as being a thousand years (2 Pet. 3:8). The point emerges. A thousand years may simply indicate a large number and is often used to indicate completeness (Rev. 7:5-8). The message is plain. The martyred dead shall reign with Christians until the Second Advent. In 20:5 is the most challenging passage. The text says simply enough, "*But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.*" The word "but" is a conjunction of contrast. There is a contrast between the living dead and the "*rest of the dead.*" Weymouth translates the verse to read, "*No one else who was dead rose to Life until the thousand years were at an end.*" By staying in context I would suggest that the rest of the dead refer primarily to the rest of the damned dead. The reasoning is this.

- The Bible teaches that all men live forever. Some live in heaven after death. Some live in eternal torment after death but all live.
- Those who are dead yet are alive in heaven enjoy the first resurrection which is spiritual (John 5:25). It begins at the moment of salvation, is enhanced in the intermediate state, and is completed in the general bodily resurrected when the glorified state is made manifest.
- In contrast to those who are physically dead yet are spiritually alive in hell experience the general bodily resurrection at the end of the millennium reign only to know the renewed horrors of the second death (20:14). If the first resurrection is the spiritual life given to the martyred saints who did not worship the Beast [Rome] then there is great comfort for the people of God. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection. On such the second death, which will take place at the general resurrection hath no power. With these words, John speaks to a very specific group of people for John has some very simple points to make. People have died for the cause of Christ. Those who are physically dead are spiritually alive. They live and reign with Christ. This is the first resurrection. The first resurrection is a spiritual resurrection.

The concept of a spiritual resurrection is taught elsewhere. In John 5:25. Jesus said, "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.*" In this passage Jesus teaches that there are those who are dead but live because they have heard the voice of the Son of God. Those who have part in this first resurrection have no fear of the second death (Rev. 20:6 cf. 20:14). All who take part of the first resurrection which is spiritual are blessed and holy (cf. 1 John 3:14). The overarching theme to this portion of scripture is that of comfort for the people of God. The martyrs are alive and ALL (20:6) who enter into the first resurrection by faith shall be priests and shall reign with Christ. When a saint dies today, it is only to reign in heaven with Christ as a priest and king. All that Christ enjoys is a present reality for us to enjoy. If Christ is a King, so are we. If Christ reigns, so do we. Here is spiritual progression. We are made kings and priests by the new birth (Rev. 1:6). We reign with Christ as kings and priests in time and in eternity.

Finally, at the general resurrection, when the eternal state begins, we shall know the full glory of redemption in a glorified resurrected body. The thousand-year reign of Christ is a present reality. Therefore, the souls of those who have died in the faith are alive in heaven and presently reigning with Christ. This spiritual reign of Christ, which is present and very real, shall come to an end according to Divine decree. Other events will be allowed to happen in preparation for the eternal state. The conclusion of the matter is simple. Revelation 20 teaches about Satan being bound. That is a present reality. Revelation 20 teaches that those who have part in the first resurrection are blessed and holy and shall enjoy the present reality of reigning with Christ as priests of God. Here is comfort for those in tribulation and for those facing death.

The Millennium Reign of Christ: Futuristic or a Present Reality? Revelation 20:7

Though the study of this portion of the Revelation has emphasized the historical fulfillment and the present realities of the prophecies of this book, there are several things that are still future. At the time the Revelation was written, the whole content was still futuristic for John was shown things, which must shortly come to pass. What John saw would happen did happen.

- John foresaw the destruction of the Beast [the Roman Empire].
- John saw the destruction of the False Prophet [emperor worship].
- John foresaw the protection the church. His vision became a source of comfort for the people of God as he set forth great principles that undergird the Christian faith.
- There is the principle of Divine faithfulness. God will always move to either protect or avenge His own elect.
- There is the principle of Divine justice. Those who hurt Christ, those who hurt the followers of
- Christ will not go unpunished in a moral universe.
- There is the principle of Divine sovereignty that declares even the Devil is subject to the Lord Jesus.

From the vantage-point of time we can see that the historical record reflects the accuracy of the prophetic vision. Just as John foresaw things that are past, he also foresaw things that are present. In particular John foresaw.

