

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

or

"Which is to come"

by Rick Shoemaker

OUTLINE

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 (6th Vial) The river Euphrates is dried up, three unclean spirits gather kingdoms for battle (16:12-14)
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The King of Kings returns to earth (19:11-16)

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Satan is defeated and cast into the lake of fire forever (20:10)

The Great White Throne judgment (20:11-15)

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10. THE ETERNAL DESTINY OF THE REDEEMED: (21:1-22:5)

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The blessing to those who obey this book (22:7)

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The invitation of the Spirit and the bride (22:17)

The warning to not tamper with this book (22:18-19)

The closing benediction (22:20-21)

The theme of the book

Since the book of Revelation tells us what is to come, I believe the words "Which is to come" (1:4) provide an excellent theme for the book.

The book of Revelation consists of a series of visions God gave His servant John. Beginning with letters to seven churches in Asia Minor it reveals future events which include the rapture of the New Testament church, the seven-year Tribulation Period, the battle of Armageddon, the binding of Satan, the Millennial reign of Jesus on earth, the Great White Throne Judgment, and the eternal state of God's rule.

This book is the fulfillment of much of what the Bible says. Up to 3/4 of the book of Revelation is the fulfillment of prophecy in the Old Testament.

There are no direct quotes from the Old Testament but of the 404 verses in this book, more than 270 are directly connected to Old Testament Scripture. For this reason, a working knowledge of the Old Testament is vitally important if we are to understand this book. The Bible is the best commentary of the book of Revelation.

I suppose no other book has thrilled more hearts or stirred more controversy than this incredible book. For this reason, many avoid it entirely.

We should remember the Bible is not a textbook that is understood intellectually. It is a spiritual book that is understood only when the Holy Spirit reveals it to us (Mt. 16:17; 1 Cor. 2:9-10).

- To be able to comprehend this book, there must be salvation

Like all Scripture, only a saved person can understand this book (1 Cor. 2:14). Strangely, many who are not saved want to know what it says.

- To be able to comprehend this book, there must be spirituality

The believer must have a spiritual mind if they hope to understand this book. Jesus had many things to tell His disciples but they were not able to handle them at that time (Jn 16:12). Many newborn believers want to go straight to the book of Revelation when they still need the milk of the Word.

- To be able to comprehend this book, there must be study

This book requires in-depth study (2 Tim. 2:15). It takes a lot of time and effort but a blessing is promised to those who are willing to do so (1:3).

THE PERSON

John identified himself as the writer on at least five occasions (1:2, 4, 9; 21:2; 22:8). This is the same John who penned the gospel of John and the three epistles by his name. He was the brother of James, the son of Zebedee, and one of the three closest disciples to Jesus (Mt. 26:36-37; Mk.9:3; Lk. 8:51). Jesus called him and his brother, "The sons of thunder" because of their boldness (Mk. 3:17).

The main character of this book is not John. It is Jesus. In the Gospel accounts, Jesus is seen as the lowly Lamb (Jn 1:29,36). In the book of Revelation, He is seen as the Lamb that was slain (5:6), and the Lord of Lords and King of kings (17:14; 19:16).

THE PLACE

The Romans mistreated John terribly. Tradition tells us they tried to kill him several times, including putting him in a barrel of boiling oil. John penned this book while on the Isle of Patmos where the Roman Emperor Domitian exiled him there for preaching the gospel (1:9). Patmos was a small (10 miles long and 6 miles wide) island in the Aegean Sea. This island, like Alcatraz, was used to confine prisoners. For the most part, it was a rocky, barren, and depressing place. John may have been forced to work in the rock quarries on this island.

The devil tried to quiet the man of God but on this barren island, God spoke through John as never before. God often uses tragedy to bring about triumph.

Despite it all, the Lord spared His beloved disciple. Eusebius, the Christian historian, tells us the emperor Nerva eventually released John from Patmos.

THE PERIOD

John penned this book around 95 AD. It is over 60 years after the crucifixion. All the other apostles were already dead. Jerusalem and the temple had been destroyed some 25 years earlier and the New Testament church was experiencing severe persecution.

THE PEOPLE

- This book was written for the saints in John's day

The book was written primarily for seven churches located in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). These persecuted believers were comforted by John's words.

Even though it was written to those seven churches specifically, it was clearly intended for everyone everywhere.

Not everything in this book is written to us, but it is all written for us. One example, the admonition for the Jews to "fly into the wilderness" is obviously for the Jews living during the Tribulation Period and not for anyone in the church today.

- This book was written for the saints of today

The Lord wants the contents of this book to encourage today's believers. We may be facing difficult times but we must remember, God told us it was going to be this way. We should not be shocked, scared, or shaken.

- This book was written for the sinners of today

The Lord wants the contents of this book to warn sinners about the coming judgment. In essence, He is telling them they need to get saved before the judgments begin. If you do not know the Lord as your Savior, you need to get saved before the prophecies of this book take place.

THE PROMISE

- This book begins with a promise of a blessing

God promises a blessing to those who read, hear, and keep the things written in this book (1:3).

This book is from God and can be believed. God has given us a look into the future of this world so we can be certain of what is ahead.

Knowing these facts should cause us to set our "affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:2). Paul wrote, "Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (1 Pt 2:12).

- This book ends with a promise of a curse

God also gave a promise of judgment to those who add to or take away from, this book (Rev. 22:18-19).

THE PROBLEMS

The first problem when interpreting the Book of Revelation:

Some prophecies are not clear until they actually happen. That means, some of what is written will not be totally understood until the predictions actually take place. You don't see it until you see it.

One example is when Jesus cleansed the temple. The Bible says, then the disciples "remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up" (Jn 2:17 cf. Ps. 69:9). The prophecy was not clearly understood until they actually experienced its fulfillment.

The second problem when interpreting the Book of Revelation:

Since the book is not in chronological order it can be difficult to discern exactly what order the events take place. We should look at the book of Revelation like a football announcer describing a play in a football game. Twenty-two players are doing twenty-two different things. Explaining what is happening and when it is happening is very difficult. This is what John was attempting to do in this book.

The third problem when interpreting the Book of Revelation:

Determining if a statement is symbolic or literal. The book of Revelation has a good bit of symbolic language. Words like "as if" (1:15), "like unto" (2:18), or "as it were" (4:1), tell us it is symbolic and not literal.

The symbols in Revelation are meant to help us visualize what is being said. A voice that sounds like thunder (6:1) helps us understand better than simply saying a loud voice. A judgment described as a harvesting sickle (14:15) helps us visualize the severity of the judgment. We determine the meaning of a symbol by the context or by other Scriptures and not by our own opinions.

We must not focus so much on the symbol that we miss its meaning. The symbols are to help us visualize and understand the subject they represent.

When studying the Bible, it's important to remember, that if the literal sense makes good sense, look for no other sense.

The fourth problem when interpreting the Book of Revelation:

A good bit of the book of Revelation is a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Therefore, to comprehend this book it is important to have a working knowledge of the rest of the Bible.

The fifth problem when interpreting the Book of Revelation:

Today's world is in trouble and no one, including the church, seems to have the answer. The world is looking for someone who can fix this mess. The book of Revelation tells us there is one coming, called the Antichrist, who seems to have the solution. Unfortunately, he will be a liar and will take this world into a depth of darkness it has never seen before.

The sixth problem when interpreting the Book of Revelation:

There may be portions of this book that, at our present state of spiritual maturity, we can not comprehend. In such a case, we should not take a guess or rely on our opinion. There is nothing wrong with saying, "I do not know". We must simply continue to study, pray, and wait for God to teach us.

THE PURPOSE

Since this book contains the last recorded words God spoke to mankind, they must be important.

Why was the Book of Revelation written?

IT WAS WRITTEN TO REVEAL THE SAVIOR

This book was written to reveal the holiness, strength, ability, compassion, and future of Jesus Christ. It reveals Christ as the Lamb that has been slain and the King of kings and Lord of Lords. It takes us to His coronation as the King of all the universe (19:16). Then, He will be revealed and we shall see Him as He is (1 Jn. 3:2).

The angel told John, "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book" (Rev. 22:10). That tells us that this book is to reveal and not to conceal, to enlighten and not to confuse.

If we miss Jesus in our walk through this book, we have missed the heart of the book.

The purpose of any prophecy is to point people to Jesus.

IT WAS WRITTEN TO REASSURE THE SAINTS

John wrote these words "to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass". The words of this book are meant to reassure God's people that God is in control even when the world seems out of control. Revelation paints a dreary picture of the future, but, it also reveals the power and grace of God and tells us who wins in the end.

Certainly, this book has its share of judgment, death, and tears, but it is also a surprisingly tender and comforting book. In the worst of circumstances, God tells His people He will be with them.

IT WAS WRITTEN TO REBUKE THE SINNERS

As with all Scripture, this book was written with sinners in mind. God loves all people but He will not ignore their sin. God is "angry with the wicked every day" (Ps. 7:11).

DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

To rightly understand any Biblical subject, we must be willing to accept whatever the Bible says. We must set aside any preconceived ideas and let the truth of Scripture be our final authority.

This book has been interpreted in several different ways. Here are three of the most common.

1. THE SPIRITUAL VIEW

This view says Revelation is not to be taken literally but is a description of the struggle between good and evil. This view says the book is totally symbolic and has no historical, or prophetic, value.

2. THE HISTORICAL VIEW

This view says Revelation describes events that have already happened and it contains no prophecy.

3. THE FUTURIST VIEW

This view says the events beginning in chapter 4 are yet to come to pass. I believe this to be the correct way to interpret Revelation because John called this a book of "prophecy" (1:9; 22:7,10,18,19).

Revelation divides itself into three parts (1:19). That which is (chapter 1), that which was (chapters 2-3), and that which is to come (chapters 4-22).

CHAPTER ONE

In chapter one John, on the Isle of Patmos, writes to the seven churches in Asia. John sees Jesus in the midst of the churches. Jesus tells John, "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter". A blessing is promised to those who read, hear, and keep the words of this book (1:3).

1. INTRODUCTION: (chapter 1)

THE FIRST DIVISION OF THE BOOK BEGINS HERE (chapter 1)

"the things which are" (cf. 1:19)

Introduction (1:1-2)

Rev. 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:

Even though this book tells us a lot about Jesus, the title, the "Revelation of Jesus Christ" means the revelation was given by Jesus Christ, and not about Jesus Christ.

Many mistakenly call this book "Revelations" (plural) instead of "Revelation" (singular).

God the Father gave this message to Jesus, who gave it to the angel, who gave it to John, who was to give it to the "servants" of Jesus.

The word, "Revelation" means "to reveal, uncover, or disclose". It literally means to take the lid off and expose.

The word "servants" refers to those who have given up control of themselves (Rom. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Jam. 1:1; 2 Pet.1:1; Jude 1). It can apply to something bad. Paul wrote, "ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness" (Rom. 6:19). Or, it can apply to something good. Again Paul wrote, "even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness" (Rom. 6:19).

God calls His children "servants" because He has a task for each of them. Every believer should discover and do that which God wants them to do. To do less is disgraceful and sinful.

The word "shew" means "show". Only God can open our eyes and show us spiritual matters (2 Kgs. 6:17; Ps. 146:8; Acts 26:18). David said, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law" (Ps 119:18).

Notice, that God shows His "servants". God saves some things for those who serve Him. The servants were the only ones who knew where the wine came from (Jn 2:9).

The word, "signified" means to "make known". It carries with it the idea of revealing through signs, symbols, and figures. That is what the book of Revelation does.

The things in this book "must" come to pass. This is repeated in 4:1 and 22:6. Some things are going to happen no matter what man does. Jesus said, "all these things *must* come to pass" (Mt. 24:6 emphasis added).

That means the "things" in the book of Revelation are not just a bunch of meaningless riddles. It is a book of specific events that will surely come to pass at their particular times.

The word, "shortly" has caused needless confusion.

To begin with, this word disproves the historical view of Revelation. That which would happen "shortly" was referring to things that had not yet happened. In fact, nineteen of the twenty-two chapters describe things that had not yet happened when John was writing.

Also, I believe the explanation for the word "shortly" is to simply take it as it is. God begins by saying what He will do with the seven churches. He said He would remove the candlestick in Ephesus (2:5), reward the faithful in Smyrna (2:10), come quickly to judge the guilty (2:16) and give hidden manna to the faithful in Pergamos (2:17), judge those who associate with the Jezebel (2:22-23), and put no more burden on those in Thyatira (2:24), come in judgment to those in Sardis (3:3), deal with those who claim to be Jews in Philadelphia (3:9) and spew the lukewarm out of His mouth in Laodicea.

These things did begin soon, if not immediately after John penned it down.

That is not suggesting everything in this book would happen shortly. Some would not happen for thousands of years. The book talks about the Rapture, the seven-year Tribulation Period, the thousand-year Millennial reign of Christ, and the future eternity. The book of Revelation stretches all the way into eternity's future.

The words, "come to pass" point to the future. Most things written in Revelation were still in the future when John lived. That in itself makes this book unique. The four gospel accounts tell us what happened in the past. The book of Acts and the epistles tell us what happened with the early church. But, the book of Revelation tells us what is going to happen in the future.

These words came to John from Jesus "by his angel" (cf. 22:16). This is the only New Testament book delivered by angels. There is more angelic activity in this book than in any other in the Bible. God uses angels to accomplish many of the events in Revelation (5:2; 7:2; 8:5; 9:1; 10:8; 11:1; 14:6; 16:3; 17:7; 18:1; 19:17; 20:1; 22:6).

Rev. 1:2 Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

The words, "bare record" mean "to be a witness". John considered himself nothing more than a witness to what he had seen and heard. Every believer should do the same.

It seems that John knew what he was writing was the Holy Scripture. He called it the "word of God". He knew it came from God.

The "testimony of Jesus Christ" refers to that which God gave to His Son to give to mankind. Jesus said, "the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me" (Jn 14:10). He also said, "the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me" (Jn 14:24). If the Son of God was receptive to His Father's words, how much should we be?

John wrote exactly what he heard and "saw". He added nothing and left nothing out. Everything he wrote came directly from the Lord.

A promise of blessing (1:3)

Rev. 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.

This is the first of seven beatitudes in this book (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7; 22:14). God promises a blessing to the one who reads, hears, and keeps what is written. These blessings assure us of the book's credibility. If it were not for God, these promises could never be kept.

Though not stated directly, those who refuse to read, hear, or keep the things written in this book can expect a curse. This book is filled with judgments on those who reject God's Word. No one can ignore God and get by.

John seems to have a church service in mind. He writes about "he" (singular) that readeth, and "they" (plural) that "hear" the words. Since they had very few copies of Scripture, a man would stand before the congregation and read aloud for all to hear (cf. Lk. 4:16; Acts 13:14-15; 15:21).

Of course, this blessing applies to any individual who reads this book on their own.

We should listen to the Word like we would listen if we were hearing the last will of one of our rich relatives being read. Knowing there is something in the will for me would make me listen intently to every word. We would be careful to not miss that which was written for us. The Word of God always has something special for the person who really listens.

The blessing is promised also to those who "keep" what is written in this book. This promise is repeated later (22:7). The word, "keep" means "to guard against loss" and has the idea of preventing something from escaping. The devil wants to steal the Word from those who hear it (Mk. 4:15). He does this by filling our minds with other things. We should guard the Word like our most prized possession.

To "keep" the Word is to obey it. We "keep" the law of the land when we obey what it says. That means, this book is more than just a description of end-time events. It is a book that is supposed to change our way of living.

Sadly, many believers avoid this book and miss these blessings as a result.

Why is it so important to hear and heed the words in this book? Because the time is "at hand" (cf. comments on 1:1). The things John was warning them about were just about to happen. It was not time to ignore God. If that was true in John's day, how much more true is it in our day?

God placed seven specific churches in specific places for specific purposes. He meant for them to live godly in an ungodly world. He expected them to be a light in the darkness. He expects the same from the churches of our day.

Rev. 1:4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;

John, as was customary in that day, identified himself near the beginning of the letter.

John addressed this letter to the "seven churches" in Asia. These were churches that existed at that time and were churches John would have been familiar with. As mentioned, John had been the pastor of the church in Ephesus.

The number "seven", a very important number in the Bible, means "completeness". It is found 463 times in the Bible and 54 times in the book of Revelation. In Revelation, there are seven letters to seven churches (1:4), seven spirits (1:4), seven lampstands (1:12), seven stars (1:16), seven seals (5:1), seven horns (5:6), seven eyes (5:6), and seven angels with seven trumpets (8:2).

Numbers are important in the Bible but we must be careful to not go to the extreme. There are times when the number seven simply means seven and nothing more.

The letter was written "to the seven churches" in Asia. It was to be sent to, and read by, each of these "seven churches".

The words, "Grace" and "peace" were common words of greeting in John's day (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; 2 Pet. 1:2).

Grace and peace are gifts from God. Both are vital to every believer.

The word "grace" means "favor, benefit, gift, or kindness". Grace is God's unmerited favor to an undeserving individual. We are saved by grace, through faith (Eph. 2:8). Grace is God giving His best to the world's worse. Grace begins with conviction and forgiveness of our sin (Acts 16:30-31).

Grace is God doing for man what he cannot do himself. Paul said, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God" (2 Co 3:5). Grace is also that which keeps believers going when life throws its worst at them. God told Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Co 12:9).

The word "peace" means "quietness or rest". Peace, as with grace, can come only from God (Rom. 15:33; 16:20; Eph. 1:2; Phil. 4:9; Col. 1:2; 1 Th. 1:1; 2 Th. 1:2; 1 Tim. 1:2; Heb. 13:20). We obtain peace with God when we get saved (Rom. 5:1). We obtain the peace of God when we dedicate ourselves fully to God and His will (Phil. 4:6-7). The peace of God cannot be explained, it must be experienced (Phil. 4:7).

The Bible never reverses Grace and peace. Peace never comes before grace. We can never have His peace until we first have His grace.

This revelation was "from him which is, and which was, and which is to come". Of course, this refers to God the Father, the One who is eternal (Isa. 9:6; 40:28; 63:16).

These words imply a continuous action. In other words, God always existed in the past, He continues to exist in the present, and will forever exist in the future. He is not as man who grows old and becomes feeble.

God rules the past, present, and future. He is the One who has always been and always will be. God the Son will be included in the next verse.

The identification of the "seven spirits" has been a subject of much discussion and disagreement. I believe this refers to the seven attributes of the Holy Spirit listed in Isaiah. These attributes are, "the Spirit of the LORD, Spirit of wisdom, Spirit of understanding, Spirit of counsel, Spirit of might, Spirit of knowledge, and Spirit of the fear of the LORD" (Isa.11:2). This means the Spirit of God has these seven attributes, not that there are seven different Spirits.

Rev. 1:5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

The preceding verse told us the message given to John was from God the Father. This verse tells us it also came from the Son, "Jesus Christ".

Jesus introduces Himself so that He might give credence to His words. It would not matter what He said if He was not the type of person who could be believed.

A "witness" is one who has information about a particular subject or event. A witness who knows nothing about the subject is worthless and can not be trusted. Jesus is the One who knows all things about all things.

A "faithful" witness is a person who not only knows about the subject but will tell the truth about it. A witness who won't tell the truth cannot be trusted.

The word, "witness" used here is a word that carries with it the idea of a martyr. A martyr is one who gives their life for someone else. That is exactly what Jesus did (Rom. 5:8; 1 Cor. 15:3).

The words, "first-begotten" refer to Jesus' resurrection, not His physical birth. It speaks of the tomb, not the womb. The Bible likens His coming forth from the tomb to a birth (Ps. 2:7; Acts 13:33; Rom. 1:4).

The "first" begotten of the dead means He was the first of many who would rise from the dead. Lazarus and others rose (1 Kgs. 17:17-24; 2 Kgs. 4:18-37; 13:20-21; Lk. 7:11-17; 8:40-56; Jn. 11:43; Acts 9:36-43), but they all died again. Jesus rose to never die again.

His being "first" also means He is the first in preeminence. There is none like Him.

The word, "prince" means "first in rank or power". He is not just one of the many princes in this world, He is the ruler of them all. Jesus is the "prince of kings of the earth". He has dominion over all earthly kings.

He is the King of heaven (Dan. 4:37), King of glory (Ps. 24:7), King of the Jews (Mt. 2:2), King of Israel (Jn 1:49), King of ages (1 Tim. 1:17), and King of the saints (Rev. 15:3).

The sentence begins with "Unto him that loved us" and continues to the end of the next verse.

What better description could be given of Jesus than He "loved us"? The phrase is used in the past tense, which points us back to the cross. His love was never more evident than when He died for us (Jn 3:16).

No one could talk about the love of Jesus better than John. He was the one who called himself, the disciple "whom Jesus loved" (Jn 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20). John remembered Jesus as the One he loved and the One who loved him.

He "washed us from our sins". We all have our own sins. I cannot blame anyone for what I have done wrong. No matter what our circumstances, we are all responsible for our own actions.

Notice, that He loved us before He washed us. He doesn't tell us He will love him if we will clean up and do better. If He loved us when we were sinners, surely He will not stop loving us now that we are saved (Rom. 5:8; 8:39; 1 Jn 4:9,10). If you ever doubt if God loves you, just take a look at the cross.

Jesus washed away our sin with "his own blood". His "blood" refers to His death on the cross. The sacrifice for sin has always been through the shedding of blood. Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness (Heb. 9:22). Jesus said His blood would be "shed for many" (Mk 14:2).

Jesus' blood is not some magic formula that mysteriously makes our sin disappear. It took all of Jesus' blood because it takes death to pay for sin (Rom. 6:23). The songs that say "One drop is enough" are totally wrong.

Jesus gave his life, the innocent for the guilty, paying a debt he did not owe. John wrote, "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 Jn 1:7). Because of his blood, all of our sin is gone and we stand clean before God.

Rev. 1:6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Verse six is a continuation of the sentence started in verse five.

Believers are not only forgiven but are made "kings" (cf. 5:10). This speaks of the believer's status. God has given us authority.

Believers are "priests". A priest had the right to go before God on behalf of himself and others (Rom. 5:2; Eph. 2:18; 3:12; 1 Pet. 2:5,9; Heb. 10:19). What a wonderful privilege.

The last words of this verse are more than John merely penning down words. The truth he had just written stirred him to where he declared from his heart, "To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen".

The word "glory" means "honor, praise, or worship". The word "dominion" means "power". That means we should give Him rule over our lives. Because of who Jesus is and what He has done, He deserves "glory and dominion" in our lives.

The word, "Amen" means "so be it". It is a word that expresses agreement and approval. John was putting his stamp of approval upon that which had just been declared.

Rev. 1:7 Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

The word "Behold" is an admonition to look and listen. What John was about to say was worth paying attention to.

This "cometh" refers to the Second Coming when Jesus comes to set up His kingdom (Col. 3:4; Rev. 19:11-21). In the Rapture, all believers on earth will meet the Lord in the air (1 Th. 4:17). In the Second Coming, the Lord will come all the way to the earth (Acts 1:11). As Jesus left, so will He return. He ascended from the earth on the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:9a), and He will return to the same place.

At the Second Coming, "every eye shall see him". When He came the first time in the manger, very few saw Him. When He comes in the Rapture, only His bride will see Him. However, at His Second Coming, all the world will see Him. Many ignored Him when He came the first time but none will the next time.

Those who "pierced" him refer not to the soldiers who nailed Him to the cross (Jn 19:34), but to the Jews who were responsible for having Him crucified. They said, "His blood be on us, and on our children" (Mt. 27:25).

All the "kindreds" refer to the different Jewish tribes. The Jews rejected Him the first time He came (Jn. 1:11).

The word, "wail" means "to beat the breast". Jesus said, "then shall all the tribes of the earth *mourn*, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Mt. 24:30 emphasis added). Their agony comes from a mixture of sorrow and fear. Sorrow, when they realize the One they crucified was indeed the Son of God. Fear, when they realize they are about to stand before God. Zechariah and John wrote about this event (Zech. 12:10; Jn 19:37).

Their eyes will be opened when they see Jesus. They will turn to Him and believe. Isaiah wrote of this when he said, "shall a nation be born at once". (Is 66:8). Israel, like Thomas, will not believe until they see.

Once again, John agrees by saying "Amen" (cf. 1:6). John realized it was right to judge those who had rejected Jesus. This gives us some insight into the attitude we will have in heaven. Having a glorified mind, we will see how sin deserves judgment.

Rev. 1:8 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

These are the words of the Son of God. His last words to man were not the Great Commission (Mt. 28:18-20), or what He said just before His ascension (Acts 1:7-8). The words in this book are His last words to mankind.

Jesus describes himself here (cf. 22:12; 11:17; 16:5).

The word "Alpha" is the first letter, and the word, "Omega" is the last letter of the Greek alphabet. Jesus is the A and Z, and everything in between. He is the beginning of all love, life, and liberty. He is the end of sin, selfishness, and sorrow. Jesus is the solution to every problem.

He is "the beginning and the ending". He was before this world began and will be after it is gone (2 Pet.3:7,10; Rev. 21:1).

He is the one "which is, and which was, and which is to come". This speaks of His eternal and unchangeable nature (Heb.13:8).

The word "Almighty" speaks of how He is the all-powerful God. He is over everyone and everything. This word is found nine times in the book of Revelation (1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 11:7; 11:14; 19:6; 19:15; 21:27).

Since He was, He got His authority from no one, since He is, He shares His authority with no one, since He is to come, He will give His authority to no one.

This word is defined at times by the word "overpowerer". There is nothing He cannot do (Gen. 18:14; Mk. 9:23; 10:27). Nothing or no one can keep Him from doing that which He determines (Ps. 115:3). This title is found in the book of Job more than any other book in the Bible. Considering how desperately Job needed a mighty God, it is not surprising.

The vision of the glorified Christ in midst of the churches (1:9–10)

Rev. 1:9 I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

John starts his comments by saying "I John". It sounds like he was amazed that God would choose him to write this book. It would do us all well to be as amazed at any move God makes toward us. We certainly do not deserve it.

John wrote this book while "in the isle that is called Patmos". Patmos was a small, rocky, barren (10 miles long and 6 miles wide) island in the Aegean Sea. It was used like Alcatraz as a place to hold prisoners. Some criminals, though guarded by Roman soldiers, were given relative freedom. Others were forced to work in the mines located on the island. We are not told if John was forced to labor. Many died from exposure or starvation but John miraculously survived and was released later.

John's statement "for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ" meant he had been placed on the island because he preached the Word of God. His only crime was that he preached the truth.

At that time, the persecution of believers had grown significantly. John the baptist and all the other apostles had already been put to death. John was the only one left alive.

Rome demanded Caesar (a title for a Roman Emperor) be worshipped as a god. Anyone who refused would be severely persecuted or killed. Thousands of Christians, including Peter and Paul, were killed under the rule of the Roman Emperor Nero. After Nero, Domitian took up where Nero left off by executing 40,000 believers and exiling John to Patmos.

Domitian was the Roman Emperor when John wrote the Revelation. He was an evil and sadistic man who spent hours torturing flies with his pen. He declared himself to be a living god and demanded he be addressed as "Lord and God". His actions were so vile that after his death, the Roman Senate immediately denounced him and had his records removed from the public records.

From the very beginning of the New Testament church, believers have suffered persecution (Mt. 10:23; Acts 8:1-4; 11:19; Jam. 1:1). It has been estimated that over 70 million Christians have been put to death for their faith since the time of Christ.

Paul wrote, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim.3:12). Suffering for the cause of Christ can be difficult. But, Jesus promised a blessing to those who stay faithful in the midst of persecution (Mt. 5:11-12). The apostles rejoiced that they were found worthy to suffer for Christ (Acts 5:41).

We should never take our freedom to preach and speak for Christ lightly.

John connects himself with those who read this book in four ways.

- He is their "brother"

Believers are a part of the family of God. Jesus said, "For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother" (Mk 3:35). What a delight, we are a part of the family of God.

- He is their "companion in tribulation"

Nothing binds the hearts of individuals like troubles and trials. There is a connection with the person who can rightly say "I understand what you are going through".

- He was a part of the "kingdom" of Christ

The kingdom of Christ refers to the kingdom over which Jesus rules.

- He was a part of those who served faithfully

The "patience of Christ" refers to those who continue to serve the Lord despite trials.

One reason this book was written was that it might encourage the believers to be faithful no matter what (2:10).

John's description of his circumstances tells us a lot about him. He did not complain about his unjust treatment. He did not attack those who had wrongly arrested and imprisoned him. There is not even the slightest hint of anger or bitterness about the situation he is in. We who complain about McDonald's leaving the pickle off our hamburger, need to follow John's example.

To this point, we who live in America have seen very little persecution. However, that may change. A hatred for godly living is spreading across this nation at this present moment. We need to prepare ourselves by getting closer to our Lord. Paul said, "If God be for us, who can be against us" (Rom. 8:31).

They may have exiled John, but they did not quieten him. Amazingly, it was from this barren and destitute place, that God gave him a message that would touch billions of people through thousands of years. At what was probably the lowest point in John's life, God did the greatest work. God can turn our trials into triumphs if we will stay faithful. We should remember, that God is God over all, including the devil.

The modern preacher should follow John's example of standing for the truth of God's Word. Way too often, preachers soften their message in an attempt to be accepted or to get larger crowds. In the process, God's Word is diluted, God's work is defiled, God's will is defied, and God's church is defeated.

Rev. 1:10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,

This is the only time we find the term "the Lord's day" in the Bible.

Some believe "the Lord's day" refers to the "day of the Lord", a term used often in the Bible (Isa. 2:12; Joel 1:15; Amos 5:18, Zeph. 1:7-8; Zech. 14:1; Mal. 4:5; 1 Th. 5:2; 2 Pet.3:10).

I believe, as many do, John was talking about Sunday. The Old Testament Jews kept Saturday as their day of worship (Gen. 2:3; Ex. 20:8; Lev. 23:3; Dt. 5:12-14; Ezk. 20:19-20). However, the New Testament church met on Sunday because Jesus rose on the first day of the week (Mk. 16:9; Acts 11:20; 1 Cor. 16:2). By the time John wrote this book, the term, "The Lord's Day", has become a common term used for Sunday.

The fact that verses 12-20 are Jesus speaking to the churches, is another reason to think John was talking about Sunday as the Lord's day.

As John was worshiping he was "in the Spirit". Later, the Holy Spirit will supernaturally transport him into the spiritual realm (4:2-11; 17:3-18; 22:10-27). But here, I believe he was simply experiencing a state of worship that all believers have access to. Being in the Spirit as found here, means the believer has so yielded themselves to the Holy Spirit to where the Spirit is in control of their thoughts. Unfortunately, many of God's people know little, or nothing, about such worship.

Worshiping in such a fashion does not mean the believer ceases all control. Paul said the "spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets" (1 Cor. 14:32). That means the Holy Spirit will not violate the will of the believer. Those who say they were in the Spirit and they could not control themselves are mistaken or lying.

Being exiled to an island did not exile John from the presence of God. He did not let his circumstances dictate his attitude. Certainly, this is the secret to enduring the difficult times of our lives. During those times when we feel most alone can be the times when the Lord becomes, even more, real to us. Jesus said, "I will never leave thee. nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5).

The word, "great" means "loud". Whether God speaks with a loud (Ex. 19:16, 19) or "still small" voice (1 Kgs. 19:12), we should listen intently. We certainly want Him to listen to us when we speak to Him.

The voice John heard was so overwhelming that he described it as sounding like a "trumpet". The blare of a trumpet commands attention. The voice John heard did the same. A trumpet in Bible days was for much more than entertainment. They were used for communication.

This loud and overpowering voice that came unexpectedly from behind must have startled John. Imagine someone coming up behind you and blowing loudly on the trumpet.

This is the first of ten times we find the words "as a" in this book (1:14; 3:3; 4:7; 6:13; 6:14; 12:15; 13:11; 16:15; 19:12; 21:2). They refer to something symbolic that gives insight to something literal.

As mentioned earlier, symbolic language uses familiar objects to help us understand spiritual truths. John talks about a reaper with a sickle to describe a coming judgment (14:15-16). Jesus is presented as a Shepherd, a Sower, and a Lamb. The city of New Jerusalem is likened to a bride on her wedding day (21:2).

The meanings of these symbols are not left to our imagination. Often, we will find it explained in the immediate passage (1:16 cf. 1:20). If not, we can search the rest of Scripture to find its meaning.

John wrote what he saw and heard and sent it to seven churches (1:11–12)

Jesus is described (1:11-16)

Rev. 1:11 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.

The voice behind John was Jesus. His words introduce a series of visions given to John throughout the book of Revelation.

The "first and the last" have the same idea as the Alpha and Omega (1:8). Jesus will be called by this title three more times (1:17; 2:8; 22:13). It refers to His eternal nature. It is a title that belongs to the God of Israel (Isa.41:4; 44:6; 48:12). It identifies Jesus as being God.

This title should remind us how Jesus is the beginning of all things.

Jesus should be the "Alpha" (first) in our lives. Nothing, or no one, should come before Him.

This title should remind us how Jesus is the end of all things.

Jesus should be the "Omega" (last) in our lives. He is the fulfillment of all our needs and the answer to all our questions.

Jesus told John to "write in a book" that which he saw. He will be told to "write" twelve times in this book (1:1; 1:19; 2:1; 2:8; 2:12; 2:18; 3:1; 3:7; 3:14; 14:13; 19:9; 21:5). That means if Jesus did not speak, John did not write. That which Jesus said, John wrote exactly.

The "book" was a scroll made of parchment that would be rolled up, not a book as we think of it.

This letter was to be sent to "seven churches" located in seven cities in Asia. These churches were in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. These were not the only churches in that area, yet they were the only ones the Lord selected. As we will see, the selection of these churches is nothing less than miraculous.

Each church was to receive a copy of the letter. That means they were independent churches and not a part of a "convention" or "association".

Why did God send this letter to these particular churches?

- Because they were real churches with real needs

These were real churches with real people who had real needs. As with every church, the problem was the people. The church in Ephesus had left its first love because the members had left their first love. The church in Sardis was dead because the members were dead.

The Lord pointed them all to the Word of God and told them to believe it and obey it. No matter what our needs, our faults, or our failures, the answer is always in the Bible.

- Because the characteristics of these churches are true of most churches

What was true of these seven churches is true of the churches of our day. Every church will have at least one of the characteristics of these seven churches. People have not changed.

- Because these churches represent the New Testament church age

As we will see later, these seven churches represent seven different periods of time in church history, beginning with John's Day and ending at the Rapture.

Interestingly, their location on the map formed a circle that lay on a clockwise mail route. The order of their location, as we will see later, agrees with the time period they represent. If they were listed in any other order, it would not have worked out prophetically.



Rev. 1:12 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;

This is the first of 32 times the words "I saw" are found in this book (1:12, 1:17, 4:4; 5:1, 5:2; 6:1; 6:2; 6:9; 7:1; 7:2; 8:2; 9:1; 9:17; 10:1; 10:5; 13:2; 13:3; 14:6; 15:1; 15:2; 16:13; 17:3; 17:6; 18:1; 19:11; 19:17; 19:19; 20:1; 20:4; 20:11; 21:1; 21:22). These words tell us something new is on the way and John is moving us from one event to another.

The voice of God caused John to turn. We should be as quick to be moved by His voice.

More than likely, John, like Mary (Jn. 20:16), recognized the voice. He had walked with Jesus for approximately three years. It was the Jesus he knew, but He was different. This Jesus was no longer a human with human limitations.

John turned to see the one speaking and saw "seven golden candlesticks". These were not the type of candlesticks we think of. They were lampstands that used oil to produce the flame.

- These candlesticks speak of the seven churches of Asia

We find here some of the symbolic language we talked about earlier. We are told later that these candlesticks represent the seven churches this book is written to (1:20).

- These candlesticks speak of light

The church is the "light of the world" (Mt. 5:14-15). Believers are to "shine as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:15). This world is growing darker and needs light more every day. Sadly, the church's light is growing more dim instead of shining brighter.

- These candlesticks speak of something precious

They were made of gold. The church is precious to God. It should be precious to the world. The world should appreciate the presence of the church. After all, it isn't the church folks who rob banks, kill people, or drive drunk. Most believers are good neighbors who contribute positively to society.

- These candlesticks speak of holiness

The gold used for such a candlestick would have been refined of impurities (Ex. 25:31). God is at work trying to purify His church (Job 23:10; Pro. 17:3; Mal. 3:3; 1 Pet. 1:7; 4:2).

- These candlesticks speak of dependence

The light came from the oil in the lamp and not from the lamp itself. It all depended on the oil. So it is with the church. Without the oil of the Holy Spirit, there will be no light.

The priests were to keep the bowls filled with oil so the flame would never go out (Ex. 27:20-21). In like fashion, the New Testament believer is to be constantly filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18). We are to "walk" in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16, 25).

- These candlesticks speak of trials

The process of making a candlestick involved heating in a furnace and then beating the gold into the desired shape (Ex. 25:31). God does this type of work in the believer (1 Pet. 1:7; 1 Pet. 4:13; Rom. 5:3-4; Jam. 1:3-4).

Jesus was described (1:13-16)

Rev. 1:13 And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

Since Jesus was in the middle of these lampstands, they must have been seven separate lamps and not a menorah with seven branches that were in the Tabernacle (Ex. 25:31-32). That makes sense since the seven lampstands represent seven separate churches (cf. 1:20). These were seven local churches present and functioning at that time.

There is a difference between the local church and the universal church. The local church is a group of professing believers who meet in a particular location regularly (Acts 8:1,3; 11:22,26; 1 Cor. 16:19; Gal. 1:2).

The universal church consists of all true believers worldwide (Mt. 16:18; Acts 12:1; 1 Cor 12:13; 12:27; 15:9; Gal 1:13; Col. 1:18; Eph. 5:23).

Jesus is called the "Son of man" 88 times in the New Testament. This title shows the combination of His humanity and His divinity.

- It reveals His humanity

As the Son of man, He was despised and rejected (Isa. 53:3), had no place to call home (Lk. 9:58), ate and drank with sinners (Mt. 11:19), suffered at the hands of man (Mt. 17:12), and surrendered to the death of the cross (Phil. 2:6-8)

- It reveals His deity

As the Son of man, he was able to forgive sin (Mt. 9:6), save lives (Lk. 9:56), raise the dead (Mk. 9:9), execute judgment (Jn 5:27), raise from death (Mt. 28:6), and ascend to heaven (Mt. 26:64).

It makes sense for Him to be standing among the candlesticks since he is the "true light" (Jn 1:9), and the "light of the world" (Jn 8:12). When Jesus returned to heaven, the church became the light of the world (Jn 9:5).

This is the only physical description of Jesus in the New Testament.

The long "garment" and the "golden girdle" were worn by a high priest (Lev. 8:7-8).

The "paps" refer to the chest area. The high priest wore a girdle around the chest area. His girdle would have gold thread but Jesus' was entirely of gold.

The garments of the high priest were for the "glory and the beauty" (Ex. 28:2-4). The richness and beauty of the high priest's garments were to display the holiness, purity, glory, and majesty of God. Jesus is our great High Priest. Isaiah writes, "And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins" (Isa. 11:5).

One of the daily duties of the high priest was to clean, trim, and fill the golden lampstands in the Tabernacle. Our heavenly High Priest tries to do the same with the believers in the church.

It's important to note that Jesus was in the "midst" of the candlesticks. This reveals His love, care, and oversight of the church. He is the head of the church (Eph. 5:23). He gave His life for the church (Acts 20:28).

Though never called it by name in the Bible, the church is considered the bride of Christ. He loves the church as a husband does his wife (Eph. 5:25-27). The words Jesus spoke to His disciples are words a groom would say to his bride (Jn 14:2-3). Paul spoke of the church being betrothed to Christ (2 Cor. 11:2). Also, the wedding of the church is promised (Rev. 19:7).

Rev. 1:14 His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;

As mentioned earlier, the words "as" and "like" refer to something symbolic that gives insight to something literal (cf. 1:10; 1:14; 4:7; 6:13; 6:14; 12:15; 13:11; 16:15; 19:12; 21:2).

The symbols are meant to help us visualize what is being said. We determine their meaning by the context or by other Scriptures and not by our own opinions.

We do the same. We can say something literal like, "Grandpa got very mad", or we can use a figure of speech by saying, "Grandpa blew his top". The symbolic language makes it no less true.

Most modern artist renditions have Jesus with long hair. The fact is we do not know what He looked like when He walked the earth. We do know He would not violate the Word of God. Since the Bible says it is a shame for a man to have long hair (1 Cor. 11:14) we can be certain His hair was not long.

John is speaking only of the color of Jesus' hair being "white like wool" and not its texture. John compared the color to "snow".

The description of Jesus' hair connects us with Daniel (Dan. 7:9). Daniel said the "Ancient of days" (a name referring to God the Father) had hair like pure wool. So, John's description of Jesus is an indication that Jesus was, and is, God.

The "white" hair refers to Jesus' purity (Isa. 1:18).

His "eyes were as a flame of fire". I believe this tells us three things about Him.

One, He sees all things (Job 34:21).

Two, He sees the truth about us (Job 34:21-22; Ps. 11:4; 44:21; 69:5; 139:3-4; Jer. 16:17; Acts 1:24; 15:18; Heb. 4:13). Job said, "Doth not he see my ways, and count all my steps" (Job 31:4).

Three, the flame of fire reminds us of His judgment (Rev. 19:11-12). Fire is often a symbol of judgment in the Bible (Isa. 29:6; Ezk. 28:18; Amos 1:4; 7,10,12; 1 Cor. 3:13,15; 1 Pet.1:7; 2 Pet.3:7,12, Jude 7; Rev. 2:18). He not only sees sin but He is worthy and able to judge sin Jn. 12:48; Rom. 1:32; 2:2; Heb. 13:4).

Rev. 1:15 And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.

The brilliance of brass burning in a furnace is indescribable.

In the bible, "brass" speaks of judgment (Ex. 27:2-6). His "feet" being brass refer to Him moving in judgment. This is seen in the book of Revelation as much as anywhere in Scripture.

Brass, like gold, was purified by boiling off the impurities. Jesus had walked through the fire of trials (Isa. 53:3; Mt. 26:38; Heb. 4:15).

His "voice" was loud and overwhelming like the sound of a rushing river. This makes me think of the sound of waterfalls like Niagara Falls. Rushing water is not only loud, it is powerful. God created all the universe simply by the word of His mouth.

Rev. 1:16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

This is the first mention of the "seven stars" in this book. These stars represent the pastors of the seven churches (cf. 1:11; 1:20).

Often in Scripture, stars are a symbol of authority or leadership. Joseph's brothers (Gen. 37:9), Jesus (Rev. 22:16; 2 Pe 1:19), fallen angels (Rev. 12:3-4), and false teachers (Jude 13) are examples.

The term, "right hand" is a reference to strength and ability. So, holding these stars in his "right hand" speaks of Him having the power to keep the church safe. We will discover, that some of these churches had big problems, yet the Lord is still holding them in His right hand. That is encouraging, especially in our day when so many churches fall short of what the Lord desires.

Jesus loved the church enough to give Himself for it (Eph. 5:25). He certainly loves it enough to protect it (Mt. 16:18). That is comforting, especially in a day when the church is so unappreciated.