- the binding of Satan (Rev. 20:1-3) that he should deceive the nations no more. This is a present reality.
- John also foresaw the fact that those who died for their faith lived and reigned with Christ (Rev. 20:4). This too is a present reality.

The prophet saw things past, things present, and things yet to come. If we take Revelation 19:7-22:21 as a unit, we find several things that are still yet to come.

- A temporary release of Satan from his prison of bondage (Rev. 19:7).
- A final deception of the nations (Rev. 20:8).
- The gathering of people to battle (Rev. 20:8).
 - ❖ the Christian community (Rev. 20:9)
 - ❖ the beloved city [Jerusalem] (Rev. 20:9).
 - ❖ The destruction of the enemies of God (Rev. 20:9).
 - ❖ The ultimate destruction of Satan into the Lake of Fire where the Beast [Rome] and the False Prophet already have been placed (Rev. 20:10).
 - ❖ The Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11).
 - ❖ The general resurrection of the dead (Rev. 20:12-13).
 - ❖ The final casting of the damned into the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:15).
 - ❖ The creation of a new heaven and a new earth (Rev. 21:1).
 - ❖ The perfection and ultimate glorification of the Church (Rev. 21:2-27).

As exciting as these events certainly will be there is nothing in the biblical narrative to suggest either times frame or signs of the time. Focusing on the Great White Throne Judgment, it can be stated that the Church has consistently taught a general resurrection from the dead of all men (John 5:28). This teaching is reflected in such documents as the *Apostle's Creed* and the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (Chapter 32 XXXIII. *Of the Last Judgment*). It is not difficult to set forth the clear teaching of the Bible on this matter.

1. God has appointed a day of general judgment.
2. Christ will be the Judge (John 5:22; Matt. 25:31-46; Acts 17:31; 2 Tim. 4:1). In John's vision at the Great White Throne it is God the Father who judges. Is there a contradiction? No! The unity of the Father and the Son is such that there is no distinction (John 14:8-14).
3. All angels and all men will appear before Him.
4. Every thought, word, and deed will be judged according to a righteous judgment (2 Cor. 5:10).
5. The purpose of God in appointing this day is to manifest His justice and grace.
6. The Day of Judgment cannot be known.

At the Great White Throne Judgment the basis of condemnation will be those who were not found in the *Book of Life* (Rev. 20:15). No wonder Jesus told the disciples to rejoice because their names were written in the *Book of Life* (Luke 10:20). Is there a distinction between the Judgment Seat of Christ and the Great White Throne Judgment? The answer is probably, “NO!” There is no evidence of any dramatic distinction between the two terms. The Bible simply teaches of a general resurrection of the dead followed by a general judgment of works. The Christians will give an account of the deed they have done (2 Cor. 5:10). The unbelievers will give an account of what they have done (Rev. 20:12). The basis of condemnation or acceptance in the kingdom will ultimately be based upon whether or not one's name has been written in the Book of Life. Why then the evaluation of works? For the Christian works are evaluated to determine rewards (1 Cor. 3:11-15). The rewards will be returned to Christ in humility (Luke 17:10). For the non-Christian works are evaluated to determine the degree of pain of eternal punishment (Luke 12:47,48). The Judgment Seat of Christ is great for on it sits God Incarnate; it is that which speaks of the Light of righteousness; it is a throne for He is LORD.

For those who would be Judged by Works: The Five Points of Arminianism

1. Jacob Hermann was a Dutch theologian who lived from 1560 to 1609. The Latin form of his last name--Arminius, best knew him.
2. Although he was reared in the reformed tradition and taught in a Calvinistic seminary, Arminius had serious questions about sovereign grace as the Reformers preached it.
3. Several years after his death his students, called Arminians, formulated his concerns into five main points that they presented to the Dutch Parliament, which had subscribed to the Reformed Doctrines of the Belgic and Heidelberg Confessions.
4. This "*Remonstrance*" was presented to the State of Holland and in 1618, a National Synod of the Church was convened in Dort to consider the teachings of Arminius in light of the Word of God.
5. After 154 session which lasted seven-month The Five Points of the Remonstrance were found to be contrary to the Scripture and were declared heretical.
6. The Five Points of the Remonstrance may be summarized:
 - **Free Will.** Arminianism teaches that man has a free will. The fall of man was not total. There is enough good left in man for him to will to accept Christ unto salvation.
 - **Conditional Election.** Arminianism teaches that election is based upon the foreknowledge of God that certain persons will believe. Man's act of faith is the condition for his being elected to eternal life, as God foresees him exercising his free will in positive volition towards Christ.