The churches are seen as lamps and the pastors as stars (1:20). Both, project light.

The "sharp twoedged sword" refers to what He says. His spoken word, like His written word, penetrates the heart like a sword (Heb. 4:12). This "sword" will be used to fight the enemy (2:16), smite the nations (19:15), and slay the wicked (19:21). We are to use His Word when in conflict with the devil (Eph. 6:17).

His "countenance" (face) was shining like the noonday sun. The sun is the brightest thing known to man. Peter and John got a glimpse of this glory on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mt. 17:2). We seldom consider the fact of God shining like a brilliant light (Ps. 36:9). There will be no need for light in heaven because God will be the light (Isa. 60:19; Rev. 21:23; 22:5).

Jesus speaks (1:17-18)

Rev. 1:17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:

Once again we find the words "I saw". As I have mentioned, these words tell us something new is on the way and John is moving us from one event to another.

Seeing Jesus did not give John a warm and cozy feeling. He was not comforted, he was terrified. When he saw Him, he fell at His feet as a dead man. We speak about running to Jesus and giving Him a hug when we see Him. I have a feeling that before we ever hug Him, we will fall at His feet in fear and worship.

As John saw Jesus, we should see Him throughout the book of Revelation. The seven churches, the seals, the trumpets, and vials, the Tribulation Period, the Antichrist, the Millennium, the Great White judgment, and the new heaven and new earth, will mean very little if we miss Him along the way.

First, he "fell at his feet as dead". He was totally immobilized. We might say he was scared stiff. This is not the only time such a thing happened (Josh. 5:13; 5:14; Isa. 6:4; Ezk. 1:28; Dan. 8:17; 10:8; Mt. 17:6; Acts 9:4). We talk a lot about what we plan to do when we first see Jesus. I have a feeling, that we like John, will fall at His feet and worship Him.

Notice, John did not say anything. In fact, Jesus spoke 1,552 words before John said a word. We are quick to talk about what we plan to say to Jesus when we first see Him. I suspect we will be as silent as John was.

Jesus laid his right hand on John. What an experience this must have been. To be touched by the Son of God. His touch always makes a difference (Mt. 8:3; 8:15; 9:25; 9:29; 20:34; Mk. 6:5; 8:22; Lk. 7:32; Jn 9:6).

John was arguably the closest to Jesus of all the disciples. Yet, the holiness, authority, and majesty of Jesus overwhelmed him. This was not a meeting between two old friends, it was a meeting of a man and his God. No man stands when they enter the presence of God.

From verse 17 to the end of chapter 3, Jesus is speaking.

Then, Jesus said, "Fear not". I don't know of anything He could have said that would be more appropriate. This was the same voice that healed the sick (Mt. 8:3), raised the dead (Mt. 9:24-25; Jn 11:43-44), calmed the sea (Mt. 14:32-33), cursed the fig tree (Mk. 11:14), rebuked the Pharisees (Mt. 23:23-24), encouraged the disciples (Mt. 5:12), and promised to return (Jn 14:3).

The voice of God is incredible. The Psalmist said, "He uttered his voice, the earth melted". (Ps. 46:6).

John was frightened. But, his fear seems to vanish once he sees and hears Jesus. Jesus reminds John who He was. If the one speaking to John had no authority, nothing he said would be valid and it all should be ignored. However, if this was truly the Son of God, everything He said would be true and should be heeded.

Once again, Jesus referred to Himself as the "first and the last" (cf. 1:11). As mentioned before, the title "the first and the last" refers to Jesus' eternal nature.

Rev. 1:18 I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

Jesus said He is the One that "liveth". To be honest, that is not anything unusual. Every person on earth can make the same claim. But Jesus is the only one who can say he "was dead" and is "alive" (Acts 2:24; Rom. 6:9; 14:9; 2 Cor. 5:15; Heb. 1:3; 7:25).

He is the One that liveth because He is the source of all life. All living things come from Him.

Not only is Jesus alive, but He is alive "for evermore" (Rom. 6:9; Rev. 4:9,10). Jesus' victory over hell and death was permanent. Unlike Lazarus (Jn 11:43), Jesus did not rise only to die again. No one else has that on their resume.

Hearing from One who was dead but was alive meant a lot to those who knew they might be put to death at any moment.

Jesus has the "keys" of hell and death. Death holds the bodies and hell holds the spirits. God has power over life and death. Jesus used those keys when He opened Paradise and led the saints to heaven (Eph. 4:8-9; 1 Pet.3:19).

- A key indicates ownership

We have the keys to that which belongs to us. Jesus is the Master over hell and death.

- A key indicates authority

The person has a key to the building because they have authority over the business in the building. Contrary to the opinion of some, the devil is not in charge of hell. He is not and never will be, standing in hell, cracking a whip, and laughing as souls are tormented. He will be cast into the lake of fire and will suffer for eternity just like everyone else who goes there (Rev. 20:10).

- A key indicates access

A key provides the means to open or close. Jesus has the authority to open and close (Rev. 3:7).

- A key indicates control

The one in possession of a key has control over that which the key opens. Jesus has control over the two things that man has no control over, that being, "hell and death".

John is commanded to write (1:19-20)

Rev. 1:19 Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;

Jesus tells John to "write" those things he was shown that dealt with the past, present, and future. The book of Revelation is the result.

This verse gives a perfect outline of the book of Revelation.

- The first division deals with the things John had seen (chapter 1)

This deals with John seeing the glorified Christ in the midst of the seven lampstands and holding the stars. This beginning of God's communication with John gives credibility to the rest of the book.

- The second division deals with the things "which are"(chapters 2-3)

This deals with that which was happening in John's day, and specifically, those things dealing with the seven churches. As we will see, the things "which are" also apply to our day.

- The third division deals with the things "which shall be hereafter"(chapters 4-22)

This deals with the things in the future and that which happens after the church age ends.

Jesus explains the seven stars and seven churches

Rev. 1:20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

In this verse, Jesus reveals the "mystery" of who the seven stars and seven churches are.

A "mystery" in the Bible is something that has been hidden but is now revealed (Eph. 3:4-5, 9-11; Col. 1:26-27). God withholds certain information until the time is right to disclose it (Eph. 1:9-10; 1 Cor. 2:7; Col. 1:25-27). The Bible speaks of the mystery of the kingdom of heaven (Mk. 4:11), blindness of the Jews (Rom. 11:25), wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:6-10), Rapture of the church (1 Cor. 15:51-58), will of God (Eph. 1:9), Christ (Eph. 3:3-4), the church (Eph. 5:27), the gospel (Eph. 6:19), the Gentiles (Col. 1:27), iniquity (2 Th. 2:6-12), godliness (1 Tim. 3:16), the seven stars and candlesticks (Rev. 1:20), Babylon (Rev. 17:5), the woman and the beast (Rev. 17:7).

We know nothing unless the Spirit of God reveals it to us (Dt. 29:29; Am. 3:7; Mt. 11:25; Mt. 13:11; Mt. 16:17; Lk. 2:26; Gal. 1:12; 1 Cor. 2:10).

As is often the case in the book of Revelation, the meaning of the symbol is given.

Jesus tells us the "seven candlesticks" refer to the seven "churches" in Asia Minor. God has always made a way for His people to gather together to meet with Him. It started in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:8), and continued in the Tabernacle (Ex. 26), the temple (1 Kgs. 6), and the New Testament church (Acts 1:13; 1 Cor. 16:19).

Jesus also tells us the seven stars are the "angels of the seven churches".

But, who are these angels? Some believe it is referring to literal angels but that does not seem likely to me. For the following reasons, I believe it is referring to the pastors of the seven churches John is writing to.

- Why would God have John write a message to an angel

Why God would speak to John and have him write a message to an angel when He could simply speak to the angel directly?

- These words are written "unto" the angels (2:1; 2:8; 2:18; 3:1; 3:14)

That means, the message was meant for the angel as well as everyone else in each church. Certainly, Jesus would never need to tell any of His angels, "I have somewhat against thee because thou hast left thy first love" (2:4). Nor, would He ever have to tell a heavenly angel to "repent" (2:5).

- These "angels" were responsible for delivering John's message to their respective church

This certainly seems to be referring to a pastor. The pastor is responsible for feeding the flock (2 Pet. 5:2a) and for the "oversight" of the church (1 Pet. 5:2b). Nowhere in Scripture is an angel seen as being in charge of a church.

- The word "angel" means "messenger"

This word is used when referring to a heavenly angel but it is also used of human messengers of God's Word on several occasions (Mt. 11:10; Lk. 7:24; Lk. 9:52; 2 Cor. 12:7; Jam. 2:25).

- These angels are mentioned later

Later, these angels are described as those who "came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:14). No heavenly angel has ever had their robe washed in the blood of the Lamb.

- They had "crowns of gold"

The Greek word for "crowns" (4:4), is referring to a crown that was earned and not one given to royalty. No angel has earned such a crown.

- They are referred to as "stars"

A star is a bearer of light. A pastor is a bearer of God's light.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SECOND DIVISION OF THE BOOK BEGINS HERE (chapters 2-3)
"the things which are" (cf. 1:19)

2. **LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES:** (chapters 2–3)

In chapters 2 and 3 we see the "things which are" (cf. 1:19).

This begins the second division of this book (chapters 2-3) and deals with the things John had seen in verses 1-19. It is also relevant for us today. That means we should give heed to what Jesus says to these churches.

The introduction of the seven churches of Asia

- Some characteristics of all seven churches are true of today's churches

This book proves the fact that people, even believers, do not change. The good, and the bad, of these churches are still true today. Some will serve God no matter how difficult the trials. And, some will not serve God no matter how much it costs them.

- All seven churches had their own particular problems

The church in Ephesus had left its first love (2:1-7).

The church in Smyrna suffered tremendous persecution (2:8-11).

The church in Pergamos had not denied the faith (2:12-17).

The church in Thyatira allowed false doctrine (2:18-29).

The church in Sardis had died spiritually (3:1-6).

The church in Philadelphia endured suffering (3:7-13).

The church in Laodicea was spiritually lukewarm (3:14-22).

- The seven churches have similarities

Each of them is addressed personally by the Lord.

Each of them is told that Jesus knows their works.

Each of them contains a description of Jesus.

Each of them contains comments about their condition.

Each of them contains a command from Jesus.

Each of them is promised a reward if they will be faithful.

Five of the seven are commanded to repent (Smyrna and Philadelphia were not).

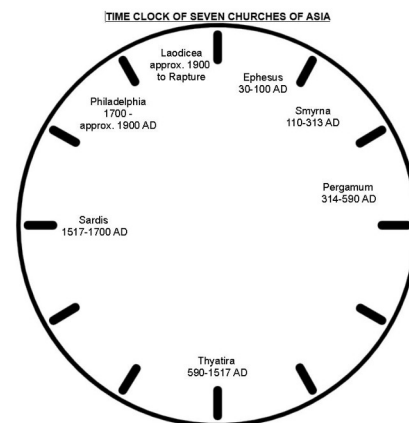
Six of the seven receive compliments from the Lord (only Laodicea did not).

- The seven churches represent church history

There are five important facts about the seven churches of Asia.

One, the characteristics of these seven churches are similar to the characteristics of seven periods of time throughout church history.

The clock to the right may help us to visualize the church age. Ephesus is the first (starting at Pentecost). Laodicea is the last (just before the Rapture).



Two, these seven periods transition from one to the next. They do not always start and stop at an exact date. It is not like punching a time clock at work. Therefore, the circumstances of these periods can overlap and the change can be gradual.

Three, the full details of these seven periods could not be recognized until recent years. As I have already mentioned, some prophecies are not clear until they actually happen. The believers in John's day would not have seen these facts.

Four, by comparing the characteristics of the churches with the events of our day, we can tell where we are in the church age. Though we cannot tell the exact time (Mt. 24:36; 24:50; 25:13; Acts 1:7), we can tell what season we are living.

Five, looking back and seeing what God has done can give us faith to look ahead and trust Him.

THE SEVEN CHURCHES AT A GLANCE

<u>CHURCH</u>	<u>CHARACTERISTICS</u>	<u>CHURCH PERIOD</u>	<u>COMMAND</u>	<u>PROMISE</u>
Ephesus (2:1-7) "Labor without love"	Left first love (2:4)	30 to 100 AD	Remember, repent and return (2:7)	Eat from tree of life in Paradise (2:7)
Smyrna (2:8-11) "Stress without straying"	Suffered terribly but refused to stray from God's will and Word (2:9)	100 to 313 AD	Fear not and be faithful (2:10)	Not hurt by second death (2:11)
Pergamos (2:12-17) "Compassion without compromise"	Held fast name of God in midst of Satan's seat (2:13)	314 to 590 AD	Repent (2:16)	Manna, white stone and new name (2:17)
Thyatira (2:18-29) "Working without warning"	Working but failing to warn those in sin (2:19-20)	590 to 1517 AD	Hold fast (2:25)	Rule with Christ (2:26)

Sardis (3:1-6) "Living without life"	Spiritually dead (3:1)	1517 to 1700 AD	Be watchful and strengthen things that remain (3:2) Remember and repent (3:3)	Clothed in white, names not blotted out, Jesus will confess (3:5)
Philadelphia (3:7-13) "Evangelism without excuses"	Took advantage of the open door of service (3:7-8)	1700 to approximately 1900 AD	Hold fast (3:11)	A pillar in the temple (3:12)
Laodicea (3:14-22) "Rich without riches"	Spiritually lukewarm (3:15)	approximately 1900 to Rapture	Fix the problem (3:18)	Sit with Christ at His throne (3:21)

THE SEVEN MESSAGES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES (chapters 2-3)

Jesus gave John a message for each of the seven churches. Since what Jesus said to these churches applies to our modern day we must not hurry past them.

These churches, like all churches, were similar in some ways and unique in others. Every church, like every person, has its own personality.

God begins this book by speaking directly to the churches. We talk often about how the world needs to listen to God. We should remember how God said, "judgment *must begin* at the house of God" (1 Pe 4:17 emphasis added). The fear of God, a sensitive heart, and a surrendered spirit, are sorely needed in today's church.

None of these churches are mentioned after the last verse in the third chapter. The word "church" is not found after Revelation 3:14 because the church leaves the earth and goes to meet Jesus in the air at the beginning of chapter 4 (cf. 2 Th. 2:7).

In the message to each church, a specific characteristic of Jesus is described (2:1; 2:8; 2:12; 2:18; 3:1; 3:7; 3:14). Each of these characteristics will be that which will apply to the particular church it is addressed to. Jesus has what every church needs.

To each church, Jesus says "I know thy works" (2:3; 2:9; 2:13; 3:1; 3:8; 3:15). He knows all things about us, not just the part we allow people to see. He is watching all the time.

Jesus gave instructions that would help them. People will be quick to tell us what is wrong with us, but very few are able, or willing, to help us.

In chapter two we will find the messages to the churches of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, and Thyatira. In chapter three, we find the messages to the churches in Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.

Jesus addressed the church in "Ephesus" first.

The first church **THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS** 2:1-7

THE CHURCH IN EPHEBUS WAS AN EXAMPLE OF "LABOR WITHOUT LOVE"

The church in Ephesus was an example of "labor without love". They labored earnestly but their love for the Lord had lessened.

THE CALENDAR

As I have mentioned, the seven churches represent seven different periods of time in church history, beginning with John's Day and ending at the Rapture.

The "Ephesus Period" represents the period in church history from 30-100 AD.

During that time, believers were excited about serving God because they truly loved Him (Acts 2:42-47). They demonstrated the power of God and enjoyed the fullness of the Holy Spirit. They resisted the false teaching and remained faithful to God's Word. Persecution, instead of stopping them, caused them to spread out and carry the gospel as far as Rome and Spain before the end of the first century. However, close to the end of the first century, their love for God began to lessen causing Jesus to command them to repent.

The result, they were laboring but they were laboring without love.

THE CITY

Having a population of 250,000, the city of Ephesus was the largest in Asia Minor (cf. Acts 19).

Ephesus was a great harbor city. The continual flow of goods made it very rich. As is usually the case with any seaport city, commerce also brought in all types of sin. There were large outdoor theaters and sports arenas. They were consumed with entertainment and selfish pleasure. The city was filled with idol worship. A temple to the goddess Diana, a magnificent structure considered to be one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, was built there. This temple was there because that's what the people wanted.

THE CHURCH 2:1

Rev. 2:1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

The church in Ephesus was founded by Paul (Acts 18:19). Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:18), Apollos (Acts 18:24), Paul (Acts 19:1-41), and Timothy (1 Tim.1:3) served the Lord at Ephesus.

John was told to "write" what the Lord said. The fact that God has a message for the church reveals it is special to Him. If a church is special to God, it ought to be special to His people. It is a great privilege to be a part of a God-fearing, Bible believing, local church.

Jesus addressed the "angel of the church". As I have mentioned, I believe this refers to the pastor of the church (Read the comments on 1:20). Jesus spoke to the pastor, but His message was to the entire church. Jesus spoke to John, John spoke to the pastors, and the pastors spoke to the churches. The pastor's job is to tell the church what the Lord tells him.

As with each church, Jesus' description of Himself applied to the condition and needs of the particular church he was addressing. He described Himself not simply to inform, but to assist those He spoke to. Knowing more about Jesus is meant to change our lives, not just fill our brains with more information.

Jesus described Himself as the One who "holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks". The fact that Jesus "holdeth" the church in His "right hand" is an indication of His authority over, and His protection of, the churches. The church belongs to Jesus, not the pastor and not the people. The pastor and the people should remember the direction of the church should be according to the will of God, not the will of the people.

The fact that Jesus "walketh" in the midst of the churches is an indication of His presence in the church. It assured them they were not alone.

This fact had to bring comfort to the New Testament church which was still in its infant stage. Certainly, the devil had tried to convince them they were being foolish to believe the words of Jesus. He uses the same tactic with believers today.

THE COMPLIMENT 2:2-3

Rev. 2:2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

Jesus commended them for their good deeds.

- They were serving

The words, "I know thy works" tell us Jesus knew the truth about the seven churches (2:2; 2:9; 2:13; 3:1; 3:8; 3:15). He knows about every church and every believer. He knows our every good deed, but also our every sin and ungodly thought.

Notice the Lord's focus on all seven churches was their "works". He expected them to do right in spite of the severity of their circumstances. Their extreme trials did not excuse them from living good and godly lives. If they were not excused, certainly we are not.

The word "works" means "toil" and speaks of working to the point of exhaustion. Serving the Lord is a blessing but it is labor-some.

The word "labour" means "weariness". It speaks not just of the physical weariness, but the emotional weariness of serving the Lord. The emotional load can get heavy. If you doubt that, ask Moses (Ex. 17:4) or Elijah (1 Kgs. 19:4) or Job (Job 3:3). God tells His children to not be weary in well doing (Gal. 6:9; 2 Th. 3:13) because it is easy to get weary.

The load can get heavy, but God always gives us grace if we will accept it (Jam. 4:6). Isaiah says the Lord gives "power to the faint" (Isa. 40:29). Our outward man wears out (2 Cor. 4:16) but our inward man is renewed (2 Cor. 4:16; Eph. 4:23).

- They were steadfast

The word "patience" means "steadfast endurance". It means they remained faithful in spite of conflict. Nothing reveals the heart of a believer more than when they stay faithful even when they suffer for it. Whether it is the godly high school student who is belittled, the Christian family who is ignored by their relatives, or the conservative church that resists the contemporary trend, we must be willing to pay the price.

- They were separated

Jesus said, "thou canst not bear them which are evil". The word, "evil" means "depraved". Staying spiritually clean means avoiding anything or anyone contrary to God's Word and will. This includes avoiding people, places, and practices that are displeasing to God.

The word, "bear" means "to lift" and has the idea of carrying away. This may imply they did not allow the false teachers to stay in the church. This may seem severe in this day of tolerance but it is biblical (Gal. 1:8; 2 Th. 3:6; 3:14; 2 Tim. 2:22; 3:5; 2 Jn 10).

- They were sensitive

Jesus said, "thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars".

During this time, men were calling themselves apostles hoping to gain power in the church. A true apostle possessed unique power from God. John was the last true apostle.

Those in the church in Ephesus recognized the error of these "liars" because they were sensitive to the Spirit of God. The modern church desperately needs this type of sensitivity.

- They were Scriptural

They were able to discern who were the "liars" because they knew the truth of the Scripture.

Not everything and everyone who claims to be of God is actually from God. Being Scriptural means not only that we know what the Bible teaches but we know what it does not teach. Recognizing error is as important as knowing truth.

We are admonished to "try the spirits" (1 Jn 4:1) and test what we hear (1 Jn 4:1; 2 Cor 11:4; 1 Cor. 10:15; Phil. 1:9; Rom. 16:17; Eph. 5:7). We can't do either without knowing the Bible.

Rev. 2:3 And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

- They were suffering

Jesus said, "And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted". The word, "borne" means "to carry a load". They did not let problems or persecution stop them.

Once again, Jesus mentioned their "patience" (cf. 2:2) and how they patiently endured the trials.

The word, "fainted" means "weary" or "to be tired". Any believer who serves the Lord understands how this feels. As someone has said, "We do not get tired of the way but we do get tired in the way".

THE COMPLAINT 2:4

Jesus' complaint, unlike ours, does not come from a selfish ego. He is the one person in the universe who is worthy to make a legitimate complaint. His complaints are always factual, precise, and meant to be helpful.

Rev. 2:4 Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

The word "Nevertheless" has never meant more than in this verse. Jesus' one complaint against this church canceled out all His compliments.

When Jesus says He has something against us, we had better pay attention.

- They were slipping

Outwardly, the church appeared impeccable, but they had let the most important thing slip. They had "left" their first love. They were laboring but they were not loving. Labor without love, grieves God.

The word, "first" is too important to rush by without comment.

Many commentators liken the first love to the early days of a romantic relationship. But, if we really think about it, that type of "love" is mixed with selfishness. The newlywed husband loves his wife because she pleases him. She is young, pretty, and ready to make him happy. The same is true about the wife. She loves her husband because he pleases, provides, protects, and pampers her.

But, the first love Jesus spoke of is not a selfish love.

The word "first" is found 162 times in the New Testament. Let's look at four examples of how this word is used.

One, the word "first" is translated "first" (Mt. 21:36; Jn 1:41). It means first in order and refers to that which comes before all others. So, leaving their first love meant Jesus no longer came first in their lives.

Two, the word "first" is translated "chief" (Mt. 20:27; Mk. 6:21; Lk. 19:47; Acts 13:50; 17:4; 28:17; 1 Tim. 1:15). It means the highest rank or most important. So, leaving their first love meant Jesus was no longer the most important thing in their lives.

Three, the word "first" is translated "best" (Lk. 15:22). It means the first in value. So, leaving their first love meant they no longer considered Jesus the best thing in their lives.

Four, the word "first" is translated "before" (Jn 1:30). So, leaving their first love meant other things in their lives came before Jesus.

Their warmth and zeal for Jesus had slipped. As is seen in Jesus' comments, they continued doing the right thing even though they were not doing it for the best reason. When our love for Christ lessens our labor becomes laborsome, tedious, and monotonous.

Notice, Jesus said they "left", and not lost their first love. Losing something can be done by accident but leaving it is done intentionally. They willingly let their love for Jesus slip away.

Notice also, they left their love, not their doctrine. Without love, doctrinal correctness becomes cold legalism.

These verses tell us we cannot measure our love for Christ by how many good things we do (2:2 "thy works"), how much we labor for Christ (2:2 "labour"), how patient we are (2:2 "patience"), how sound our doctrine is (2:2 "canst not bear"), or that we have not been overcome by trials (2:3 "not fainted").

It does not matter how gifted we are, how much faith we have, how much we give, or what great works we can do, it all is vain without love (1 Cor. 13:1-3). Paul said, the greatest of these is love (1 Cor. 13:13). We should remember, God does not need our labor. He wants to use us because He loves us and He wants us to serve Him because we love Him.

Jesus said the two great commandments are, to love God, and to love others (Mt. 22:38-40). And, these two things were that which the people in the church in Ephesus were failing.

Paul wrote the church in Ephesus in approximately A.D. 62 and commended them for their faith and love (Eph. 1:15). At that time, He also warned them about "grievous wolves" coming in to devour the flock (Acts 20:29-30). In thirty years, their love for Christ had slipped to such an extent to where Jesus said it was the greatest problem they had.

THE COMMAND 2:5a

Jesus told them, and us, how to fix their problem:

Rev. 2:5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

- He said to Remember

He said, remember when you loved me so much that stuff did not overcome you. Remember when you first got saved, you loved Him so much that problems did not affect you. Problems did not cause you to miss church, neglect prayer, stop reading your bible, become angry, or complain.

He said, remember when you loved me so much that sin did not overpower you. When we first got saved our flesh was just as real and temptation was just as strong, but we loved God so much we did not want to hurt Him. We avoided anything that would grieve Him. When we failed Him, it grieved us terribly.

He said, remember when you loved me so much that sinners did not overlook you. When we first got saved it was obvious in our conduct. We couldn't wait to tell someone about Jesus. We were not overly concerned about what people thought about us.

- He said to repent

Remembering alone, was not enough. They needed to repent. Lack of love is not something we should take lightly. God calls it sinful. Repentance is a change of mind that leads to a change of action. It means to change course. We have not repented if we have not changed.

- He said to return

Their "first works" were those they did because they really loved Him. This is not a command to do more, it is a command to return their first love.

We need to ask the Lord to rekindle our love for Him. We do that by focusing on Him and what He has done for us.

God will lead us no further until we have listened to what He has already told us.

THE CONCLUSION 2:5b

Jesus concludes His comments to the church in Ephesus by telling them what would happen if they refused to obey. There are always consequences to our obedience or lack thereof.

2:5b ...or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

Jesus saying "I will come" would usually be wonderful. Every church needs Him to come and move in their midst. But, here Jesus speaks of coming to judge. He would be coming to "remove" their candlestick. Nothing worse could ever happen to any church.

The "candlestick" refers to the presence and power of God.

At this time, Jesus is still in the midst of the church. But, if they did not heed His warning, He would remove the presence of God. This has nothing to do with the salvation of the individuals in the church. It speaks of God's presence working in the church itself.

What could be worse than a church that continues to operate as usual, but lacks the presence and power of God? Imagine having the services, singing the songs, praying the prayers, and preaching the sermons, but having no power.

Jesus not only said He would come, but He said He would come "quickly". The word means, "without delay". God is longsuffering but when He says enough is enough, He does not waste time in dealing with the problem.

Thank the Lord for the last three words of this verse. Jesus said, "except thou repent". I am so glad He is willing to forgive those who are willing to repent.

I am afraid many churches are on the verge of having their candlestick removed. But, if they will recognize their condition and repent, God will restore them.

Rev. 2:6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

The "deeds" of the Nicolaitans are mentioned here. John addresses the church in Pergamos (2:15). The deeds refer to what they did, and the doctrine refers to what they believed.

The exact details about the Nicolaitans are uncertain. The word, "Nicolaitans" means "to conquer the people". This group may have followed the teaching of Balaam.

Some believe they were a group who followed the teaching of Nicolas, one of the first deacons (Acts 6:5) who denied the faith and indulged in unrestrained pleasure. Others believe they were a group that taught an unbiblical distinction between clergy and laity.

Either way, Jesus made it clear that He hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans. Such strong words may seem strange coming from the One who loves everyone (Jn 3:16). Notice, that it was their "deeds" Jesus hated and not the people.

Jesus commended the people in the church for standing against those who held to this false teaching. We're living in a day when we are told Jesus accepted everyone. However, nothing could be further from the truth. Jesus stood for right and against wrong. The Bible tells us to do the same (Acts 15:1-5; Rom. 16:17; Phil. 3:17; Gal. 1:7-9; 2 Th. 3:14-15).

We cannot love good without hating evil. We, like those in the church in Ephesus, should guard against those who might come into the church with false doctrine or sinful practices. If we let down our guard, even the slightest, error will find its way in and defile the church.

Sadly, as we will see, the church of Pergamos allowed the doctrine of the Nicolaitans (2:15).

An admonition to hear

Rev. 2:7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

As with all seven churches, Jesus closed His message with a promise to those who would listen and obey.

This message is directed to any individual who will "hear what the Spirit saith". Every move of God starts with one person. One person, fully surrendered to what the "Spirit sayeth" can see God do amazing things.

John closes each of his messages to each of the churches with the words, "He that hath an ear" (2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:29; 3:6; 3:13; 3:22). Not all are able to hear what the Holy Spirit is saying (Mt. 13:16-17; 16:17; Lk. 10:21). Only by the illumination of the Holy Spirit can a person discern the voice of God (Jn 10:27; 1 Cor. 2:14; 3:1).

We should not take this lightly. Jesus used parables because some refused to hear His words. In essence, He was saying, "If you won't listen to me, I will make it where you can't hear me".

Jesus warns all seven churches to "hear" what the Spirit is saying (2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:29; 3:6; 3:13; 3:22). He says the same in the book of Matthew (Mt. 11:15).

Those who are able to hear had better listen. The future of the church depends on it. The Holy Spirit had the message those in the church in Ephesus needed.

Unfortunately, some willingly reject the Words of God. Zechariah wrote, "But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear" (Zec 7:11). They "stopped their ears" when Stephen spoke (Acts 7:54-60). Jesus said, they refuse to come to the light because their "deeds are evil" (Jn 3:19). They love their sin too much to listen to God.

We do not know whether those in the church in Ephesus heeded John's warning. We do know the church in Ephesus died out.

The city of Ephesus is a place of ruins today. The silt from the Cayster River caused the harbor to move away from the city of Ephesus. Eventually, the trade died out and the city was abandoned. The ruins of Ephesus (near the city of Selcuk, in modern Turkey) are now miles from the coast. When God takes removes a candlestick, the church will pay the price.

Those who "overcometh" refer to all true believers, not a few "super" saints.

A believer is an overcomer in two ways.

One, he is an overcomer simply by being saved.

A believer is an overcomer because they overcame sin and Satan when they accepted Jesus as their Savior. John tells us an overcomer is one who believes Jesus is the Son of God (1 Jn 5:5). The faith of the believer gives them victory (1 Jn 4:4; 5:4). John used this word often (Jn 16:33; 1 Jn 2:13; 4:4; 5:4; Rev. 2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:26; 3:5; 3:12; 3:21; 12:11; 15:2; 17:14; 21:7). The overcomers mentioned in this book are given special promises (2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:26; 3:5; 3:12; 3:21; 21:7).

Two, he is an overcomer by winning the victory.

The word "overcometh" means "to conquer" or "to get the victory". John wrote, "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God" (1 Jn 5:5). The overcomer is the believer who gains victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil.

The word itself implies a battle. A battle implies enemies who are on opposing sides that have opposing desires.

This is true of the individual believer. Our flesh cares nothing about obeying God. Paul said, "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Ga 5:17).

This is true of the local church. Every church will battle against the world's beliefs (Jn 15:18-19; Jam. 2:4:4).

The phrase "that overcometh" is found eight times in the book of Revelation (2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:26; 3:5; 3:12; 3:21; 21:7). Each church had something they needed to overcome. The secret to overcoming our battles is listening and obeying God.

The "tree of life" takes us back to the Garden of Eden (Gen.2:9). When God drove Adam and Eve from the garden they lost access to this tree (Gen.3:22-24). God is giving back what man lost when he sinned.

Once again, we see the appeal to individuals. To "him" that overcometh, will "I" give. God is able to make time for every one of His children. This will be even more true in heaven.

The words, "which is in the midst of the paradise of God" make it clear that Jesus is talking about heaven. The New Jerusalem will eventually take the place of the Garden of Eden (Rev. 22:1-7). This paradise will never be lost (Lk. 23:43; 21:27).

Those who overcome receive back what Adam lost in the Garden of Eden. After man sinned, he was not permitted to eat of the Tree of Life nor partake of the delights of the garden (Gen. 3:22-24). All this, and more, will be enjoyed freely (22:2, 14).

The second church THE CHURCH IN SMYRNA 2:8-11

THE CHURCH IN SMYRNA WAS AN EXAMPLE OF "STRESS WITHOUT STRAYING"

The church in Ephesus was an example of "labor without love", and the church in Smyrna was an example of "stress without straying".

This is the shortest of the seven letters. Smyrna is one of the two churches that did not receive any complaint from the Lord. The church suffered the tremendous stress of severe persecution but refused to stray from the will and Word of God. Jesus talked about their tribulation, poverty, and suffering. Yet, there is no indication of them straying.

Smyrna is one of the two churches (other is Philadelphia) that Jesus did not rebuke.

THE CALENDAR

As I have mentioned, the seven churches represent seven different periods of time in church history, beginning with John's Day and ending at the Rapture.

The "Smyrna Period" represents approximately 100 to 313 AD.

THE CITY

The city of Smyrna was 35-40 miles north of Ephesus and considered the most beautiful city in Asia. Being a large seaport city caused it to be a city of great wealth, wickedness, and idolatry. It was a city known for its knowledge of science and medicine.

One of the chief exports of Smyrna was myrrh which was used for healing, perfume, and for preparing a body for burial. Myrrh, having a sweet aroma but a very bitter taste, became a symbol of the crushing of persecution. The persecution of the believers in Smyrna was bitter but, like perfume, it caused the sweet gospel to spread.

Smyrna was the first city to build a temple to worship a Roman Emperor. By the end of the first century, Emperor worship was required. Many Christians refused to give worship to Caesar and suffered terribly as a result. They were imprisoned, burnt at the stake, and killed by wild animals in the coliseums as the crowds cheered with delight. Polycarp, a close friend of John the beloved, was put to death in Smyrna.

THE CHURCH 2:8

Rev. 2:8 And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;

Jesus addressed the "angel of the church". As I have mentioned, I believe this refers to the pastor of the church (read the comments about angels on 1:20). The pastor's job is to tell the church what the Lord tells him.

As with each church, Jesus' description of Himself applied to the condition and needs of the particular church He was addressing. He described Himself not simply to inform, but to assist those He spoke to.

First, Jesus said He was the "first and the last".

That refers to His eternal nature and says He was, and is, very God.

Second, Jesus said He was the One who had been "dead".

He understood the agony of being persecuted for doing the right thing (Heb. 4:15). He had been wrongly accused, arrested and executed. If anyone understood the suffering of the believers in Smyrna, it was Jesus.

Third, Jesus said He was the One who "is alive".

Jesus had been dead but was alive. He won the battle over death. If He overcame death, no enemy that could defeat Him. Him being alive meant the believers in Smyrna had that same victory. His being alive also reminded them of their own future resurrection. There is nothing to fear when you don't have to be afraid of death.

THE COMPLIMENT 2:9

Jesus complimented this church for its faithful stand during difficult times.

- They were true 2:9

Rev. 2:9 I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.

As with the other churches (2:2), Jesus knew the "works" of the people in the church in Smyrna.

The word "tribulation" means "pressure" and refers to the effects of the persecution they were enduring.

The word tribulation is connected to the word, "poverty" which may be an indication that their poverty was caused by the persecution they were experiencing. They were not poor because they had misused their finances, they were poor because the enemies of the church had taken advantage of them.

They were poor yet Jesus said they were "rich". Those who have eternal redemption are rich far beyond what this world has to offer. I believe Jesus was talking about the riches they were laying up in heaven by staying faithful through persecution (Mt. 5:12; 16:27; 2 Cor. 4:17; 1 Tim. 4:8).

Jesus knew their pain and poverty, but He did not remove it. Instead, He allowed them to continue to build up treasures in heaven. We need to keep our eyes on eternity and not our daily trials.

God views riches differently than man (Mat. 6:20; 19:21; Jam. 2:5). Later we will find those in the church in Laodicea thought they were rich but Jesus said they were poor (3:17).

Our attitude toward finances is more important than we realize (Luke 12:21). Material goods are given to us so that we might use them for God's glory. Material riches are temporary and leave us empty. Spiritual riches are eternal and leave us satisfied.

Riches can actually keep a person from God. Jesus said, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God" (Mk 10:23). The rich man was materially rich but a spiritual pauper (Lk. 12:16-21). As he discovered, the person who depends on earthly riches will be disappointed. This is not suggesting that being poor guarantees spirituality or being rich guarantees carnality.

If the Lord can not trust us with material things, He will not trust us with spiritual things (Lk. 16:11). Peter had little materially, but he was rich spiritually. He said, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk" (Acts 3:6).

The word "blasphemy" means "to speak evil against" and refers to an absolute hatred toward God.

Blasphemy is a verbal reproach of God, His name, character, or works. Since it is a direct and deliberate reproach of God, a true believer cannot commit blasphemy.

Some impostors who claimed to be "Jews" had entered the church and were causing trouble. They were Jewish nationality, but not spirituality. Paul said a true Jew was one who was a Jew in their *heart* (Rom. 2:28-29 emphasis added).

God is more concerned about the inside of man than He is about the outside. A true believer will have a changed heart (Ezk. 11:19; 18:31; 36:26; 2 Cor. 5:17).

God told Samuel, "Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the *LORD looketh on the heart*" (1 Sam. 16:7 emphasis added). God wanted a man who had a heart that was right with Him.

A note of interest: God was not telling Samuel He did not care at all about the outward appearance. In fact, the verse isn't even talking about clothing. God was telling Samuel to not look at the size, build, or fierceness of the men he was examining. The Bible often talks about proper dress and appearance (Dt. 22:5; Pro. 7:10; 1 Tim. 2:9-10; 1 Pet.3:3-4). A believer should not look, or act, like the world.

God may not look at the appearance of a man, but the world does. Our appearance tells the world what we are inside. The world sees our appearance, God sees our hearts. The world sees what we wear, God sees why we wear what we wear. No matter what they claim, those who dress like the world have a worldly heart.

Jesus called this group the "synagogue of Satan". They gathered with the church and claimed to be worshipers of God but were the exact opposite. They may have deceived people but they did not deceive God. He knew what they really were. It would do us well to remember, we do not fool God about anything in our lives.

Jesus calling this group the "synagogue of Satan" may seem harsh, but it should warn us of the danger of false doctrine. It should also remind us of the need for direct preaching. Unfortunately, all too many modern preachers have learned how to say a whole lot without saying anything.

THE COMMAND 2:10

- They were tested 2:10a

Rev. 2:10a Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days:

Jesus said these believers would suffer, yet He told them to not fear. Humanly speaking, this seems impossible. But, God's grace is more than sufficient for the suffering believer. After describing some of his worst afflictions, Paul said, "*None of these things move me*" (Acts 20:24 emphasis added).

Fear paralyzes us. It keeps us from doing what we should do. Fear makes our circumstances look worse than they actually are. Many a mountain was in reality, nothing but a molehill.

Fear causes us to make unwise decisions. If we are driven by fear, we are likely to do something we will regret.

Fear is nothing more than a lack of faith. Jesus rebuked the disciples for their lack of faith (Mt. 6:27; 8:26; 16:8). He does no less with us.

We may face impossible situations, but we will never face a situation that is impossible to God (Mt. 19:26; Heb. 18:27).

The "devil" would cast some of them into "prison". This is a good indication of the power the devil has. Take a look at Job if you doubt the power of the enemy (Job 1:13-19; 2:7-11).

The word, "cast" means "to violently throw". This is an indication of the hatred the devil has for God's children.

As powerful as the devil is, God is more powerful and limits him in his attack (Job 1:12; 2:6). God always has a reason when He allows the devil to attack His children.

The "ten days" of tribulation have caused much discussion among God's people. Some suggestions are, ten literal days, ten years, ten Roman Emperors, and ten days being the deadline for a verdict in the Roman trial.

The fact is, we do not know for certain what Jesus meant. We can, however, gain some insight from this phrase.

First, we know Jesus is talking about a time of tribulation these believers will endure.

Second, we know ten days are long enough to make it difficult. One or two days would be difficult but short enough to make it bearable. But, ten days is long enough to wear you down. Ten days is long enough to rob your faith, discourage your spirit, and zap your zeal.

Three, we know the ten days are temporary. Ten days tells us this time of tribulation has an ending. It will not be forever.

- They were trusting 2:10b

Rev. 2:10b ...be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

They were to be faithful "unto" death. There was a good chance they would die a martyr's death and not a natural death. He was saying they should be faithful no matter what the cost.

Some are willing to be faithful to the point of being mocked or ridiculed. Others are willing to go further and are faithful to the point of being rejected by their families. Jesus was saying they should be faithful to the point of it costing their lives.

Like Paul, they were to fight a good fight and finish their course (2 Tim. 4:7-8). There will be times when we feel like giving up, but we can trust the Lord to help us keep going. We may face difficult days, but the reward is worth the effort. We will be glad then for being faithful now.

Jesus promised a "crown of life" to those who remained faithful. Those in the church in Smyrna were to trust Him to keep His promise.

There are two kinds of crowns mentioned in the bible. One is a victor's crown which is earned by those who are victorious. The other is a royal crown which is simply given to those who are of royal descent.

This is a victor's crown, which must be earned (1 Cor. 9:25; Jam. 1:12). It refers to victory for the faithful believer, not earning eternal life. Eternal life is a gift given freely to those who repent and believe (Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:8-9).

Death for the child of God is simply a transition to a better life (1 Cor. 15:54; Phil. 1:21).

THE CONCLUSION 2:11

Jesus concludes His comments to the church in Smyrna by telling them what would happen if they obeyed. There are always consequences to our obedience, or lack thereof.

Rev. 2:11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

Jesus warns those in the church to "hear" what the Spirit was saying. There is no way to describe the importance of listening to what God says.

As He does with all seven churches (2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:26; 3:5; 3:12; 3:21) Jesus talked about those who "overcometh".

No greater promise could ever be given than the one we find here. The One who has the keys to hell and death promised to keep them safe from the "second death". No one else could make such a promise. The second death refers to being sent to the lake of fire forever (20:14).

If we have had two births, we will have only one death. If we have had one birth, we will have two deaths.

As believers, we may have to suffer some in this life, but nothing we face can be compared to the torment of eternal fire. On the worst day of our lives as a believer, we have it better than our best day as an unbeliever.

John closed his message as he did with all the churches (2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:29; 3:6; 3:13; 3:22). Anyone who can hear, needs to listen.

The third church **THE CHURCH IN PERGAMOS 2:12-17**

THE CHURCH IN PERGAMOS WAS AN EXAMPLE OF "COMPASSION WITHOUT COMPROMISE"

The church in Ephesus was an example of "labor without love", Smyrna of "stress without straying", and the church in Pergamos was an example of "compassion without compromise".

This church needed to learn how to have compassion on those who had been seduced by false teaching without compromising themselves.

The word Pergamos comes from two Greek words. The first, "pergos" speaks of a powerful fortress. The second, "gamos" means "marriage". Put together it speaks of being married to a powerful organization. This is a perfect picture of the church being married to the world.

Jesus calls Pergamos "Satan's Seat" (throne).

THE CALENDAR

Once again, let me remind us, that the seven churches represent seven different periods of time in church history, beginning with John's Day and ending at the Rapture.

The "Pergamos Period" represents approximately 314 to 590 AD.

The devil tried unsuccessfully for over two hundred years to destroy the church by persecution. Realizing persecution only made the church stronger, the devil tried persuasion. He tried to persuade the believers to compromise with the false religions of their day. If one attack fails, he will try always another. If he cannot destroy the church from without, he will attack it from within.

And that brings us to the time of the Roman Emperor Constantine. In 313 AD, Constantine issued the "Edict of Milan" which accomplished two things. One, it gave believers the right to worship as they pleased. Two, it made religious persecution illegal. The end of persecution made life easier for believers, but it also attracted false converts and false doctrine.

Constantine promised a white garment and twenty pieces of gold to every "convert". Of course, this corrupted the church. It corrupted the church because, one, soft living always makes weak believers, and two, because pagans joining the church by the thousands contaminated it. According to Gibbon, there were 12,000 men baptized in Rome in one year.

THE CITY

The city of Pergamos was north of Smyrna. Pergamos had little commerce but was known for its culture, education, and medicine. It had one of the greatest libraries of the world which contained over 200,000 volumes. The temple of Aesculapius, the Greek god of medicine, was in Pergamos. The emblem of a snake wrapping around a staff often used in modern medicine came from Aesculapius.

Like so many cities of that day, Pergamos was filled with idolatry. It had temples dedicated to Dionysus, Athena, Demeter, Zeus, and three temples dedicated to the worship of the Roman Emperors.

THE CHURCH 2:12

Rev. 2:12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

Jesus addressed the "angel of the church". As I have mentioned, I believe this refers to the pastor of the church (read the comments about angels on 1:20). It is the pastor's job to tell the church what God tells him.

As with the other churches, Jesus' description of Himself applied to the condition and needs of the particular church He was addressing. He described Himself not simply to inform, but to assist those He spoke to.

He describes Himself here as the One with the "sharp sword with two edges". Jesus always speaks the truth, even when it cuts. The church in Pergamos needed God's sharp blade of truth because, as we will see, they had allowed other beliefs to enter the church. God always tells us the truth.

The sword of God's Word divides (Lk. 12:51; Heb. 4:12). We should separate from those who teach false doctrine (2 Cor. 6:17; 2 Jn 10).

Rev. 2:13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

As with the other churches (2:2; 2:9), Jesus said He knew the "works" of the people in the church in Pergamos.

Jesus talked about their dwelling place.

- They were in a place of Satan

The word, "seat" means "throne". The devil had selected this city for his headquarters to run his ungodly operation. As the god of this world (Mt. 4:8-9; 2 Cor. 4:4) he is organized in his dealings against the work of God. He will move his headquarters to the city of Babylon in the future (chapters 17-18).

- They were in a place of suffering

Jesus spoke of "Antipas" who was His "faithful martyr". We know nothing about this man other than what is said here. If there could be only one thing said about us, I know of nothing better than what Jesus said about Antipas.

Being "among you" means Antipas was one of them and they knew him well.

The word "martyr" is the same word translated as "witness" earlier (cf. 1:5). What greater witness could there be than for someone to be willing to give their lives for the One they believe?

Even though they were in such an ungodly location, the believers at Pergamos remained faithful. Holding the name of Christ means they unashamedly proclaimed themselves to be followers of Jesus Christ.

- They were in a place of seduction

As we will see in the next verses, when persecution did not work against the church, the devil tried persuasion. He tried to seduce them into compromising with the world and other religions. Some in the church refused to compromise but they failed to rid themselves of those who did. Like cancer, false doctrine will always spread when it is not cut off.

THE COMPLAINT 2:14-15

I have mentioned, Jesus' complaint, unlike ours, does not come from a selfish ego. He is the one person in the universe who is worthy to make a legitimate complaint. His complaints are always factual, precise, and meant to be helpful.

Rev. 2:14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

Jesus spoke well of the church in Pergamos, but He also had a complaint against them. They were allowing some who accepted the "doctrine of Balaam" to remain in the church. As Paul said, "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (1 Cor. 5:6; Gal. 5:9)

The "doctrine of Balaam" can be traced back to Numbers 22-24. Simply put Balaam's sin consisted of two errors.

First, he tried to make money by misusing the ministry God had given him (Num. 22-24; 2 Pet. 2:25; Jude 11).

Second, he worked with the enemy of God, King Balak, and persuaded the people of Israel to marry Moabite and Midianite women (Num. 25:1-9).

Part of the seduction of Balaam was the eating of "things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication". This refers to attending the festivals dedicated to idol worship which included fornication in the name of worship.

The bottom line is, the doctrine of Balaam says a believer can cooperate with the world and still serve God. It can be summed up by the word "compromise". When the church opens the doors to the world, trouble is on the way. The church may grow in number, but it also gets more worldly.

This all magnifies the importance of standing for the truth, living separated lives, and having godly churches. The world tells us we need to get along with everyone. But, when it comes to what we believe and what we live for, there is no place for compromise.

Compromise may start small, but it always grows and worsens. The pastor, church, and Christian must be on their guard and never give an inch (Num. 16:21; 16:26; Ezr. 6:21; Ps. 1:1; Acts 2:40; 2 Cor. 6:17; 7:1; Eph. 5:11; 1 Th. 5:22; 1 Jn 2:15).

Rev. 2:15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

Another false doctrine introduced in the church was the "doctrine of the Nicolaitans". As mentioned earlier (Rev. 2:6), the doctrine of the Nicolaitans was that the clergy should be exalted above the laity.

The church in Ephesus stood against this doctrine (2:6). However, some in the church of Pergamos had accepted it.

As with the issue with the doctrine of Balaam, the church as a whole was doing nothing to rid itself of the false teaching and false teachers.

THE COMMAND 2:16

Jesus told them, and us, how to fix their problem. There is always a solution if we will believe, and do, what God says.

Rev. 2:16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

Pergamos is told to repent. They were to acknowledge their failure and turn from it.

Commanding them to repent shows us how serious God was about the compromise of the church. He tells us to "come out from among them, and be ye separate" (2 Cor. 6:17).

If they refused to repent, God would "fight against them with the sword" of His mouth. The God who is able to bless with His words can curse with the same (Gen. 3:16, 17-19; Dt. 11:26-28).

The word, "quickly" means "without delay". When God's mercy runs out, His justice is quick. Action against them would be swift. Their time to decide was running short. Those who think there is no need to rush to get right with God are sadly mistaken. As far as I can tell, God is seen as being in a hurry in only two situations. The first, He is quick to forgive those who repent and confess. The prodigal's father "ran" to greet him (Lk. 15:20). The second, is when God's mercy runs out and He moves quickly in judgment.

THE CONCLUSION 2:17

Jesus concludes His comments to the church in Pergamos by telling them what would happen if they obeyed. There would be consequences for their obedience, or lack thereof.

Rev. 2:17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

The world tells us the way to happiness is to compromise. God tells us happiness comes from a separated and spiritual life.

Once again, Jesus talked about those who "overcometh". An overcomer is one who believes Jesus is the Son of God (1 Jn 4:4; 5:4-5). He repeats this with each of the seven churches (2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:26; 3:5; 3:12; 3:21). This means, the one who believes in Jesus has overcome because Jesus has already overcome. Please refer to my comments about overcomers made on Revelation 2:7.

Jesus said those who overcome will eat of His "hidden manna". Manna was the food that God gave to His people in the wilderness (Ex. 16:11-18, 35). Some of this manna was placed in the ark of the covenant (Ex. 16:33-34; Heb. 9:4).

The "hidden manna" probably speaks of a spiritual bread that God prepares only for His children. God was telling those in the church in Pergamos that He would bless them even in the worst of circumstances. God still has manna to feed us when we face our wilderness. We do not have to turn to the world to find contentment in this world.

Jesus said He would give the overcomer a "white stone". The

There are several possibilities about what the "white stone" means.

- Used as an invitation to a banquet

The host of a banquet would give a white stone to those he invited. This stone had to be presented at the door to gain entrance.

- Used to one acquit of a crime

A judge would present a white stone for acquittal and a black stone for conviction.

- Used as a sign of friendship

A white stone would be given to a close friend with a special name written on it.

The stone Jesus spoke of will be special in that it has a "new name" written on it. It is a name that only the recipient knows. This may mean we receive a new name in heaven. Could this be that God has a special "nickname" for each of His children?

Whatever this white stone means, it is a sign of God being pleased for it is for the one who "overcometh". This person did not compromise with the world.

John closed his message to Pergamos as he did with all the churches (2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:29; 3:6; 3:13; 3:22). Anyone who can hear, needs to listen.

The fourth church
THE CHURCH IN THYATIRA 2:18-29

THE CHURCH IN THYATIRA WAS AN EXAMPLE OF
"WORKING WITHOUT WARNING"

The church in Ephesus was an example of "labor without love", Smyrna of "stress without straying", Pergamos of "compassion without compromise", and the church in Thyatira was an example of "working without warning".

The believers in the church in Thyatira were busy working but they neglected to warn those in the church who had been swept up in sin. Jesus mentions their "works" two times in one verse (2:19).

THE CALENDAR

Once again, let me remind us, the seven churches represent seven different periods of time in church history, beginning with John's Day and ending at the Rapture.

The "Thyatira Period" represents 590 to 1517 AD. During that time Rome took control of religion in the world with what came to be known as Roman Catholicism. God called this union of the world and the church, "fornication" (v. 20). He could not, and would not, let it continue without judging.

This is the longest of the seven church periods. During this time of the Puritans and Anabaptists remained true to the truth of Scripture in spite of being persecuted horribly by the Catholic Church.

THE CITY

Thyatira, a city of around 20,000, was southeast of Pergamos.

Lydia, a convert of the apostle Paul, lived in Thyatira (Acts 16:14). This city was known for its export of dyed goods.

THE CHURCH 2:18

Rev. 2:18 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;

Jesus addressed the "angel of the church". As I have mentioned, I believe this refers to the pastor of the church (read the comments about angels on 1:20). It is the pastor's job to tell the church what God tells him.

Jesus' comments to this church are the longest of the seven churches. Strangely, considering this fact, Thyatira was by no means, the most important of the churches.

As with each church, Jesus' description of Himself applied to the condition and needs of the particular church He was addressing. He described Himself not simply to inform, but to assist those He spoke to.

This is the only church, and the only time in the entire book, where Jesus calls Himself the "Son of God". This is especially important to this church because they were being persuaded to worship false gods. They needed to be reminded there is only one God and only one way to get to Him, His Son Jesus Christ.

His eyes were like a "flame of fire". As mentioned before, this description of His eyes speaks of His judgment (please read comments on 1:14). These are the eyes that see all things (Pro. 15:3; Job 28:24; Jer. 23:24; 16:17). He sees the heart and life of every person on earth. He sees the good, the bad, and the ugly.

Knowing God was watching meant a lot to the believers in the church in Thyatira who were being persecuted. It assured them, that God would take care of them and would deal with those who were mistreating them.

Brass was the hardest of all metals at that time. His feet being brass was an indication of His steadfastness. Jesus never changes, no matter what the circumstances (Heb. 13:8). He wants us to do the same.

THE COMPLIMENT 2:19

Rev. 2:19 I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.

As with the other churches (2:2; 2:9; 2:13), Jesus said He knew the "works" of the people in the church in Thyatira.

As mentioned, this church was the least significant of the seven churches, but God was still attentive to her. I am glad the Lord does not check the size of the congregation to determine how much attention He will give a church.

Jesus mentions their "works" twice in this one verse.

He compliments them for their "charity". This statement amazes me. These believers who were suffering under tremendous persecution were concerned, not only for themselves but for others. This proves that Christian love reaches out even in the worst of circumstances. In fact, Christian love is at its best when under distress. The family of God grows even closer when facing difficulties.

The word, "faith" has the idea of "persuasion". They were persuaded what they believed, and what they were doing, was right. Because of this fact, they were able to stay faithful even in the worst of circumstances. We need this same type of faith in our day.

The word, "patience" means "enduring patiently", and carries with it the idea of being cheerful. They had the joy James talked about for those who suffer for Jesus' sake (Jam. 5:11).

The "last to be more than the first" means they were increasing in their positive attributes (Job 17:9; Pro. 4:18; Jn 15:2; 2 Pet.3:18). The works of many believers decrease as time passes. The opposite was true of this church. Can God say the same to us? Have we grown in love, patience, boldness, or faith?

THE COMPLAINT 2:20-24

I have mentioned, Jesus' complaint, unlike ours, does not come from a selfish ego. He is the one person in the universe who is worthy to make a legitimate complaint. His complaints are always factual, precise, and meant to be helpful.

Rev. 2:20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

As mentioned, there were some who loved God and walked with Him. But, unfortunately, not all in this church were dedicated believers. The biggest problem was a woman Jesus called "Jezebel". That may not have been her actual name but one Jesus gave her because of her wickedness. Whether her actual name or not, it tells us a great deal about the kind of woman she was.

She must have been much like the Jezebel of the Old Testament.

The Old Testament Jezebel was a model example of a wicked woman. She was a power-hungry and selfish woman who would do anything to get her way. She influenced her husband Ahab to worship Baal, she ordered the death of God's prophets (1 Kgs. 18:4), she promised to put Elijah to death (1 Kgs. 19:2), and she convinced Ahab to swindle and kill Naboth (1 Kgs. 21:5-16). She had 450 false prophets under her direction (1 Kgs. 18:19). Her life ended in a way that fit her lifestyle. She was consumed by the dogs on the streets (2 Kgs. 21:19, 23).

The "Jezebel" at the church in Thyatira claimed to be a "prophetess" for God while at the same time teaching those in the church to worship false gods and commit fornication. She called herself a prophetess, but God never did. Some today claim to be speaking for God but are not.

She had a dominating influence in the church and "seduced" her listeners into following her vile ways instead of following God.

As mentioned earlier, eating "things sacrificed to idols" refers to attending the festivals dedicated to idol worship which included fornication in the name of worship.

All this being said, Jesus' complaint was that the church allowed her to spread her spiritual cancer and did nothing to stop it. Their sin was allowing the corruption to continue.

Rev. 2:21 And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.

This verse says so much.

First, it says God saw her actions as sin. He called it "fornication" here and "adultery" in the next verse.

Second, it says God "gave" her time to repent. As God did the Jezebel of the Old Testament (1 Kgs. 21:17-29), Jesus gave this Jezebel time to repent. God's mercy on sin is astounding (2 Pet.3:9). Since He is long-suffering and patient, He gives the guilty person time to repent before He judges them.

Third, it says God gave her "space" to repent. The word "space" means "a period of time". This means, the time of God's mercy will run out and when it does, judgment is certain.

Fourth, it says the guilty person must "repent" if there is to be forgiveness. Unconfessed sin does not drift away or diminish over time. Without confession and repentance, there is no forgiveness.

Fifth, it says this Jezebel refused to take advantage of the time God gave her and refused to repent. Far too often people assume God will give them more time to get right with Him. And, like this Jezebel, their time runs out.

Sixth, it says God will let a person go on in sin if they are determined. Just as the Prodigal's father did not stop his son from going to the far country, God will let the sinner go on their way to perdition.

Sadly, there is no evidence that Jezebel in Thyatira ever repented. In like fashion, the Catholic Church has not turned from its false teaching.

They believe and teach the following.

- The Pope has supreme authority over the church

This means the Pope has as much authority as the Apostles.

- The Pope is infallible when speaking ex-cathedra (full authority)

This means what the Pope speaks is as God speaks, is without flaw, and is not to be questioned.

- The teaching of the Catholic Church on the same level as Scripture

Many Catholics actually exalt the teaching of the church above the Bible.

- The Immaculate Conception

This means Mary, like Jesus, was born without a human father.

- The perpetual virginity of Mary

This means Mary never participated in a physical relationship, even with Joseph.

- Mary never sinned and ascended into heaven.

Mary said, "And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior" (Lk. 1:47). That proves she, like every other person on earth, was a sinner and needed a Savior.

- Mary is a co-redemptrix

This means it took Jesus and Mary to provide redemption for mankind.

- Mary is a co-mediatrix

This means prayer flows through Mary, was brings them to the attention of Jesus.

- Good works are a method of obtaining justification

The Bible says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Eph 2:8).

- At the Catholic Mass, the wine and bread is transformed into the literal blood and body of Jesus Christ

Rev. 2:22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

Jesus mentions two parties and says He will judge them if they do not repent. The first is Jezebel herself. The second, those who "commit adultery with her", are those who believed her lies and followed her ways. Jesus calls them "her children" in the next verse.

The "bed" is a bed of judgment. God promised to judge them if they refused to repent.

The word "except" demonstrates God's amazing compassion. If they would repent, He would forgive. Jezebel had already refused to repent and her judgment was certain (v. 21) but those who followed her still had a chance.

The word "except" also demonstrates God's justice. The only way to escape judgment is for them to repent.

Rev. 2:23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

Her "children" refers to those who followed the "Jezebel" in the church of Thyatira.

The phrase "kill her children with death" may be speaking of the second death (20:14). If this is so, their judgment includes being sent to the lake of fire forever.

By seeing God execute this judgment, all the churches would know God knows the "hearts" of all men. When God judges rightly because He knows the deeds and the motives of man. We see what a person does, God sees why the person does what he does.

This means, not only are their deeds evil, but their hearts are evil also. These two factors prove they deserve God's judgment.

God gives to every individual "according" to their "works". He gives what they deserve.

Rev. 2:24 But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden.

The "rest in Thyatira" are those who rejected the teaching of Jezebel and stood for the truth. Thank the Lord, not all the church had gone bad. Staying true under such circumstances had to be difficult.

I am so glad God can tell the difference between the false and the genuine.

THE COMMAND 2:25

Jesus told them, and us, what to do. God has the solution if we will listen.

Rev. 2:25 But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.

God tells them what to do. They were to "hold fast". He told them how long they should do it. They were to hold fast until He came. The same command is given to the church of our day. Jesus said, "occupy till I come" (Lk. 19:13).

God speaks to the faithful and tells them to stay faithful no matter what the rest of the church does. This may indicate there would be no repentance in the church.

THE CONCLUSION 2:26-29

Jesus concludes His comments to the church in Thyatira by telling them what would happen if they refused to obey. There are always consequences to our obedience or lack thereof.

Rev. 2:26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

Once again, Jesus talked about those who "overcometh". Jesus repeats this with all seven churches (2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:26; 3:5; 3:12; 3:21). An overcomer is one who believes Jesus is the Son of God (1 Jn 4:4; 5:4-5). Please refer to my comments made on Revelation 2:7.

The word, "keepeth" means "to keep guard". It is an interesting word in that it carries with it the idea of staying unmarried. Spiritually speaking, it is telling the believer to not join themselves with the world.

That which Jesus called "my works" was the opposite of the works of Jezebel. We should refuse the works of Jezebel and do the works of God (Jn 6:28). Not doing wrong is good, but doing right is even better.

God asks them, and us, to continue "unto the end". That is saying a lot, especially since they were facing constant persecution. It is easy to be worn down but God has grace to help us remain faithful.

The word, "power" means "authority". As we will see in the next verse, the "power over the nations" looks ahead to the Millennium. Jesus promises the faithful saints will share His authority when He rules in His kingdom (Mt. 19:28; Lk. 19:17).

Rev. 2:27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.

Jesus continues His prediction about His coming kingdom for those who overcome.

The word, "rule" refers to a shepherd who loves his sheep enough to protect them. A good shepherd would never let the wolf get to his sheep.

Like a good shepherd, Jesus will rule with a "rod of iron" during His 1000-year kingdom. David had this in mind when he wrote "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Ps 2:9).

When John was writing this, it seemed like God was allowing Jezebel and her followers to do as they pleased. But, in the kingdom, Jesus will deal quickly and severely with such rebellion. Those who oppose Him then will be "*broken to shivers*" like pottery being shattered.

Jesus was talking to people who had been beaten down. He was telling them they were on the winning side and one day they would be the ones on top.

Rev. 2:28 And I will give him the morning star.

The "morning star" is speaking of Jesus (2:28). This means the overcomers will experience Christ in all His fullness.

Rev. 2:29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

John closed his message as he did with all the churches (2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:26; 3:6; 3:13; 3:22). Anyone who can hear, needs to listen.

The fifth church

THE CHURCH IN SARDIS 3:1-6

THE CHURCH IN SARDIS WAS AN EXAMPLE OF "LIVING WITHOUT LIFE"

The church in Ephesus was an example of "labor without love", Smyrna of "stress without straying", Pergamos of "compassion without compromise", Thyatira of "working without warning", and the church in Sardis was an example of "living without life"

Jesus said the church of Sardis had a reputation of being alive but was dead. They were alive physically but dead spiritually.

THE CALENDAR

Once again, let me remind us, the seven churches represent seven different periods of time in church history, beginning with John's Day and ending at the Rapture.

The "Sardis Period" represents the time period from 1517 to 1700 AD. At least a portion of those years included the time of the Protestant Reformation. During that time men like Martin Luther, John Calvin, and William Tyndale led the protest against the false teaching of the Pope and the Roman Catholic church. The Lutheran, Presbyterian, Reformed, and Anglican churches sprang up from this movement.

The Reformation reversed much of the Roman Catholic heresy but it did not return the church to that which the New Testament church was supposed to be. Even Martin Luther himself said the church was in terrible shape.

It is important to understand, that the Baptist Church was not a part of the Reformation because it was never a part of the Catholic belief system. In fact, the Baptists were persecuted by the Catholics and millions were put to death. These believers stood till death because they believed the Bible and were willing to stand for it. May we do the same if the need arises.

All this led to the church becoming, in large part, a formal institution with little, or no, spiritual life. That is exactly what Jesus said about the church in Sardis.

THE CITY

The city of Sardis, located about 30 miles south of Thyatira, was a wealthy city known for its love for luxury, lustful pleasure, and loose morals. Sitting at a junction of an important trade route brought much sin into the city. Like many cities of that day, they were guilty of idol worship.

The city was built on a hill surrounded by steep cliffs which provided a seemingly impenetrable defense against attack. The residents, trusting this natural barrier, felt safe.

This natural defense actually became its downfall for in 546 BC, the Persian King Cyrus, overtook Sardis. He was able to do so because one of his soldiers named Hyroeades saw a guard in the city of Sardis accidentally drop his helmet over the side of the cliffs that surrounded the city. Hyroeades watched while this man climbed down a hidden trail to retrieve his helmet. Hyroeades, and some other soldiers, climbed up this trail, found the wall unguarded, entered, and overcame the city. Those in the city of Sardis were so convinced they were safe from attack, they had left the city unguarded. Shockingly, those in Sardis did not learn their lesson, for some 300 years later, Antiochus the Great did the same thing.

These facts should warn us to not trust our own strength or ingenuity. Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:30-33) and Peter (Mt. 26:31-35) learned this the hard way.

Every believer needs to learn they are not indestructible. We are not beyond the wiles of the devil.

THE COMPLIMENT

Sadly, this church was one of the two churches (Laodicea is the other) that did not receive any compliment from Jesus. You have to be in bad shape indeed when God can not say even one good thing about you.

THE CHURCH 3:1

Rev. 3:1 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

Jesus addressed the "angel of the church". As I have mentioned, I believe this refers to the pastor of the church (read comments about angels on 1:20). He spoke to the pastor, but His message was to the entire church. The pastor's job is to tell the church what the Lord tells him.

As I have mentioned before, Jesus' description of Himself applied to the condition and the needs of the particular church He was addressing. He described Himself not simply to inform, but to assist those He spoke to.

To the church in Sardis, Jesus described Himself as the One who "hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars" (cf. 1:20). As mentioned earlier, the seven Spirits of God refer to the seven attributes of the Holy Spirit (Isa. 11:2) and the seven stars refer to the pastors of the churches.

Jesus is saying He has both, the Spirit of God and the pastors of the church. The Spirit of God provides the power needed to help the church. As long as the Spirit of God is near, there is hope for the church. The pastors of the church are the instruments God can use to make the church what He desires. As long as the pastor is willing to walk with God and obey His Word, there is hope for the church.

Also, as with the other churches (2:2; 2:9; 2:13; 2:19; 3:1; 3:8; 3:15), Jesus knew "the works" of the people in the church in Sardis. God knows everyone and He knows everything about everyone.

The church in Sardis had a reputation of being alive but the One who really knew them said they were "dead". The word "dead" means "corpse". It does not mean weak, sickly, or unconscious, it means dead.

This tells us three things about this church.

First, some in the church professed, but did not possess, salvation. Like Jesus said, "This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me" (Mk 7:6). True salvation will produce good and godly works (Eph. 2:10). God is not deceived by pretense or lip service. Sadly, these "professors" had a dramatic effect on the church. Their human mindset influenced the church into a worldly form of order.

In every church, some who are not really saved. One of the greatest mission fields is the local church.

Second, some in the church were saved but were not submitted to the Spirit of God. Being led by the Spirit is a vital part of doing the will of God (Isa. 48:17; Rom. 8:5; 8:14; Gal. 5:16; 5:18). Jesus, Himself was led by the Spirit (Lk. 4:1).

Sadly, many in the local churches of our day know nothing about being led by the Spirit of God.

Third, the church lacked the power and presence of God. Without the moving of the Holy Spirit, there is no life in a church. Without Him, there will be no real joy, peace, compassion, or conviction.

Sadly, and to our shame, we must face the fact that most of today's churches are without real spiritual power. Yet, the church continues to operate as though everything is fine.

A dead church is more interested in the talent of man than the touch of God, seeks performance more than power, buildings more than a burden, a system instead of the Spirit, and finds more pleasure in the world than the Word.

The bottom line is, a dead church is a church that has dead members for a church is what the members are. No church will be any greater than its members. When the members of a church are more excited about a ball game than a prayer meeting, that church is in trouble.

A dead church has lost all of its effectiveness for the cause of Christ. A dead church has lost its ability to help the believers who are struggling with the problems of life. It is unable to reach the lost world around it. But, more importantly, it has lost its ability to please and glorify God.

These things are too serious to ignore. It should cause every church on earth to reevaluate itself more closely.

With all this being said, I think the obvious question is, how could a dead church have a reputation of being alive?

- Because of those who are evaluating of the church

A spiritually ignorant person can not make an accurate evaluation of spiritual matters. Unfortunately, many of those who evaluate the churches today are not spiritually mature enough to know what a real church looks like.

- Because of the appearance of the church

Many believe the building makes the church. There is more to a church than a steeple and a pulpit. Some of the most spiritual churches I have known were in a storefront or some dilapidated structure. The church is the people in the building, not the building itself.

- Because of the activity of the church

Sadly, in our day, many people think a church is alive if it is big and has a lot of stuff going on. Activity is not always an indication of life. Those in the church in Sardis were going through the motions but they lacked real spiritual life.

No doubt, the church in Sardis looked alive when it came to plans, programs, promotions, and performances. They were a church that always had something happening. But, none of these things are proof of real life.

Notice, there are no instructions about how to handle persecution of the church in Sardis. The devil has no reason to persecute those he has control of.

THE COMMAND 3:2-3

Jesus told them, and us, how to fix their problem:

He spoke to those in the church who still had a heart for God and His work. The fact that He gave these commands to the church in Sardis tells us it had not gone too far to be resurrected. Thank the Lord, God is able to raise the dead.

Rev. 3:2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

Jesus gave five commands to those at the church in Sardis.

- His first command was, "Be watchful"

Their carelessness and lack of attention had taken their toll on the church. It was time for them to wake up and be vigilant.

Jesus spoke about them watching that which remained.

Watching implies danger. We watch that which could be stolen or damaged.

Watching implies concern. We watch that which is important or valuable to us.

Watching implies an enemy. Someone wants to steal or damage that which we have.

Their city had fallen twice because no one was watching. Jesus warned them to not let the same thing happen to the church.

- His second command was "strengthen the things that remain"

The fact that there were "things which remain" tells us there were some believers in the church who still had a desire for something real.

The word, "strengthen" means "to turn resolutely in a certain direction". Jesus was telling them to fervently set their hearts towards the life-giving work of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said that which remained was just about "ready to die". In essence, He was saying, "If you don't do something quickly, it is going to die". Nothing naturally improves on its own. On the contrary, everything in this world naturally decays. The young grow old, the strong grow weak, and the new wears out. We must continually repair or replace everything in our lives.

This same principle is true about our spiritual condition. The neglected fire soon burns out. We must add the fact that the devil is at work trying to bring about a spiritual decline to the work of God.

We are not told exactly what was ready to die. Whatever it was, it was important enough for the Lord to warn them about it.

It may have been their commitment to doctrinal truth. In our day, so many believers are willing to compromise about the truths in the Word of God. Once a person heads down that slippery path, they seldom return.

It may have been their commitment to biblical standards and convictions. No church will stay strong when its standards lessen. Many churches have done so without realizing it. They go along their merry way with no hint that they are grieving the God who bought them.

It may have been their commitment to each other. Their love for others may have lessened. When a church loses its closeness it ceases being what God wants it to be. Jesus said the believers would be known by their love for each other (Jn. 13:35).

It may have been their concern for the lost world around them. Anytime a church loses sight of the lost world around them, it will die. New life is vital for the survival of any church.

Everyone else may have been pleased with this church, but Jesus said He had a problem with them. The word, "perfect" means "complete" and carries with it the idea of satisfaction. Those in the church may have been satisfied with their works, but God certainly was not.

They were working without the Spirit of God's enablement and it was all in vain.

Rev. 3:3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

- His third command was, "Remember"

We can remember only that which we have experienced. Sadly, many Christians have nothing to remember because they have never experienced a real touch of God.

Jesus told them to remember "how" they had "received and heard".

How did they receive? They received the truth by someone telling them. That is true of every believer. Someone, somewhere, sometime, told them the gospel. Paul said, "How shall they call in Him of whom they have not heard (Rom. 10:14). If someone was willing to tell us we should be willing to tell someone else.

How did they receive? They had received the truth wholeheartedly. They grasped it as a drowning man does a lifebuoy. They saw it as their only hope and their only means of survival. If they received the truth with such enthusiasm should they not still be excited about it?

How did they receive? They received because the Holy Spirit opened their eyes to their need. This may be the primary reason Jesus admonished them to remember. If it took the Holy Spirit's work to accomplish God's work in their hearts, it would take His work in the hearts of those they were trying to help.

- His fourth command was, "hold fast"

The words, "hold fast" mean "to guard against loss" and have the idea of preventing something from escaping. The devil wants to steal away the work of God in the hearts of every believer. Jesus said, "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy" (Jn 10:10). We should guard that which God has worked in us as we would our most prized possession.

- His fifth command was, "repent"

The word, "repent" means "to think differently" and speaks of having a different view of our actions. It means we see our sin as God sees it. It carries with it the idea of turning away from. True repentance involves changing our minds and our actions about our sin.

Jesus said, "If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee". There would be consequences if they did not give heed to these five commands.

Jesus coming as a thief in the night is used of His Second Coming at the end of the Tribulation Period (Mt. 24:43-44; 1 Th. 5:2; 2 Pet.3:10). However, in the context of this verse, it seems to refer to Jesus coming with a specific judgment on this particular church.

Jesus warned that the "hour" of Him coming with this judgment would not be known. When they least expected it, He would come with judgment. A thief does not announce his plans to come and rob. He comes, usually at night, and takes that which is most valuable.

Many who live ungodly think they are getting by because God has not sent extreme judgment. The fact judgment has not yet come does not mean it will not come. There will always be consequences when we ignore the Lord.

Jesus' warning about coming as a thief in the night should have reminded the people of Sardis of Cyrus' attack on the city back in 546 BC (please refer to earlier comments about CITY).

THE COMPLIMENT 3:4

Some say the Lord gave no compliment to this church, but He did commend the ones in the church who had not "defiled their garments".

Rev. 3:4 Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.

In the bible, "garments" often refer to a person's character. Our clothes are an outward expression of what we are on the inside. A businessman wears a suit, a policeman wears a uniform, and a prostitute wears seductive attire.

When the Bible talks about a person's garments it tells us a lot about their spiritual condition. The outside reveals what is inside.

For example, Adam and Eve being without clothes revealed their innocent hearts (Gen. 2:25). Them making fig leaf aprons revealed guilty hearts (Gen. 3:7). Accepting God's coats of skin revealed their repentant hearts (Gen. 3:21). A person accepting God's garments of salvation reveals a believing heart (Isa. 61:10). Wearing sackcloth revealed a broken heart (Gen. 37:34). The white garments of the priest were to reveal his pure heart (Lev. 16:4). The New Testament believer putting off the old, and putting on the new is to reveal the change in their hearts when they got saved (Eph. 4:22). The Bible talks about the garments of widowhood (Gen. 38:19), holiness (Ex. 29:29), salvation (Isa. 61:10), and praise (Isa. 61:3). All of these reveal the condition of the heart.

With this in mind, those who had not "defiled their garments" means they had kept their hearts clean and refused to be conformed by the corruption around them.

Keeping their garments undefiled is no small matter for they were walking among those who were defiled. It is like trying to stay clean while walking through a pig pen. None of us will live a totally spotless life but we should try to live a clean life and confess quickly when we do not do so.

Jesus spoke of a "few" who had not defiled their garments. That means, most of them had. It is sad indeed when the majority of a church is not that which would please God.

God has kept a faithful remnant through every age (Isa. 1:9). Noah during the days of the flood, Gideon during the time of judges, Elijah and seven thousand during the time of Ahab and Jezebel, and there were a "few" laborers in the field, (Mt. 9:37). During the Protestant Reformation, He had the Puritans and Anabaptist.

Jesus said those who stayed undefiled would be rewarded. Being able to "walk with" Him speaks of a close fellowship (cf. Lk. 23:43; Jn 17:24).

No doubt, Jesus' comment reminded them of how a Persian king would grant their most trusted subjects to walk with them in the gardens of the king. It was a tremendous honor to walk with a king.

Those who are undefiled can enjoy a close walk with the Lord now. Enoch (Gen. 5:22), and Noah (Gen. 6:9), walked with God. However, this walk "in white" refers to a close fellowship with Jesus in heaven (cf. 7:9; 19:8). It is an honor to walk with the Lord now, how much more in heaven?

The delight of walking with Jesus should be more of an incentive to live godly than the fear of judgment mentioned in the previous verse. We should delight in His fellowship more than we fear His judgment.

They were "worthy" means "deserving". This is not a worthiness of their own, but that which Christ has given them. They are worthy because God made them so.

THE CONCLUSION 3:5-6

Jesus concludes His comments to the church in Sardis by telling them what would happen if they obeyed. There are always consequences to our obedience or lack thereof.

Rev. 3:5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

Once again, Jesus talked about those who "overcometh". He repeats this with each of the seven churches (2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:26; 3:5; 3:12; 3:21). An overcomer is one who believes Jesus is the Son of God (1 Jn 4:4; 5:4-5). Please refer to my comments made on Revelation 2:7.

Jesus said those who overcome "shall be clothed" in white raiment. God will provide the garments and clothe those who belong to Him.

Being clothed represents the covering we receive from Christ while unbelief is represented by nakedness (Gen. 3:7; 10-11).

Jesus speaks of the "book of life". I believe, as many others do, the Book of Life contains the names of all those for whom Jesus died, namely, all of humanity. Those who refuse to accept Jesus as their Savior will be blotted out of this book. That means, eventually, only the names of those who accepted Jesus will remain. At the Great White Judgment, those who are not in this book will end up in the lake of fire (20:15).

The "book of life" deals with spiritual, or eternal, life (Lk. 10:20; Phil. 4:3; Rev. 13:8; 17:8; 20:15; 21:27). Also called the "Lamb's book of life" (Rev. 13:8; 21:27). In essence, it is heaven's roll book.

Jesus saying he "would not blot his name out" is a promise of assurance to every true believer. He will not remove their forgiveness.

The words "would not" are a double negative in the Greek language. Which means He was saying He would never, ever, in any way, blot their names out. Please take a moment and look at these other double negatives in the Word of God (Mt. 5:18; Mt. 24:35; Lk. 21:18; Jn. 4:14; Heb.13:5).

Instead of a warning of losing our salvation, as some believe, this is actually a promise of assurance to true believers.

To "confess" their name before the Father means Jesus will claim them as one of His own. The opposite will be true of those who never get saved. Jesus will say, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Mt 7:23).

Rev. 3:6 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

John closed his message as he did with all the churches (2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:29; 3:6; 3:13; 3:22). Anyone who can hear, needs to listen.

We need to "hear what the Spirit saith" because He is telling us the truth. The world lies, the flesh lies, the devil lies, but God always tells the truth.

We need to "hear what the Spirit saith" because He says exactly what we need to hear. Like the doctor who tells the patient how to get well, our Lord tells us how to live a victorious life in a rotten world. Like the patient, we need to listen and obey.

The sixth church
THE CHURCH IN PHILADELPHIA 3:7-13

THE CHURCH IN PHILADELPHIA WAS AN EXAMPLE OF
"EVANGELISM WITHOUT EXCUSES"

The church in Ephesus was an example of "labor without love", Smyrna of "stress without straying", Pergamos of "compassion without compromise", Thyatira of "working without warning", Sardis of "living without life", and the church in Philadelphia was an example of "evangelism without excuses".

God opened a door for those in the church in Philadelphia to reach the known world with the gospel of Christ (3:8). In spite of the difficulties, they faithfully witnessed without offering excuses.

Jesus promised to keep them from the hour of temptation that would come upon the entire world because they had been faithful and kept His Word.

Philadelphia is one of the two churches (other is Smyrna) that Jesus did not rebuke. Some believe it was the best of the seven churches.

THE CALENDAR

Once again, let me remind us, the seven churches represent seven different periods of time in church history, beginning with John's Day and ending at the Rapture.

The "Philadelphia Period" represents from 1700 to 1900 AD.

This was a time of spiritual awakening which includes the First and Second Great Awakening. The Pilgrims, Anabaptists, and others fled the persecution in England and came to the New World. Men of God like Johnathan Edwards, George Whitfield, John Wesley, David Livingston, and D.L. Moody were used greatly during this time. Preacher Shubal Sterns was used tremendously at the Sandy Creek Baptist Church in Liberty North Carolina.

In a 200 years, the church spread faster than at any time since the first century. The church became the evangelistic vehicle God had intended her to be. Revival had come. After the deadness of the Sardis period, the church needed this time of reviving.

The fact is, many of our churches would not exist if it were not for this time of spiritual awakening.

THE CITY

Philadelphia, which means "brotherly love", was located about 30 miles southeast of Sardis.

The city was on an important trade route called the Imperial Post Road. It sat at a place where three countries met (Mysia, Lydia, and Phrygia) and was called "The Gateway to the East".

This city was built with the intention of spreading the Greek language and culture throughout the Asian provinces.

Unfortunately, the city was built in a volcanic mountain range that made it susceptible to severe earthquakes. The citizens being in constant fear of these earthquakes were ever ready to flee their homes and run outside of the city until the danger ended.

This volcanic activity, though dangerous, produced two useful things.

First, it produced very rich soil which grew healthy crops and vineyards.

Second, it produced hot springs. People traveled great distances to take advantage of the healing benefits of these springs.

THE CHURCH 3:7

The church of Philadelphia gladly proclaimed the gospel. The city was built to spread the Greek language and culture, but God used it to spread the gospel to the ungodly regions beyond Philadelphia.

We do not know exactly how or when this church was founded but it lasted for centuries. Perhaps its longevity was due to them witnessing faithfully.

Rev. 3:7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

Jesus addressed the "angel of the church". As I have mentioned, I believe this refers to the pastor of the church (read the comments about angels on 1:20). It is the pastor's job to tell the church what God tells him.

As with each church, Jesus' description of Himself applied to the condition and needs of the particular church He was addressing. He described Himself not simply to inform, but to assist those He spoke to.

First, Jesus described Himself as "holy".

The believers in the church in Philadelphia could proclaim the gospel of Christ without fear. He was the One who was "holy" enough to pay for the sin of mankind on Calvary.

Mankind unsuccessfully tries to find fault in Jesus (Lk. 6:7). Pilate had to admit there was no fault in Him (Jn. 18:38). Many modern self-proclaimed intellectuals prove their ignorance by ridiculing Jesus. Until a person sees how God holy is, they will not see their need for salvation.

A real relationship with God starts, not with His love, but with His holiness. We must first see Him being too holy to ignore our sin. Then, and only then, will we see ourselves as hopeless sinners and turn from our sin to Him who is willing to forgive.

Also, until a person sees how God holy is, they will not see their need for separation.

In our day, many profess to be saved but ignore God's admonition to be holy even as He is holy (Lev. 11:44; 19:2; 20:7; 20:26; 1 Pet. 1:15-16).

Jesus described Himself as holy so those in the church of Philadelphia would see their need to be holy. God is too holy to use a dirty vessel. He tells us to present our bodies as a "holy" sacrifice (Rom. 12:1). He says also, "And be not conformed to this world" (Rom. 12:2). We'll never be a good witness if we are not holy. No one will listen to a person who claims to know the Lord but lives like the world.

Second, Jesus described Himself as "true".

The word "true" means "genuine". He is who He claims to be. Many claim to be something they are not.

The "key of David" takes us back to Isaiah (Isa. 22:22). In essence, this key refers to the authority to allow or refuse admittance into a king's presence. It means Jesus had the authority to control the entrance of God's kingdom to the New Testament church.

This description of Jesus assured the New Testament believers they were on the right path. Coming, as most of them did, from the Old Testament system of Judaism to the New Testament system of grace was a dramatic change. No doubt, the devil tried to convince them they had made a mistake in doing so.

Jesus is the One who "openeth". He opens doors of service to every believer. We need to be sensitive to these opportunities so we won't miss them. We should never take lightly the privilege of doing something for our God. We will give an account of how we handled every one of those opportunities (1 Cor. 3:13).

When God opens a door, "no man shutteth". The work and will of God cannot be stopped. The Pharisee Gamaliel said, "But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God" (Acts 5:39). Fighting against God and His will never ends well. Hijab said if you fight against the work of God "ye shall not prosper" (2 Ch 13:12).

God is able to open entire nations to the gospel, even those nations who declare Christianity illegal. At present China persecutes believers horribly, yet there is a great revival taking place.

Jesus is also the One that "shutteth". God not only opens, He closes doors. The Holy Spirit pointed Paul in the right direction by closing the wrong directions (Acts 16:6-10).

The thought of God closing a door is terrifying. The country, state, community, or individual that rejects God and His Word is on dangerous ground. Much of what determines whether God opens or closes a door is the attitude of the believers. Sodom was destroyed because of its sin but also because of the lack of true believers (Gen. 18:32). America could come under God's judgment for the same reasons.

When it seems like all of our effort is accomplishing nothing, we can rest in the fact that it is God's work and not our own. As Jesus told His disciples, there are times when we should shake the dust off our feet and move on (Mt. 10:14).

THE COMPLIANT 3:8-10

The church in Philadelphia is one of the two churches (other is Smyrna) that received no complaint from God.

THE COMPLIMENT

Rev. 3:8 I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

As with the other churches (2:2; 2:9; 2:13; 2:19; 3:1), Jesus knew "the works" of the people in the church in Philadelphia.

Jesus said, "I have set". This phrase includes with it the idea of a gift. God gave these believers the gift of an opportunity.

The One who openeth and shutteth had set a very definite "open door" before those at the church in Philadelphia. As I have mentioned, the city of Philadelphia was called "The Gateway to the East". This gateway was an open door to the world as far as commerce and culture. It was also an open door to getting the gospel to the known world.