- **Universal Atonement.** Arminianism teaches that God loves everybody without distinction and without exception and Christ died for everyone. Redemption was general not specific. The death of Christ provided grounds for God to save all men just as long as each person exercises his free will to accept Christ.
- **Obstructable Grace.** Arminianism teaches that since God wants all men to be saved, He has sent the Holy Spirit to woo all men to Christ. However, since man has free will he is able to resist God's will for his life. Finite man on an individual basis resisting the calling of the Holy Spirit will and can frustrate God's omnipotent.
- **Fall From Grace.** Arminianism teaches that it is possible for a saved person in a state of grace to sin in such a way as to fall from grace and to be forever lost.

The Doctrine of Total Depravity

1. As the result of Adam's transgression, men are born in sin and by nature are spiritually dead. If men are to become the children of God and enter into His kingdom, they must be born anew by the Holy Spirit.
 - **Adam sinned.**
 - ❖ *Genesis 2:16-17 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: 17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*
 - **Sin brought death.**
 - ❖ *Romans 5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:*
 - ❖ *Ephesians 2:1-3 1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; 2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: 3 Among whom also we all had our conversation times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*
 - ❖ *Colossians 2:13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;*

- **Men are born into sin.**

- ❖ *Psalms 51:5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.*

- ❖ *Psalms 58:3 The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.*

2. Because of this state of sin men must be born anew if they are to enter into the kingdom of God.

- ❖ *John 3:5-7 5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.*

- ❖ *John 1:12-13 12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: 13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

3. As the result of the Fall, men are by nature blind and deaf to spiritual truth. Their minds are darkened by sin and their hearts are corrupt and evil.

- ❖ *Genesis 6:5 And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*

- ❖ *Genesis 8:21 And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.*

- ❖ *Eccl. 9:3 This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all: yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in the heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead.*

- ❖ *Jer. 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*

- ❖ *Mark 7:21-23 21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, 22 Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: 23 All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.*

- ❖ *John 3:19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*

- ❖ *Rom. 8:7-8 7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. 8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.*
 - ❖ *1 Cor. 2:14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*
 - ❖ *Eph. 4:17-19 17 This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, 18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: 19 Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.*
 - ❖ *Eph. 5:8 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:*
 - ❖ *Titus 1:15 Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.*
4. Before sinners are born into the kingdom of God through the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, they are the children of the devil and under his control. They are slaves to sin.
- ❖ *John 8:44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.*
 - ❖ *Eph. 2:1-2 1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; 2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:*
 - ❖ *2 Tim. 2:25-26 25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; 26 And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.*
 - ❖ *1 John 3:10 In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.*
 - ❖ *1 John 5:19 And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.*
 - ❖ *John 8:34 Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.*
 - ❖ *Romans 6:20 For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.*
 - ❖ *Titus 3:3 For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.*

5. The reign of sin is universal. All men are under its power. Consequently, none is righteous-- not even one!

- ❖ *2 Chronicles 6:36 If they sin against thee, (for there is no man which sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them over before their enemies, and they carry them away captives unto a land far off or near;*
- ❖ *1 Kings 8:46 If they sin against thee, (for there is no man that sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captives unto the land of the enemy, far or near;*
- ❖ *Job 15:14-16 14 What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? 15 Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight. 16 How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?*
- ❖ *Psa. 130:3 If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?*
- ❖ *Psa. 143:2 And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.*
- ❖ *Prov. 20:9 Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?*
- ❖ *Eccl. 7:20 For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.*
- ❖ *Eccl. 7:29 Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.*
- ❖ *Isa. 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*
- ❖ *Isa. 64:6 But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.*
- ❖ *Rom. 3:9-12 9 What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; 10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: 11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. 12 They are all gone out of the way, they altogether become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*
- ❖ *James 3:2 For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.*
- ❖ *James 3:8 But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.*
- ❖ *1 John 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*

❖ *1 John 1:10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*

6. Men left in their dead state are unable of themselves to repent, to believe the gospel, or to come to Christ. They have no power within themselves to change their natures, to incline their wills to God or to prepare their hearts for salvation.