This was a door that "no man" could shut. No one, including the devil, could stop what God was doing. That does not mean there was no opposition. The next verse talks about the "synagogue of Satan". The devil fights, but he cannot win when the hand of the Lord is at work. We certainly need to keep this in mind in our day.

Imagine what an open door means.

- It means God has prepared the hearts of those involved

God has prepared the believer.

He has instructed the person presenting the gospel. The gospel message did not magically plant itself in the mind of the believer. They were taught by someone who had been taught themselves.

God has prepared the unbeliever.

An unbeliever does not naturally welcome the gospel message. God works on their heart and shows them their sinful state and their need of forgiveness.

- It means God has provided an opportunity

God has worked to bring two or more people together at the exact same place at the exact same time.

An open door is wonderful, but it is useless if not used. God opens doors each and every day. The person at work, the man at the store, and the lady at the bank, all are doors that God has opened to us to present the gospel message. So many times, we fail to walk through these doors.

Jesus complimented the church in Philadelphia for three things

- One, they had "little strength"

The word "strength" is the Greek word "dunamis" which usually means "power" in the Bible. It can refer to at least three different types of power. It is used for God's supernatural power (Mt. 11:20; 13:54; 22:29; 26:64; Mk. 5:30; Lk. 4:36; Acts 2:22; Rom. 1:4; 1 Cor. 15:43; 2 Cor. 12:9; 12:12; Eph. 1:19). It is used for the mighty power of God done through man (Mt. 25:15; Mk. 6:14; Lk. 1:17; Acts 1:8; 3:12; 6:8; 19:11; Rom. 1:16; 15:19; 1 Cor. 2:4; 2 Cor. 4:7; Eph. 3:7; 3:16; 3:20; Col. 1:29; 1 Th. 1:5; Heb. 2:4). And, it is used for the natural ability of man (Mt. 7:22; 2 Cor. 1:8; 8:3; Heb. 11:11; Rev. 15:8; 17:13).

The words "little strength" could be a rebuke or a compliment. As a rebuke, it would mean Jesus was condemning them for their little spiritual power. As a complement, it would mean Jesus was commending them for having any spiritual power considering the severe circumstances they were enduring.

The context seems to favor a compliment and not a rebuke. In one statement, Jesus said, they have little strength, had kept His Word, and had not denied His name. Since the last two parts of His statement are positive, it seems to me that the first would also be positive.

These words certainly fall short of an overwhelming compliment but I believe Jesus was grateful for the spiritual power they did have. The "strength" they did have, they had received from the Lord.

Recognizing our weakness is one of the first requirements for being used by God. God told Paul, His strength was made perfect in Paul's "weakness" (2 Co 12:9). The sooner we learn how "little strength" we have, the better. We are in trouble when we think we are strong enough to not need God's power. God's way up is always down (Mt. 23:12), His way to riches is poverty (Mt. 5:3), and His way to comfort is mourning (Mt. 5:4).

- Two, they had "kept" His Word

We "keep" the law of the land when we obey what it says. In like fashion, keeping God's Word is obeying what it says. God tells us to be "doers" and not just hearers of His Word (Jam. 1:22). Preachers should preach and obey and church members should hear and obey the Word. We can keep God's Word out of fear, obligation, or love. God wants us to do what we do because we love Him.

- Three, they had not "denied" His name

We deny the name of the Lord by openly denying that we know Him as Lord. The word "denied" is the same word used when Peter "denied" the Lord (Mt. 26:72). Many believers have been forced to deny the Lord or be executed.

We deny the name of the Lord when we refuse to submit to His Lordship and live for ourselves. Paul talked about people who "denied" the Lord by their disobedience (Tit 1:16).

We deny the name of the Lord when we put the things of the world before Him. The same word is used to explain how Moses "refused" to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter (Heb. 11:2).

We deny the Lord when we fail to witness regularly. Undoubtedly, the believers at the church in Philadelphia were especially faithful to openly tell others about Christ.

The word "for" means "since" or "because". That means, God set an open door before them because they had kept His Word and did not deny His name. Had they not done so, there would have been no open door. Many want the open door without having to keep His Word or do His will.

Rev. 3:9 Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

As he did with the church in Smyrna, John mentioned the "synagogue of Satan" (cf. 2:9).

The first-century believers experienced a tense relationship with these unbelieving Jews. Those who practiced Judaism met in the Jewish synagogue on the Sabbath day and took part in the Old Testament ritualistic worship. On the other hand, the New Testament church met on Sunday, in the temple (Acts 2:46a), spare rooms (Lk.22:10-12; Acts 1:12-13), homes (Acts 2:46b; Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19, Phm. 2), and schools (Acts 19:9) and practiced the New Testament Scriptures.

The "synagogue of Satan" refers to the Jews who still held to the Old Testament system and rejected Jesus as the way of forgiveness. They were Jews by blood, but not by "the" blood. Instead of accepting Christ and assisting the church in Philadelphia, they were causing trouble. Those who should have been the greatest allies of the church were their greatest enemies.

They not only claimed to know God, they believed they were doing God's work by persecuting Jesus and the church. The Jews, especially the Pharisees, caused Jesus, His disciples, and the church, more problems than any other group. Please take time to read through these verses (Mt. 3:7-8; 9:34; 9:11; 12:2; 12:14; 12:24; 12:38; 15:1; 22:15; 23:13-15; Acts 7:57-60). The Jews joined with the ungodly Romans to make sure Jesus was crucified. Then, they did their best to do away with the Christian movement. It is no wonder why Jesus called them the "synagogue of Satan".

Sadly, the synagogue of the Lord had become the synagogue of Satan. Jesus said about the house of God, "ye have made it a den of thieves" (Mt. 21:13), and "*your* house is left unto you desolate" (Mt. 23:38 emphasis added).

These non-Christian Jews claimed to be God's people. Jesus settles this with "and are not".

Jesus said, "I will make them come and worship before thy feet". Jesus said those who oppose the church in Philadelphia would eventually turn to Christ and worship with the church.

The believers in Philadelphia may have been helpless to stop those who opposed them, but God was not. He could have consumed them with fire (2 Kgs. 1:10). But, He determined to touch the hearts of those who opposed the gospel. At least some of those who had despised the cross would come to love it.

Like the apostle Paul (1 Tim.1:13), those who once blasphemed the name of Christ will worship Him. Only God can touch those who hate Him and cause them to love Him.

The last words of this verse are amazing. Those who had been in the synagogue of Satan will acknowledge the fact that God "loved" the believers. They will understand that Jesus was truly the Messiah, that He willingly gave His life for wicked sinners, and He used the New Testament church to accomplish His will in the world.

Rev. 3:10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

The "word of my patience" is a fitting title. These believers desperately needed patience if they were to live victoriously in their day of trials. They remained true to God even though wickedness was all around them.

Since the believers in the church in Philadelphia had "kept the word", God promised to keep them from the hour of temptation. The only "hour of temptation" that is to come upon "all the world" is the Tribulation Period (described in chapters 6-19). The church has endured many times of tremendous tribulation but never to the extent of what this verse speaks of and never a tribulation that covered "all the world". Jesus said this time will be worse than anything since the beginning of time (Mt. 24:21).

Some believe God was promising He would keep His children safe as they went through the Tribulation Period. We will discuss this subject in detail in the fourth chapter but I will say now, I do not believe the church will go through any part of the Tribulation Period.

The phrase "dwell on the earth" is found five times and "dwell upon the earth" is found three times in the book of Revelation. These phrases always refer to those who are lost (3:10; 6:10; 11:10; 13:8; 13:14; 14:6; 17:8).

The word, "dwell" means "to inhabit". It means, those who dwell "upon the earth" are earthly people as opposed to heavenly people (cf. Phil. 3:20). They have lived only for the things of the world and cared nothing for spiritual matters. In other words, they are unbelievers.

THE COMMAND 3:11

Jesus told them, and us, what to do.

Rev. 3:11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

Jesus encouraged the believers by assuring them He could come at any moment and remove them from the trouble that was coming.

The Bible never tells us when Jesus is coming. He could come at any time and we are to be ready.

The words, "hold fast" mean "seize". It has the idea of holding to and refusing to let go. It is the same word used for laying hold of the devil and chaining him in the bottomless pit (20:2).

That which "thou hast" refers to their trust in God ("little strength"), and their faithfulness ("kept my word") mentioned in verse 8. They were to keep doing what they had been doing. How many churches could the Lord say, "Just keep doing what you are doing"?

This "crown" refers to a crown earned for service. A crown is received at the end of the race. Our race is not over, it is not time to stop or even to slow down.

That "no man take thy crown" does not suggest we can lose a crown we have already earned. It is talking about us losing a crown we could have won had we remained faithful.

THE CONCLUSION 3:12-13

Jesus concludes His comments to the church in Philadelphia. He told them what would happen if they obeyed. There are always consequences to our obedience or lack thereof.

Rev. 3:12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.

Once again, Jesus talked about those who "overcometh". He repeats this with each of the seven churches (2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:26; 3:5; 3:12; 3:21). An overcomer is one who believes Jesus is the Son of God (1 Jn 4:4; 5:4-5). Please refer to my comments made on Revelation 2:7.

Great blessings promised to those who overcome

One, God will make them a "pillar" in the temple of God.

A "pillar" refers to the large columns on which a building rests. The believers, like the pillars, were that which the church depended on. No church is greater than its members.

A pillar is able to support the building only if it is resting on a good foundation. The pillar is dependent on the foundation it rests upon. In Jesus' description, the pillar is the believer and the foundation is Jesus.

Because of the earthquakes around the city of Philadelphia, a strong and steady pillar was an indispensable part of a building.

The buildings during John's day were quite different than our modern buildings. The framework that supports today's buildings is hidden inside the walls. The pillars during John's days were exposed and an important part of the buildings appearance. The pillars played an important part in people's opinion of the entire building.

In like fashion, the believers of a church are exposed to the world. They form their opinion of our church by looking at us. We should be careful to live in a manner that attracts people toward the Lord and the church.

Two, they would enter the temple and "go no more out".

This speaks of permanence. Our position in Christ is secure. This really meant a lot to this church. As I mentioned earlier, the earthquakes around the city of Philadelphia forced the citizens to flee their homes until the danger ended. Jesus promised something secure and permanent.

Three, He would write on Him the name of His God.

Like a badge identifies the policeman, Jesus' name identifies us as one of His. There is no mistake about who the overcomers belong to.

Four, the believer will have the name of New Jerusalem.

The believer will be a citizen of the New Jerusalem. We will learn more about what this means in chapter 21.

Five, the believer will have a "new name".

We will have to wait for heaven to discover what this "new name" is.

Rev. 3:13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

John closed his message as he did with all the churches (2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:29; 3:6; 3:13; 3:22). Anyone who can hear His voice, needs to listen.

This admonition is the most applicable of any Jesus has made to this point. It applies directly to our day, our churches, our lives, and our future.

If there has ever been a time when we need to "hear what the Spirit saith" it is now. As is suggested in these verses, we are seeing the drifting away from the truth of the Word. The old-time preaching is being replaced by a modern "feel-good" message with no bite. So-called worship music is nothing more than rock music sprinkled with a few "Jesus" words. But, more important than anything, the gospel has been watered down to easy believism.

Also, many churches have become more of a political institution than a real church. The emphasis has become good citizenship instead of a godly walk with Christ. Somehow, the hope for America has shifted from the church house to the White House.

In spite of the church's downturn, this is not a time to give up. It is a time to trust God and stand true to Him and His Word. As God told Paul, His grace is sufficient for whatever we face (2 Cor. 12:9).

If those in the church of Philadelphia saw the need to evangelize, surely we should also. They did not use their circumstances to excuse themselves from telling their world about the gospel. If they didn't, neither should we.

The seventh church

THE CHURCH IN LAODICEA 3:14-22

THE CHURCH IN LAODICEA WAS AN EXAMPLE OF "RICH WITHOUT RICHES"

The church in Ephesus was an example of "labor without love", Smyrna of "stress without straying", Pergamos of "compassion without compromise", Thyatira of "working without warning", Sardis of "living without life", Philadelphia of "evangelism without excuses", and the church in Laodicea was an example of "rich without riches".

The step between the church in Philadelphia to the church in Laodicea is a dramatic one. We go from what might be the best of the churches to what is certainly the worst.

As we will see, the church in Laodicea is a picture of the church on earth just before the Rapture. If a man wrote this story, the last church before Jesus returns would be a spiritual giant. It would be a duplication of the early church with godly believers, thousands being saved, and the Spirit of God working in an indescribable manner.

Sadly, the facts could not be more different. The last church in God's economy will be an absolute failure and an embarrassment to the name of Christ.

THE CALENDAR

Once again, let me remind us, the seven churches represent seven different periods of time in church history, beginning with John's Day and ending at the Rapture.

The "Laodicea Period" represents the time period from approximately 1900 AD till the Rapture of the church. It is difficult to determine the exact end of the Philadelphia and the beginning of the Laodicea period. The characteristics of these churches overlap more than any of the other churches.

That means we are presently at the end of the Philadelphia age or already in the Laodicean church period. Since the Bible says nothing about how long the Laodicean period will last, we have no idea how much longer it will be before Jesus returns to get His bride.

THE CITY

Laodicea, a city forty-five miles southeast of Philadelphia was known for its banking centers, theaters, and medical school.

It was the richest city in its district because of its banking, medicine, and wool.

There were three negative aspects to this city.

One, their pride made them stubborn and self-sufficient. They believed they had "need of nothing" (3:17).

Two, there was little, or no, fresh water inside the city. They had to build aqueducts to bring water into the city. Since this water came from miles away it was lukewarm by the time it reached the city.

Three, their susceptibility to the attack of an enemy. The water aqueduct created a major defense problem. An enemy could cut off their water and simply wait until they gave up. For this reason, the leaders of the city wanted to negotiate instead of fighting.

Paul spoke of this church in a somewhat negative manner (Col. 2:1; 4:16).

THE COMPLIMENT

Sadly, this was the only church that did not receive any compliment from Jesus. It is sad indeed when God can not say one good thing about you.

THE CHURCH 3:14

The name Laodicea means "people ruling" or "rule of the people". It has the idea of the majority rules. Contrary to popular opinion, the local church is not to be a democracy. The Lord cannot run a church that is run by the people. A church belongs to the Lord, not to the people in the church.

A good bit of debate has arisen about whether those in the church were believers or unbelievers. There were believers in the church in Laodicea when Paul wrote some 30 years earlier (Col. 2:1; 4:15).

I believe what Jesus said to this church can be applied to both believers and unbelievers. With this thought in mind, we will walk our way through the next few verses.

Rev. 3:14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

Jesus addressed the "angel of the church". As I have mentioned, I believe this refers to the pastor of the church (read the comments about angels on 1:20). It is the pastor's job to tell the church what God tells him.

To the other churches, Jesus addressed the churches according to the place they were located. Here, He addressed the people ("the Laodiceans"), and not the place (Laodicea). This means the Laodiceans controlled the church and not the Lord. Sadly, the same is true about many churches in our day.

As with each church, Jesus' description of Himself applied to the condition and needs of the particular church He was addressing. He described Himself not simply to inform, but to assist those He spoke to.

Jesus described Himself as the "Amen". The word means "so be it" and implies the absolute certainty of a subject. Being God, Jesus speaks a word and it is so.

A "faithful and true witness" is one who has seen an event with their own eyes and is willing to speak the truth about it. A "faithful" witness is one you can depend on. A "true" witness tells the truth all the time. Like it or not, agree with Him or not, Jesus always tells the truth.

Jesus is faithful and true but the Laodiceans are neither.

The "beginning of creation" refers to the fact that Jesus is the source of all creation. In other words, it all began with Him. John said, "All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made" (Jn 1:3).

THE COMPLAINT 3:15

I have mentioned, Jesus' complaint, unlike ours, does not come from a selfish ego. He is the one person in the universe who is worthy to make a legitimate complaint. His complaints are always factual, precise, and meant to be helpful.

With what could arguably be the saddest comments of any church in the bible, Jesus told the church in Laodicea they were lukewarm.

Rev. 3:15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

And, as with the other churches (2:2; 2:9; 2:13; 2:19; 3:1; 3:8), Jesus knew "the works" of the people in the church in Laodicea.

Jesus described this church by gauging their spiritual temperature. Their geography was a perfect picture of their spirituality. The city sat between the hot springs of Hierapolis and the cold springs of Colossae. Spiritually, they were in between hot and cold.

He first told the Laodiceans what they were not.

They were not "cold".

The "cold" church is the church that denies the fundamentals of the faith. They deny the virgin birth, the resurrection of Christ, and the inspiration of Scripture. They believe in salvation by good works and a God who is tolerant of sin.

They were not "hot".

The "hot" church is on fire for God. The Greek word translated "hot" is found only here however, the same root word is translated "fervent" in Romans (Rom. 12:11). This type of church demonstrates a genuine fervor for God and His will. The member's actions and attitude show evidence of genuine salvation and sincere longing for a closer walk with God.

Why would Jesus say, "I would thou wert cold or hot"?

It is easy to see why Jesus would want a church hot instead of lukewarm. But, why would He rather them be cold than lukewarm? At first glance, it seems that lukewarm is better than cold.

I can think of two reasons why Jesus would rather a church be cold than lukewarm.

One, because the beliefs and practices of a cold church are obvious. One look at the cold church and you know what you are getting. So many churches are not clear about what they believe. They proudly proclaim themselves to be nondenominational, so you don't really know what they believe. A church should not be like a grab bag where you don't know what you are getting.

Two, because being cold is uncomfortable and makes you desire warmth. Lukewarm is comfortable. With that comfort comes contentment and little desire for change. The worst enemy of God's will is satisfaction.

The first step to doing God's will is becoming dissatisfied with our present condition.

The Bible speaks often about making a choice. God told Israel, "Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse" (Dt 11:26). Joshua said, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve" (Jos 24:15). Elijah said "How long halt ye between two opinions" (1 Kgs. 18:21). Ruth told Naomi, "thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God" (Ru 1:16). Jesus said, "No man can serve two masters" (Mt. 6:24). One of the greatest needs of the modern church is for people to decide they are going to live for God.

Rev. 3:16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

After Jesus told the Laodiceans what they weren't, He told them what they were.

They were "lukewarm". This is the only time the word "lukewarm" is found in the Bible. What did Jesus mean?

The "lukewarm" church is neither cold nor hot.

Notice, it is important to realize, the following description can apply to an unbeliever or a true believer. If this refers to an unbeliever it is a person who claims to be saved but shows no evidence of salvation. If it refers to a believer it is a person who is saved but has no desire to go further with the Lord. Like lukewarm water, they are of no value to anyone, not even themselves.

Whether believer or unbeliever, those who are lukewarm are content to remain as they are. The lukewarm person does not care and does not care that they don't care. None are further from God than those who are content in their present spiritual condition. None are more difficult to penetrate with the Word of God. How do you persuade the person who is convinced they are okay? The publicans and sinners were much more prone to hear the message of Christ than the Pharisees and Sadducees (Lk. 18:9-14).

Quite often, this is the person who causes the most trouble in a church. They cause more trouble to the people and more tears to the pastor than anyone else.

And, this was the state of the Laodiceans. They were not so worldly that they shunned the church, and neither were they so godly that they shunned the world. Unfortunately, this attitude is found all too often in the churches of our day. The cry for tolerance and compromise has replaced the cry for truth and convictions.

What is a lukewarm church?

- A lukewarm church is a church that hurts and angers God

First and foremost, we must realize, a lukewarm church angers God. He is not just mildly displeased, He is angry, and rightfully so.

- A lukewarm church is a church that a worldly church

This is a church that tries to live for the Lord and the world at the same time. In the process, neither is accomplished. They are hot enough to not be cold and cold enough to not be hot. Lukewarm churchgoers have done more damage to the family of God than the sinners in the gutter.

- A lukewarm church is a church that has lost its zeal

This is a church that has meetings but they are without the zeal of the Holy Spirit's presence. There is little emotion, little burden, little joy, and little fruit. The singing, sermons, and services are half-hearted and boring. There is an overall disinterest in the work and will of God. The excitement about loving and serving God is gone.

- A lukewarm church is a church that an unhappy church

This is a church that is too close to the world to enjoy the things of God and too close to the things of God to enjoy the things of the world.

- A lukewarm church is a church that is a nonproductive

This is a church that accomplishes little, or nothing, for the Lord. They believe, but what they believe had little effect on their lives. They believe in literal hell but do not witness. They believe it is right to live a clean life, but they do not live clean themselves. They believe it is right to love each other, but they fail to love those around them.

- A lukewarm church is a church that a satisfied church

This is a church that has no desire, or intention, to get closer to God.

So many of our churches today are in a "lukewarm" condition. The church on fire is a dying breed. There are lots of programs, but little power, lots of talent, but little touch, and lots of committees but few convictions.

The word, "spew" is found only here in the Bible. It means, "to reject with extreme disgust".

God rejects them.

The words, "I will spue thee out of my mouth" speak of rejection. The stomach automatically rejects that which is contrary to it. In like fashion, God will reject that which is contrary to His nature. We talk a lot about how God receives and forgives, and we should, but we must realize God also rejects. Jesus said earlier He would remove their candlestick (2:5).

God refuses them.

God refuses to help, answer prayer, give instruction, or bless in any manner. More importantly, He will cease to convict and chasten. He will turn them loose to their own way and let them suffer the consequences.

We must remember, Jesus is speaking to a church as a whole and not to individuals. God will not reject one of His children (Heb. 13:5), but He will turn away from the local church that continually rejects Him.

Being spewed out of His mouth does not necessarily mean the church would be closed down and services would cease. They could continue to meet together for their services but the Spirit of God would not be present.

One example of this is the temple. The temple went from being "my father's" house (Jn. 2:16), to "your" house (Mt. 23:38), because they rejected Jesus. Jesus told them their house was "desolate", which means deserted (Mt. 23:38). God was no longer there.

Another example would be when the glory of God was withdrawn from Israel (1 Sam. 4:21-22). When the ark of the covenant, the symbol of the presence and power of God, was gone, so was God.

The word "will" means it was already settled. The decision had already been made. If they did not repent, He would spew them out. How many churches of our day are at this point?

Thankfully, as we will see in verse 18, God was willing to hear their cry if they would repent.

Rev. 3:17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

Their problem was not just their condition but also their attitude about their condition. They thought they were okay. A self-sufficient attitude is a curse on any church or individual. Our blessings can become our curses when we think we deserve them.

The two phrases, "thou sayest" and "knowest not" summarize the problems in this church. The words, "thou sayest" refer to their view of themselves. The words, and "knowest not" refer to their actual condition.

- Jesus talks about what they thought they were

First, they saw themselves as being "rich, and increased with goods". Their business affairs were making them rich and richer. They attributed their success to their hard work and ingenuity and refused to acknowledge God's blessings on them.

Sadly, many churches have the same attitude today. They look at their buildings and their bank accounts and think that means they are pleasing God. A multi-million dollar budget does not guarantee God's approval. Some of the most wicked actors in Hollywood are millionaires.

There are times when God does bless His people with riches (Job, Job 1:2-3; Abraham, Gen. 13:6; Isaac, Gen. 26:12-14; Solomon, 1 Chr. 29:28). However, neither riches nor poverty is not always a sign of God's approval or disapproval. God's own Son never owned His own home (Mt. 8:20) and had to go fishing to get the money to pay His taxes (Mt. 17:27).

Second, they saw themselves as needing "nothing".

Those who think they need nothing have the greatest need.

They saw themselves as needing nothing from man or God. In 60 AD, when the city was destroyed by an earthquake, they rebuilt by using their own funds and refusing assistance from the Roman government. Their pride led them to declare, that they did not need outside help, they did not want outside help, and they did not ask for outside help. The self-sufficient attitude of the city filtered into the church.

The world thinks happiness comes from riches but, for so many, riches become a curse. The "love of money" is the root of evil (1 Tim. 6:10). We cannot serve God and mammon (Mt. 6:24). Riches can make it difficult for a lost person to acknowledge their condition and be saved (Mk. 10:23).

The words, "knowest not" tell us their opinion of themselves was totally wrong.

Whether believer or unbeliever, seeing our need is vitally important. The unbeliever must see their need to repent and turn to Christ for forgiveness. Every true believer on earth once saw themselves as a hopeless and helpless, hell-deserving sinner. Also, the believer living in sin needs to see their need to repent and get right with God.

- Jesus talks about what they actually were

He said they were "wretched". This word is found only one other time in the Bible. Paul said, "O wretched man that I am" (Rom. 7:24). When Paul saw himself as he was, he immediately repented. Those in the church of Laodicea needed to do the same thing. Repentance is the only solution to our failure.

He said they were "miserable". This word is found only one other time in the bible. Paul said, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1 Cor. 15:19). It means "full of misery".

He said they were "poor". The word, "poor" means "a pauper". They were financially rich but spiritually poverty-stricken. Their financial prosperity kept them from seeing their spiritual poverty. In the next verse, Jesus told them to purchase spiritual riches instead of material.

He said they were "blind". This means they lacked the ability to see spiritual truth. They believed they were what they needed to be and had everything they needed.

He said they were "naked". They lacked the covering of God's righteousness. The city was known for its extravagant clothing but they were spiritually naked.

He said they were "blind". The city was known for its eyesalve but the people were spiritually blind. They were blinded to self, sin, sinners, and even to the Savior. Spiritual sight comes only by the Holy Spirit's illumination (1 Cor. 2:14). The medical school may have produced ointments and salves that promised healing, but they had nothing for their spiritual ailments.

THE COMMAND 3:18

Jesus told them, and us, how to fix their problem. Their situation was dire, but not hopeless. Sadly, there is no evidence that they obeyed.

As I will explain, it seems to me that verse 18 speaks to an unbeliever, and verse 19 speaks to a believer.

Jesus tells them what they should do

Rev. 3:18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

This verse seems to apply to an unbeliever, which would imply, there were unbelievers in the church in Laodicea. The sheep are never safe when there are wolves present. Mixing with the unbelievers will cause the believers to compromise their Christian convictions. And, mixing with believers will give the unbelievers a false sense of security.

The word, "counsel" means "to give advice or to recommend". Many hours have been wasted on church members who had already made up their minds and paid no attention to the advice of the preacher.

They were to buy gold "of" the Lord. Only God can provide that which He demands. The bankers in Laodicea could not provide this type of gold.

Jesus offered them spiritual benefits that related to the three areas of business in the city.

- First, Jesus offered them true riches

Jesus' first command was, "buy of me gold tried in the fire".

As mentioned earlier, the Laodiceans were financial experts. Being such, they were always ready to listen to the advice from their financial experts, but they refused to listen to the sound advice of the Lord. Jesus offered that which would make them truly rich. He offered them the best gold.

The "gold tried in the fire" refers to gold that has been purified by heating. If they wanted gold, Jesus was offering the best. The gold they loved so much was impure but that which Jesus offered was 100% pure.

The word "buy" does not imply good works. It means to give of one thing to receive another. The Laodiceans had to give up their self-sufficiency so that they might receive the gift of forgiveness. Salvation is a free gift (Jn. 4:14; 6:32; Rom. 5:16; 6:23), but a person must be willing to turn away from their sin and turn to the Lord to be saved.

God said through Isaiah, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (Is 55:1 emphasis added).

Jesus' advice still rings true today. True riches only come from God. Paul talked about the "unsearchable *riches* of Christ" (Eph. 3:8 emphasis added).

- Second, Jesus offered them new garments

Jesus' second command was to purchase "white raiment".

The Laodiceans were proud of the quality of their black wool and clothing industry, but, Jesus offered them much better garments.

This "white raiment" is an emblem of Christ's righteousness being applied to the account of the believing sinner. Jesus was offering them the solution to their "nakedness". Once again, it was God who supplied that which He demanded.

That thy nakedness "do not appear" means their sin would be completely covered. The fig leaves did not cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:8). The blood of Christ cleanses from all sin (1 Jn. 1:7).

The garments made from the black wool of the Laodiceans would eventually decay. The garments Jesus offered would last forever.

- Third, Jesus offered them eyesalve

Jesus' third command was, "anoint thine eyes with eyesalve".

As mentioned before, the Laodiceans were in the business of making and selling eyesalve for vision problems. They sent eyesalve all across the world but did not realize they were the ones most in need of visual healing. Jesus said they were "blind" (3:7).

The Holy Spirit opens the eyes of the blind (1 Jn. 2:20).

Jesus' command was the complete opposite of what the Laodiceans were used to. Usually, if they needed money, they depended on the financial institutions in their city. If they were sick, they turned to the medical experts, if they needed clothing, they purchased it from the local vendors. In this case, Jesus was telling them to forsake all of what they were used to and trust God.

Rev. 3:19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

The comments in this next verse seem to apply to a believer.

God chastens His "son" (Pro. 3:11; Heb. 12:5). He does not chasten those who are not His. Being without chastisement proves we are not His child (Heb. 12:8).

Jesus told the church He was being harsh on them because He loved them. If He loved the worst church, there is hope for everyone. He was not their enemy.

The word, "love" is the Greek word "phileo" which refers to brotherly love.

The words "I love" say He loved them. The words "I rebuke and chasten" prove He loved them.

The word, "rebuke" means "to rebuke" but it refers to the act of actively correcting.

The word, "chasten" means "to discipline" and carries with the idea of teaching.

The word, "repent" means "to think differently". It is a change of mind that causes a change of action.

The only solution to their situation was to "repent". Confession and repentance are the only means of forgiveness of our sin. Sin does not dissipate over time. Until there is confession and repentance the sin remains on the account of the guilty person.

The word, "zealous" means "heat" and refers to having an earnest desire. It is translated "covet" (1 Cor. 12:31; 14:39), envy (Acts 7:9; 17:5; 1 Cor. 13:4), and desire (1 Cor. 14:1). All of which is an indication of the earnestness of desire. Jesus uses this word to emphasize the urgency of their need to get thoroughly right with God.

Jesus is standing at the door

Rev. 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

The word, "Behold" means "to see" and implies taking a long and complete observation. They needed to stop and take a good, long, look at themselves.

It was the "I" of the universe calling to them. The Great I AM (Ex. 3:14) is standing outside His church, knocking.

What does this tell us?

- One, it tells us Jesus has been discarded

He who had been in the "midst" of the churches is now standing outside. He has been shut out of His own church. The Lord of the church had left the church. The Jews rejected Him and now the church in Laodicea has also.

He had become an unwelcome stranger standing on the outside of the church asking for entrance. We rightly complain about God being thrown out of the schools, government, and homes, but nothing much is being said about Him being thrown out of the church.

It is sad, strange, and scary that no one noticed Jesus was no longer in the church. I wonder if we are any better at discerning His presence. We must remember, that we are presently near, or in, the Laodicean period.

- Two, it tells us, a church cannot survive without the presence of Jesus

A church can survive without, doctors, lawyers, millionaires, and politicians, but it will not survive long without Jesus.

- Three, it tells us, Jesus is trying to get the attention of those inside

A knock is abrupt and is meant to get our attention.

- Four, it tells us, that Jesus still cares about those in the church

Had He not cared, He would have simply left and never returned. It would serve them right if He had. And yet, we find Him asking to be invited back in.

- Five, it tells us, Jesus is able to help those in trouble

Jesus wanted to be allowed back into the church. To do that, He needed one person willing to admit their need, repent, and open their hearts to Him.

- Six, it tells us, Jesus is willing to come in if someone will open the door

His knocking is a legitimate call. He longs for someone to hear His call and open the door.

Jesus is a gentleman. He never forces His way in. He has to be invited. Whether talking about salvation, worship, blessings, or service, He offers the benefits, but man has to open his heart to receive.

- Seven, it tells us the power of an individual

Jesus said if any "man". He did not say there needed to be a vote of the congregation and that everyone had to agree. All it takes is for one sincere saint to wake up, see their need, and call on the Lord. Herein lies the secret of a lukewarm church. It starts with one individual who gets tired of the deadness.

The letters to all seven churches are to individuals in the churches, but this seems more true about this church than any of the others. This church especially needed someone to hear the call of Jesus and open the door to let Him in.

The amount of influence a member has in a church is determined by how godly they live, not by how many positions they hold.

A church will be nothing more than what its members are. What they are on the outside of the church they will bring into the church. What they are, the church will become. One member who gets truly right with God can have a dramatic effect on the church.

Jesus wants someone to "open the door"

Opening the door implies opening our hearts. A knock at the door of our house, causes us to decide to open the door and let them in or leave the door closed and keep them out. Opening the door means we give them access to our house. Opening the door to our hearts is us allowing the Lord to have access to every part of our lives.

Years ago a stranger knocked at my door, told me he was having car trouble, and asked to use my phone. This was before the invention of cell phones, so I allowed him to step just inside my door and use the phone. I opened my door but I did not really open my home to him. He had access to my house just enough to get to the phone, and that was all.

Opening the door to Jesus means we give Him access to every room of our lives and withhold nothing from Him. In other words, it means He becomes the Lord of our lives.

So many want God to be like a genie in a bottle who will take care of their wants and wishes, but not a God who is the absolute Lord of their lives.

Jesus' promise to the one who opens the door

Jesus promised three things to the one who would hear His voice and open the door.

One, He said, "I will come in to him".

This promise is to any believer who will ask Him.

Two, He said He would "sup" with him.

To "sup" means to dine and refers to the evening meal. It, being the main meal, was when special guests would be invited. It was the time when they unhurriedly sat to enjoy the meal and each other's company. The day of labor was over so it was a time of refreshment and relaxation. Jesus is speaking of a close and personal time relationship.

If anyone understood this it was John (Jn. 13:23-26). At this meal, John leaned against the "bosom" of Jesus. Also, John was close enough to ask a question the other disciples did not feel comfortable enough to ask. Also, John received information that none of the other disciples had received.

Three, He said, "and he with me".

There is a closeness involved with this statement.

It is one thing to be invited to a large affair where you are just one of the crowd. You are there but no one knows you are there. It is quite another to be invited to an affair where the host asks you to sit at his table. In this case, you have complete access to the host and are able to converse with him closely. Jesus said if you open the door, He would talk with you like you are the only one in the room.

THE CONCLUSION 3:21-22

Jesus concludes His comments to the church in Laodicea by telling them what He would happen if they obeyed. There are always consequences to our obedience or lack thereof.

Jesus' promise to him that overcomes

Rev. 3:21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

Jesus mentions two thrones in this verse. The first, He calls "my" throne, the second is His father's throne.

The Father's throne, of course, refers to the throne in heaven where God abides (Ps. 11:4; 1 Kgs. 22:19; Isa. 6:1; 63:15; Mt. 23:22; Heb. 8:1; Rev. 4:2). This is the throne upon which He now sits. On this throne, no one will ever sit, other than God.

The other throne, what Jesus calls "my" throne, refers to the throne in Jerusalem on which Jesus will sit during His Millennial reign (Isa. 32:1; Zech. 14:9; Mt. 19:28; Mk. 10:40; Lk. 1:32-33; Acts 15:16; 1 Cor. 6:2; Rev. 2:26-27; 20:1-5; 22:5).

Once again, Jesus speaks of those who "overcometh". Please refer to my comments made on Revelation 2:7.

The words, "grant to sit with me in my throne" mean, the overcomer will share the authority that Jesus enjoys (Dan. 7:27; Rev. 1:6; Mt. 19:28; 25:20-21; Lk. 22:29-30; 1 Cor. 6:2-3; Rev. 2:25-27; 5:9-10; 20:4). The believer will be allowed, in some way, to reign with Christ. Exactly what this means or how it is carried out is beyond my understanding.

Amazingly, these are the same ones who were in danger of being spewed out of the mouth of Jesus. God's mercy is available to those who are willing to admit their spiritual lack.

There is no better example of an overcomer than Jesus Christ Himself. He overcame and sat upon His Father's throne as a result (Jn. 17:5; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3; 8:1).

The obvious question would be, how did Jesus overcome?

- He overcame by surrendering

Jesus said, "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (Jn 6:38).

- He overcame by selflessness

Jesus said, "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (Jn 5:30).

- He overcame by service

Paul wrote about how Jesus, "took upon him the form of a servant" (Phil. 2:7).

- He overcame by sacrifice

Paul wrote, "as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour" (Eph 5:2).

All these can be summed up by the cross. Jesus overcame at the cross. And so it is with the believers who overcome. They overcome by going to the cross and trusting the finished work of Christ.

Rev. 3:22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

John closed his message as he did with all the churches (2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:26; 3:5; 3:12; 3:21). Anyone who can hear, needs to listen.

Notice, once again, that Jesus speaks to individuals. He said "He" that hath an ear. Some believers may feel like they have little to contribute to their local church. Jesus tells us nothing could be further from the truth. The most seemingly insignificant member may be the one that God uses to restore power to the church. Will you be the one who opens the door of your heart and begs Jesus to come in, and take over your church?

The letter to the seven churches ends with Jesus still outside of the church, knocking and asking to be invited in. There is no sign they did so.

The details described in the letter to the Laodiceans describe perfectly the condition of today's church. Seeing these details being lived out before us is both exciting and scary at the same time.

Before we go to the next chapter, I'd like to mention one more thing about these seven churches. Sadly, only two of the seven churches were anywhere close to what God desired. I wonder how the churches of our day would measure up. The good news is, that Jesus was willing to forgive and restore the church that repents. To those who refuse to repent, God promises judgment.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE THIRD DIVISION OF THE BOOK BEGINS HERE (chapters 4-22)

"the things which shall be hereafter" (cf. 1:19)

Beginning in chapter four, we are introduced to "the things which shall be hereafter" (cf. 1:19)

In chapter four, God translates John into heaven. Something dramatic is about to happen. In the chapters ahead, John describes things he, nor anyone else, had ever seen.

Like many others, I believe this chapter starts with a picture of the Rapture. Our viewpoint moves from earth to heaven and we find ourselves in heaven looking down on the earth.

At this time, I would like to take a somewhat lengthy detour and deal with when the Rapture takes place. Does Jesus come before, during, or after the tribulation period?

The discussion of when Jesus will return falls into four groups (Pre-Trib, Pre-wrath, Mid-Trib, and Post-Trib). Interestingly, all of these groups believe the Bible is inspired, inerrant, totally accurate, and is God's instruction manual for our day. Neither group is any more spiritual than the other.

I want to look at three aspects of this subject. First, we will look at TRUTH SHOULD BE ACCEPTED, then TIMING SHOULD BE ADDRESSED, and finally, TROUBLES SHOULD BE ANTICIPATED.

1. WHEN EXAMINING THE RAPTURE, TRUTH SHOULD BE ACCEPTED

The word "Rapture" is not found in the Bible but that does not undo its reality. The word "Trinity" is not in the Bible but the truth of the Trinity is taught throughout Scripture.

The Rapture refers to the time when Jesus Christ comes in the clouds and takes the church to the place He has prepared for them in heaven. Jesus said, "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" (Jn 14:3).

The Rapture begins in heaven with Jesus.

1st step, The Lord will descend from heaven, bringing the souls of the New Testament saints who have died ("dead in Christ") with Him (1 Th. 4:16a).

2nd step, The bodies of these souls who come with Jesus are glorified and raised from their burial places (1 Th. 4:16b).

3rd step, The believers who are still alive will be changed in a split second (1 Th. 4:17a).

4th step, Both those who have been raised from the dead and those who have been changed will ascend to meet the Lord in the air and will go with Him to the place He has prepared for them in heaven (1 Th. 4:17b).

Paul explained the Rapture when he wrote the church in Corinth (1 Cor. 15:51-58).

He said the Rapture is a "mystery" (1 Cor. 15:51). A "mystery" is something that has been hidden in the past but has now been revealed. We see this in the fact that the Old Testament tells us nothing about the Rapture but it is revealed in New Testament times.

When talking about believers, Paul says not all will die (sleep) but all will be "changed" (1 Cor. 15:51-52). The trumpet will sound, the bodies of those who have died "shall be raised incorruptible" and those who are alive will "be changed". Our corruptible bodies will be changed into incorruptible bodies (1 Cor. 15:53) like unto the resurrected body of Christ (1 Jn. 3:2).

Paul said, "then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting" (1 Cor. 15:54). We have not yet escaped the sting of death. Death, like the stinger of a bee, causes great pain. But, then, death will lose its sting and will no longer cause pain.

Paul concluded his comments by encouraging the believer to be faithful until the end (1 Cor. 15:58).

2. WHEN EXAMINING THE RAPTURE, TIMING SHOULD BE ADDRESSED

We know Jesus is coming, but when? This question has caused more controversy than any other. The timing of the Rapture may not be one of the essential doctrines in the Bible but that does not mean it is unimportant. The fact is, anything God says is important and should not be taken lightly.

While on earth, even Jesus Himself did not know the exact time of His coming (Mt. 24:36). A note of interest, the verse in Matthew 24:36 speaks of Jesus' Second Coming, not the Rapture. Of course, when Jesus ascended back to heaven, that knowledge, with all the other attributes He had temporarily put on hold while on earth, was restored (Phil. 2:7; Jn 17:5). Certainly, He now knows the exact moment of His return.

There is no verse in the Bible that tells us when the Rapture will take place. The fact is, there are no specific signs in Scripture pointing to the Rapture. There are, however, several signs that point to the Second Coming of Jesus.

These signs will be seen in, and out, of the church.

The signs seen out of the church will be, false Christs, wars and rumors of wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, unusual hate and betrayal (Mt. 24:5-6; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; 2 Pet.3:3-5), peace and safety (1 Th. 5:3), scoffers 2 Pet.3:3-4), spiritism (1 Tim 4:1), and circumstances getting worse (2 Tim 3:13).

The signs seen in the church will be, lukewarmness (Re 3:15), traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God (2 Tim 3:4); a form of godliness (2 Tim 3:5), hypocrisy (Tim. 4:1), and departing from the faith (1 Tim. 4:1).

When we see the signs of the Second Coming, we know the Rapture is close because it happens seven years before the Second Coming.

This can be illustrated by the signs of Christmas. Weeks before Christmas, we start seeing the signs in department stores and commercials. Since Thanksgiving comes before Christmas, the signs of Christmas should make us aware of the closeness of Thanksgiving.

Seeing the signs of His coming should alert us to the fact that nothing has to happen before Jesus comes in the Rapture. He could come before I write my next word.

Knowing Jesus could come at any moment should make us live pure lives (1 Jn 3:3), keep us steadfast (1 Cor. 15:58), cause us to listen intently to the Word (2 Tim. 4:1-2), and to wait patiently for His coming (1 Th. 1:10; Tit. 2:13). What could motivate the believer more than realizing, at any moment, they could be standing before the God who sent His Son to die for their sin (Ecc. 11:9; Rom. 14:10; 1 Cor 3:13; 2 Cor. 5:10).

There are four primary views about the timing of the Rapture. I'll simply mention them now but we will examine these in more detail later.

- The Post-Tribulation view

This view says the Rapture will come after or at the end of, the Tribulation Period. This view says believers will rise to meet Jesus in the air and immediately return to earth to enter the Kingdom of Christ (Millennium). In this view, the church will go through the entire Tribulation Period.

- The Mid-Tribulation view

This view says the Rapture will come in the middle of the Tribulation Period. In this view, the church will go through the first half of the Tribulation Period.

- The Pre-Wrath view

This view says the Rapture will come before the Wrath of God is poured out on those living on earth. This view interprets "wrath" as referring only to the second half of the Tribulation Period.

Actually, the wrath of God begins with the coming of the Antichrist at the very beginning of the Tribulation. The coming of the Antichrist is God's wrath on Israel and all of mankind. Surely the terrible judgments of the four horsemen at the first of the Tribulation Period (6:1-8) must be considered as part of the wrath of God.

- The Pre-Tribulation view

This view says the Rapture will come before the Tribulation Period begins. In this view, the church goes through none of the Tribulation Period.

Let me take some time to explain why I hold to this view.

- I BELIEVE IN THE PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURE BECAUSE OF THE PLAN OF GOD

God's plan in reaching out to mankind is separated into three distinct aspects.

One, in the Old Testament, God's plan dealt with the people of Israel (Gen. 12:1-3, 7; 17:4, 7-8; 22:17; Dt. 4:6; 2 Sam. 7:23; Isa. 43:10, 12; 44:8; 60:2-3).

Two, after Israel rejected God's Son (Jn. 1:11), He turned to the Gentiles (Rom. 11:25). God's plan for Israel was put on hold until He completes His current plan with the church (Rom. 11:1-2).

Three, God will turn back to Israel so that He might keep His promises (Rom. 11:26).

The Tribulation Period is a vital part of God turning back to Israel. He will use that time to purge the people of Israel and bring them to repentance (Ezk. 20:37-38).

Trying to mix these three aspects of God's plan will lead to confusion and error.

- I BELIEVE IN THE PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURE BECAUSE OF THE PROMISE OF GOD

The Tribulation Period is a time of the wrath of God being poured out (Rev. 6:17; 11:18; 14:10; 15:1; 15:7; 16:1; 19:15; Joel 2:31).

God has promised to save the church from His wrath. I do not suggest for a second that God has promised to keep His church from any of the tribulations of life. In fact, He promises the exact opposite (Mt. 5:11-12; 10:34-35; Jn 16:33, 17:15; Jam 1:2-3; 1 Pet. 4:12-17).

But, there is a vast difference between the tribulations of life and the wrath of God. The tribulations of life are meant to develop the believer (Rom. 5:3; Jam. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:6-7). The wrath of God is meant to correct sin (Rom. 1:18; Col. 3:6; Re. 16:1).

The church will not endure God's wrath because His wrath on our sin was poured out on Jesus on the cross (Isa. 53:4-5; 53:11; 1 Pet. 3:18).

The first time Jesus revealed the Rapture to His disciples, He told them to not let their hearts be troubled (Jn. 14:1).

God told the New Testament church they are not appointed to wrath.

1 Th. 5:9 For God hath not appointed us to *wrath*, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ ... (emphasis added).

Ro 5:9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from *wrath* through him (emphasis added).

1 Th. 1:10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the *wrath* to come (emphasis added).

The above verse connects the coming of our Lord with escaping wrath.

God spoke directly to the church in Philadelphia and promised He would keep them from the hour of temptation that would come upon all the world.

Re 3:10 *Because* thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also *will keep thee* from the *hour of temptation*, which shall *come upon all the world*, to try them that dwell upon the earth (emphasis added).

Some teach this verse means God was promising to take care of the church as it goes through the Tribulation Period.

Three reasons tell us this cannot be so.

One, the word, "from" means "out of" and not "through".

Here are some examples of this word being used elsewhere in the Bible. In each, the word means to be taken out.

Mt. 2:15 *Out* of Egypt have I called my son (emphasis added).

Mk 5:8 Come *out* of the man, thou unclean spirit (emphasis added).

Jn 10:28 ... neither shall any man pluck them *out* of my hand (emphasis added).

Acts 16:40 And they went *out* of the prison (emphasis added).

Acts 19:16 ...so that they fled *out* of that house naked and wounded (emphasis added).

1 Cor. 5:10 ... for then must ye needs go *out* of the world (emphasis added).

Two, if God is saying He will keep His children from the destruction of the Antichrist, He certainly does not keep His promise. The believers living during the Tribulation Period will not only suffer terribly but will be put to death (Re 6:9-11).

Three, the Antichrist will make war with the saints and "overcome" them (Re 13:7). If they are overcome, how could they be raptured at the end of the Tribulation?

- I BELIEVE IN THE PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURE BECAUSE OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

The Tribulation Period deals primarily with the people of Israel. For this reason, when we study the Bible, we must be careful to determine what God meant for Israel and what He meant for the church.

The 24 elders (Re 4:4), who represent the church, are seen by John, in heaven and wearing white raiment and crowns. The only way this could be possible is that the Rapture has already taken place.

We know the Tribulation Period deals mainly with Israel because of the following.

- The Rapture is not mentioned in the Old Testament

The Old Testament, when God was working specifically with the people of Israel, is totally silent about the Rapture. The reason, the Rapture involves the church and not Israel.

God never told Israel He would come to remove them from the earth and take them to heaven. Jesus was speaking to the church when He said, "I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (Jn. 14:3).

God did promise Israel a future kingdom. They are looking for their Messiah to come, set up His Kingdom, and reign on earth (Dt. 30:1-7; 2 Sam. 7:10-13; Isa. 11:1-9; Zech. 8:3; Dan. 7:14; Zech. 12:10-14; Mic. 4:2-4; Acts 1:6). This kingdom involves their repentance (Zech. 12:10-11), peace (Micah 4:2-4; Isa. 32:17-18), joy (Isa. 61:7), comfort (Isa. 40:1-2), obedience (Jer. 21:33; Isa. 35:8), and Jesus will rule (Isa. 9:7; 11:1-10).

This kingdom involves Israel's repentance (Zech. 12:10-11), peace (Micah 4:2-4; Isa. 32:17-18), joy (Isa. 61:7), comfort (Isa. 40:1-2), obedience (Jer. 21:33; Isa. 35:8), and rule of Jesus (Isa. 9:7; 11:1-10).

- All seven years of the Tribulation Period deal with Israel and not with the church

The Tribulation Period is a vital part of God's work on the people of Israel.

The word, "church" is not mentioned at all between 4:1 and 19:11. However, Israel is mentioned 30 times in Revelation.

The "saints" mentioned during the Tribulation (13:7; 14:12; 17:6; 20:9) are those who are saved after the Rapture takes place and are not a part of the church. The Greek word translated "saints" is a different word than the word translated "church".

The church has not replaced Israel as some believe. When Israel rejected their Messiah (Mt. 27:26; Mk. 15:10-15), God set them aside temporarily and grafted in the New Testament believers (Rom. 11:11). God will turn back to Israel for He has not cast them aside forever (Isa. 49:15; Rom. 11:1-2).

- The Tribulation Period is called "Jacob's trouble"

The Bible calls the Tribulation Period "Jacob's trouble" (Je 30:7). Jacob was Abraham's grandson whose name God changed to Israel (Gen. 32:28). Therefore, the Tribulation Period is a time of Israel's trouble.

- The Jewish calendar is used to count the 1,260 days

The Bible speaks of 1,260 days (3 1/2 years), during which the Tribulation Period will take place on earth. This 1,260 days is connected to Israel.

- The seven years of Tribulation are the fulfillment of the seventh week of Daniel's prophecy

God said to Daniel, "Seventy weeks are determined upon *thy* people and upon *thy* holy city" (Da 9:24 emphasis added). The reference to "thy people" refers to Daniel's people who, of course, are the Jews. And "thy holy city" can only be Jerusalem, which is the capital of Israel.

Sixty-nine of these "weeks" (of years) have been fulfilled. The last week of years will be the seven-year Tribulation Period (Dan. 9:27). Notice, this is a week, not half of a week as Pre-wrath or Mid-Trib would have us believe.

To understand this better, we need to understand what is commonly called a double-fulfillment prophecy. A double-fulfillment prophecy is a prophecy that has both a short-term and long-term fulfillment. The first (short) fulfillment takes place relatively soon after the prophecy is given. The latter (long) part will be fulfilled but at a much later date.

One example would be Isaiah's prophecy about the coming of Jesus. He wrote, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Is 9:6).

Obviously, the part of the prophecy that says a "child is born" and "a son is given" was fulfilled when Jesus was born (Lk. 2:1-7). But, the part that says "the government shall be upon his shoulder" and Him being called "Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God" has yet to be fulfilled.

As I mentioned, Daniel's prophecy about the seventy weeks is a double-fulfillment prophecy (Dan. 9:24-27). The events described in verses 25 and 26, which point to the first coming of Jesus, have already taken place. However, the events described in verse 27, which point to the Tribulation Period, have yet to be fulfilled.

It is important to realize, that the period that separates these two times coincides with the time of the church.

Someone may ask why God would divide prophecy in such a manner. I'm sure there are reasons that God reserves to Himself but I feel certain He did it to encourage His children. Seeing the first part fulfilled would encourage you to expect the second part to come to pass. The God who can do the first part can be trusted to do the second part. He knows the end from the beginning (Isa. 46:10).

- The Antichrist will make a covenant with Israel

The Antichrist will make a seven-year covenant with Israel (Da 9:27). Of course, this refers to the seven-year Tribulation Period. This covenant will draw Jews back into the land of Israel by the droves.

- The comments made that could only refer to Israel

During the Tribulation Period, the Devil persecutes the woman who brought forth the man child (Re 12:3-4, 13). The woman is Israel and the man child is Jesus.

Those in "Judaea" are told to flee to the mountains to escape the attack of the Antichrist (Mt. 24:15-21). Those in Judea are a reference to the people of Israel.

Those who are to flee are to pray their flight does not take place on the "Sabbath" (Mt. 24:20). Only a Jew would be concerned about the Sabbath day. The Jews were forbidden to travel more than 2,000 yards on the Sabbath.

When Luke described this same event (Lk. 21:12-28), he mentioned "synagogues" (21:12), Jerusalem (21:20), and Judaea (21:21). All of these refer distinctly to Israel.

Some have asked why God told the church about the Tribulation Period if they will not be here to experience it. The answer is simple, He wants us to know. The Bible records a lot that does not apply directly to us. Everything does not have to be about us to be important.

- I BELIEVE IN THE PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURE BECAUSE OF THE PURPOSE OF GOD

Before I deal with God's purpose for the Tribulation Period, I would like to ask, what possible reason could there be for the church to have to experience the first half of the Tribulation Period?

What is God's purpose behind such a horrific event as the Tribulation Period?

- God will use the Tribulation Period to punish Gentiles

Even though it is a time when God deals primarily with Israel, He will also be judging the Gentiles who turn against Him and follow the Antichrist (Re 6:17; 13:8; 14:7 16:19).

- God will use the Tribulation Period to purge Israel

The Bible speaks of God converting the people of Israel (Dt. 4:29-30, Isa. 43:5; Jer. 30:7; 32:37; Ezk. 20:37-38; Zech. 12:10; 13:1; Hos. 6:1-2; Rom. 11:25-27; Mt. 23:37-39; Acts 3:19-21; Rom. 11:25-27). He will use this time to show Israel their sin and bring them to repentance for crucifying their Messiah. God will use the horror of the Tribulation Period to convert Israel and prepare them to receive the King.

- I BELIEVE IN THE PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURE BECAUSE OF THE PREPARATION OF GOD

Nowhere in Scripture does God tell His people to prepare for the Antichrist or the False Prophet. He does, however, tell the church to prepare for the coming of His Son.

The church is told to look, watch, and wait for the Lord's return, not for the judgment of Tribulation (1 Cor. 1:7; Phil. 3:20; 1 Th. 1:10; Tit. 2:13; Heb. 9:28; 1 Pet. 1:14; Jude 21). If the church is to go through the Tribulation Period, why are we not instructed to look, watch, and wait for the appearance of the Antichrist?

God never instructs the church to prepare bomb shelters or store food to prepare for the attack of the Antichrist. We are never admonished to get our stuff ready, but we are admonished to get ourselves ready.

- I BELIEVE IN THE PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURE BECAUSE OF THE POWER OF GOD

The power of God is demonstrated in many ways. One way we don't often think of is His restraining power. At this present time, the power of the Holy Spirit restraining the power of the Wicked One. The time will come when the Holy Spirit, and His restraining work, will be removed (2 Th. 2:7-8).

Paul tells us this will happen when that "Wicked be revealed" (2 Th. 2:7-8). Obviously, this is a reference to the coming of the Antichrist at the beginning of the Tribulation Period.

Since the Holy Spirit abides in the heart of every believer, when He goes, every believer will go with Him.

- I BELIEVE IN THE PRE-TRIBULATION RAPTURE BECAUSE OF THE PROTECTION OF GOD

Whether it be Israel or the church, God always protects His own. He has demonstrated this fact thousands of times throughout the history of mankind.

There are two Old Testament characters who serve as excellent illustrations of God's protection.

The first is Lot. God protected Lot from the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah by taking him out before the judgment came (Gen. 19:22). This illustrates God protecting His church by removing her before the Tribulation Period.

The second is Noah. God protected Noah and his family by keeping them safe through the judgment of the flood (Gen. 7:1). This illustrates God protecting Israel as they go through the horror of the Tribulation Period.

3. WHEN EXAMINING THE RAPTURE, TROUBLES SHOULD BE ANTICIPATED

Any time we dig into the Word of God, we can anticipate an attack from the devil. God is not the author of confusion, but the devil certainly is. His first attack on man was to put doubt on the Word of God (Gen. 3:1).

As I have mentioned, there are good and godly people who disagree about the timing of the Rapture. What we believe about this subject does not necessarily make us more, or less, spiritual than anyone else.

COMMON MISUNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT THE TIMING OF THE RAPTURE

- Some believe the timing of the Rapture depends on when the last person completes the body of Christ

Some believe the Rapture will take place the moment the last person who completes the body of Christ gets saved. I believe God has set the exact moment of the Rapture and we have no affect on it. Nothing has to be fulfilled before Jesus comes (1 Cor. 15:52).

- Some believe the gospel has to be preached throughout the world before the Rapture can take place

This comes from a misunderstanding of Matthew 24:14 which says "And this gospel of the *kingdom* shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (emphasis added).

The context of Jesus' statement shows us Jesus was talking about His Second Coming, not the Rapture. His disciples had asked Jesus about the sign of His coming, and the end of the world (Mt. 24:3). They were thinking about Jesus setting up His Kingdom on earth, not coming in the Rapture.

Notice, that the gospel Jesus mentions is the gospel of the "kingdom" (Mt. 24:14), not the gospel of Christ. The "kingdom" is referring to the Millennial Kingdom. That means, the "gospel of the kingdom" is the message about His coming kingdom that will be preached during the Tribulation Period. The message will speak of Jesus' return bringing deliverance to the believers and judgment to the unbelievers.

Also, and maybe most importantly, the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom unto all the world is preached by an angel, not by man. John wrote, "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" (Re 14:6).

- Some teach the Rapture takes place at Revelation chapter 14

Revelation 14 does describe the reaping of a harvest. However, it is a harvest of lost souls as they are cast "into the great winepress of the wrath of God (14:19). This speaks of Jesus' return at the end of the Tribulation Period and the battle of Armageddon (Re 14:20; Mt. 24:30; 26:64; Acts 1:9-11). Paul (2 Th. 1:7-10) and Jude (Jude 1:14-15) wrote of this event.

- Some believe only the last half of the Tribulation Period involves God's wrath

Some believe only the second half of the Tribulation Period deals with God's wrath. They point to when the Antichrist breaks his treaty with Israel (Mt. 24:15) as the time when this wrath begins.

However, the fact is, the first half, though not as bad as the second, is still God's judgment on Israel. The first half is the beginning of God's judgment. It will be the time when God lets man have their way on earth. That my friend, is the worse of all judgments.

God indeed gives the Antichrist 3 1/2 years to unleash his hostility on mankind (Dan. 7:25; 9:24-27, 12:7-12; Re 11:2-3, 12:6, 12:14, 13:5). But, that does not undo the fact that all seven years are years of judgment (Dan. 9:24).

- Some confuse the Rapture with the Second Coming of Christ

For instance, in Matthew 24, the words "Then shall two be in the field" so often used as a reference to the Rapture, is actually referring to the Second Coming of Jesus (Mt. 24:40–41).

In Matthew 24, Jesus was answering His disciples' question about when He would return and set up His kingdom (Mt. 24:1-3). His words, therefore, are dealing with His Second Coming, not the Rapture.

He used those taken away in the flood during Noah's day as an illustration to describe those who would be taken away at His coming. It was the sinners, and not saints, who were taken away by the judgment of the flood (Mt. 24:37–39). That tells us, that those being taken away in Matthew 24:40-41 are the unbelievers whom Jesus will take away to be judged, and not the church being taken to heaven.

<u>RAPTURE</u>	<u>SECOND COMING</u>
Jesus receives His bride, the church (1 Th. 4:16-17)	Jesus gathers unbelievers for judgment (Rev. 19:11-21)
Not mentioned in Old Testament	Predicted in Old Testament (2 Chr. 6:6; Dan. 7:13-14; Zech. 14:4)
Jesus is coming in the air (1 Th. 4:16-17)	Jesus will come to earth (Zech. 14:4; Acts 1:11)
Jesus comes for the believers (Jn. 14:3; 1 Th. 4:16-17)	Jesus will come with the believers (1 Th. 3:13; Re 19:14, Jude 14)
All believers translated	No translation at all
Believers will be removed to be taken to heaven (1 Th. 4:16-17)	Unbelievers will be removed, judged, and sent to hell (Mal. 3:2; Mt. 24:38-42)
No judgment on earth	Those on earth will be judged (Mt. 25:31-46)
Deals primarily with New Testament believers Jn. 14:1-3	Deals primarily with Israel. Jesus will set up the 1000-year kingdom (Zech. 14:4-5; Mt. 24:27-31)
Only His bride sees Him	Every eye shall see Him (Mt. 24:30; Re 1:7)

No signs pointing to Rapture	Many signs pointing to Second Coming (2 Th. 2:3; Mt. 24:4-8)
Imminent, could happen at any moment	Comes only after certain signs
No mention of Satan	Satan is bound (Rev. 20:1-3)
Jesus claims His bride (1 Cor. 15:51-52)	Jesus comes with His bride (Rev. 19:14)
Tribulation begins	Millennial Kingdom begins

God gives us examples of the Rapture in the Bible.

Enoch is a picture of the Rapture.

Ge 5:24 And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.

Elijah is a picture of the Rapture.

2 Ki 2:11 And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

Paul is a picture of the Rapture.

2 Co 12:2 I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.

AND NOW, LET'S GO BACK TO OUR WALK THROUGH THE BOOK OF REVELATION

3. SEVEN SCENES IN HEAVEN: (chapters 4-5)

In chapter four, John is transported into heaven and shown marvelous sights. He describes but makes no attempt to explain what he sees. From this, we can presume that even he did not comprehend all that he was seeing.

Chapter 4 transitional. The church age comes to an end and the Tribulation Period begins.

John is taken in the spirit to heaven (4:1)

Rev. 4:1 After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.

As we will discover, this verse describes the calling away of the bride of Christ, commonly known as the Rapture.

The words "After this" or "after these things" indicate a change of circumstances (4:1; 7:1; 18:1; 19:1). Something new and dramatic is about to happen so we should always pay close attention when we see these words.

The door John saw was already "opened". This open door provided a way into the very throne of God. There are two other open doors in this book (3:8; 3:20).

Once again, John heard a "voice" speaking to him (cf. 1:10). As in chapter 1, it was the voice of Jesus Christ himself.

I believe, as many others do, the words, "Come up hither", refer to the Rapture when Jesus comes for His bride. At that moment, all true believers will be "caught up together" to "meet the Lord in the air" (1 Th. 4:13-18; Cor. 15:51-57). For much of the rest of this book, John's experience will be related to heaven.

The voice, like a "trumpet" was loud and clear. Also, like a trumpet, it demanded attention. The words, "Come up hither" are a command and not just an invitation. Like the words "come out of him" (Mk. 1:25), when Jesus speaks, things happen. In like fashion, Paul talks about the "trump of God" at the Rapture (1 Th. 4:16).

John was promised to be shown things "which must be hereafter". What he was shown was real and precise descriptions of future events, not an "Alice in Wonderland" fairy tale.

John's call, like the call of believers at the Rapture, was a personal call. Millions will hear His call, but it is to each and every individual. I'm glad we have a personal Savior.

The word, "hereafter", much like the words "after this", shows a change of circumstances and something new taking place.

The word "hereafter" tells us these things described had not yet happened. In fact, even two thousand years later, they still have not happened. That does not mean they will not happen, it only means they have not happened yet.

First scene

God on His throne (4:2-3)

John is taken to heaven

Rev. 4:2 And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.

Some believe John being "in the spirit" means he was transported into heaven. Others believe it means he was simply seeing a vision.

I believe it means John was supernaturally transported to heaven. His spirit left his body and was taken to heaven. The words, "Come up hither" in verse 1 would seem empty unless he was actually caught up. Paul had a similar experience (2 Cor. 12:15). Paul said he was not sure if he was in the body or out of the body when it happened.

John experienced in his spirit what the church will experience literally. He, like the church at the Rapture, was taken above the chaos on earth. From that heavenly viewpoint, he was shown the events that will take place during the Tribulation Period and beyond.

The word, "immediately" coincides with the words, "moment" and "twinkling of an eye" that Paul used (1 Cor. 15:52) to describe the quickness of the escape of the believers. The Rapture will be so quick we will be there before we realize we left.

Once transported to heaven, as verse 1 tells us, the first thing that caught John's attention was a throne. He talks about the One on the throne (1:3), what was around the throne (1:4), what came out of the throne (1:5), and what was before the throne (1:6).

Man used to think the earth was the center of the universe. Had they read the bible, they would have known the center of the universe is this throne that John saw.

John mentioned nothing about the gates of pearl, the street of gold, or the mansions. Certainly, all these things are there but they are insignificant compared to this throne.

The throne is an important part of this book. The word, "throne" is found 12 times in chapter four and 39 times in the book of Revelation.

John's focus was not on the throne itself but on the One who "sat on the throne". John was seeing that which Isaiah had seen. He saw the "Lord, sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up" (Isa. 6:1-3).

The One sitting on the throne is the same one who had been seen in the midst of the churches. We no longer see Him among the church because He has taken the church to heaven. Now, instead of Him being in the presence of the church, the church is in His presence.

When we get to heaven our focus will not be on streets, or gates, or trees, it will be on Him who sits on the throne. The only reason we get to go is because of Him. We will see then, what is truly precious.

If God is the focus in heaven, should it not be the same on earth? Who is on the throne of your life? Is your life controlled by this God who rules over the universe?

As we will soon discover, the God on this throne will be dispensing judgment and not blessings.

Rev. 4:3 And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

John had an impossible task. How do you describe the indescribable? How do you describe the Son of God? What words are sufficient to describe His magnificence?

Also, how can you describe that which no one has ever seen? John used something we have seen to try to describe something we have not seen.

John didn't give a detailed description of Jesus. He said nothing about His size or shape. Instead, he described the glory and radiance surrounding Him. He said Jesus' appearance was like a "jasper and sardine stone".

The truth is, we are not told, and therefore do not know, the exact meaning of these stones. It is easy to go to extremes in our attempt to explain that which God hasn't told us. When the Bible is silent we should be silent.

However, we do know that a "jasper" stone was transparent. Later, a jasper stone is described as being "clear as crystal" (21:11). With this in mind, the jasper stone may be a symbol of the pure holiness of God.

Also, the "sardine" stone was blood red. Certainly, this is meant to remind us of the blood of Christ that He shed for the world (Mt. 26:28; Heb. 9:14).

John saw a "rainbow" around the throne. The rainbow was the color of an "emerald" which is a rich green color. A rainbow reminds us of God's promise of mercy. He placed a rainbow in the sky when He promised Noah He would never again destroy the world with water (Gen. 9:12-17).

The word, "round" means "in a circle". This rainbow is a complete 360-degree circle. A circle is unbroken and has no end. So it is with God's promises.

The One John saw "sat" on the throne. Why was He sitting?

- Him sitting tells us He is in charge

The person sitting on a throne is the one in charge. Jesus sitting on the throne speaks of His authority and power over the universe. We will never have the correct view of life on earth until we recognize the fact that there is an Almighty God ruling from His throne in heaven.

- He was sitting tells us His authority is settled forever

Many mighty kings have been dethroned because someone stronger came along. That will never happen to the One on this throne.

- He was sitting tells us He is worthy of worship and obedience

Jesus sitting reveals the fact that He had pleased the heavenly Father. Had His work at Calvary not satisfied the holiness of God He would not be sitting on this throne.

24 elders around the throne of God (4:4-5)

Rev. 4:4 And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.

Once again we find the words "I saw". As I have mentioned, these words tell us something new is on the way and John is moving us from one event to another.

The word, "seats" means "thrones. Of course, these seats are different than the throne. It was common for a queen to sit on a less majestic throne beside her King. No doubt those sitting on these thrones have less authority than He who sits on the throne of God.

Who are these 24 elders?

One, they are not, as some believe, a group that represents a combination of Israel and the church.

Two, they are not angels. The word translated "elders" is never used for angels in the Bible. Nowhere in Scripture do we find an angel reigning with Christ or sitting on thrones. Also, later we see these elders mentioned separately from the angels (5:11).

Three, it is doubtful that they are Old Testament saints. Israel as a people is not saved at this point in time. Also, the Old Testament saints do not receive their glorified bodies until the end of the Tribulation Period.

Four, they cannot be Tribulation saints for they are still on earth at this time (7:9-10).

Five, the obvious conclusion is, they represent the New Testament church.

Why do I believe this?

One, the word "elder" is associated with the officials of the New Testament church (Acts 14:23; 15:6; 15:22; 16:4; 20:28; 21:18; 1 Tim. 5:17; Tit. 1:5).

Two, later these 24 elders sing a song that speaks of them being "redeemed" (5:6). So, they must be believers who have left their earthly lives.

Three, their white garments indicate they are New Testament believers (Rev. 3:5; 3:18; 6:11; 7:9; 7:13; 19:8; 19:14).

Four, their crowns are Victor's crown. A Victor's crown is that which is obtained by running the Christian race faithfully. New Testament believers receive this type of crown (2 Tim. 4:7-8; Jam. 1:12; Rev. 2:10).

Five, these elders obviously have glorified bodies. The church is the only group who will be glorified at this point in time. These elders represent the New Testament believers who have already received their crowns at the Bema Seat and are enjoying their rewards. Those who were taken in the Rapture will stand before the Lord to determine their rewards and will receive crowns for those things done for God's glory (Rom. 14:10; 1 Cor. 3:11-15; 2 Cor. 5:10).

Six, these elders sitting on thrones indicate they are reigning with Christ. The Bible repeatedly tells us the church will reign with Christ (Mt. 19:28; Lk. 22:30; Rev. 2:26-27; 5:10; 20:4).

Rev. 4:5 And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

The lightning and thunder is an evidence of God's judgment. As we will discover in the next chapter, God is about to pour out His wrath. Lightning and thunder are associated with the seventh seal (8:5), the seventh trumpet (11:19), and the seventh vial (16:18). Each of these refer to God's judgment.

The rainbow about the throne speaks of God's mercy. But, the lightnings, thunder, and voices speak of His holiness. God is the perfect balance of holiness and mercy.

The "seven spirits" of God refer to the seven attributes of the Holy Spirit (Isa.11:2). John will mention this four times (1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6). The Holy Spirit is seldom mentioned in a visible way. Here He is seen as "lamps of fire burning". He is also seen as a dove (Mt. 3:16) and as tongues of fire (Acts 2:3).

The four beasts worshiping God (4:6-9)

Rev. 4:6 And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.

A "sea" stood in front of the throne. The word "glass" refers to how it looked and not what it was made of. It looked like a sheet of "crystal". This may mean, God's throne rests on a transparent glass-like platform. Later (15:2) the Tribulation saints are standing on this sea, so it is unlikely it is a sea of water as we would usually think of.

John sees four angelic beings around the throne. Their closeness to God may be an indication of their rank among God's creatures. By no means are they buck privates.

Though not described exactly the same, these "four beasts" may be the type of cherubims seen by Ezekiel (Ezk. 1:12-20). Lucifer was one of the beings before his fall (Ezk. 28:14). They are different from the seraphim Isaiah wrote about (Isa. 6:2-3).

The "eyes before and behind" tell us they have the ability to see in every direction. Having eyes tells us they have intelligence and they are aware. Though not omniscient as God is, they do possess great knowledge.

Rev. 4:7 And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.

These four beasts represent the highest of their particular animal type. The first beast, as a lion, is the king of the beasts. The second, as a calf, is a beast of labor and one of the most useful of animals. The third, as a man, is the highest of all of God's creation. The fourth, as an eagle, is the greatest of all birds.

Their characteristics describe these creatures. The face of a lion indicates their strength and power. The face of a calf indicates their humble service. The face of a man indicates their intelligence. The face of an eagle indicates the swiftness in their service to God. God's angels are able and willing to do His will at a moment's notice.

Some believe these creatures are meant to remind us of the four gospel accounts of Jesus. Matthew portrays Jesus as the King (lion). Mark portrays Jesus as a servant (ox). Mark portrays Jesus as a man (man). And, John portrays Jesus as God (eagle).

Others believe these creatures represent all of God's creation and its submission to His authority over them.

As mentioned earlier, the word "as" refers to something symbolic as opposed to something literal (cf. 1:10; 1:14; 3:3; 6:13; 6:14; 12:15; 13:11; 16:15; 19:12; 21:2).

Rev. 4:8 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

Their heads are different, but the rest of their bodies appear to be the same.

Another reason to think these creatures are cherubims is because of their association with the holiness of God. At least one of the tasks of a cherubim is to defend God's holiness. God placed cherubims in the Garden of Eden to keep Adam from returning to the Tree of Life (Gen. 3:22). Cherubims were an important part of the Tabernacle. They were in the curtains (Ex. 26:1), in the veil (Ex. 26:30), and on each end of the Ark (Ex. 25:17-22; 26:1-31). The Tabernacle was a model from the heavenly dwelling place of God (Ex. 25:8-9; 25:40; Acts 7:44; Heb. 8:5; 9:23-24).

One of their functions is to worship and give praise to God (4:8). They are also involved with the work of God (5:6-14; 6:1-8; 14:3; 15:7; 19:4). They will play a part in the calling out of the judgments later (6:1,3,5,7; 15:7). By no means do they endure a boring existence.

Their six wings speak of the swiftness in their executing God's commands. Mankind is the only part of God's creation that resists His will.

Since there is no night in heaven (22:5), the words "day and night" mean they cease not to cry "holy, holy, holy". As we will discover soon, these creatures are not alone in their worship (cf. 5:11-12). The word, "holy" means "morally blameless". God is without flaw or defect.

Certainly the word "holy" being said three times points to the co-equal nature of the Trinity. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are completely and totally equal.

Their cry also enlightens us to the primary attribute of God. Some would think the creatures should be saying, "loving, loving, loving". Others would expect them to be saying "merciful, merciful, merciful. But, God's holiness is His predominate attribute.

In the writing of the Hebrew language, there are no exclamation marks. Therefore, when writing Hebrew an emphasis is made by repeating a word or statement. Repeating "holy" three times puts a triple emphasis on the fact that God is holy.

They have "no rest" does not mean they are discontent and wishing they could do something else. It simply means they do not stop. Their praise is not mechanical or forced. It is genuine and real.

The word, "Lord" means "supreme in authority" and says He is the master.

The word, "Almighty" means "all-ruling". He is the absolute, all-ruling God of all things.

The words, "is and is to come" speak of His eternal existence. The writer of Hebrews said, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Heb 13:8).

Rev. 4:9 And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,

These four beasts are worshipping the Lord. The word worship means "worth-ship" and means something, or someone, is worthy. When we worship God we see Him as worthy. It's like when a king walks into a room and all the focus turns to him and everyone else is forgotten.

The creatures give God "glory and honour", but they also give Him "thanks". Having never sinned, they do not know of God's grace as man does, but they certainly understand God's goodness. That is enough to be thankful for.

Once again, John speaks of how God "liveth for ever and ever".

Rev. 4:10 The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

When the angelic creatures in the previous verse give praise the 24 elders (the church) fall before the Lord, worship Him, and cast their crowns at His feet. As mentioned before, these are Victors crowns which are obtained by running the Christian race faithfully (2 Tim. 4:7-8).

This group, as one, casts their crowns at the feet of Jesus. Not one of them resists or hesitates. No one will boast of their talent and effort in that day. We will recognize then, as never before, how undeserving we are and how our crowns should be given to Jesus. Any achievement on earth was not our own for only by the power of God was any good thing accomplished through us.

There were times when a Roman Emperor conquered a nation, he would not actually dethrone the king of the conquered nation. The defeated king be allowed to continue to act as a king but he would be under the authority of the victorious Emperor. Occasionally, the victorious Emperor would call all these conquered kings together. They would remove their crowns and lay them at the Emperor's feet which acknowledged his authority over them. Interestingly, there were times when the Emperor would pick up these crowns and give them back to the kings. Could it be possible that our Lord will do the same with us?

Rev. 4:11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

The word, "worthy" means "deserving".

God is "worthy" of praise because He is "Lord". He is the Master of the universe.

God is "worthy" of praise because He "created all things: (cf. Ps. 33:6; Isa. 44:24; Jn. 1:1-3; Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2). His creation is the foundation of His other works and reveals His wisdom, compassion, and power. Amazingly, He created everything knowing He it would cost Him His own Son.

He created all things because He wanted to. He did it for His own "pleasure". He finished His work of creation and said it was "very good" (Gen. 1:31).

The elders, who represent the church, give God the glory because He is the One who created, convicted, and converted them. Who else would deserve the credit?

The effects of Adam's sin touched most of God's creation (Gen. 3:17-18). Here we find the One who created all things about to deliver His creation from this awful effect (Rom. 8:21). Creation itself groans for its deliverance (Rom. 8:22). God's people long for this deliverance (Rom. 8:23). I am delighted to say, the story ends well. There is a light at the end of the tunnel.

The acknowledgment of God's holiness in chapter four is setting the table for chapter five where God's judgment is demonstrated in a very real way. It is vitally important that those who witness this judgment recognize the fact that God is absolutely holy. He is just to judge those who reject Him.

CHAPTER FIVE

Chapter five continues with John's thoughts in chapter four. John is still before the throne and in the very presence of, God the Father (5:1), the Son (5:6a), the Holy Spirit (5:6b), the four creatures (6:8), and the 24 elders (6:8).

In chapter five we are told about a scroll with seven seals. The seven seals are the beginning of God's judgment on the Antichrist and those who follow him. They are the first of three sets of seven judgments. The seven seals (6:1-17), seven trumpets (8:6-9:21), and seven vials (16:15-19). These judgments will worsen as they progress.

We will discover, the seventh seal contains the trumpet judgments (8:6-9:19), and the seventh trumpet contains the vial judgments (16:1-21).

The seven-sealed scroll (5:1-7)

Rev. 5:1 And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.

Once again we find the words "I saw". As I have mentioned, these words tell us something new is on the way and John is moving us from one event to another.

The One holding the book (scroll) is God the Father.

John's attention moved from He who sat on the throne to a scroll (book) He held in His hand. This scroll will become one of the most important parts of the rest of the book of Revelation.

The writings on a scroll were laid out in narrow columns and were read horizontally instead of vertically. The scroll John saw had writing on the inside and out. Legal documents were often written inside and out. Some scrolls had the documentation written on the inside and a summary of the content of the document written on the outside.



If desired, the content was hidden from unauthorized eyes by dropping melted wax at specific places in the scroll. Only those with authority could break these seals and read the contents of the scroll.

The scroll John saw had seven of these wax seals. These seven sections required someone with authority to open before the next section could be read. For a scroll to have multiple seals, they would write, seal it, write some more, seal it, write some more, and seal it again. Such a scroll would be read by breaking the seals one at a time as they read through the scroll. The reader would unroll one end and roll up the other as he read through the document.

Much discussion has been given as to what this particular scroll represents. All sorts of legal documents (marriage contracts, rental agreements, slave agreements, title deeds, last wills, and financial arrangements) were written and sealed in this manner.

It seems to me that this scroll is God's explanation of His final dealings with mankind. He is dealing with the effects of sin and reclaiming the universe. It contains the judgment of the guilty, the forgiveness of the repentant, the end to all evil, the casting of the devil into the lake of fire, the glorification of God's people, the restoration of all things to God, and the fixing of everything that is broken.

A search is made for someone worthy to open the seven-sealed scroll

Rev. 5:2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?

Notice first, this is a "strong" angel. The world and the church have made angels into sissy creatures who look like little babies floating around. Nothing could be further from the truth for, as we will see in this study, angels are mighty creatures who are capable of unbelievable feats. Angels often say "Fear not" when addressing mankind because they are fearless and they trust an Almighty God.

The angel asked who was "worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals". A legal document, like this scroll, could be opened only by one who had legal authority to do so.

Opening this scroll involved more than just reading its contents, it included the losing that which was recorded therein. The question was, who is qualified to unleash the judgments, to bring an end to evil, to set the people of God free, to put the devil in the lake of fire, and to fix everything that is broken?

The contents of the scroll were completely unknown at this time. However, once the seals were broken and the scroll was read the contents would be open for all to see.

Rev. 5:3 And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.

The angel traveled from heaven to hell, and all places in between, in search of someone worthy to open the scroll, but he found no one.

The words, "no man" mean "not even one". Notice, no one, no one, steps forward and volunteers to open the scroll. No doubt men and angels will hide their faces as the angel comes their way. They know they are not worthy. Perhaps as never before, they will recognize their unfit condition.

We should remember the fact that God has restrictions when it comes to certain tasks done for His name's sake. If this be true in heaven, it is also true on earth.

Only God has the right to "loose" the seals and set in motion that which is inside the scroll.

Rev. 5:4 And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.

John must have recognized the significance of the scroll. He was brokenhearted because no one could open it. He, like all Jews, had longed for the Messiah's kingdom. The last time he spoke with Jesus was when he and the other apostles asked Him about His coming and His kingdom (Acts 1:6-8). Perhaps he saw the opening of this scroll as the one remaining hope for the kingdom becoming a reality. If it is not opened, wickedness would not be judged and evil would continue to infect the earth.

The strong angel searching simply proved a fact that was already known, that being, no one other than Christ was worthy to open the book.

Rev. 5:5 And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

One of the 24 elders tells John to "Weep not". This elder had information John did not have. The elder refers to Jesus as the "Lion of the tribe of Juda" and the "Root of David". This speaks to the human bloodline of Jesus. The Messiah had to be of the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10; Mic. 5:2; Mt. 2:6; Heb. 7:14). Humanly speaking, Jesus was from the tribe of Judah.

This is a wonderful picture of the deity and humanity of Christ. As a man, He was of the tribe of Judah. As God, He was the source (root) of David (Isa. 11:1).

A lion symbolizes power, fierceness, and majesty. Jesus did not demonstrate these attributes when He came to earth the first time but He will the next time He comes.

The word, "prevailed" means "to conquer" or "overcome". As we will see in the next verse, even though Jesus was worthy to open the book simply because He is God, the reason He was able to open it was because He had won the victory over sin and Satan on the cross.

Rev. 5:6 And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

John saw the One the elder was talking about. The word used for "lamb" is a little lamb. John looked expecting to see a mighty lion but saw a little lamb instead.

The words, "as it had been slain" speak as if His sacrifice is, at this moment, in the act of being offered. The blood of Jesus continues to cleanse, never wears out, and does not have to be repeated. His wounds will be a constant reminder throughout eternity of how we got to heaven.

John's description tells us a great deal about the lamb.

First, the lamb was standing, which means, it is very much alive. Our Savior is alive and well.

Second, the lamb had the marks of sacrifice. The only thing man will put in heaven are the wounds of the Savior.

Third, the lamb had "seven horns". Horns, in the Bible, refer to power or authority. The fact He has seven horns speaks of His complete authority.

Fourth, the lamb has "seven eyes". The eyes refer to the "seven Spirits of God" that we have discussed earlier (cf. 4:1; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6).

Jesus is a lamb and a lion. As the lion, He is the Sovereign, as the lamb, He is the sacrifice. As the lion, He is the ruler, as the lamb, He is the redeemer. As the lion, He is mighty, as the lamb, He is meek.

The Son takes the scroll from the Father

Rev. 5:7 And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.

Jesus came and took the scroll from the right hand of God the Father. These are such simple words but their meaning is as big as the universe.

Up to this time, the Son of God has been sitting on the throne. Now, He stands, goes to the Father, and takes the scroll.

The beasts and elders sing a new song of worship (5:8-12)

Rev. 5:8 And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints.

Those present, seeing the Son take the scroll, and recognizing His worthiness, fall down and worship.

The four angelic creatures and the 24 elders have harps. A harp is seen as an instrument of praise (1 Chr. 25:3; Ps. 92:1-3; 150:3). Music and singing will be a big part of heaven (14:2-3; 15:2-4).

The "vials of odours" are the "prayers of the saints". This means, the opening of the scroll that unleashes the work of God, is an answer to the prayers of the saints. Some of these prayers were from those who were on earth at that moment. No doubt, others were from some who had prayed for years.

Either way, it reminds us of the fact that God does not forget our prayers (Gen. 30:22; Ps. 38:9). God bottles our prayers (Ps. 56:8). He may not grant our petitions immediately, but that does not mean He never will.

The elders presented the prayers of the saints before God. This does not suggest for a moment that they were interceding for the saints. They were not mediators of God's people. There is one mediator (1 Tim. 2:5).

The vials are full of "odours" which reminds us of the altar of incense in the temple (Ex. 30:1-10). The incense burnt on that altar was a symbol of the prayers of God's people. They are a sweet smell to Him. David said, "Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense" (Ps 141:2).

Rev. 5:9 And they sung a new song, saying, 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 nation;

The Lord was worthy to open the book, not just because He is the creator, but because He is the Redeemer. He gave His life to pay for sin, provide a way of forgiveness, and reclaim that which sin had stolen.

We must remember, this scroll is much more than a little storybook. The opening and loosing of the contents of this scroll is that which causes the end-time events to happen.

It seems obvious that the four angelic beings, the 24 elders, and John, realize the importance of the opening of the scroll.

As a result of the opening of the scroll, all of heaven breaks out in song. Their praise is described all the way to the end of the chapter. They know the beginning of the end has begun. God is about to deal with sin and Satan, and, to say the least, they are glad.

This song was a "new" song. A "new song" is mentioned several times in the Bible (Ps. 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:3). Usually, it refers to being forgiven.

Despite the events described in the scroll, the theme of this song is "Thou". It is all about Him. He ought to be the theme of our lives.

The content of this song is so important. So many modern "gospel" songs are lacking meaningful content. But, this song gives praise to the Lord because of His work of redemption. This new song does not have a new message. The old gospel message never grows old. If you do not know the old song, you will never be able to sing the "new song".

These were redeemed out of "every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation". We are so prone to think only of our own nation when we think of the family of God. The truth is, God has children from every people group on earth.

Rev. 5:10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

They sing the song of praise because God has made them "kings". We are "kings". We will reign with Christ. Every believer shares the victory won by Christ.