❖ *Job 14:4 Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.*

❖ *Jer. 13:23 Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.*

❖ *Matt. 7:16-18 16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or of thistles? 17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth every fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.*

❖ *Matt. 12:33 Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit.*

❖ *John 6:44 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.*

❖ *John 6:65 And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.*

❖ *Rom. 11:35-36 35 Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again 36 For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.*

❖ *1 Cor. 2:14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

❖ *1 Cor. 4:7 For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?*

❖ *2 Cor. 3:5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;*

Conclusion

If it is really true that men are born in sin and are blind, deaf, darkened, corrupt, evil, and unable to help themselves then the plight of the natural man is more desperate than most realize. The issue which divided Protestant and Catholic in 1517 and which divides many Protestants today is this vital point. Either man still has some ability to believe in and of himself and be saved or he does not. There are those who still believe in some innate goodness and ability in man. The doctrine of total depravity strikes at the pride of fallen man. It also goes against much human observation for it does seem that men are religious. There are many noble and honorable unbelievers. Where did such goodness come from? And what about self-esteem theology?

The Doctrine of the Carnal Christian

1. The doctrine of the carnal Christian teaches that after a person becomes a Christian there is a choice to either grow in grace, follow the Lord and become a spiritual Christian, or to remain a babe in Christ and live like natural men.
2. The passage that is appealed to for this doctrine is 1 Corinthians 3:1-4. From this passage it is taught that there are three categories of men - the natural man the spiritual man, and the carnal man. The carnal man is described as being like the natural man who is unconverted.
3. One major reason for the widespread popularity of the carnal Christian doctrine is that the doctrine has been part of the notes in the Scofield Reference Bible.
4. Paul divides men into three classes:
 - Natural i.e. the Adamic Man, unrenewed through the new birth;
 - Spiritual i.e. the renewed man as Spirit-filled and walking in the Spirit in full communion with God;
 - Carnal, "*fleshly*," i.e. the renewed man who, walking "*after the flesh*," remains a babe in Christ.
5. It should be noted that according to Scofield, men are divided into three classes: natural, spiritual, and carnal. One of these classes of men comprises the carnal, the fleshly, the babe(s) in Christ, who walk after the flesh. To "*walk*" implies the bent of the life, a leaning or bias in one direction, and that direction is towards carnality.
6. A popular presentation of this doctrine presents the teaching like this: After you have invited Christ to come into your life, it is possible for you to take control of the throne of your life again. The New Testament passage, 1 Corinthians 2:14-3:3, identified three kinds of people:
 - **The Non-Christian.** The natural man is a self-centered man, his interests are controlled by self.
 - **The Professing Christian.**

- **The Carnal Christian.** According to the theory there is no essential difference between the Non-Christian and the Carnal Christian. The bent of the carnal Christian is the same as that of the non-Christian even though the carnal Christian has made a profession of receiving Christ as Lord and Saviour.
7. It is to be acknowledged that Christians do sin. There are babes in Christ. There is divine chastisement, which all Christians receive. There is even a sense in which Christians may be said to be carnal. Every Christian is carnal in some area of life at many times in life. And in every Christian *"the flesh lusteth against the Spirit"* (Gal. 5:17). However, to concede these points does not allow for a classification whereby a Christian may live a whole lifestyle of total carnality so there is no essential difference between the Christian and the natural man.
 8. The apostle Paul does not say that the believers in Corinth are living like babes and like the unregenerate in every area of their lives but in ONE area only. He has already referred to them as the *"sanctified in Christ Jesus"* who are recipients of *"the grace of God"* enriched by Christ *"in all utterance, and in all knowledge"* (1 Cor. 1:2-5). However, they were acting like natural men by dividing themselves into various factions.
 9. Proof that Paul knows only two classes of men may be found in the following passages: 1 Corinthians 2:14-15; 2 Corinthians 5:17.
 10. The carnal Christian doctrine is not an innocent doctrine. It undermines the two basic blessings of salvation which are:
 - a new heart and,
 - forgiveness of sins (Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:24-27 cf. Heb. 10:15-17).
 11. When a sinner is reconciled to God, the blood of Christ covers his sins. This is the first blessing of salvation. The second blessing of salvation, according to the Scriptures, is a new heart, a new nature.
 12. For a Christian to live in total carnality without repentance is for the work of redemption to be void and meaningless.
 13. There is a difference between speculative faith (Acts 8:12-23), temporary faith (John 2:23,24; 12:42,43; Luke 8:13), and saving faith. All "carnal" Christian professes their faith but it is not always saving faith.
 14. The carnal Christian neglects the place of repentance in the life of the believer which is a vital part of the gospel message (Acts 20:20,21). The Puritan John Cotton was right when he wrote: *"There is none under a covenant of grace that dare allow himself in any sin; for if a man should negligently commit any sin, the Lord will school him thoroughly and make him sadly to apprehend how he has made bold with the treasures of the grace of God. Shall we continue to sin that grace may abound? God forbid. None that has a portion in the grace of God dareth therefore allow himself in sin; but if through strength of temptation he be at any time carried aside, it is his greatest burden."*

15. Many people live comfortably behind the carnal Christian doctrine just as people accept the concept of being backslidden as "*normal*" Christian living. There is no scriptural comfort to be found in being a backslider or being carnal. And there is certainly no biblical basis for believing that a person can live a life of carnality and still be in the sphere of true saving grace.

The Royal Reign of Christ

Revelation

Chapter 21

The Ultimate Glory of God: Revelation 21:1-27

Following the final judgment John sees in his vision the creation of a new heaven and a new earth. This is not the first time that the scripture speaks of a coming New World order. Isaiah prophesied such a thing in two Old Testament passages. Isaiah 65:17 says, *“For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.”* Isaiah 66:22 declares, *“For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain.”* In the New Testament the apostle Peter tells how the present universe will be destroyed. The destruction of this world order is associated with the events of the Second Advent (2 Pet. 3:10-12). With intense heat and a great noise the very elements shall melt, the earth also, shall be destroyed. Because we understand a little about nuclear energy we know it is literally possible to destroy the world. Two atomic bombs had already destroyed two cities in August 1945. In October 1962, Castro came very close to exploding three tactical nuclear devices if American troops had tried to land on the beaches of Cuba. In 1973, the plans of Israel were armed to drop nuclear bombs on the Egyptian army. Today, at the end of the twentieth century, the world is still armed and dangerous and unstable. There is violence in the Middle East, in Europe, and in Asia. It is not difficult to imagine a global nuclear war in the near future. *“Never the less, we according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness”* (2 Pet. 3:13). What will the new heaven and the new earth be like? There are some texts that indicate the characteristics of the new heaven and the new earth. Staying very close to the Bible it can be said that in the eternal state:

1. There will be no more sea (Rev. 21:1). This may be literal which means that in the new earth there will not be oceans and great bodies of water, which covers so much of the earth today. If the phrase is symbolic then for John the sea which separated him from his beloved churches would be banished and in the eternal state there will be no more separation for our loved ones.
2. In the new earth, we shall inhabit it in glorified bodies either by resurrection or transformation (John 5:28 cf. 1 Cor. 15:52ff).
3. In the new earth Jesus will walk and exist among His people. God incarnate will once more walk among men. He shall inhabit the new earth (Rev. 21:3).
4. In the new earth there will be no more sorrow and no more death. Once, the promise was that the young would not die prematurely and the animal kingdom would live side by side. The New Testament promises far exceed the Old Testament prophecies for not only will the young not die, not even at a hundred, but no one will die. There will be no need for funeral directors nor for hospitals or doctors for the former things are passed away.

5. In the new earth there will be absolutely no expressions of evil nor evil people (Rev. 21:8). The eternal destiny of all that have rejected Jesus Christ as Savior will be the Lake of Fire.
6. In the new universe will be no sun nor moon for the glory of God and the Lamb will be the light of the world (Rev. 21:23).
7. In the new earth there will be nations (Rev. 21:24) and government (Rev. 21:24) and they shall all worship the Lord in perfect love.
8. The most glorious part of the new earth is that it will be the place for the Church to dwell in. What a glorious the Church faces.