They sing the song of praise because God has made them "priests". In Christ, the believer is a priest (1 Pet. 2:9; Re. 20:6). We can freely approach the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16).

The believer is a king because they are born into the royal family of God. They are priests because they can go straight to God.

They "shall reign on the earth" refers to the Millennial reign when believers will rule with Christ (Mt. 25:21; Lk. 22:30; 1 Cor. 6:2).

Rev. 5:11 And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;

It seems as though every creature in heaven joins together in praise. The angels and believers form a magnificent group. John said the number was "ten thousand times ten thousand". That's 100 million. And then, "thousands of thousands" on top of that. What a tremendous experience this will be.

Though not the main point of these verses, we must not miss the unity demonstrated here. We do good to get 50 people on the same page in the average church of today. But, in heaven, a number that cannot be calculated with be in perfect unity. Even the saints and the angels will be in perfect unity.

The words, "round about" mean "a circle" It seems to be saying this vast multitude will surround the throne of God.

Rev. 5:12 Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

The "loud voice" tells us every individual will sing with all their heart. How we could learn from their example at this present time? I am hoping a glorified body comes with a beautiful voice. Whether it does or not, we will sing with all of our hearts when we get home.

Once again (cf. v. 9), we are told the worthiness of the Lamb is based on Him being "slain". The One who gave His all deserves the glory.

The word, "receive" means "to accept". This word was used to describe the workers who received the pay they deserved (Mt. 20:9). Since only Jesus was found worthy to open the scroll, He alone has the right to accept "power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing".

Every creature in heaven and earth worship God (5:13-14)

Rev. 5:13 And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

God the Father (sitteth upon the throne) and God the Son (Lamb) are worshipped by all of creation. This worship of the "Lamb" is another proof that Jesus is God. Every "creature" means exactly as it sounds (Phil. 2:10). Before we object to what we read here, we should remember the words of Jesus when He said even "the stones" would cry out (Lk. 19:40).

The Godhead will reign "for ever and ever". The God who lives forever will forever be worthy of our praise.

Rev. 5:14 And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

The word, "Amen" means "so be it". Here, it means the four angelic beings agree completely with all that had been said about the Lamb in verses 12 and 13.

The church (four and twenty elders) prostrate themselves in heartfelt worship of God.

CHAPTER SIX

4. THE SEVEN SEAL JUDGMENTS (6:1-8:1)

In chapter six the Tribulation Period and the judgments of God actually begin. God is beginning His plan to redeem the world from the results of sin and set up the kingdom He promised Israel.

Jesus will open six of the seven seals in the scroll He received from God the Father. The opening of each seal unleashes a different judgment. The seventh seal, which consists of the seven trumpets and seven vial judgments, is introduced in this chapter.

The first four seals involve four horses with riders who represent judgments coming upon the earth. They include false peace (6:1-2), war (6:3-4), famine (6:5-6), death (6:7-8), prayer (6:9-11), earthquake, and earthly chaos (6:12-17).

John has nothing to do with reading the contents of the scroll or opening the seals. The Lamb (Jesus) opens the seals and looses the judgments. All of these events are coming directly from God. His wrath has begun. Jesus called this time the days of "vengeance" (Lk. 21:22). The horrors of the Tribulation Period will be God giving Israel, and the world, what they deserve for how they have treated Him and His Son.

The events in this chapter correlate with what Jesus said in the Olivet Discourse (Mt. 24-25). The first four seals are a part of what He called the "beginning of sorrows" (Mt. 24:8). The last three seals are a part of what He called the "great tribulation" (Mt. 24:21).

Jesus (Mt. 24:8), and Paul (1 Th. 5:3) said these judgments, like birth pains, will start somewhat slow but will come closer and build in severity.

The Lamb opens the first scroll

Re 6:1 And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.

Once again we find the words "I saw". As I have mentioned, these words tell us something new is on the way and John is moving us from one event to another.

The Lamb opens the scroll that contains the seven seal judgments, the first seal is broken, and there is the "noise of thunder". As thunder on earth is the sound of a coming storm, this is a sign of God's coming judgment (cf. Ex. 9:23; 1 Sam. 2:10; 22:14; Isa. 29:6).

The first seal is broken The first (white) horse and rider (false peace) (6:2)

Rev. 6:2 And I saw, and behold 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.

Jesus opens the seal which allows the scroll to be unrolled revealing its contents. The first seal brings the first judgment. God's wrath has begun.

There are differing opinions about the identity of the rider on the white horse.

One, some believe it is Jesus. This can not be for this rider comes promising peace. Jesus will return on a white horse but He is carrying a sword, not a bow. He will come, not to bring peace, but to make war and to overcome the Antichrist and his armies (19:11-16). Also, this cannot be Jesus for He is the One who opens the seal and is in heaven when He does so.

Two, some believe this rider is the Antichrist himself. This cannot be for the same reasons explained above.

Three, some believe this rider is a symbol, not a person. I believe this is the correct explanation. The Antichrist is certainly the major player in all seven seals, but, as with the riders on the other three horses, it is best to see the rider of the white horse as a symbol that represents the circumstances attached to the seal and not an actual person.

When the first seal is opened, we are introduced to a man commonly called the Antichrist.

The word "Antichrist" can mean "against". Every time the word "antichrist" is found in the Bible, it refers to someone or something that is against, and opposed to, Christ (1 Jn. 2:18; 2:22; 4:3; 2 Jn. 7). He will certainly be against everything good and godly.

However, the word "Antichrist" can also mean "instead of". It speaks of that which takes the place of Christ. In his attempt to overthrow God, Lucifer said he would "be like the most High" (Is 14:14). The Antichrist, like Lucifer, wants to take the place of God. He will try to convince the world he is the long-awaited Messiah. The devil, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet will form an unholy trinity during the Tribulation Period.

The Antichrist's operations deal with much more than one man. The devil has been working on this plan for a long time. Both Paul (2 Th 2:7) and John (1 Jn 4:3) said the spirit of Antichrist was already working in their day. The Antichrist is simply one part of the devil's elaborate attempt to overthrow God.

THE ANTICHRIST WILL BE A MAN OF POWER

He is riding a "white" horse. A white horse is the type of horse ridden by a military commander. He will become the leader of the entire world.

The "crown" he wears is a Victors crown which implies he overcomes.

Daniel calls him a "prince" (Dan. 9:27). The word "prince" means "leader or ruler".

John describes him (13:2) as being like a leopard (swiftness), having the feet of a bear (great strength), and the mouth of a lion (fierceness).

The Antichrist will be energized and empowered by Satan (2 Th 2:3; 2 Th 2:9; Re 13:2; Dan. 8:24). He will be known for his intelligence (Dan. 8:23), his ability to speak well (Dan. 11:36), his political power (Re 13:2), his commercial ability (Dan. 11:43; Re 13:16-17), his military ability (Re 6:2), his religious activity (Re 13:8), and his ability to deceive (2 Th 2:9). Sadly, the world will believe his lies and flock to him (Re 13:4).

First and foremost, he will get his power straight from the devil. John wrote, "and the *dragon gave him his power*, and his *seat*, and great *authority*" (Re 13:2 emphasis added).

As bad as the Tribulation will be, it will never be out of God's control. God keeps Satan on a short leash. Satan will be able to do only that which God allows him to do, even during the Tribulation period.

THE ANTICHRIST WILL BE A MAN OF PEACE

As I have mentioned, he has a "bow" but no arrow. A bow without an arrow, like a gun without bullets, is harmless. It means he will come offering peace.

The Antichrist will promise peace but he has no desire for real peace. The peace he promises is nothing but bait to lure the world to himself that he might take control. Daniel said "by peace" he shall destroy many (Dan. 8:25).

He comes promising worldwide peace. The man who could accomplish this would be worshiped by the world. He will be convincing and will deceive many (Mt. 24:24; 2 Th 2:9). Paul had this in mind when he wrote, "For when they shall say, Peace and safety" (1 Th. 5:3).

It seems the Antichrist is able to convince the nations of the world to unite. He may do this.

When the Antichrist comes, the world will want peace so much they will be willing to do anything to get it. This attitude will make it easy for him to gain control of the entire world. Even today, many are crying for world peace. The cry for world unification is common. Even America is willing to overlook the horrible actions of other countries for the sake of world trade. World trade and open borders are just two of the signs that our world is ready for a man like the Antichrist.

There will be one exception to this peace. The Antichrist and his followers will make no effort to work with or have mercy on, the believers on earth.

There will be an artificial peace, but since the second seal brings war, we know even that will not last.

The Antichrist's first matter of business will be the signing of a covenant with Israel (Dan. 9:27). This signing actually starts the stopwatch of the seven-year Tribulation Period. Daniel said this covenant will be with "many" (Dan. 9:27). That means the agreement will involve nations other than Israel.

The covenant the Antichrist makes with Israel and other nations will seem to be working and all will appear to be peaceful. But, he will break his agreement after 3 1/2 years (Dan. 9:27; 12:11) and his system for peace will start to unravel.

THE ANTICHRIST WILL BE A MAN OF PERVERSION

Remember, his name, Antichrist means "against" or "in the place of" Christ. Anyone who is against Christ, or wants to put himself in the place of Christ, has to be an ungodly person.

Daniel said he would "understand dark sentences" (Dan. 8:23). He will be a type of medium and able to communicate with the dark side. This man will have a direct contact with the devil himself.

Daniel said he "shall do according to his will" (Dan. 11:36). He will do what he wants with no concern about the results. A man with such power, doing whatever he wants to do, will be dangerous.

He will exemplify the evil desires of the devil more than any who has ever lived.

John said the antichrist type of person is one who denies the "Father and the Son" (1 Jn. 2:22). Jesus said, "He that is not with me is against me" (Mt. 12:30). He will be an evil man and has only evil on his mind.

Paul called the Antichrist the "man of sin" (2 Th. 2:3). He will be a human example of what the devil is. Lucifer wanted to be in the place of God (Isa. 14:13-14). He wanted to control and to be worshipped. So will the Antichrist.

Daniel tells us he will not regard "the desire of women" (Dan. 6:4). That may mean he will be a homosexual. During our day, sadly, that would be beneficial for there are so many who celebrate those who are "brave" enough to "be themselves".

THE ANTICHRIST WILL BE A MAN OF PERSUASION

The Antichrist will be the biggest con man who has ever lived. He will not be some ugly and grotesque monster, he will be good-looking, appealing, and powerful. He will be winsome and attract the multitudes. He will be able to convince the world that he is God (2 Th. 2:4).

He went out "conquering and to conquer" which means he intends to rule the world and is in the process of doing so. He will use his words and his miracles to take control of the world. He will be a man of great charisma, well-liked, and accepted as the answer to the world's problems. However, eventually, his true nature will be revealed and he will be seen as the diabolical brute he really is.

John says, "And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things" (Re 13:5). The world will believe his lies. He will con the world into joining his ungodly agenda. In fact, the world will worship him (Re 13:8).

Even though he has world domination in mind, he will persuade everyone he wants peace. Adolf Hitler was such a man. Here are a few of Hitler's quotes.

"The German nation wishes to live in peace with the rest of the world" (March 23, 1933).

"The German Government wishes to come to a peaceful agreement with other nations on all difficult questions" (May 17, 1933).

"We desire peace perhaps more than all others" (May 1933).

Like Hitler, the Antichrist will be proven to be a liar.

The scary thing is the fact that our world is ready for such a man.

Years ago, the late Paul-Henri Spaak, a former Belgian Prime Minister said, "We do not want another committee, we have too many already. What we want is a man of sufficient stature to hold the allegiance of all people, and to lift us out of the economic morass into which we are sinking. Send us such a man, and be he, god or devil, we will receive him."

All it takes for these things to come to pass is for our Lord to give the go-ahead.

*The second seal is broken
The second (red) horse and rider (war) (6:3-4)*

Rev. 6:3-4 And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see. And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.

Remember, the Antichrist is involved with this and all the seals.

The second of the four angelic beings tells John to come closer and watch what is about to happen. Jesus opens the second seal which allows the scroll to be unrolled further and reveal more of its contents and cause another judgment to come forth.

The second horse was red (fire-like red), which represents war and bloodshed.

Like with the other horses, this rider and the horse are a symbol of the circumstances being loosed around the world. The first horse brought peace, but this horse takes it away. The peace promised by the Antichrist does not last long.

The "sword" mentioned here is a small, dagger-like, sword used by soldiers in hand-to-hand combat. It was the type assassins used and was capable of producing a literal blood bath.

To "take peace" means there will be no peace in the heart of the individual. A person with no peace knows only anger, violence, and hatred. If individuals have no peace, there will be no peace among mankind. That means, a wave of hatred, anger, and bloodshed, will sweep across the world like a storm cloud.

To take peace "from the earth" means this will be world-wide. Jesus said about this time, "And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars" (Mt. 24:6). He also said, "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom" (Mt. 24:7).

People will turn against each other over the smallest of disagreements and there will be havoc in the streets throughout the world. Imagine a world with no peace at all and only anger, hatred, and violence.

It's like a bar fight that starts with two individuals and, in a matter of seconds, spreads throughout the entire crowd. There is a spirit or force that takes over everyone. Some are simply caught up in the emotion and may not even know why they are fighting. This kind of evil spirit will spread across the world.

Though not mentioned specifically, surely a good bit of this hatred and anger will be directed towards those who are getting saved during this time. The persecution will worsen as the Tribulation continues. Speaking about the time near the middle of the Tribulation, Jesus said, "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake" (Mt. 24:9).

Our present world knows much about hatred, war, and anger, but there is still a good bit of compassion. Imagine a world where there is no compassion at all.

The only bright spot in all this gloom will be the believers who are getting saved and are letting their light shine in the darkness.

*The third seal is broken
The third (black) horse and rider bring famine (6:5-6)*

Rev. 6:5 And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.

Remember, the Antichrist is involved with this and all the seals.

The third of the four angelic beings tells John to come closer and watch what is about to happen. Jesus opens the third seal which allows the scroll to be unrolled further to reveal more of its contents and cause another judgment to come forth.

The third of the four angelic beings tells John to come closer and shows him a "black horse". The rider is holding a "pair of balances". The balances were scales used to measure weights.

Rev. 6:6 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 thou hurt not the oil and the wine.

This horse and rider brings famine.

"Wheat" was used to make bread, which was the staple of life during John's day. "Barley" was cheap grain fed to animals or eaten by the extremely poor.

A "measure" was the amount one man would eat in a day. The word "penny" is the Greek word "denarius" and is the amount of a day's salary for a common laborer (Mt. 20:2). The famine will be so bad that it will take a day's salary just to buy a day's food. And that is for one person. What about the rest of the family? What about all the other household necessities?

If bread is this expensive, how much will other items cost? It will cause panic, looting, and robbery.

This famine comes partially as a result of the war caused by the second seal. War destroys crops and kills farmers, which causes famine. Also, the farmers will be too busy protecting themselves and their families to plant or harvest their crops.

However, I believe this famine is, in and of itself, a separate judgment from God. The same God who makes crops grow can keep them from growing (Dt. 28:17-21; 1 Cor. 3:7).

Some believe the "oil and wine" refer to luxury items. However, in John's day, oil and wine were items of necessity, not of luxury. Oil was used to make bread and wine was their common beverage. If this is what is meant here it means God will spare the world by protecting the necessities for survival. In wrath, God will remember mercy.

*The fourth seal is broken
The fourth (pale) horse and rider death (6:7-8)*

Rev. 6:7 And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see.

Remember, the Antichrist is involved with this and all the seals.

Jesus opens the fourth seal which allows the scroll to be unrolled further to reveal more of its contents and cause another judgment to come forth.

Rev. 6:8 And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with 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.

The "pale" color is a pale greenish-yellow. It is the color of a body many hours after death.

This seal brings "death".

As the third seal (famine) is the partial result of the second seal (war), so this fourth seal will be a partial result of both. Famine and war bring death.

However, as with the other seals, this seal brings a separate judgment of its own. It is a judgment of death.

As mentioned before, these are symbols of what is happening on earth. "Death, and Hell" have come to claim their own. Death is coming for the bodies and hell is coming for the souls.

One "fourth" of the world's population will die. According to today's population, that would mean almost 2 billion people will die from this one judgment. In comparison, there were approximately 50 million who died in World War II. Never in the history of mankind, other than the flood, has there been any calamity that caused such a death toll.

We should remember, Jesus called this time the "beginning of sorrows". If the beginning of sorrows takes out 1/4 of the world's population, how bad will the rest of it be? We are going to find out.

The first three seals had only one device of judgment. This seal has four.

To kill with "sword" refers to death from actual war. Death by "hunger" refers to the famine which is the result of war. The death by "death" refers to pestilence from the diseases that follow war and famine. Approximately two-thirds of the deaths in the Civil War were because of diseases related to the war. To kill with "beasts" probably refers to the wild animals who become aggressive when they have to search for food.

As bad as the first four horse judgments are, they are simply setting the stage for what is to come. Things are going to get a lot worse in a hurry.

*The fifth seal is broken
The martyrs under the altar cry for vengeance (6:9-11)*

Rev. 6:9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:

Jesus opens the fifth seal which allows the scroll to be unrolled revealing more of its contents and causing another judgment to come forth.

The fourth seal dealt with the death of unbelievers, this one deals with the death of believers.

This seal is a judgment as the other seals but there are some differences.

First, it is different in that there are no horses or riders as with the first four seals.

Second, it is different because it is the prayers of the martyred believers that set its judgment into action.

Many believe the emphasis of this seal is martyrdom. I believe that, even though the martyrdom of these souls is an important part of this seal, the primary emphasis is on the prayer they are praying. We will discover that it is their prayer for justice that brings about the judgment connected to this seal.

Let's look back and see how we have gotten to this point. Seal one brought peace, Seal two brought war, Seal three brought famine, and Seal four brought death. The fifth Seal will bring justice and it will come because of the prayers of believers who have been killed.

When the seal is opened, John sees the "souls of them that were slain". These are those who had been put to death since the Tribulation Period began. They have not yet received their glorified bodies. The Tribulation saints will not receive their glorified bodies until the end of the Tribulation Period (20:4).

I believe this seal takes place somewhere around the middle of the Tribulation Period. The persecution against believers began early in the Tribulation Period but this is the time when it will worsen dramatically. It probably happens very soon after the Antichrist breaks his covenant with Israel. At that time, he will go into the temple and declare himself to be God (Dan. 9:24-27; 2 Th. 2:4). He will make war with the saints (13:7). Daniel said he will "wear out the saints of the most High" (Da 7:25). Jesus described the details by saying, "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake" (Mt. 24:9).

The word "slain" means "to slaughter". God did not use this word for no reason. It is a word that is often connected to the sacrifice for sin (5:6, 5:9, 5:12; 13:8). This may be an indication that many of those killed will be Jews.

They were "slain for the word of God". Undoubtedly, these believers will try to warn the lost by pointing to the Scripture that talks about the Antichrist and the Tribulation Period.

The "testimony which they held" means they, even though they know it may cost them their lives, will reject the Antichrist and will openly proclaim that Jesus is God. John mentions this group later when he wrote, "I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast" (Re 20:4).

This may mean they were forced to deny Christ or be put to death. The testimony of the New Testament believer is about the saving grace of God and the coming Rapture. The testimony of the Tribulation believer will be about the saving grace of God and the coming Kingdom.

Even under such horrific trials, these believers live according to the principles in the Bible. Where does that leave us who live in a country where there is little, or no, persecution?

The persecution will be worldwide. Later, when the two witnesses are put to death, the entire world will celebrate and give gifts to each other (11:9). The Antichrist and his followers will do their best to put all believers to death. More than likely, his "policing" squad will be built into the government to where believing Christ is Lord will be against the law. Imprisonment and execution will be common. These squads will search out and capture every believer they can find.

Later, when talking about the followers of the Antichrist, John says they will not repent of their "murders" (9:21). This may mean the average citizen will have the right to put any believer to death without even obtaining governmental approval.

Jesus said, "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you" (Mt. 24:9). Sadly, some will turn in their own friends and family members to the Antichrist's Gestapo-like army. Jesus also said many "shall betray one another" (Mt. 24:10).

This persecution will continue throughout the entire Tribulation Period. It will consummate at the Battle of Armageddon when the Antichrist tries to overcome Jesus (19:11-21).

Now, notice these souls were "under the altar". But, what altar is this referring to?

We know this altar is in heaven because these souls are in heaven. We also know there were two altars in the Tabernacle and the temple. One was the altar where sacrifices were offered and the other was the altar of incense where prayers were offered.

Considering the fact that these souls are praying under this altar, I believe it is best to view it like the altar of incense in the Tabernacle and temple.

Rev. 6:10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

I believe this verse is the key to the meaning of the fifth seal.

These fallen believers are crying out for justice. The word "avenge" means "to repay harm with harm". They ask God how long it will be before He brings justice to those who have mistreated and killed His children.

Them asking how long tells us they know God. They know God is too holy to let sin go unpunished. They know the time when God settles the account with sin and Satan is coming, they just do not know when it will happen.

Their request may sound unspiritual. After all, the New Testament tells us to forgive those who persecute us (Mt. 5:44; Lk. 23:34; Acts 7:60; Rom. 12:19). But, we need to consider, these people are in heaven, which means their fleshly nature is gone and they are incapable of selfish desires. Their request is about the vindication of God's honor not the satisfying of some fleshly revenge. They are asking that the holiness of God be satisfied. They are asking God to do exactly what He intended to do anyway. He will do that which they were asking (cf. 6:11).

As mentioned previously (3:10), the phrase "dwell on the earth" is found five times, and "dwell upon the earth" is found three times in the book of Revelation. These phrases always refer to those who are lost (3:10; 6:10; 11:10; 13:8; 13:14; 14:6; 17:8). The word, "dwell" means "to house permanently", which means, these are earthly people as opposed to heavenly people (cf. Phil. 3:20). It means they have lived only for the things of the world.

First, they call Him "Lord", which means "absolute ruler". It speaks of God's power and might.

Second, they call Him "holy". He is too holy to allow the mistreatment of His people to continue.

Third, they call Him "true". He is true to His Word so He cannot deny what the Bible says about Him hearing the prayer of His children.

All three of these point to the fact that God is the One who is able to answer their prayer and do that which they ask.

Rev. 6:11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

Notice, Jesus will not rebuke these saints for their request in verse 10. He simply tells them to wait a little longer.

God gives them "white robes". The word "white" is a brilliant and glistening color.

Being given a robe tells us they have a body of some sort. Believers in heaven are given a temporary body until they receive their glorified bodies.

The word "rest" means "to take ease". This does not suggest they are anxious or unsettled. Certainly, those in heaven do not get anxious or unsettled. God was simply telling them to enjoy heaven and let Him take care of what needed to be done on earth. The time for their toiling is over (Re 14:13).

They are to rest until their "fellowservants" and their "brethren" who are still on earth are also martyred. These words tell us their request will be answered. The implication is, once the other believers are killed and brought to heaven, it will be time to judge those who mistreated and killed them.

I realize God has a plan that He will initiate during the Tribulation Period. However, at the same time, we have just discovered part of His plan involves Him answering the prayers of His children who have been taken to heaven. Amazingly, the answer to their prayer will put into motion much of what takes place during the rest of the Tribulation Period.

To explain, the answer to their prayers will bring the sixth and seventh seals. We should remember also, that the seventh seal contains the seven trumpets. Also, the seventh trumpet contains the seven vials. We should remember this the next time we feel like our prayers are useless.

The question we might ask is, why does God wait to judge? Why not judge the Antichrist and all his followers before they cause even more heartache and death? The answer, though we may not comprehend it totally, is the sin of the wicked had not yet been fulfilled. God never judges prematurely. He never sends judgment until judgment is deserved. God said the iniquity of the Amorites "is not yet full" (Gen. 15:16). Paul talked about how the Gentiles were "filling up" their sins (1 Th. 2:16).

The words, "should be fulfilled" do not imply that God had preordained these people to be saved.

The fact that this entire seal is dedicated to those who have been killed for their faith tells us several things.

One, it tells us there is no such thing as soul sleep. The souls were very much aware of what was happening around them.

Two, it tells us God cares. He cares enough to give them time and space in the Word of God.

Three, it tells us the devil is evil. These were good, godly, and innocent people, yet he was glad to take their lives. He wants to kill God's people (Jn. 8:44). He killed Job's children (Job 1:14-16) and would have killed Job had God allowed him to do so (Job 2:6). He would be doing greater evil than he is if the Holy Spirit was not holding him back (2 Th. 6-8).

Four, it tells us people will be saved during the Tribulation Period. In fact, what might be the greatest revival of souls in the history of mankind will take place during this time. Eventually, the number will be a number that no man can number (7:9-10).

Someone may ask how a lost person can be saved if the Holy Spirit is removed from the earth at the Rapture (2 Th. 2:7). Obviously, no one can be saved apart from the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (Jn 6:44). The fact is, during the Tribulation Period the Holy Spirit will come and go as He did in the Old Testament (Num. 27:18; 1 Sam. 10:10; 16:13; 1 Sam. 16:14; Ps. 51:11). Therefore, He will be present to convict and convert the lost.

Five, it tells us accepting Christ will be more difficult than ever. Those who contemplating getting saved will know it may very well cost them their lives.

Six, it tells us believers will be persecuted during the Tribulation Period (cf. Mt. 24:8-13). There have been times of tremendous suffering for believers, but nothing like this.

The persecution of believers will continue through the rest of the Tribulation Period. Those who are seduced by the Antichrist will join in his hatred of believers. Later John will describe those who persecute the believers by saying they were "drunken with the blood of the saints" (Re 17:6). The death of the believers excited them as wine does a drunk. Jesus spoke of this, He said "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake" (Mt. 24:9).

Seven, it tells us death was a blessing to these believers. Paul said dying was far better than living (Phil. 1:23; 2 Cor. 5:8; 2 Tim. 4:6).

Eight, these are the first of many more to come. They are told to wait until their brethren are killed.

Nine, it tells us God answers prayer. He will answer their request (19:17-21).

Ten, it tells us God can give us the grace to face whatever comes our way. These believers suffered horrible persecution and eventually gave their lives for Christ. But, they did not give in or give up.

It is one thing to stand for Christ if a gun is placed to your head. But, what if they put a gun to the head of your spouse, your parent, or your child? God can give grace to face even that.

Eleven, it tells us it is important to get saved now. These are those who never heard the gospel before the Rapture took place. Those who heard the gospel and rejected it before the Rapture will be sent "strong delusion, that they should believe a lie" (2 Th. 2:7-12). If you have never been saved, please do not wait, right now, turn from your sin, turn to the Lord in prayer, and ask Him to forgive you and birth you into His family.

*The sixth seal is broken
Disastrous disturbances, earthquake, earthly and heavenly chaos (6:12-17)*

The events of this seal are difficult to envision. Some believe it is symbolic and is describing the shaking of human governments and institutions. But, the reaction of those living on the earth proves it is literal (6:15-16). It is doubtful that any shaking of governments or human authorities would cause large numbers of people to beg for the rocks and mountains to fall on them.

God will use man in the war of the second seal, the famine of the third seal, the death of the fourth seal, and the prayer of the fifth seal, but the judgment of this seal is totally an act of God.

As we will discover, during the time leading up to this seal, God sends believers to proclaim the truth and offer them the way of forgiveness. Sadly, instead of accepting God's forgiveness, they continue to believe the lie of the Antichrist and do their best to dispose of the believers. Their time of justice is coming (cf. 6:15-16).

Rev. 6:12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;

Jesus opens the sixth seal which allows the scroll to be unrolled revealing more of its contents and causing another judgment to come forth.

The Lamb opens the sixth seal and there is a "great earthquake".

The word "earthquake" is the Greek word "seismos" which means "a shaking". We get our word seismograph from this word. The same word is translated "tempest" to describe the storm where waves covered the ship (Mt. 8:24).

Earthquakes are common on earth. The deadliest earthquake in recorded history was in Shaanxi China in 1556, killing about 830,000 people. The Great Chilean earthquake on May 22, 1960, was the most powerful earthquake ever recorded. The resulting tsunami produced a wave that was still 35' high over 6200 miles away. There have been some horrible earthquakes on earth but the one John talks about will be worse than all of them combined. When God calls something "great", you know it is out of the ordinary.

This shaking will bring about significant changes on the earth and in the heavens.

On earth, everything is shaken. Buildings will crumble, mountains and hills will be leveled, dams will break, volcanoes will erupt, ocean beds will be raised causing monstrous tsunamis, and rivers will be diverted or stopped. And, all of this will be happening over the entire earth at the same time.

In the heavens, the sun becomes black "as" sackcloth of hair.

As mentioned earlier, the word "as" refers to something symbolic as opposed to something literal (cf. 1:10; 1:14; 3:3; 4:7; 6:14; 12:15; 13:11; 16:15; 19:12; 21:2). Sackcloth was a rough material made from the black wool of sheep. The word "black" refers to a jet-black color. This is more than a natural eclipse.

The darkening of the sun and the blood-red color of the moon may be caused by the volcanic ash and debris cast into the atmosphere from the earthquake. Or, it may be simply an act of God. The moon showing any color when the sun is giving no light is nothing short of a miracle.

We are not told how long this will last, but if it lasts any length of time it will begin to affect plant and animal life. Without the Lord's intervention, the earth's temperature would drop to a deadly level.

With such unusual events, you would expect mankind to do some self-examination and repent of their ungodliness. Surprisingly, the complete opposite takes place. Mankind goes even deeper into their sin and further from God.

Rev. 6:13 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.

John did not describe these events with precise and scientific language. He simply tells us what he saw.

The "stars" John mentions may be asteroids, meteorites, or simply fiery balls from space. A meteor shower would cause massive damage to the earth. Without intervention from God, the heat of a normal star would consume the earth before it reached the earth's surface.

John describes these events as being like the figs that fall from a fig tree when the wind blows. The unripe figs literally cover the ground when fierce winds blow. This illustrates the magnitude of stars that will plummet to the earth. It isn't going to be two or three, there will be a multitude falling.

It would be no problem for God to make a star fall to the earth without completely destroying it. He put them in the heavens (Gen. 1:16), He can certainly take them out if He sees fit. I have no problem whatsoever in accepting this verse as it is written. The astronomers of our day are of the sort of crowd that told Noah a worldwide flood was impossible.

Rev. 6:14 And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

As with the previous two verses, man's response (6:15-16) shows this is a literal event.

The word "departed" means "rend apart or separate". The heavens and earth, as we know them, will be totally changed.

The heavens will be changed.

The cosmos is so precise we can determine the exact millisecond of solar and lunar events. But, this judgment will totally change our solar system.

The earth will be changed.

Mountains and islands will be moved and the entire geographic landscape will be changed. The slightest movement of mountains and islands would be devastating and destroy anything and anyone even remotely close.

Modern, so-called, science is in a frenzy about global warming and environmental contaminants. Some are violently upset about what they think man is doing with our environment. What they say we are doing is nothing compared to what God is going to do one day.

Rev. 6:15 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;

John's attention is moved from the heavens to the earth. The effects of this judgment on mankind are as sensational as on the earth and heavens.

John sees the unbelievers who have followed the Antichrist trying to hide from God in the caves and rocks of the mountains. Every level of mankind is included in this number. Whether it be kings or slaves, rich or poor, well-known or unknown, they are all in the same predicament. The judgment of God pays no attention to earthly preeminence.

Rev. 6:16 And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:

Once again, we see that which is happening is the "wrath of the Lamb". The Bible has much to say about God's wrath (Zech. 7:12; Mt. 3:7; Rom. 1:18; Eph. 5:6; Col. 3:6; Re 6:16-17; 11:18; 14:10; 14:19; 15:1; 15:7; 16:1).

How do these unbelievers know what they are experiencing is the wrath of God? They know because they heard the words of the believers they have killed (cf 6:9). They, and other believers, have been faithfully proclaiming the gospel of Christ. Unfortunately, just like those in Noah's day (Mt. 24:37-38), they ignored the message, and judgment has come.

Many will reject the message of the witnesses, but, as we will see (7:9), many will hear and believe.

They see God as the One that "sitteth on the throne". They even recognize Him to be God, but they still refuse to repent of their sin. Such is the nature of man. He will know he is a sinner, know his sin is causing him tremendous suffering, know God will forgive, and still reject the one way of deliverance.

The Greek tense of the words "fall on us" suggests urgency. They believe their time has come to an end and want the rocks to cover them immediately. They were more afraid of the face of God than the calamity all around them. The writer of Hebrews said, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb 10:31). God is angry at the wicked every day (Ps. 7:11). John said the "wrath of God abideth" on those who believe not (Jn 3:36).

The problem is, they will meet God anyway (Rom. 14:11; Phil. 2:10). No cave nor rock can hide them from God. There is literally nowhere for man to hide.

Thankfully, the believer is set free from God's wrath because Jesus drank the cup of God's wrath on the cross (Mt. 26:42; Is 53:3; Ps. 22:1). Because of Calvary, the believer is "delivered" from the "wrath to come" (1 Th. 1:10; 5:9).

The word "Lamb" begins with a capital "L", which means, this lamb is the Lamb of God. He is the lamb who gave His life for the sheep.

They are trying to hide from the "wrath" of the Lamb. We usually associate a lamb with tenderness instead of wrath. This is the lamb who came in tenderness, but since man rejected Him, He comes now with wrath.

Rev. 6:17 For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

The word "day" refers to a period of time and not a twenty-four hour day (cf. Joel 2:31; Zeph. 1:14; Jude 1:6). We use the same terminology when we say "In my day, things were different".

The "great day of his wrath" has come. God has been patient, but His patience is running out. God, being holy, has the right to be angry about sin. Sin is the transgression of God's law (1 Jn. 3:4). David said, "God is angry with the wicked every day" (Ps 7:11).

Who "shall be able to stand" tells us no one is worthy to stand before the holy God of the universe. Those with unforgiven sin have no hope before a holy God.

This is not the "granddaddy" God so many believe in today. The God of the Bible is a loving and merciful God (Dt. 4:31; Num. 14:18; Neh. 9:31; Ps. 86:15; 98:3; 103:8; Jn. 3:16). But, He is also a God who is holy and just (Lev. 11:44; 19:2; Ps. 99:9; Isa. 6:3; 57:15; Re 4:8).

We must not miss the fact that not one of these described here is getting anything other than what they deserve. God's wrath is never out of control.

Men will be so terrorized they will believe the end has come. When it does not, they harden their hearts even more. After all the devastation of the previous verses, they continue to reject the way of forgiveness. Eventually, they will make war against the Lamb (19:19).

Perhaps the most searching question in the Bible is found here. Who shall "be able to stand" when God's wrath comes? The ones who are able to stand are those who accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

God's grace is always more than sufficient (Rom. 5:1-2; 1 Cor. 15:1; 16:13; 2 Cor. 1:24; 1 Pet.

5:12). The believer is able to stand before God's wrath because the Son has already taken our wrath (Is 53:10-11).

Many parents are sincerely concerned about their children growing up in such a wicked world. I agree, the world is wicked and getting worse by the second. But, the same grace that was sufficient for us, will be sufficient for them. They will not face the future alone.

As horrible as these first judgments have been, they are only the prelude to what is coming. Things are going to get much worse.

CHAPTER SEVEN

First pause (interlude) Sealing of the 144,000 Jewish witnesses (7:1-17)

Chapter Seven records the first of five pauses (interlude) in the book of Revelation.

As we saw, chapter six closed with the opening of the sixth seal and people crying for the rocks to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb. It ends with the searching question, "who shall be able to stand". At that moment, John is probably wondering if any will survive.

Then, we move to the seventh chapter expecting the seventh seal to be opened and the judgments to continue. Instead, we find a pause (some call it an interlude) between the sixth and seventh seals. The seventh seal is not opened until chapter eight.

It's like being on a hiking trip in the mountains. We walk awhile and pause to take a break. As we pause we look back at where we came from and ahead to where we are going. Then, the break is over and we start walking again.

We are not told the reasons for these pauses but here are three possible reasons. One, to give His people a rest and to remind them He is still with them and they will be victorious. Two, to heighten the fear of the unbelievers about what is coming next. Three, to give the unbelievers an opportunity to repent and be saved.

During this first pause, 144,000 male Jews are sealed with the seal of God. Chapter Seven opens with 144,000 Jewish evangelists and closes with a multitude (Jews and Gentiles) who were saved by their witness.

Four angels holding the wind

Rev. 7:1 And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.

Once again we find the words "I saw". As I have mentioned, these words tell us something new is on the way and John is moving us from one event to another.

As before (cf. 4:1; 7:1; 18:1; 19:1), the words, "after these things" or "after this" indicate a change of circumstances. Something new and dramatic is about to happen. We should always pay close attention when we see these words.

The "four angels standing on the four corners of the earth" means the angels are affecting the entire earth.

The four angels "holding the four winds of the earth", which includes the jet stream and gulf stream, means they are controlling the weather of the entire earth.

I believe there will be a calmness so obvious that it causes alarm. It's like being in a jungle and suddenly realizing there are no animal noises. Everyone will realize, the hand of God is at work.

Some have scoffed at this verse for talking about the "four corners" of the earth but it refers simply to the four directions of the wind (N,S,E,W). The weatherman tells us the wind comes from these directions.

The next verse makes it clear, that the winds were a part of God's judgment that was coming. The wind is can be used as a means of destruction (Job 1:19; Isa. 41:16; Jonah 1:4, 10-12; Hos 13:15).

Rev. 7:2 And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea,

John saw "another angel" coming up from the east and carrying the "seal of the living God".

God has given these angels the authority to "hurt the earth and the sea". The word "hurt" means "injure" and is definitely a part of God's judgment.

This book reveals some truly amazing works being done by angels. Of course, the power comes from God and not the angel. Angels are under the authority of God and do not act independently of God.

The 144,000 are sealed

Rev. 7:3 Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

The four angels have been given the authority to hurt the earth and sea (v.2), but are told to not hurt the earth, sea, or trees. God's judgment is temporarily put on hold.

This is the pause we talked about. Some believe this pause is an act of God's mercy. However, it was probably just the calm before the storm. Calmness in the life of the ungodly is a promise of judgment to come.

The word "we" takes us back to the angel in the previous verse. This angel seems to be the leader of a group of angels.

These "servants" of God are "sealed". The seal in their "foreheads" is the same as the "Father's name" mentioned later (14:1). The devil will have an imitation mark for his followers (13:16-18).

Rev. 7:4 And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.

This answers the question at the end of chapter six. These are the ones who were able to stand.

All the "tribes of the children of Israel" refer to the twelve tribes of Israel which came from the twelve sons Abraham's grandson, Jacob (Gen. 35:23-26). God changed Jacob's name to Israel (Gen. 32:28).

There is no reason to suppose, as some do, that these are someone other than the twelve tribes.

Some believe this number is symbolic because of the so-called, ten lost tribes of Israel. But, the ten lost tribes are lost only to man, not to God. The twelve tribes still exist. James addressed his letter to the "twelve" tribes (Jam. 1:1). Paul talked about the "twelve" tribes (Acts 26:7). Anna was from the tribe of Aser, one of the supposed lost tribes (Lk. 2:36).

John lists the twelve tribes and says there are 12,000 from each of tribe.

- This is not a seal of salvation

I believe these 144,000 were saved earlier. Them being called "firstfruits" (14:4), tells us they were the first to be saved during the Tribulation Period. That means they had be saved before Tribulation martyrs mentioned back in chapter six (6:9). More than likely, they were saved right after the Rapture.

Some have tried to use the 144,000 to prove God elects some to be lost and some to be saved. But, as we will see, this is a call to service and not salvation. God does hand-pick His servants.

- This is a seal of security

The word "seal" means "security or preservation". In John's day, a king had a signet ring that bore his seal. Anyone under this seal was guaranteed the protection and provision of the king.

- This seal is a seal of safety

The word "seal" means "to keep safe". The 144,000 are kept safe from God's judgments and from the attack of the Antichrist. They will be indestructible until their ministry is over. Protecting some while judging others is no problem for God. Noah, Rahab, and Lot are perfect examples.

- This seal is a seal of service

They are called the "servants" of God because that's what they do.

Through all the turmoil of the Tribulation Period, these men have been faithfully proclaiming the gospel of Christ. They will do what the church should have done during the church age. Many will be saved as a result of their witness (7:9).

The seal in their "foreheads" is the same as the "Father's name" mentioned later (14:1). The devil will also have an identification mark for his followers (13:16-18).

Rev. 7:5-8 Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nepthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.

Some have questioned the order these tribes are listed, But, the twelve tribes are listed several several times in the Old Testament and are often listed in different order.

The 144,000 consists of 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of Israel, excluding the tribe of Dan. The Bible does not tell us why the tribe of Dan is excluded. Some believe it is because the tribe of Dan was guilty of idolatry (Judges 18:30). Others believe it is because the Antichrist will come from the tribe of Dan. The good news is, the tribe of Dan is included in the list of tribes during the Millennial (Ezk. 48).

The great multitude stands before the throne (7:9-17)

Rev. 7:9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;

Once again, the focus is on the throne of God in heaven.

This "after this" deals with what happens after the 144,000 are sealed.

John saw a number too large to count from every nation, kindred, people, and tongues. They came from the streets of New York City to the remote jungles of Africa. This tells us there will be differences among the people in heaven and we will retain our individuality. Verses 13-14 tell us this multitude are those who have gotten saved during the Tribulation Period.

The "white robes" are a symbol of righteousness, but not a righteousness of their own. The next verse makes it clear, they know their source of salvation is the Lord. Salvation is a gift, given by God, not earned by man (Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:8-9).

The word "white" is a brilliant and glistening color. White is a symbol of purity.

Palm branches were used as emblems of victory. They spread palm branches before Jesus as He entered Jerusalem (Jn. 12:12-13). The Jews viewed the palm tree as a symbol of victory because of its ability to withstand storms. These believers had endured the storms of the Tribulation Period and were victorious.

We can be certain of one thing about the 144,000. None of them regret giving their lives to the Lord while on earth. Paul said, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Ro 8:18).

It is interesting to note, that this innumerable multitude tells us the greatest harvest of souls will take place during the worst of times, the Tribulation Period. They got saved during the most difficult time to serve the Lord in the history of mankind. This is contrary to the thinking of our day. The church of today, in its attempt to win the lost, tries to make salvation sound like a sweetheart deal where life becomes nothing but heaven on earth.

Rev. 7:10 And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

Those who are praising the Lord are some of the ones who heard the witness of the 144,000 witnesses. It is likely that the 144,000 will be gifted as those who were at Pentecost. God tells us the day will come when He will pour His Spirit upon all flesh (Joel 2:28-30). It is quite possible that the gifts of doing miracles and speaking in tongues (cf. 1 Cor. 12:10) will be reinstated and used during the Tribulation Period. The gift of tongues was the ability to speak in a foreign language the speaker did not know (Acts 2:8).

They are worshiping and praising God with a "loud voice". God must like things loud (2 Chr. 30:21; Ps. 33:3; 98:4; 150:5).

All heavenly creatures worship and rejoice

Rev. 7:11 And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God,

The "angels", "elders" and "four beasts" join together in worship and praise. Please read the comments on 4:4.

The next two verses center on the gratitude of the saints. They know how they got to heaven. They know who provided the means of their salvation.