As John saw the future, the Church will descend for her husband. There is an obvious mixture of metaphors here for cities do not appear in wedding garments. What John has done is to take two great symbolic images to try to communicate how majestic, how powerful, how spectacular the Church is. The sight of a heavenly host descending at once towards earth could easily bring to John's mind the image of a city with definite structure much like dances can form physical looking shapes. In John's imagination the descending beautifully arrayed Bride (21:2), the very wife of the Lamb (21:10) takes on a definite shape in the form of a city with a foundation and gates in a wall. The specific details of the city are given.

1. The light of the city was like unto a jasper stone, clear as crystals (Rev. 21:11).
2. The size of the city is measured at 12,000 furlongs or about 1,500 miles long, wide, and high. If placed in America this city would reach from New York City to Denver, Colorado and from Canada to Florida.
3. The walls of the city measure 216 feet high and are made of jasper (Rev. 21:12,17,18). If this were a literal city then the buildings would tower 1,499 miles and 5,064 feet above the wall.
4. The gates number twelve. There are three gates on the north, three gates on the south, three gates on the east, and three gates on the west. On each gate is the name of one of the tribes of Israel. An angel guards each gate. Each gate is made of a splendid solid white pearl stone cf. Matt. 13:45,46). The gates will never be closed (Rev. 21:12,13,21,25).
5. The foundation of the city rests upon twelve stones with each layer being inlaid with a different precious gem.
 - First Foundation—inlaid with jasper, a crystal clear diamond.
 - Second Foundation—inlaid with sapphire, a blue opaque stone with gold specks.
 - Third Foundation—inlaid with chalcedony, a sky blue stone with stripes of colors running through it.
 - Fourth Foundation—inlaid with emerald, a bright green stone.

- Fifth Foundation—inlaid with sardonyx, a white stone with layers of red and brown.
- Sixth Foundation—inlaid with sardius, a fiery blooded stone.
- Seventh Foundation—inlaid with chrysolyte, a transparent golden yellow stone.
- Eighth Foundation--inlaid with beryl, a sea green stone.
- Ninth Foundation--inlaid with topaz, a transparent golden green stone.
- Tenth Foundation--inlaid with chrysoprasus, a blue apple green stone.
- Eleventh foundation--inlaid with jacinth, a violet, blue purple stone.
- Twelfth Foundation--inlaid with amethyst, a flashing purple stone.

The list of twelve foundations with twelve precious stones is full of symbolic meaning. By the imagery the splendor of the Church [the city of God] is stressed for the very foundations are made of riches beyond price. The essential unity of the Church is also stressed for the twelve foundations are the twelve apostles made up the precious stones many of which can also be found in the breastplate of the High Priest of Israel (Ex. 28:17). The breastplate was made of four rows of precious stones.

Row 1	sardius	topaz	carbuncle
Row 2	emerald	sapphire	diamond
Row 3	jacinth	agate	amethyst
Row 4	beryl	onyx	jasper

Eight of the stones were to be found in the breastplate of the high priest (Exodus 28:17). Several of the stones mentioned in the breastplate are not mentioned in the foundation.

Breastplate mentions	Foundations mentions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • carbuncle • diamond • agate • onyx 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> chrysolyte chrysoprasus chalcedony sardonyx

1. The composite picture in John's vision is that the Church has an essential unity for there are the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles in the very fabric of the structure.
2. The Church has an innate glory manifested in the jewels.
3. The Church has an eternal destiny for time has ceased and eternity has begun.
4. The Church has an outward as well as an inner perfection. Inside there is no corruption. Outside there is no corruption or deformity. The Church is of perfect symmetry. She is without blemish.
5. The Church is the final dwelling place of God (Rev. 21:22) who delights to fellowship with the redeemed (Rev. 21:3,4). There are many with whom God will not fellowship with.
 - **The fearful or the cowards.** Those who love ease and comfort more than Christ will be cast out of the kingdom.
 - **The unbelieving.** All who have refused to believe the gospel shall be lost.
 - **The abominable.** The reference is to those who have been polluted by the abominations of this world.
 - **Murderers.** Many took part in the slaughter of the Christians. Their deeds will not be forgotten.
 - **Whoremongers.** There are those who live a life of constant immorality.
 - **Sorcerers.** Those who practiced magic were well known in the ancient world (Acts 19:19).
 - **Idolaters.** People who worship false gods will not go into the holy city.
 - **All liars.** False teaching as well as false speaking will have no fellowship with the Lord.