Rev. 7:12 Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

This is not half-hearted. No one in heaven is taking their salvation for granted. As impossible as it seems, many believers on earth have gotten used to being forgiven. We need to practice now for the worship in heaven.

Rev 7:13 And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?

One of the elders asks the identity of the multitude who are praising God. He wants to know who they are and where they came from.

The multitude is identified

Rev 7:14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

The multitude is not the New Testament church.

This multitude being mentioned right after the 144,000 may mean many, if not all, were saved through their preaching. These are the ones who heard the gospel during the Tribulation Period and got saved. They had never heard the gospel of Christ before the Rapture (cf. 2 Th. 2:10-11). They are some of the "fellowservants" mentioned earlier when the souls were praying under the altar (6:9-11).

Having "washed their robes" is symbolic for having their sin forgiven by the grace of God.

The "white robes" symbolize the cleansing power of the "blood of the Lamb". What can wash away my sin, nothing but the blood of Jesus (1 Pet. 1:18-19).

They had resisted the Antichrist's evil system, withstood the persecution of his ungodly followers, endured the famine, the wars, not being able to buy or sell, and the out-and-out attack of Satan. Now, their battle is over and they are with the Lord.

As mentioned before (7:9), the greatest harvest of souls will take place during the worst of times. It also tells us that in the time of God's ultimate wrath, He will still have mercy on those who repent and believe. In His wrath, He remembers mercy (cf. Hab. 3:2).

No doubt, John was pleasantly surprised to see this vast number being saved during the Tribulation Period. After all, the last he knew about the earth was when he was shown the sad condition of the church of Laodicea.

Rev 7:15 Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

The multitude is before the "throne of God". The inhabitants of heaven enjoy being close to God.

Usually, we find a "throne" in a palace, but this throne is in a "temple". The temple was a place of worship. This reminds us of how God is not just a sovereign to be feared but a God to be worshiped.

There is no sign of restriction whatsoever. They can, as they please, enter into the very presence of God.

The saints in heaven "serve" God "day and night". The ones who served faithfully on earth will serve joyfully in heaven. We are not told exactly how we will serve God but it will be a pleasurable service and not a burden. Before Adam's labor in the Garden of Eden before his sin was a joyful labor (Ge 2:15).

Rev 7:16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

The multitude shall "hunger no more". They, being of the number who refused the mark of the beast, are not able to buy or sell (13:16-17). They had to beg or steal to get food so there were times when they had no food at all. But, those times of hunger are over.

The reference to the "sun" and "heat" may refer to how they had to face the outside elements as they hid from the Antichrist and his army. That type of suffering is forever behind them.

Rev 7:17 For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

The One who had been in the midst of the churches (1:13), is now in the midst of the "throne". During the Tribulation Period, the multitude had to get food from anywhere and anyone. But, in heaven, the "Lamb" Himself will feed them. How amazing is that?

Their life on earth had been a life of many tears. But, God will wipe their tears away forever (21:4).

We will look at this in greater detail later, but why would tears need to be wiped away by the Lord? It may be tears of grief. The trials of life cause much grief now, but there are no trials in heaven. It may be tears of guilt. Believers will see then, as never before, how they failed the Lord. I am so glad, for whatever reason, tears will be forever wiped away.

CHAPTER EIGHT

In chapter eight, Jesus breaks the seventh seal and there is silence in heaven for about half an hour. Also, in this chapter, four of the seven trumpets are sounded which bring judgments from God.

The seventh seal contains the seven trumpet judgments. A trumpet was a vital part of Jewish life. It was used to warn of an enemies' attack (Ezk. 33:3), gather people (Ex. 19:13; Isa. 18:3), announce a religious ceremony (Lev. 23:24; Num. 10:10), announce Jubilee (Lev. 25:9-10), collapse the walls of Jericho (Josh. 6:2-5, 20), celebrate the ark (2 Sam. 6:15), call people to war (Jer. 4:5; 6:1; 1 Sam. 13:3-4), stop a fight (2 Sam. 2:26-29), call to worship (Isa. 27:13; Ps. 150:3), establish a king (1 Kgs. 1:34), declare a new beginning (Num 10:10; Ps. 81:3), express of praise (Ps. 98:6), and announce Jesus' return (1 Th. 4:16).

In the book of Revelation, the trumpet is used to declare judgment. The trumpet's distinct and unmistakable sound declares the severity of the judgments. From this point on, things get much worse. One noticeable difference is the fact that there are no more cries for mercy from the believers.

The first pause (interlude) ends

The Seventh Seal is opened (silence in heaven) (8:1)

Introduction to the Seven Trumpet judgments (8:1-11:19)

The first three trumpet judgments bring devastation to the earth itself. The next three bring misery to mankind.

By this time, the Antichrist has deceived the world into believing he is the answer to all their troubles. He has been ruling the world, but he has also been hunting down and killing Jews and Christians. Six of the seven seals have been opened which has sent the world into absolute anguish. Sadly, the worst is yet to come.

Rev 8:1 And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.

Jesus opens the seventh seal which allows the scroll to be unrolled revealing more of its contents and causing another judgment to come forth.

The seventh seal is the last of the seal judgments.

As the diagram shows, the "seventh seal" contains the seven trumpet judgments. We will see later, the seventh trumpet contains the seven vial judgments (11:15 cf. 16:17-21). There is a progression from seals, to trumpets, to vials. It's like a fireworks rocket that ascends and bursts into seven individual stars.

When Jesus opened the seal, there were about thirty minutes of silence in heaven.

Heaven goes from the loud and joyful worship of the innumerable multitude (7:9-12) to a dead silence in a split second. Such a sudden change has to make the silence even more dramatic.

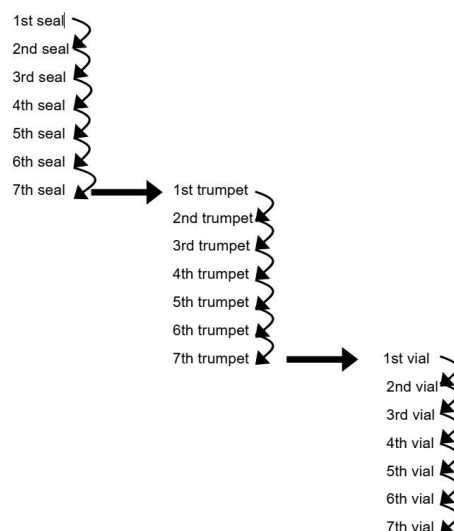
The silence may be God's way of getting the attention of those who dwell on earth. It gives mankind time to think. God can say more by His silence than all the world can say with all their intelligence.

The silence may be because all of creation is shocked when they see the contents of the seventh seal.

The silence may be God hesitating to do what He is about to do. God does not enjoy judging.

Whatever the reason for the silence, it is the calm before the storm. As bad as it has been, it is about to get worse.

After all the calamities of the six seals, this silence will have an incredible eeriness about it. Thirty minutes can be a miserably long time. Try sitting in silence, not for thirty minutes, but just 30 seconds, and see how long it seems.



5. **THE SEVEN TRUMPET JUDGMENTS:** (8:2-11:19)

Seven angels prepare to sound their trumpets (8:2-5)

Rev. 8:2 And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.

Once again we find the words "I saw". As I have mentioned, these words tell us something new is on the way and John is moving us from one event to another.

John sees seven angels standing before God who are given seven trumpets. The implication is, that they are standing, trumpet in hand, waiting for God to tell them to sound. They are ready and waiting to do what God tells them. We should do the same.

Verses 3-5 give us a view of prayer from heaven's point of view. Presently, we see prayer only from the earth's perspective. We have never seen what is going on in heaven to make sure our prayer is answered. To us, it seems like nothing is happening. Nothing could be further from the truth. The gears of heaven are turning.

Rev. 8:3 And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

Before the first trumpet sounded, John saw "another angel" standing at the "altar" with a "golden censer". The "golden altar" is "before the throne" of God in heaven. Once again, this reminds us how the design of the Tabernacle and temple on earth was after the original in heaven (Ex. 40:25-26).

This angel was given "much incense" which he offered with the "prayers of all the saints" on the "golden altar".

The ascending aroma of incense is a picture of the prayers of God's people who ascend to His throne (Ps. 141:2). The Old Testament priest sprinkled incense on the altar in the Tabernacle every morning and evening (Lev. 16:12). The fire used had to be taken from the altar of burnt offering (Ex. 30:9). The incense used had to be of a special recipe given by God (Ex. 30:34-38). The fire activated the sweet aroma of the incense in the censer. The appealing aroma is a picture of God's pleasure in hearing and answering the prayers of His people.

No doubt, these prayers are from those who are suffering on earth. God is judging the sinners on earth, but He is also hearing the cries of His people.

Much incense implies a large number of prayers. The believers on earth are hurting, so they are bombarding the throne of grace.

Of "all the saints" may mean, many of the suffering saints on earth are meeting together in prayer and crying out as a whole. Nothing unites the body of Christ like trials.

Offering it "with the prayers of all saints" means, he burns the incense at the exact moment when the prayers were sent from those on earth. These prayers are being answered even as they are being prayed.

The work of this "angel" reminds us of the work of the priest on earth. For this reason, some believe this is Jesus Himself. There are times when Jesus is referred to as "The angel of the Lord" (Gen. 16:7; Exodus 3:2; Num. 22:22; Judges 2:1; I Kings 19:7; Ps. 34:7; Isa. 37:36). However, I believe, as many do, this is simply an angel and not Jesus. God uses angels in many wonderful ways.

The "saints" are some of the "fellowservants" we are told about earlier when those under the altar were praying (6:11). Some of them had already made it to heaven (7:14). These were still on earth and facing the terror of the Antichrist. We aren't told the content of their prayers but there is a good chance they are asking for God to help them to be faithful through the hardships of the Tribulation Period. God will answer their requests (8:5).

Rev. 8:4 And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand.

As mentioned in the previous verse, the ascending aroma of the incense is a picture of their prayers ascending to God. As the pleasant aroma was pleasing to God, so are the prayers of His children. He is pleased when His children talk to Him.

These things are taking place in heaven because the believers on earth were crying for help from God. God heard their cry. There may be times when we wonder if God is listening. We can rest assured, not one of our prayers goes unheard. We just have to trust and wait.

Rev. 8:5 And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

The events described in this verse are an answer to the prayers of the saints recorded in verses 3 and 4.

The voices, thunderings, lightnings, and earthquake are signs of the coming storm. Jesus said there would be earthquakes in divers places (Mt. 24:7). This same thing happens when the seventh vial is poured out (11:19).

Thunder is often a sign of coming judgment (1 Sam. 2:10; 2 Sam. 22:14; Rev. 8:5; 11:19; 16:18).

Rev. 8:6 And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

Jesus opened the seven seals Himself. However, He uses angels to sound the trumpets and bring about the seven trumpet judgments.

*The first trumpet sounds
A third of vegetation is destroyed 8:6-7*

Rev. 8:7 The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.

The "first angel" sounds his trumpet which starts the first trumpet judgment of hail and fire mingled with blood.

God sent fire and hail to judge Egypt (Ex. 9:23-26). This is not a coincidence. In fact, at least five of the nine judgments during the Tribulation Period are very similar to those God sent when Israel was in Egypt.

There are several similarities between this event and that which happened to Israel in the book of Exodus.

In Exodus, Israel was in bondage to Egypt. In the Tribulation, the Jews are in bondage to sin.

In Exodus, God brought the people out of Egypt through a series of judgments. In the Tribulation, God will deliver the Jews by judgments that are even more severe.

In Exodus, God took Israel through the wilderness. In the Tribulation, God will bring the believers through the horrors of His judgments.

In Exodus, the people of Israel finally make it to the Promised Land. In the Tribulation, the people of Israel will make it to the Millennial Kingdom.

The one difference between these two is the fact that the situation will be reversed. The judgments were directed towards Egypt in the Old Testament, they will be directed toward Israel during the Tribulation Period.

The Jews on earth during this time will be well aware of the plagues God sent to Egypt. We should keep in mind, the time of Tribulation is a time of God dealing with the Jews.

The blood involved with this judgment should be a reminder to the world of the blood Jesus shed for their sin. They despised His blood so God will use blood as a part of their judgment. Blood can be the means of salvation or judgment.

The hail and fire mingled with blood consume "one-third" of the trees and green grass". This means 1/3 of the earth that is totally destroyed. This takes a good bit of the inhabitable space of the earth. In essence, the earth is getting smaller.

A fire that destroys a third part of the earth would be devastating. A "simple" local fire can wreak havoc but this will be a world-wide event. Fire spreads quickly through forests and consumes everything in its path. The damage of the fire itself will be indescribable, but the smoke will blanket the globe. Few things are more terrifying than to be in the path of a raging forest fire.

The second trumpet sounds

A third of the sea creatures and ships destroyed (8:8-9)

Rev. 8:8 And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood;

The "second angel" sounds his trumpet which starts the second trumpet judgment and brings a judgment with something like a huge, blazing, mountain that is thrown into the sea.

We usually think of judgment as causing damage to people, but this judgment is in the oceans and seas.

Some believe the "sea" refers only to the Mediterranean Sea. I believe this involves all the seas on earth.

The words "as it were" tell us this is not a literal mountain. Literal mountains do not turn water to blood. Remember, John is trying to describe something he had never seen before. What he saw looked like a burning mountain.

A third part of the sea turns to blood. This seems to be literal blood, not that the waters simply turned a blood-red color. Sadly, this blood is a symbol of death and not life.

This judgment reminds us of Moses and the water of the Nile turning to blood (Ex. 7:19-21). There is one vast difference, in Exodus, only the Nile River was effected, here all the seas of the earth are involved.

Rev. 8:9 And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.

A third part of the sea creatures die.

The bodies of the people and animals will drift to the shores causing a horrendous and harmful smell. This may not seem significant, but when we consider, there are over 300 cruise ships, over 5,000 container ships, and over 11 million boaters in the world, it suddenly becomes a very big deal.

A third of the ships being destroyed may be because of a huge tidal wave caused by the burning mountain falling into the sea. Of course, if God wants a third of the ships destroyed, He can do it without the use of a tidal wave.

The hail and fire of the first trumpet (8:7) consumed 1/3 of the earth. Now, this judgment will destroy 1/3 of the seas. It seems as though God is shrinking the earth and making the Middle East the center of focus. He is moving the entire world to the land of Israel.

The third trumpet sounds

A third of the rivers and springs become bitter, and many die (8:10-11)

Rev. 8:10 And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters;

The "third angel" sounds his trumpet which starts the third trumpet judgment contaminating a third of the freshwater sources on earth.

The third trumpet, much like the second, affects the waters of the earth. The difference is, the second affects the seas, and the third affects the freshwater lakes and rivers.

The "great star" may be some type of meteor. It is unlikely the great burning "star" is a literal star because a literal star would destroy the entire earth. Also, this "star" affects only fresh waters. Some believe this "star" is actually an evil angel sent by God to contaminate the fresh water.

Rev. 8:11 And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.

Wormwood is an extremely bitter, shrub-like, plant.

It is one thing for the seas to be affected but the freshwater will affect the world's water supply. Man cannot live without water. They forsook the fountain of life (Ps. 36:9; Pro. 13:14; 14:27), so they will have to drink the bitter waters of their sin.

This judgment reminds us of the experience Israel had when the water was bitter (Ex. 15:23-25).

The fourth trumpet sounds

A third of the sun, moon, and stars are smitten which affects day and night (8:12)

Rev. 8:12 And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.

The "fourth angel" sounds his trumpet which starts the fourth trumpet judgment causing all sorts of changes in the heavens. A third part of the sun, moon, and stars, turn black. Now, the heavens are affected by the judgments.

This judgment affects a third part of the sun, moon, and stars. Luke was writing about this when he wrote, "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring" (Lk. 21:25).

A third part of the heavenly bodies are "darkened" and do not shine. The day and night are shortened by a third. That means, a day will be reduced from 24 to 16 hour cycles.

This may be what Jesus spoke of when He talked about the days being shortened. Jesus said except the days should be shortened there would be no flesh saved (Mt. 24:22). God will alter the universe so that He might protect His people.

The four trumpet judgments will involve four different elements. They affect the plant life, marine life in the oceans, freshwater, and the heavenly bodies. That means the entirety of creation has been affected.

Angel announcing the coming of three woes (8:13)

Rev. 8:13 And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!

An angel flies through the midst of heaven loudly proclaiming a message from God. The seriousness of the message demanded an emphasis.

The word "woe" is an expression of grief. Here, it is a warning about that which is to come. God does not exaggerate. If He uses the word "woe" we can be sure it will be horrible.

The word "woe" is repeated three times because it refers to the three remaining trumpet judgments. The fifth, sixth, and seventh trumpets are referred to as the three woes (cf. 9:1; 9:13; 11:15).

The repetition of the "woes" also speaks of the severity of their judgments. The Bible uses repetition to add emphasis. Repeating the word "woe" three times indicates a calamity beyond imagination. As bad as it has been, things are about to get much worse. Up to this point, most of the judgments have fallen upon inanimate objects and lower life forms. That is about to change.

The "woes" John speaks of will be directed at these "inhabiters". The word "inhabiters" means "to house permanently". It refers to those who love this present world and live for temporal things. They will suffer tremendously and they end up going to hell.

No wonder why John tells us to "love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" (1 Jn. 2:15). Since this world is temporary (Isa. 40:7; Mt. 5:18; 2 Cor. 4:18; 1 Pet. 1:24), it is unwise to devote ourselves totally to that which will not last. The rich man with "much goods" is a perfect example (Lk. 12:19).

CHAPTER NINE

The fifth trumpet sounds, The first woe

With this trumpet, our attention is moved from heaven to hell, then to the earth.

Locusts from bottomless pit torment men (9:1-11)

Rev. 9:1 And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.

Once again we find the words "I saw". As I have mentioned, these words tell us something new is on the way and John is moving us from one event to another.

John devotes more space to this judgment than all the others. This speaks to its severity. God does not waste words. If He spends this much time on this judgment, there must be a reason.

The "fifth angel" sounds his trumpet which starts the fifth trumpet judgment. This is the first of three woes (cf. 8:13).

This "star" being referred to as "him" tells us this is a man and not an ordinary star. What John saw looked like a shooting star to him.

The Bible is silent as to the identity of this person. Some suggestions are an angel, the devil, or Jesus Himself. There are occasions in the Bible where men (Rev. 1:20), angels (Job 38:7), demons (Rev. 12:4), and Jesus (Rev. 22:16), are referred to as stars.

To me, it seems more likely to be the devil than anyone else. Falling from heaven doesn't sound like an angel or Jesus, but it does sound like the devil.

Being "given" the key gives him temporary access to the bottomless pit. No doubt, he plans to use the demons that come forth from the pit in some evil manner. However, God is still God and He will turn the devil's plan around and use it for His purpose. God often uses the devil to accomplish His purpose.

The word "pit" means "abyss" or deep chasm. The word "bottomless" is found seven times in the book of Revelation (9:1, 9:2, 9:11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1; 20:3) and always speaks of the abode of fallen angels. Satan himself will be bound there for a thousand years (20:3).

It may or may not be the same as the place called "hell" (Mt. 5:22; Lk. 16:23; Rev. 20:13). Hell is in the center of the earth (Num. 16:30-33; Isa. 14:9; 14:15; Eph. 4:9), and is the place of temporary confinement the unsaved who died without Christ (Lk. 8:31; 2 Pet. 2:4; Rev. 11:7; 20:13). Hell is different than the lake of fire (20:10,13-15).

Demon locusts come up from the bottomless pit

Rev. 9:2 And he opened the bottomless pit; and 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.

When the pit is opened a "smoke" like a "great furnace" billows out, actually blacking out the sun. Smoke has a connection to the presence of God (Gen. 15:17; Ex. 19:18; Rev. 15:8). But, it also has a connection with judgment (Gen. 19:28; Josh. 8:20; Joel 2:30; Nah. 2:13; Rev. 14:11; 18:19). Obviously, this smoke is connected to God's judgment.

This, as the other judgments, will be world-wide. The smoke from the destruction of Sodom could be seen for miles (Gen. 19:28). This smoke will cover the entire globe.

The "sun" is mentioned because the smoke blocked out the light. The "air" is mentioned because the smoke makes it difficult to breathe.

Rev. 9:3 And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.

If there was nothing more to this judgment than the smoke it would be bad enough. But the smoke is only the beginning for out of the smoke comes swarms of locusts.

Locusts are one of the most feared of all calamities. Locust swarms can devastate large amounts of farmland and vegetation. The largest recorded swarm of locusts was in 1875. The swarm was 1,800 miles long and 110 miles wide (larger than the state of California) and contained several trillion locusts.

As we will see in the next verses, these are not regular locusts. Most likely, they are fallen angels (demons). Without a doubt, this is another judgment from God.

These locusts being "given power" means God will give them limited authority to do that which He desires. The devil is certainly involved with the actions of these demons, but God is still in control. We must remember, this is a judgment that is coming from a holy God. Even though these demons will be on a rampage, God will still be in absolute control. God never, ever, loses control.

As the next verses describe, these locusts will be given attributes like "scorpions".

The Jews especially will remember another time when God sent locusts to judge the guilty (Ex. 10:12-19).

Rev. 9:4 And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.

As mentioned in the previous verses, these are not ordinary locusts. Some believe them to be symbolic but there is no Biblical reason to think they are anything but literal and exactly as these verses describe.

To begin with, they listen to a command. Regular locusts are driven by instinct. They listen to no one.

Secondly, they do not eat green plants and trees. Regular locusts devour both. The grass must have, at least partially, grown back from the first trumpet judgment (8:7).

Thirdly, they attack men, specifically, those who do not have the "seal of God in their foreheads". These are the ones who choose to reject Christ and obey the devil. Now, their master has become their tormentor. The devil promises joy but gives heartache.

Those with the "seal of God" refer to the 144,000 (7:4) and all those who have gotten saved during the Tribulation Period (22:4). As He did with Job (Job 1:10), God will put a protective hedge about His people.

Thus far, the judgments have primarily affected the earth and sea but now God's creation is spared and man will become the target. The entire population of the world will be included in this judgment. Only God's people will escape.

Rev. 9:5 And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.

The locusts have one ability and one mission, they produce pain.

These are demons and they were in the bottomless pit because they are evil. They long to frighten and torture their victims. They have no mercy whatsoever. They will do their best to make their victims suffer tremendously.

Remember also, that they have been confined in the bottomless pit for a long time. During that time, their anger toward man and their hatred for God has had time to build. They come out of the pit excited about causing pain.

God limits the power of these locusts. They are not able to kill those they attack. As with Job, God limits what the devil can do (Job 1:12; 2:6).

The fact that they are not allowed to kill tells us they could have. This should not surprise us. If a man can kill, certainly demons can. Satan can kill (Job 1:15; 1:17). Jesus said he was a "murderer" from the beginning (Jn. 8:44).

The length of their existence will be limited to "five months". Five months is the ordinary period of life of locusts.

The word "tormented" means "torture". It's the word used to describe the sea during a storm (Mt. 14:24).

Their bite will cause excruciating pain like the sting of a scorpion. The pain of a scorpion sting is described as unbelievable, indescribable, and unrelenting anguish. One sting causes pain over the entire body. Other effects of ordinary scorpion stings include difficulty breathing, muscle thrashing, drooling, sweating, vomiting, high blood pressure, and accelerated heart rate. But, again, these are much worse than ordinary locusts.

The effects will be five long months without one second of relief. It is quite possible for a person to be stung more than once during this five-month period.

Rev. 9:6 And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.

These words are some of the most sobering of all the Bible. For a person to be in so much pain that they would want to die is bad enough. But, they will "seek death" and "death will flee from them". They will try to commit suicide but not be able to kill themselves. This too, is the hand of God. He will not allow anyone to escape His coming judgment. It is nothing short of a miracle, guns will misfire, ropes will break, poison will not work, and knives won't cut.

These are the ones who refused to obey God and demanded they be in control of their lives. Now, they have no control whatsoever over their circumstances.

There will be no escape nor rest for the mind or body. There is nowhere to run when you are trying to outrun God.

Rev. 9:7 And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men.

It is important to note the words "like unto" and "as it were" in these verses. The locusts are shaped "like" horses.

The word, "horses" may describe their size. It may mean they are much larger than ordinary locusts. Their actual size is not given.

The word, "horses" may describe their strength. The type of horse used for "battle" is one of the strongest animals on earth. Few things are more intimidating than a horse dressed as described here.

The word, "horses" may describe their savagery. The words, "prepared for battle" reveal their nature. They are aggressive. It is in their nature to attack and do harm. They want to hurt people.

The "crowns" describe the success of their mission. John does not say they were wearing crowns. He says their heads were like crowns. As mentioned, these locusts are another one of God's judgments. God never fails, whether it be in blessing His people or judging His enemy. The locusts will do that which He sends them to do. There is no way to hide and no way to escape.

The "faces of men" describe their intelligence. They can think and reason. They are not mind-numb robots. They understand and obey the instructions of their "king" (9:11).

Rev. 9:8 And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions.

No doubt, the "hair of women" is not the soft and flowing hair we usually think about. It probably is long, scraggly, and dirty. This further enhances their hideous appearance.

The "teeth of lions" speak of their vicious nature and desire harm. Imagine one of these creatures coming after you with an open mouth and long sharp teeth.

Rev. 9:9 And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle.

The "breastplates of iron" speak of their power of defense. No doubt, men will try in vain to kill these monstrosities. Their breastplates will instill hopelessness in the minds of their victims. It is just more one reminder that they cannot be overcome.

The sound of them approaching makes their appearance even more terrifying. Their noise is described as "chariots of many horses running to battle". Even the noise they make suggests their intention to hurt and harm.

Rev. 9:10 And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months.

Their description and their ability to cause pain is repeated here (cf. v.5). It would do us well to take heed when God repeats Himself. I can think of three reasons why God would repeat. One, He repeats to stress the importance of what He has said. Two, He repeats because someone has refused to listen the first time. Three, He repeats to emphasize the severity of what He has previously said. God does not waste words, when He speaks, we need to listen.

Like scorpions, their sting is in their "tails". Even though they have teeth like lions, they do not bite with their mouths.

Rev. 9:11 And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon.

Contrary to ordinary locusts (Pro. 30:27), these locusts have a "king over them".

This "king" is probably not the devil but one of his chief demons. The king seems to be someone other than the one who received the key (v.1). Also, Satan has never been in the "bottomless pit". At present, he is walking to and fro in the earth (Job 1:7; 22). It seems that the devil has a hierarchy of angels (Eph. 6:12).

The Hebrew word "Abaddon" means "destruction" and Greek word "Apollyon" means "destroyer".

No doubt, men will attempt to kill these locusts but to no avail. No man can stop what God sets in motion.

Try to imagine what it would be like to live through this horrible event. What would it be like to see these monstrosities all around the world on the evening News? Imagine them in your neighborhood, breaking down your door, coming into your house, and attacking you and your family.

These demons had better enjoy their time of freedom. The day will come when they will be cast into the lake of fire with the devil and all the other demons.

It may seem like a fairy tale right now, but one day it will be all too real. If you are not saved, now is the time to turn to the Lord. Right now where you are, bow before the good God of heaven, repent of your sin, and believe on the Lord Jesus and His work on Calvary's cross. Like the man of old, cry out, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Lk. 18:13). If you are saved, these coming events should cause you to start doing your best to win to Christ all those around you.

An announcement about the two coming woes (9:12)

Rev. 9:12 One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter.

As horrible as the first woe was, it is but a drop in the ocean to what is coming. The torment of the demon locusts will be beyond comprehension, yet, it will be one very small portion of the seven years of horror. By this time there has been judgment on the land, the sea, the freshwater, and the air. But, there is much more to come.

The sixth trumpet sounds

The second woe

Four angels with an army of two hundred million (9:13-21)

Rev. 9:13 And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,

When the sixth angel sounded his trumpet John heard a voice coming from the "four horns of the golden altar".

This is the altar "before God" in heaven where the Tribulation martyrs were praying earlier (8:3-5). Here, we find God answering their prayers. That means, the coming judgment is, at least in part, a result of God hearing the prayer of His people. God does not forget the prayers of His children. Rest assured, He is at this very moment in the process of answering some of your prayers. Be patient and trust Him.

The golden altar in the Tabernacle and Temple had a horn protruding from each corner (Ex. 30:1-3). The four horns remind me of believers joining together in prayer. It takes more than one person to grab hold of four horns. There is power in a church joining together in prayer about a particular need. The New Testament believers set a time each day where they could meet together for prayer (Acts 3:1). God answered when they did so (Acts 2:42-43).



Four angels in the Euphrates River are loosed

Rev. 9:14 Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.

The sixth angel sounds his trumpet which begins the sixth trumpet judgment. This is the second of three woes (cf. 8:13).

The voice from the golden altar spoke to the sixth angel and told him to "Loose the four angels which are bound in the river Euphrates". These are not the same four angels we read about earlier (7:1-3). Those were good angels, these are anything but good. We are not told why these four angels were bound in the river to begin with. More than likely, they were some type of leaders among the devil's demons before God locked them away.

The Euphrates River is mentioned often in the Bible (Gen. 2:14; 15:18; Dt. 1:7; 2 Sam. 8:3; Jer. 13:4; Rev. 16:12). The area near the Euphrates River is a hot spot of devilish activity. It seems that, through time, the devil has set his headquarters in different areas throughout the world. The Euphrates River may have been one of his headquarters. The Garden of Eden was located somewhere in this region (Gen. 2:14). So the first sin (Gen. 3:6), the first murder (Gen. 4:8), the first war (Gen. 14), the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:4), the first dictatorship (Gen. 10:8-10) and the Babylonian captivity (Ps. 137:1-4) took place around the Euphrates River. The river will one day be dried up to allow the kings of the east to cross over and engage in the battle of Armageddon (16:12-16).

At times being referred to simply as "The River" (Gen. 15:18; Isa. 8:7), the Euphrates is 1,740 miles long and one of the greatest rivers on earth. God designated the Euphrates as the eastern border of the Promised Land (Gen. 15:18; Ex. 23:31; Dt. 11:24). For centuries this river has served as a barrier between opposing nations. Even today, the entirety of the Euphrates runs through Muslim territory and serves as a barrier between Israel and her enemies.

Rev. 9:15 And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.

The hour, day, month, and year refer to the precise time of their task and not its duration. In other words, God has set an exact minute for this to occur. God's will is not only done how He wants it but when He wants it. God's timing is vitally important in our lives. He is never late, but He is never early. We must learn how to "wait on Him" (Isa. 30:1b; 40:31; 64:4b; Ps. 27:14; 37:7; 130:5; Mic. 7:7).

The fact these angels are loosed does not mean they will be free to do as they please. They are loosed by God and will be controlled totally by God. They will be pawns in the hands of Almighty God.

These four angel's one and only task is to kill. Before they are done they will have killed one-third of the world's population. Since a fourth of the world's population had already been slain (6:8), this means, that over half the world's population will be killed from just two judgments. At the present population that would be close to 4 billion people.

Army of two hundred million horsemen

Rev. 9:16 And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them.

The four angels are in control of a vast army of two hundred million. The word, "army" means "body of troops" or "man of war". That means they are coming for battle. It means they are coming for blood.

The word "horsemen" means "cavalry force". The cavalry is known for being well-organized, strong, and determined. No doubt, this is true of this ungodly army.

John "heard the number of them". God put an emphasis on the number of this army. And yet, some modern commentators who believe this number is not literal.

Rev. 9:17 And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone.

Interestingly, the horses receive more attention than the riders.

The two hundred million army is on horseback. In the Bible, the horse is almost always referred to in connection with war (only exception is Isaiah 28:28). These are certainly horses of war. These are not ordinary soldiers and the horses are not ordinary horses.

There are differing opinions about this army.

One, some believe it is symbolic. I believe it is literal. If the Euphrates River (v.14) is literal, why would we think the horsemen and horses are not literal?

Two, some believe it is an army from China. As I will discuss, I disagree because I believe this is an army of demons.

Three, some have suggested this is an army of human soldiers and John described their modern machines of war (tanks, missiles, rocket launchers, airplanes, and helicopters) as best he could with his ancient knowledge.

This seems all but impossible to me for the following reasons.

One, it seems unlikely for a human army to be led by angelic beings (cf. v. 15).

Two, the fire, smoke, and brimstone come from each and every one of these two hundred million. That would require an army, not just of two hundred million soldiers, but of two hundred million fighter planes, tanks, or helicopters.

Three, it is difficult to imagine any human army, even of this size, would be able to kill a third of the population on earth as the next verse describes.

Four, their description makes it obvious that these are demonic beings and not human soldiers.

The "breastplates" on the horses bare emblems that reveal who, and what, they are. Our military puts emblems on their uniforms that show their rank and their military achievements.

"Fire" is a bright red, and refers to the fire in their breastplates, "jacinth" is a dull blue and refers to the smoke, and "brimstone" is light yellow and refers to the brimstone that comes from their mouths.

The heads of their horses being as the heads of "lions" is another indication that they are not ordinary horses.

From the mouths of their horses come "fire and smoke and brimstone". These three are often means of God's judgment (Gen. 19:24; Dt. 29:23; Ezk. 38:22; Lk. 17:29; Rev. 20:10).

Seeing two hundred million such creatures would be terrifying. As with the seal and trumpet judgments that came before, this is the hand of God. God's judgment on sinful man continues.

Rev. 9:18 By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths.

God repeats the fact that one-third of the earth's population is killed (cf. v. 15). What a traumatic experience this will be. Just the problem of disposing of the dead bodies would be overwhelming.

Their ability to kill comes from the fire, smoke, and brimstone that comes from their mouths. They kill those who had refused the words from the lips of God's servants. They rejected what came from the mouths of God's servants (cf. 7:4), but they will not be able to resist that which comes from the mouths of these creatures.

It is no coincidence that a third of lost mankind is killed. The pattern of one-third is obvious. The first trumpet destroyed one third of the trees (8:7), the second trumpet caused one third of the sea to turn to blood and one third of the sea creatures perished (8:8-9). The third trumpet caused one third of the rivers and springs to dry up (8:10-11). The fourth trumpet caused one third of the sun, moon, and stars to go dark (8:12). The sixth trumpet caused one third of lost humanity to die (9:15).

Rev. 9:19 For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.

Their power to kill and injure comes from the "mouth" and "tails" of the horses. Their tails are like snakes that strike quickly and cause pain. If somehow their victim survives the fire, smoke, and brimstone, they have the power to "hurt" with their "tails".

Rev. 9:20 And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:

This verse reveals the depravity of man. Man is corrupt to his core.

The "rest of the men" refers to the ungodly who are able to escape the demon army and live.

The word "plagues" means "wound" and refers to the agony of what they experience.

They "repented not". Those not killed by this army will grow even more hardhearted. It is obvious the army of horsemen is a judgment from God, but, as did Pharaoh (Ex. 8:32), they harden their hearts even more. This is the case throughout the book of Revelation (9:20; 11:6; 15:1; 15:6; 15:8; 16:9; 18:4; 18:8; 22:18).

These are some of the most unbelievable words in the Bible. By this time, they have endured the indescribable horrors of the seal and trumpet judgments, watched as much of the earth has been destroyed, seen people killed by the billions, and suffered tremendously themselves. Yet, they not only refuse to repent, they continue to defy God and worship their false gods. The wickedness of man is unbelievable. Without the restraining work of the Holy Spirit, man is nothing more than an animal.

This proves tragedy or hardship may cause a person to fear, but it will not cause a person to repent. Only the Holy Spirit can convict the sinner (Jn. 16:8). The heart of man is so wicked that, even though they know their sin is worthy of hell, they continue to live as though there is no tomorrow (Ro 1:32).

The Holy Spirit took time and space to list some of their sins.

The "works of their hands" means they do as they please and use that which God gave them for their own selfish pleasures. This includes the idols they made with their own hands. They make an idol with their own hands and then worship that which they have just made.

The fact the idols were made of "gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood" shows they have no ability to help them. They cannot "see, nor hear, nor walk". The Psalmist says the same thing (Ps. 115:4-8) and concludes his comments about idols by saying, "O Israel, trust thou in the LORD: he is their help and their shield" (Ps 115:9).

Realize it or not, they were worshipping "devils" (demons). The Bible warns of this (Lev. 17:7; Dt. 32:17). A demon will do that which the worshiper asks of the idol to deceive them into thinking the idol answered their requests. Perhaps this is why so many man-made idols have such hideous faces.

The Bible warns us to avoid all forms of witchcraft (Ex. 22:18; Lev. 19:31; Dt. 18:10-11; Rev. 21:8; Rev. 22:15). Dabbling in witchcraft, Ouija boards, horoscopes, or astrology is dangerous. The devil is looking for anyone who has an open mind. A believer cannot be possessed by demons, but they certainly can be oppressed.

Those in the New Age movement claim to have communicated with extraterrestrial beings and to have had out-of-body experiences. They believe "spirit guides" connect them with another world. They teach the need to bypass the mind and reach what they call "cosmic consciousness". Certainly, all believers should avoid such fallacy.

Re 9:21 Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

Law and order are long gone. The people have become used to being able to do as they please with no legal consequences.

Neither repented they of their "murders". These "murders" would include abortion and euthanasia. Our world has lost their minds when it comes to the sanctity of life.

As mentioned earlier, I believe these murders include the killing of believers. I believe the Antichrist will instruct the average citizen to put believers to death. Citizens may be given the right to execute believers without even obtaining governmental approval. This is mentioned later (13:15).

The word "sorceries" means "witchcraft or magic" and points to their worship of the devil and demons (cf. Gal. 5:20). The Bible forbids all forms of sorcery (Ex. 22:18; Dt. 18:10-11; Lev. 19:31; Lev. 20:6; Sam. 28:3-9; Mal. 3:5). Sadly, our society thinks nothing about things like Bewitched, or Harry Potter. Cartoons for preschoolers are filled with this type of indoctrination. Even the new Disney cartoons (The Owl House) teach our children to practice witchcraft and how to cast spells.

Interestingly, the word "sorceries" is the Greek word "pharmakeus" from which we get our English word "Pharmacy". This may refer to those who used drugs to assist them in their worship of the devil. Either way, drugs have practically destroyed our world.

The word "fornication" is a word that includes all types of unlawful sexual activity. The word is singular, which means, they are guilty of a lifestyle of sexual perversion, not just an occasional inappropriate act. Our world views the idea of one man and one woman for life as archaic. Our young people are told their bodies are to be used for pleasure and those who wait for marriage are ridiculed and mistreated.

"Thefts" indicate their desire to get something for nothing. This way of thinking is rampant even in our day.

The words, "Neither repented" means they continue in these ungodly deeds as they had before the judgments had come.

CHAPTER TEN

The second pause (interlude) (10:1-11:14)

Since chapter nine ends with the sixth trumpet judgment, it is natural to assume chapter ten would open the seventh judgment. But, such is not the case. As He did between the sixth and seventh seal judgments, God pauses between the sixth and seventh trumpet judgments. This is the second (interlude) in the book of Revelation. It begins at 10:1 and continues to 11:14. Notice, this means, the seventh trumpet will not sound until Revelation 11:15.

As mentioned previously, we are not told the reasons for these pauses but here are three possible reasons. One, to give His people a rest and to remind them that He is still with them and they will be victorious. Two, to intimidate the unbelievers and to heighten their fear about what is coming next. And, three, to give the unbelievers an opportunity to repent and be saved.

To say the least, this is one of the most important chapters in the entire book of Revelation.

John told to seal up the little book (10:1-7)

Rev. 10:1 And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire:

Once again we find the words "I saw". As I have mentioned, these words tell us something new is on the way and John is moving us from one event to another.

The scene moves from heaven to earth.

Some believe this angel is Jesus because he is called the "angel of the Lord". Indeed Jesus is called the angel of the Lord in the Old Testament (Gen. 16:7-12; 21:17-18; 22:11-18; Ex. 3:2; Judges 2:1-4; 5:23; 6:11-24; 13:3-22; 2 Sam. 24:16; Zech. 1:12; 3:1; 12:8). However, in the New Testament, after His incarnation, Jesus is not seen as the angel of the Lord.

I lean more toward believing it is an angel. I will explain my reasoning as we go through these verses but I think we should focus more on what is being said than who is saying it.

What are we told about this angel?

We are told, this angel is "another" angel. The Greek word translated "another" means another of the same type. For instance, a tennis ball and a basketball are balls of a different type. Two tennis balls are balls of the same type.

That means this angel is the same type of angel we are told about in 5:2, 7:2, 8:3, and 18:2. It means also, that since this is that type of angel, it cannot be Jesus.

We are told, this angel is "mighty". The word "mighty" means "powerful".

The fact he is mighty does not suggest he is something more than an angel. God uses angels in some truly remarkable ways. Angels have great power (Ps. 103:20; Rev. 18:1, 21; 19:17-18). God uses angels to kill (1 Chr. 21:15; 32:21; Acts 12:23), destroy (2 Sam. 24:16), give His message (Gen. 18:1-3; 19:1; Lk. 1:19; Heb. 2:2), minister to His people (Heb. 1:7, 14), give comfort (Acts 27:23-24), set free from prison (Acts 12:7), fight for (Jude 9), bring answers to prayers (Dan. 10:10-14), assist in judgment (Rev. 7:1; 16:1), select the 144,000 (Rev. 7:2), assist in judging Satan (Rev. 12:7), bind Satan (Rev. 20:1-3), announce the coming of Jesus (1 Th. 4:16), and carry deceased believers to heaven (Lk. 16:22).

We are told, this angel came "down from heaven". If this is Jesus, this would be another coming of Christ. We know, by this time, the Rapture has already taken place and the Second Coming doesn't happen until chapter 19. Those are the only comings of Christ that the Bible talks about.

We are told, this angel was "clothed with a cloud". The word "clothed" means "to wrap around". The cloud surrounded this angel like a garment.

Clouds are closely connected to God. A cloud is connected to the mercy seat (Lev. 16:2), leading Israel in wilderness (Ex. 13:21, 14:24; Neh. 9:12), Aaron rebuking Israel (Ex. 16:10), over the Tabernacle (Ex. 40:34), approaching Moses (Ex. 19:9), the dust of His feet (Nahum 1:3), the Rapture (1 Th. 4:17), and His Second Coming (Mk. 13:26; Rev. 1:7).

We are told, this angel had a "rainbow" upon his head. The "rainbow" speaks of God's mercy (Gen. 9:13). God's Mercy has just about to run out for the unbelievers but He still has mercy on the believers on earth. Only God can rightly dispense mercy and judgment at the same time.

We are told, his "face was as it were the sun". The presence of God has a visible effect on those who are close. Angels, as found here, are described as having a glowing countenance. Stephen was described as having the face of an angel (Acts 6:15). Moses' face glowed after he spent time with God (Ex. 34:30). Jesus glowed when He was transfigured (Lk. 9:29).

We are told, his feet were "as pillars of fire". A pillar holds up the building. It speaks of something firm and unmoveable. The "fire" refers to the judgment that is yet to come.

Rev. 10:2 And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth,

We are told, this angel has a "little book" in his hand. Some believe this book is the scroll with seven seals (5:1). However, the Greek word used here for "book" is not the same word used in 5:1. That means, this is probably a different book.

The little book is "open". All of its content is revealed.