Though many are cast out of the kingdom, multitudes will have fellowship with God for from the north and south people come. From the east and from the west people come. The gates are not closed. The invitation to come into the Church and be part of the Church is universal.



Revelation 21:6

"I am the Alpha and Omega—the Beginning and the End."

The Royal Reign of Christ

Revelation

Chapter 22

Our Heavenly Home: Revelation 22:1-21

The vision of John is about to end. He has shared much with the Church that should both excite and comfort God's people. Once again, the great themes of the book can be stated. The Lord Jesus Christ is alive and well. From His throne in heaven He rules over the nations of the earth.

- The Church shall know great periods of tribulation. As the Church suffers for the cause of Christ so Christ so make those suffer who hurt the saints.
- God will avenge the blood of the elect. Political powers that rise against the Sovereign shall be dealt a deathblow. Religious powers that seek to hurt the Church shall also be dealt with. The Beast and The False Prophet have an ultimate date with destiny in damnation.
- Those who are put to death for the cause of Christ shall live after death. They rule with Christ.

Such themes as these form a strong cord of hope and comfort for the church. Revelation was not given as a crystal ball but as a challenge to remain faithful. It may very well be that those who remain faithful shall enjoy seeing the things that John saw in His vision. Concerning the heavenly scene in Revelation 22 it is difficult to determine whether or not many of the things exist, as we understand existence. Does heaven have a literal river of water of life or is this symbolic (22:1)? Does heaven have streets with trees of life, which bear 12 different fruits of which people eat and are healed? It may or may not. If heaven does not have these things what does characterize heaven. The following things are more certain.

1. Heaven is a place where there is no curse of sin or the effects of sin (Rev. 22:3). There is no curse of sin or the effects of sin because those who are in heaven have drunk of the pure river of water of life which is the Holy Spirit (John 7:38,39). They have eaten of the tree of life thereby manifesting the fruits of the spirit (Gal. 5:22).
2. Heaven is the place where God the Father and God the Son dwelt (Rev. 22:3).
3. In heaven there is continuous acts of worship (Rev. 22:3).
4. In heaven all the saints shall see the One they have loved and served (Rev. 22:4).
5. In heaven the saints are secured forever for His name shall be in their foreheads (Rev. 22:4).
6. In heaven there is no night neither candle nor sun (Rev. 22:5). There is no darkness to fear.
7. In heaven the saints reign (Rev. 22:5).
8. In heaven there are holy angels who when commissioned to, reveal the future (Rev. 22:6). All these things are faithful and true (Rev. 22:6). For John, such knowledge, such glimpse of glory was too much. He tried afresh to worship the angel but was forbidden (Rev. 22:8-9). Only God is to be worshipped. The Revelation closes with a terrible note of warning and a tender plea from God calling out to a lost world to "*Come!*" (Rev. 22:17). "*Come to salvation. Come quickly. Come now. By faith call upon Christ to forgive all sins and cleanse the very foundation of life, which has been polluted. Come!*" Outside of heaven will be left dogs. The dog refers to all that is savage, unclean, and immoral. Outside of heaven will be the sorcerers and whoremongers and murderers and idolaters and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. Yet, no one need despair. Where sin abounds grace does much more abound. It is symbolic and proper that the Revelation and the Bible ends with the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Royal Reign of Christ

*"The Lord hath prepared His throne in the heavens:
and His kingdom ruleth over all.*

~*~

Psalms 103:19

Earthly Kingdoms

Genesis 10:10
Genesis 20:9
Numbers 24:7
Numbers 32:33

Kingdoms Of Nature

Subject To The Sovereign

1 Samuel 13:13
1 Samuel 28:17
Daniel 4:17
Daniel 4:25

Subject To The Sovereign

Exodus 3:1-22
Exodus 7 - 11
Mark 4:37-41

Kingdom of Heaven

Kingdom of God
Kingdom of Light

Includes the reign of God
over the elect angels and
the regenerated of the saints.

Kingdom Of Darkness

Includes the reign
of God over fallen
Angels (demons) and un-
regenerate souls

Subject To The Sovereign

Luke 22:29
John 3:2
2 Timothy 4:18
Hebrews 12:28

Subject To The Sovereign

Matthew 17:18
Revelation 20:10