We are told, this angel standing on the sea and the earth. The angel standing on the sea and the land indicates at least four things. One, it shows the massive size of this angel. Two, what is about to happen will affect the entire world (sea and land). Three, this angel is claiming the entire world for God. Four, God is about to take back the control of the earth from the hands of the devil.

Rev. 10:3 And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices.

The angel's voice was "loud". Like a lion roaring, it commanded attention. No one can ignore a lion's roar.

The "seven thunders" were actually seven thunder-like voices speaking. John heard and understood what they said.

Seven thunders speak

Rev. 10:4 And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.

John proceeded to write what he saw and heard as he had been told to do at the beginning of this book (1:11). Just as he was about to write, the voice from heaven stopped him.

Here the word "seal" means simply to not record what the seven thunders said.

We are not told why God did not want the words recorded. Our speculations are futile and any guesses are useless. If God did not tell John, He isn't going to tell us. All truth comes from God. He said, "I declare the things that are right" (Isa. 45:19). God will tell us what we need to know. Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth" (Jn. 8:32).

Since John was not allowed to write what the voices said, why did God record this event at all?

One, to show us there are some things that God keeps to Himself. God will never tell us everything He knows. There are some things we can not understand. Jesus told His disciples there were some things they could not comprehend at the moment (Jn. 16:12).

Two, to remind us God knows more than we do. God is omniscient. That means, He knows all things and there is nothing He does not know. He knows the number of hairs on our heads (Mt. 10:30). He knows what will happen in the future (Mt. 16:21; 21:1-3; 24:2; 26:22; 26:43). He even knows what would happen if our circumstances were different. He told those in the cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida that if the works that were done in them had been done in Sodom, they would have repented (Mt. 11:23).

Three, to show us there are some things we are not supposed to know. Like it or not, God has told us all He is going to. There will be no new revelations.

The contents of the little book are never revealed in Scripture. Any speculation is futile. If God sealed it up, we will not unseal it with our guesses. Man should leave alone those things God has reserved for Himself. To do anything else is adding to or taking away from the Word of God (cf. 22:19).

The angel speaks

Rev. 10:5-6 And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, And swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer:

The word "swore" means "an oath". This is another one of the reasons why I believe this is an angel and not Jesus. It is highly unlikely that the Son of God would make such a vow. If it was Jesus, He would have sworn by Himself (cf. Heb. 6:13).

The angel standing on the sea and the land gave a solemn oath. Much like the oath a witness takes in a court of law, this angel raises his hand and declares that what he is about to say is the truth and nothing but the truth.

Simply put, the angel saying God is true to His Word and that which he says shall surely come to pass. Our God never lies. He cannot lie (Titus 1:2). Since this is true, preachers can stand in pulpits and preach the Word without fear. We can trust even the crossing of the "T" and the dotting of the "I" of God's Word (Mt. 5:18).

The angel makes the vow by the One who "liveth for ever and ever".

This speaks of God's immutability. God never changes and He never changes His mind. Time has a way of changing people. We make promises but, over time, we change our minds. This never happens to God because He never changes.

The angel makes the vow by the One who created "heaven" and "earth" and everything in them. This speaks of God's authority. Being the Creator of all things, He has the right to do what He wants with that which He made.

This speaks of God's power. The God who is able to create all things is certainly able to bring to pass that which is left in the seven-sealed scroll.

The words "there shall be time no longer" do not mean, as some have suggested, that time itself will cease to exist. It means "there will be no more delay". It means, time has run out and the next judgments will come with no delay. The next step in God's plan is about to come, He is about to turn the page.

Rev. 10:7 But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.

This verse gives us information about the seventh trumpet that is about to be sounded. There have been seven seals and six trumpets and none of them had such a solemnity about them. There, is indeed, something unique about the seventh trumpet.

The "days of the voice of the seventh angel" refers to the time in the future when the seventh trumpet will sound. It is important to note, this will not actually happen until Revelation 11:15.

A "mystery" is something that has been hidden in the past but has now been revealed. There are several mysteries in the New Testament. There is the mystery of Israel's blindness (Rom. 11:25), of the Rapture (1 Cor. 15:51), of God's will (Eph. 1:9), of Christ (Eph. 3:5), of God, and of the Father, and of Christ (Col.2:2), of Christ in the believer (Col. 1:27), of iniquity (2 Th. 2:7), of Christ (Eph. 3:4), of godliness (1 Tim. 3:16), of the seven stars (Rev. 1:20), and of the woman on the beast (Rev. 17:7).

The "mystery of God" in this verse, refers to God's plan for the universe. It includes His plans throughout the eternal ages.

This plan is that which God has "declared to his servants the prophets". It is not new. It is that which God had planned from before He created the earth and made man.

The words "should be finished" speak of how God will bring His plan for the universe to its completion. To say the least, that is no small matter.

God's plan includes providing the way of forgiveness of sin, restoring His chosen people Israel, His Second Coming, His Millennial reign, the Great White Throne judgment (Rev. 20:11-15), the new heaven and new earth (Jer. 31:31-34), and the eternal state of His domain.

The completion of this plan accomplishes several amazing things.

One, God will remove the curse caused by Adam's sin (Gen. 3:17; Rom. 8:22).

Two, God will reclaim His dominion of the universe.

The devil "stole" the domain that God had given to Adam and became the prince of this world (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4), and the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2). That does not mean he rules the world completely. It does mean God has allowed him to operate with certain restrictions (cf. Job 1:10, 12; 2:6). God, as only He can, actually uses the devil to accomplish His will in this world.

But, God is showing in this verse that He is about to take back forever that which Adam lost. Paul wrote, "That in the dispensation of the fulness 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 1:10).

Three, God will forever defeat Satan.

The time of God allowing Satan to have his way in the world will come to an end. God will defeat the devil (Jn. 12:31; 16:11; Rom. 16:20; Col. 2:15). He will cast the devil and all his evil demons into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10).

We may wonder why God allows the devil to go so long and do so much before He steps in and stops him. To begin with, that is His business and not ours. But, that being said, by God allowing the devil to work, His plan was accomplished to perfection. After all is said and done, we will find, that Romans 8:28 is really true. Despite the times of chaos, God has never lost control and His plan will run its course to its final completion.

This verse is meant to give hope to John and the believers who are enduring the Tribulation Period on earth. This will be welcome news to those who living through the horrible time of demons, disasters, and devastation. It will assure them that everything is as God said it would be. They have walked a long and hard road, but their journey will soon be over.

John is told to eat the little book (10:8-11)

Rev. 10:8 And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.

This "voice" is the same John has been hearing throughout this book (1:10; 4:1; 8:13; 9:13). It is the voice of Jesus. This is another reason to believe the mighty angel (10:1) is not Jesus. While the angel is on earth talking to John, this voice is speaking from heaven.

This is the third mention of the angel that stands on the sea and the land. This time, John puts the sea before the land. In other instances, the land comes before the sea (5:13; 7:3; 12:12; 14:7). No explanation is given.

The voice tells him to "Go and take the little book".

Rev. 10:9-10 And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.

John was not always just a bystander of what he was seeing. Here he is very much a participant in the action. He is told the "take" the book and to "eat" in (10:11). Later, he is instructed to measure the temple (11:1).

As John was instructed in the previous verse, he approaches the angel and asks for the little book. This is another indicator that this is an angel and not Jesus. I find it hard to believe that John, even though he was instructed to (v. 8), would tell Jesus what to do.

We are not told what this book is or what it contains. Some believe, of which I agree, that this is the book that God told Daniel to seal up until the time of the end (Dan. 12:4, 9). And now, in the verses we are discussing, the "time of the end" has come. That which Daniel was told to seal is being revealed. It seems this book contains the prophetic message John is to deliver. The next verse tells us John will prophesy to many people.

John is told to "take" the book and "eat it up". Eating means receiving knowledge (Jer. 15:16; Ezk. 3:1-3). A preacher must first take in that which he is to give out. He must let God speak to him before he can speak to others.

The angel forewarned John that consuming the book would be "sweet" to the taste but "bitter" to the belly. When John ate the book it was as the angel had said.

The book being both sweet and bitter is a picture of how end-time prophecy is both sweet and bitter.

End-time prophecy is sweet to those who are faithful. God promises blessings to those who remain faithful during difficult times (Mt. 5:10-12; Acts 5:41; 16:25; Rom. 5:3; 2 Cor. 4:17). It is sweet because they know all their burdens will soon be over. God will cast the devil into the lake of fire, and make a new heaven and a new earth where there will be no more sickness, sorrow, self, or Satan.

End-time prophecy is bitter to those who reject God's Word and live for self. It is bitter because the time of their judgment is close.

The modern church wants a Bible that avoids the bitter and emphasizes the sweet. Many preachers have filled their church by refusing to mention anything negative. But, knowing the bitter only makes the sweet even more sweet. Knowing I am going to heaven is made sweeter when I realize I deserve to go to hell.

Rev. 10:11 And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.

The word "prophesy" can mean to foretell the future. But, as it is meant here, it can also mean to proclaim God's Word (Acts 13:1; 15:3; 21:10; 1 Cor. 12:28; 14:37; 14:29; 14:39; Eph. 4:11).

The angel tells John what he is to expect in his future. He is to "prophesy". His ministry was not over. Of course, through his writing of the book of Revelation, John would prophesy to "many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings". But, the word "again" seems to refer to John's personal ministry. Tradition tells us John was set eventually free from the Isle of Patmos. The devil failed to quieten this mighty man of God.

"Peoples" refers to large groups of people without taking into consideration their nationality. "Nations" refer to people separated by geographic boundaries. "Tongues" refer to people who are separated by language. "Kings" refer to those who are rulers.

As we come to the end of this chapter we are confronted with the fact that the world is getting closer to the third woe. The third woe will be the worst of all the judgments thus far. Not since the flood has the world seen anything close to what is coming.

The God of the universe is going to take back His kingdom, and everyone isn't happy about it. It will be a battle.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Chapter eleven is a continuation of the events described in chapter ten with the pause (interlude) that began in chapter ten continuing until verse 15 of this chapter.

This chapter begins with a temple on earth and ends with a temple in heaven.

In this chapter, John is told to measure the temple, the two witnesses are introduced, and the seventh trumpet sounds.

John told to measure the temple (11:1-2)

Rev. 11:1 And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.

Once again, we see John actually becoming a part of the action. An angel, probably the same mighty angel who handed him the little book (10:1), told him to measure the "temple" the "altar" and "them that worship therein".

The word "temple" is the Greek word "naos". It refers to the inner temple, which includes the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies.

The "altar" is probably the brasen altar in the outer court of the temple area. This is where the average person could go there. They could not go into the Holy Place or the Holy of Holies for only the Priest or the High Priest could go there.

The "reed" John used was made of a bamboo stalk that grew in the Jordan Valley. Being very lightweight, they were used as walking sticks, and, much like our yardsticks, as measuring rods.

This brings four questions to mind.

- The first question, what did John measure?

John is measuring a temple that did not even exist in his day. It cannot be the Temple that existed when Jesus walked on earth. In 70 AD, the Roman General Titus had completely destroyed that temple (Mt. 24:2). Neither is this the Millennial Temple (Ezk. 4:1; 42:20-42:20).

From this, we know there will be another temple built and will be standing during the Tribulation Period. Daniel (Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11), Jesus (Mt. 24:15), and Paul (2 Th. 2:4) speak of this temple. We do not know exactly when the construction will begin but it will certainly be completed by the mid-point of the Tribulation Period. This temple does not have to be as extravagantly built as the previous temples. In fact, it could be built in a matter of days.

This means, that sometime during the first part of the Tribulation Period, the Jews will build a temple and go back to the Old Testament sacrificial system.

- The second question, why did John measure the temple?

The Bible tells us of two things that God measures.

One, God measures what He is about to judge (2 Sam. 8:2; 2 Kgs. 21:13; Isa. 28:13; Lam. 2:8; Amos 7:7-9; Mt. 7:2). It's like He is putting a border on that which is condemned.

Two, God measures to mark out ownership. We do the same when we buy property.

By measuring parts of the temple, God is saying, "This is mine, it belongs to me". By claiming it as His own, He is accepting the responsibility for its care and protection.

Notice, God has the temple and "them that worship therein" measured. The people are His also. God isn't just promising to take care of a building, He is promising to take care of His people.

This is especially significant because the temple and the sacrifices being offered will not be pleasing to God. Animal sacrifices are no longer needed for the Son of God has already offered Himself as the supreme sacrifice. Despite of the Jews attempting to approach Him by these inferior methods, God will use this temple and the sacrifices to show the Jews their need for Jesus. He did the same thing with the Old Testament Law. God gave the Old Testament Law, which included the sacrificial system, to show mankind their need for Christ. Paul said, "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Ga 3:24).

Even though many Jews will die during the Tribulation Period, God will not let them be totally annihilated. He will see Israel through the Tribulation Period and will set up His kingdom as He promised Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3).

- The third question, why will another temple be built?

Why would the Jews, the Antichrist, and most importantly, God want another temple?

First, why would the Jews want another temple?

The Jews will want a temple then for the same reason they want a temple now. Being spiritually blind they will still depend on the Old Testament method of approaching God. They will still be looking for their Messiah.

At present, most Jews have little concern for the temple or temple worship. But, there are small groups of orthodox Jews who are totally dedicated to seeing a new temple built.

One such group dedicated to the building of another temple call themselves "Temple Mount and Land of Israel Faithful Movement". Their statement of purpose says, "The goal of the Temple Mount and Land of Israel Faithful Movement is the building of the Third Temple on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem in our lifetime in accordance with the Word of G-d and all the Hebrew prophets and the liberation of the Temple Mount from Arab (Islamic) occupation so that it may be consecrated to the Name of G-d".

Jewish groups like this have woven the clothing the priests would wear, made silver and gold vessels for temple worship, and trained men in the Old Testament Levitical rituals. In other words, the Jews are getting ready. They are still looking for their Messiah. But, the man who will come (Antichrist) will be anything but their Messiah. Jesus said, "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive" (Jn 5:43). His "own name" is not an indication as to whether he will be a Jew or Gentile.

Second, why would the Antichrist want another temple?

The Antichrist will allow the Jews to build a temple because he wants them to think he is their friend. He knows he can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar. But, the day will come when he will show his true colors and cause their sacrifices to cease (Dan. 9:27).

Third, why would God have Israel build a temple?

Why would God let the Jews go back to the Old Testament sacrificial system and offer sacrifices that do not cleanse them from their sin? He is attempting to open their eyes so they might see their sin and come to Christ. He wants them to see the futility of trying to approach God by any other means than the blood of Christ. Paul tells us all Israel will be saved (Rom. 11:26).

- The fourth question, where will this temple be built?

If there is another temple, it must be built at the same location as the previous temples. At present, the Islamic Dome of the Rock (Mosque of Omar) stands on this spot. The Muslims are certainly not willing to give up this location. For the last 2,000 years Jews, Muslims, and Christians have died in their attempts to gain control of this plot of land.

However, some believe the original site of the temple is actually 100 yards north of the Dome of the Rock. Those who hold to this location believe a temple could be built without disturbing the Dome of the Rock. If the temple is built at this location the area where the outer court would normally be built will be where the Dome of the Rock is. Perhaps this is the reason, as we will see in the next verse, God tells John to not measure that area for it is "given to the Gentiles" (11:2).

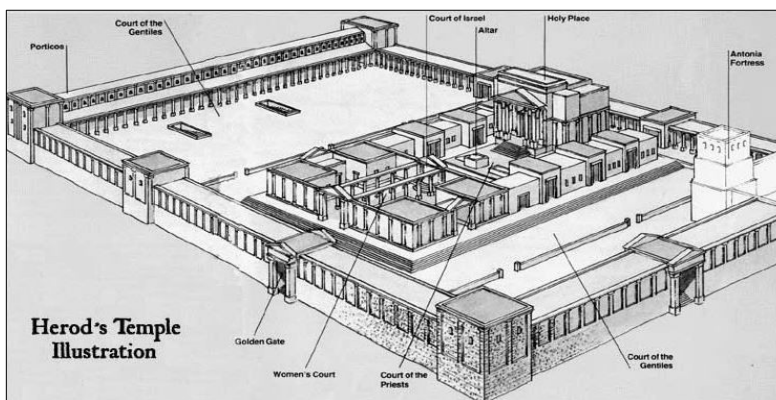
More than likely, settling the location problem will be one of the Antichrist's first accomplishments. One thing is certain, the man who could settle the problems between the Jews and the Muslims would be worshiped by the world.

One way or the other, God will make it happen, and there will be another temple built.

The Gentiles are not included in the temple

Rev. 11:2 But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.

As mentioned in verse one, the word "temple" refers to the inner temple, which includes the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. Any Jew could come into the outer court but only priests could enter the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies.



The "court" spoken of in this verse refers to the court of the Gentiles.

Herod's temple contained four separate courts. The court of the Gentiles, court of the women, court of Israel, and court of the Priests. The court of the Gentiles was known as the "outer court". It was the only part of the temple the Gentiles were allowed to enter. It was in this area that Jesus drove out the money changers (Jn.2:11-12; Mt. 21:17-23).

John is instructed to leave out the court of the Gentiles because they were guilty of oppressing the people of Israel. That means also, they will not be a part of the protection that God promises the people of Israel mentioned in verse 1.

The "forty and two months" (3 1/2 years) refers to the last half of the Tribulation Period. The Jewish calendar has 360 days in a year.

The Gentiles treading the holy city "under foot" will reach its height when the Antichrist desecrates the temple by setting up an image of himself (13:15). Paul writes of this time (2 Th. 2:3-4).

Jesus spoke of this when He said, "And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Lk. 21:24). This is the time when the Jews are to run to the mountains (Mt. 24:15-22). Jesus said, "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Mt. 24:21).

The 42 months this verse speaks of are a small part of what the Bible calls "The Times of the Gentiles". The times of the Gentiles began when Nebuchadnezzar overthrew Jerusalem (2 Kgs. 25:8-12; Dan. 1:1), and will end when Jesus returns in power and overcomes the Antichrist and his army (19:11-21). That means we are presently living in the "Times of the Gentiles".

God will use the time of the Gentiles to turn Israel back to Him (Rom. 11:25-26). He will use the Gentiles to provoke Israel to jealousy (Rom. 11:11). When the time is right, He will restore the entire nation of Israel and they will accept His Son as their Lord and Savior (Isa. 62:11-22; Rom. 11:25-26).

Just as a side note, the emphasis on the temple and the Jews is more evidence that the church has already been taken to heaven in the Rapture.

The two witnesses (11:3-13)

In the following verses, we are introduced to two special witnesses God uses to send out the gospel message to the world. The timing could not be better for their witness will convince many of the Jews to forsake their offerings in the temple and turn to Christ.

Before we get into the verses, let's deal with the issue of who these two witnesses are.

First and foremost, the Bible does not give the identity of these men. They could simply be ordinary men who God raises up for the task at hand. There is nothing in the Bible that would require that they be any more than that.

However, as we will see, there are characteristics about these men that are surprisingly similar to men who have walked the earth before.

Many believe Moses will be one of the witnesses because he, like these witnesses, was able to turn water into blood (Ex. 7:20). Those who hold to this believe the devil fought over the body of Moses because he was trying to keep him from being one of these witnesses (cf. Jude 9).

Some believe Enoch will be one of the witnesses because he went to heaven without dying (Gen. 5:24). They say everyone has to die because the Bible says it is appointed unto man, "once to die" (Heb. 9:27). The problem is, many have died twice because God raised them (Widow's son, 1 Kgs. 17:21-24; Shunammite's son, 2 Kgs. 4:18-37; Man in Elisha's grave, 2 Kgs. 13:20-21; Jarius' daughter, Lk. 8:51-56; Dorcas, Acts 9:36-43; Lazarus, Jn. 11:43; Eutychus, Acts 20:7-12). Also, this argument is not valid for many will escape death when the Rapture takes place (1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Th. 4:15). Another issue with Enoch is the fact that he was not a Jew.

Some believe John will be one of the witnesses. The angel told him Thou must prophesy "again" before many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings (Re 10:11). Those who hold to this theory believe him prophesying "again" means he will come back during the Tribulation Period and preach again. The fact however is, John was released from the Isle of Patmos and did live to preach again.

For the following reasons, some believe the witnesses will be Moses and Elijah.

One, Elijah, like these two witnesses (v. 5), was able to destroy their enemies with fire (2 Kgs. 1:10-14).

Two, Elijah, like these two witnesses (v. 6), was able to control the weather (Jam. 5:17-18).

Three, they will stop the rain for 3 1/2 years, just like Elijah did.

Four, Moses and Elijah were at the transfiguration (Mt. 17:3-4).

Five, Moses represents the Law and Elijah represents the prophets.

Six, both were used by God to bring judgment to people.

Seven, both left this life in unusual ways. God buried Moses in an unmarked grave (Dt. 34:5-7), and took Elijah to heaven in a chariot of fire (2 Kgs. 2:11).

Eight, God promises to send Elijah again (Mal. 4:5-6). If the Jews had accepted Jesus as their Messiah, John the baptist would have been the fulfillment of this prophecy (Mt. 11:14). Even today, when an orthodox Jewish family observes Passover, they will sit an extra chair and place setting at the table as a sign of expecting Elijah to come.

And now, let's take a look at these special witnesses.

The two witnesses and their purpose

God will use these men to turn multitudes to salvation. They will be lights in the darkness.

The responsibility of these two witnesses will be to expose the Antichrist as the fraud he is and to explain how Jesus is the only way of escape. As we will see, their ministry and message do not make the Antichrist happy.

God often sends men to warn those on earth just before He sends judgment. This was true of Noah before the flood, Abraham before the destruction of Sodom, and John the baptist before Jesus.

Rev. 11:3 And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

As mentioned earlier, a "witness" is a person who knows about a particular subject and is willing to tell the truth about it. This word carries with it the idea of a martyr. A martyr is one who gives their life for someone or something they believe in.

Notice, that there are two witnesses. The Old Testament demanded there be two or more witnesses to confirm a testimony (Dt. 17:6; 19:15; Mt. 18:16; Jn. 8:17; 1 Cor. 13:1; 1 Tim. 5:19; Heb. 10:28).

God will give "power" to these two witnesses. The Spirit of God will work through them to reach many with the gospel of Christ. No doubt, part of their message will have to do with the unbiblical nature of the temple sacrifices.

The word "prophecy" means, to preach or to explain what has happened or what is about to happen.

The ministry of these two witnesses will last 1,260 days (3 1/2 years). We will see more about this later.

As mentioned earlier, wearing "sackcloth" was a sign of mourning or a broken heart (Gen. 37:34; 2 Sam. 3:31; 2 Kgs. 6:30; 19:1; Isa. 22:12; Mt. 11:21). We must remember, these are real men with real hearts. They love the Lord, they love their fellow believers, and they love the lost world around them.

Rev. 11:4 These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.

The "two olive trees" and the "two candlesticks" point us back to the book of Zechariah (Zech. 4:1-14). In Zechariah's day, in spite of great opposition from the devil, God used two men, Zerubbabel the Governor and Joshua the High Priest (not the Joshua who followed Moses), to rebuild Israel and restore the Temple after Israel had been in Babylonian Captivity. John is saying the two witnesses will come with the same type of ministry as Zerubbabel and Joshua. As God used Zerubbabel and Joshua to call Israel to repentance, He will use the two witnesses will preach repentance and salvation to Israel during the Tribulation Period.

In John's day, two things were needed for light. One was oil, the other was a lamp. Both, oil (olive trees) and lamps (candlesticks) are mentioned in this verse.

The "olive trees", the source of oil, is a picture of a limitless supply of oil flowing straight from the tree to the bowl in the lamp. In other words, God pours His Spirit in an indescribable ways into the lives of these two witnesses. The ministry of these men will depend totally on God's anointing. As we find in Zechariah, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts" (Zec 4:6).

The two witnesses and their protection

In a world filled with wickedness and hatred towards God's people, God will protect these men until their ministry is done.

Rev. 11:5 And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.

As we would expect, the preaching of these two witnesses will infuriate the Antichrist and the unsaved population of the world. They will, on several occasions, attempt to put the witnesses to death. However, God will protect His men.

The "fire" from their mouths is a literal fire. God has equipped them with a weapon that makes it impossible for them to be hurt or executed. The word "devoureth" means "to eat down". Their attackers are consumed in an instant. Our best science fiction movies don't have anything as good as this.

By this time, the Antichrist and his followers have put many believers to death and want to do the same to these two men. These men represent everything they hate. They long to get rid of them but God will not allow it.

The two witnesses and their power

God gives them supernatural power to do that which cannot be done by mortal men.

Rev. 11:6 These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.

Like Moses, they have the power to turn water to blood and "smite the earth with all plagues".

Like Elijah, they will have the power to "shut heaven" so that it will not rain for 3 1/2 years.

Imagine the results of this one aspect of their lives. The earth has already been devastated by the previous judgments (8:8; 8:10). Now there is no rain, drought comes, and food runs out. There is no water to drink, cook with, bathe in, or give the livestock.

The two witnesses are able to cause these things to happen "as they will". It isn't like these plagues are happening randomly and everyone is suspecting the two men are responsible. There will be no doubt about who is causing it. They can speak or wave their hand and the plague will happen immediately right in front of their eyes. So, the world will know these two witnesses caused the rain to stop or the water to turn to blood. As a result, their hatred and their desire to put them to death will grow stronger. But the Lord will continue to protect them.

The two witnesses and their passing

At the end of their ministry, the two witnesses are killed by the Antichrist.

Rev. 11:7 And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.

The word "finished" means "complete" or "to make an end". It means, they have done everything they were supposed to do and left nothing at all undone. Paul used the same word when he said, "I have finished my course" (2 Ti 4:7). May every believer do the same.

The word "beast" means "a dangerous animal". This is the first time the word "beast" is found in the book of Revelation. Of course, this refers to the Antichrist. He is human but demon-possessed. He is empowered by Satan.

His ascending out of the bottomless pit is simply a description of his satanic powers. He is also described as "rising up out of the sea" (13:1). We will see much more about him later (17:8). This is the same beast who will make war with the saints later (13:7).

The two witnesses will be indestructible until the end of their ministry. When they finish their work, the Lord will allow the devil to do what he has been wanting to do for 3 1/2 years. No doubt, this will convince lost humanity even more to trust the Antichrist and their commitment to him will escalate.

Rev. 11:8 And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

Where "our Lord was crucified" is without question, the city of Jerusalem.

The word "great" refers to its size and not to its goodness. God describes the sinful condition of Jerusalem.

"Jerusalem" will be in such a sad state spiritually that it is called "Sodom". God had called the city of Jerusalem a "holy city" (Neh. 11:1; Is.52:1; Dan. 9:24; Mt. 4:5; Rev. 11:2). How does a city go from a holy city to a harlot city? The city that should be an example of holiness has become an example of perversion and sin.

"Egypt" makes us think of the oppression of God's people (Ex. 1:11-14). How sad that the city that should be the center of spiritual liberty is instead the capital of spiritual bondage.

Conquering kings would often leave the dead body of their enemy to rot as a sign of disrespect and contempt. The Antichrist will leave their bodies in the streets as a trophy of victory. It appears that he is winning.

Rev. 11:9 And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves.

Until the invention of satellite television, this prophecy seemed impossible. Of course, God could make the entire world see a particular event without having to use a satellite. As with all prophecy, God tells the truth whether we can explain it or not.

The people hate these two witnesses so much they won't even bury their bodies. Even after their bodies begin to decay and stink, no one has the decency to bury them.

Rev. 11:10 And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.

The word "rejoice" means "cheerful". The word "merry" means "to make glad". They will be delighted that these men are dead.

During Old Testament times, it was customary to send gifts to each other during days of joy (Neh. 8:1-12; Esther 9:19, 22). But, custom or not, a person has to be perverted to rejoice and give gifts because someone has died. Just imagine the entire world throwing a party like Mardi Gras with drinking, dancing, singing, and all types of perversion in the streets.

As mentioned previously (3:10; 6:10), the phrase "dwell on the earth" is found five times, and "dwell upon the earth" is found three times in the book of Revelation. These phrases always refer to those who are lost (3:10; 6:10; 11:10; 13:8; 13:14; 14:6; 17:8). The word, "dwell" means "to house permanently", which means, these are earthly people as opposed to heavenly people (cf. Phil. 3:20). It means they have lived only for the things of the world.

The world was "tormented" by the witnesses. No doubt having no rain and water being turned to blood will be a part of their torment, but the greatest will be that of their witnessing. The truth torments those who love their sin.

Someone has said this is the only record of rejoicing on earth in the book of Revelation. Sadly, it is evil people rejoicing about a horrible situation.

Rev. 11:11 And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them.

After three and a half days of rotting in the streets, something totally unexpected will happen. The same God who breathed into Adam the breath of life will do the same to these two men. Not only is their life restored but their partially decayed bodies will either be restored to perfection or completely glorified.

Imagine the ungodly Newscasters doing a live broadcast of this event. He may be saying something like, "Well folks, I'm here at the site of the dead bodies andUh..something is happening....THEY'RE GETTING UP....THEY'RE ALIVE". No doubt about it, their party will end abruptly.

The entire world, especially the Antichrist, will be in shock.

This would be a wonderful time for them to stand and preach the gospel, They have just risen from the dead and all the world will be watching and listening. But, to be honest, it probably would not do any good. Abraham told the rich man, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (Lk. 16:31).

Those who see their resurrection will be stricken with "great fear". Sadly, they were not afraid when the two witnesses told them the Antichrist was a fraud and that hell was a reality.

They will be afraid of the wrong thing.

Man fears bathing, bees, blood, blushing, cancer, cats, choking, clothes, corpses, crowds, darkness, death, deformity, demons, dirt, dogs, dreams, the number eight, elevators, flying, germs, hair, heights, horses, insanity, insects, lightning, mice, milk, mirrors, noise, numbers, pain, poverty, pregnancy, school, sleep, snakes, spiders, strangers, strings, surgery, thunder, travel, the color yellow, long words, work, and worms. The fact is, man fears everything except that which they really ought to fear. It seems as though he does not fear God, death, or hell.

Jesus said, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Mt. 10:28).

Rev. 11:12 And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.

Whether anyone would listen or not, they will not have time to say much. A "great voice" says "Come up hither".

Some try to put the Rapture at this point but their ascension is slow, as was the ascension of Jesus (Acts 1:9). The change and rising at the Rapture will be in an instant (1 Cor. 15:52). Also, their resurrection will be seen by the entire world. The Rapture is seen only by God's people.

Rev. 11:13 And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.

The "same hour" means as the witnesses were ascending toward heaven. As the two witnesses are ascending toward heaven, a mighty earthquake rocks Jerusalem to its foundation, causing one-tenth of it to crumble into rubble. I believe this is a worldwide earthquake, yet, it seems, the only damage is in the city of Jerusalem. Only God can do such a thing.

Seven thousand will perish from this earthquake. The death toll continues to rise. A fourth, and then a third, of the world's population, has been killed. Now 7,000 more are added to the death toll. No wonder why Jesus said, "And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved" (Mt. 24:22).

The word "men" means "names of men" and refers to important men. This may mean God will target the people and the buildings where the Antichrist has his operations. That would certainly make sense. God knows how to target those He is after.

The phrase "God of heaven" is found in the Old Testament to distinguish the one true God from the gods of man.

Those who "gave glory to the God of heaven" are those who repent and believe on Christ. The phrase, "glory to the God heaven", is a reference to accepting God's salvation (14:7). Also, those who refuse to give glory to God are seen as those who reject God's salvation. Examples are the nine lepers (Lk. 17:18), King Herod (Acts 12:23), and those scorched with heat (Rev. 16:9).

This is the only place in the book of Revelation where disaster is followed by repentance. Even though these repent, the vast majority of the world will continue to hate God and His people.

The modern-day believers need to do as these witnesses. We need to stand true during difficult days and continue to tell people about Christ, whether they listen or not.

An announcement saying the second woe is past and third is coming (11:14)

The second pause (interlude) ends

Rev. 11:14 The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.

The preceding events bring the end of the second woe. The third woe will be the seventh trumpet, which includes the seven vial judgments. It will include, seven vials of God's wrath (11:15-20), painful sores (16:2), death in the sea (16:3), waters turned to blood (16:4-7), sun's heat intensified (16:8-9), darkness and pain (16:10-11), Antichrist army advances (16:12-14), and great earthquake and hailstones (16:17-21).

As difficult as it is to comprehend, the coming judgments are more severe than those we have seen thus far.

The word "quickly" means "without delay". Once it starts, it will happen quickly. It seems the seven seal judgments will extend through most of the seven years of the Tribulation Period. The seven trumpet judgments will take place the last few months, and the seven vial judgments, the last few weeks or days of the Tribulation Period.

The third woe does not actually begin until the devil is cast down to earth (12:12). The third woe continues to the end of God's judgments on this world and will take us to the end of chapter 19 when Jesus comes and overcomes the Antichrist and his followers.

The seventh trumpet sounds

The third woe

The Seventh trumpet contains the seven vial judgments (11:15-19)

Rev. 11:15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, 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 end of the second pause (interlude) arrives and the trumpet judgments continue.

The seventh angel sounding his trumpet starts the last trumpet judgment and brings to pass the last of the three woes (cf. 8:13). The seventh trumpet is the last of the trumpet judgments.

As I have mentioned before, and as the diagram shows, the "seventh seal" contained the seven trumpet judgments (cf. 8:1-2). And now we see, the seventh trumpet (11:15-19) contains the seven vial judgments. There is a progression from seals, to trumpets, to vials. It's like a fireworks rocket that ascends and bursts into seven individual stars.

The "seventh angel" sounds his trumpet. This trumpet is the last of the seven trumpets but it is not to be associated with the "last trump" Paul talks about (1 Cor. 15:52). The trumpet Paul talks about is instantaneous, this trumpet brings about an extended series of judgments. The trumpet Paul speaks of deals with the removal of the godly, this one deals with the judgment of the ungodly.

This verse announces the victory of God over the devil and sin.

It is vitally important to realize, that the events described here do not take place the instant the seventh trumpet sounds. In verses 15-19, we are told what happens in heaven when the seventh trumpet sounds. What happens on earth will not be described until chapter 15. The sounding of the trumpet simply sets in motion the process that will bring it all to pass at the precise time God decrees. If we miss this, we will misunderstand the meaning of the verses ahead.

When the seventh trumpet sounds, John hears "great voices in heaven". The Greek grammar of the words "are become" refers to something so certain that it speaks of a future event as though it has already happened. We have to remember this if we are to understand the meaning of the next few verses.

We could liken this to the presidential elections of our day. When a candidate wins an election, they are acknowledged as the winner before they ever step foot into the actual office. The date of the winning candidate assuming office is set, but the losing candidate is still running the country. However, the day comes when the new President takes over the country and the loser vacates the premises.

The "kingdoms of this world" refer to the rule of Satan. As previously mentioned, the devil "stole" the domain God had given Adam. As a result, he became the prince of this world (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11), the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4), and the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2). Man thinks he is making all the decisions, when in fact, so often, the devil is in the background moving things as he desires.

The kingdoms of this world "are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ" means God is about to take back the rule of the earth (cf. Ezk. 21:26-27; Dan. 2:35; 6:26; 7:14; Zech. 14:9). God will dethrone the devil and take back the reins. This is no small matter. The entire universe is being snatched from the devil's hands. That which has been a part of this world since the fall of Adam will suddenly be made right.

Christ will win and the devil will lose. The rightful King will rule again. Paul likens it to a king who has defeated his enemy (1 Cor. 15:27).

It is important to keep in mind, when this announcement is made it seems like the devil is running the world. The Antichrist is in the place of authority. He has brought world peace, settled financial problems, and convinced the world he is a god. It seems like he has the world by the tail and nothing can be done to stop him.

But, God is about to bring the devil down. His time is running out.

Paul also said about Jesus, "For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet" (1 Cor. 15:25). It was a common practice for the victorious king to sit on his throne above the one he defeated. Some would even place their foot on the neck of their defeated foe as a symbol of his authority over him. Jesus won this victory over the devil on Calvary. The writer of Hebrews writes, "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb 2:14). I am glad I am on the winning side. I do not like to lose.

All that being said, even though God's victory over Satan is a future certainty, the battle between God and the devil will continue to rage. The devil will not be made powerless until after the Millennium. He will be allowed to tempt those who lived in their natural bodies during the thousand-year reign of Christ (20:7-8). Eventually, he will be cast into the lake of fire where he will be tormented forever (20:10).

From all this, we see, that the seventh trumpet truly is the beginning of the end.

Rev. 11:16 And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God,

The "four and twenty elders", who represent the church, have been in heaven since the beginning of the fourth chapter. The announcement about the kingdom of our Lord causes them to fall to their knees and worship God. They, along with the Tribulation saints (6:10), have been waiting for this announcement.

The elders have praised God as the creator (4:10-11), as the Redeemer (59-14), and now as the Conqueror.

Rev. 11:17 Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.

- They worship God for His authority

The word "Almighty" means God is always in control. For those living through the horrors of the Tribulation Period, these words will be a great encouragement. At a time of absolute chaos, they need to be reminded that God is in complete control.

If this is true during the Tribulation Period, it is certainly true now. There may be times when it seems like God has lost control but that is never the case. Jesus said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Mt. 28:18). No matter how difficult our circumstances are, our God is still in control (Rom. 8:28).

- They worship God as the Eternal One

They say to Christ, you are the One "which are, and wast, and art to come". God is not just a God of the past. He was, is, and ever shall be, God.

- They worship God because He has "taken" authority over the earth

He has "taken" to Himself "great power". God has allowed the devil to have his run of things, but that is about to end. Christ will return to this earth and take back what Adam lost (Isa. 2:3; Dan. 2:44; Lk. 1:33; Rev. 19:11-21).

The King of the universe rules because He has the right to reign. He has the right to reign because of who He is and what He has done. He is God and He has defeated Satan.

Rev. 11:18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.

I believe this verse refers specifically to those living during the Tribulation Period. It tells us what will happen to the unbelievers and the believers.

The "nations were angry" refers to the rage of man against God during the Tribulation Period. They have followed the Antichrist, rejected God, and hated God's people. Their anger will grow to where they will gather together in an attempt to kill all of Israel and Jesus Himself (19:11-21).

Man will be rebellious toward God to the very end of this world. In general, mankind has always been hostile to God (Gen. 6:5; Ps. 2:2; Acts 4:26) and His people (Mt. 5:10; 10:16; Jn. 15:19; Acts 8:4; 11:19; Jam. 1:1). The world's anger against God was made most evident when they hung His Son on a cross (Mt. 27:35).

The words "thy wrath is come" tell us not only was man angry at God, but God was angry at man. Man's wrath was unfounded and unholy, God's was holy.

To "give reward unto thy servants" refers to those who will be rewarded for being faithful to God's will and helping the people of Israel during the Tribulation Period. Jesus spoke of this while on earth (Mt. 25:34-40).

The "servants" and "saints" mentioned here refer to the Old Testament and Tribulation saints. We know the New Testament believers (church) were rewarded after the Rapture (cf. 4:1). The fact that the 24 elders, who represent the church, already have their crowns (4:4) is another indication that they have already received their rewards.

God will "destroy them which destroy the earth" refers to those who pollute the earth with sin. The sin of man forces God to judge by sending earthquakes, drought, and hail storms, all of which cause harm to the earth.

Some actually believe the words "them which destroy the earth" refer to those who harm the environment of the earth. God is not judging these people because they drove an SUV and did not recycle. Many are fanatical about saving the planet yet think nothing about the saving of their soul. They worship the creation more than the Creator (cf. Ro 1:25).

Rev. 11:19 And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

As mentioned earlier, this chapter opened with a temple on earth and ends with the temple in heaven.

The temple in heaven opened to where John could see the Holy of Holies and the ark of the covenant. The Tabernacle and ark on earth were copies of the ones in heaven (Ex. 25:9, 40).

The temple of God being "opened" tells us there is still access to God. The world below is coming unglued, but God's people still have access to Him. They, like us, can call on God for help.

Notice, the ark is called the ark of his "testament". The word "testament" means "covenant or contract" and refers to the fact that God always keeps His promises. The suffering believers can hold on to God's promises. He will never leave them nor forsake them.

Later, we are told there will be no temple in the New Jerusalem (21:22). That means, there will be no actual building (temple) in heaven for the magnificent presence of God will fill the entirety of heaven. All of heaven will be His temple for He will fill all of heaven.

And, we must not forget, He said His children will be with Him. John will write later, "God himself shall be with them, and be their God (21:3). That is why Jesus was able to say, "I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (Jn 14:3).

When the temple is opened in heaven, there are lightnings, voices, thundering, earthquakes, and great hail on earth. This tells us there are more judgments ahead.

CHAPTER TWELVE

The third pause (interlude) (12:1-14:20)

In chapters 12 through 14 we find the third pause (interlude) in the book of Revelation (12:1-14:20). These chapters give us a bird's eye view of the entire Tribulation Period.

As mentioned previously, we are not told the reasons for these pauses but here are three possible reasons. One, to give His people a rest and to remind them that He is still with them and they will be victorious. Two, to intimidate the unbelievers and to heighten their fear about what is coming next. Three, to give the unbelievers an opportunity to repent and be saved.

Chapter twelve is a perfect example of how the book of Revelation is not in chronological order. Chapters 12-14 take us back in time. Chapter 12 will take us back in time and describe the devil's hatred of Jesus and the people of Israel (12:1-17). Chapter 13 takes us back to look at the career of the Antichrist. Chapter 14 will tell us how God reaches out to His beloved people of Israel, how He judges those who refuse His offer of forgiveness, and how He brings to an end the Antichrist and his followers.

John is giving an overview and not a detailed description of these events.

6. THE SEVEN PERSONS (12:1-14:20)

In the next two chapters, John mentions seven persons. They are the woman who is Israel (12:1-2), the man-child who is Christ (12:3-4), Michael the archangel (12:7-2), the Jewish remnant (12:17), the beast out of the sea, who is the Antichrist (13:1-10), and the beast out of the earth, who is the False Prophet (13:11-18).

The first person

*John sees a woman about to give birth (which is Israel)
(12:1-2)*

Rev. 12:1 And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:

The word "great" is a word used to describe something that is large in size or significance. It is used four times in chapter twelve (woman in verse 1, dragon in verses 3 and 9, wrath in verse 12, and eagle in verse 14).

The word "wonder", which means "sign", tells us this is a symbol of something and not a real woman. This isn't the only woman used as a symbol in the book of Revelation (Jezebel in chapter 2, the harlot in chapter 17, and the bride of Christ in chapter 19).

The Roman Catholic church wrongly believes this woman is Mary. Others believe it is the church. But, the church is the bride of Christ, she did not give birth to Christ (12:2). Jesus gave birth to the church, the church did not give birth to Christ.

This woman is obviously a symbol of Israel. As we will see, Israel gives birth to a child who can be no one but Jesus (12:4-5). Jesus was born of the seed of Israel (Isa. 7:14; Mt. 22:42; Rom. 1:3; Gal. 3:16).

This woman is clothed with the "sun", the "moon", and the "stars". The only other place in the Bible where the sun, moon, and stars are gathered in one place is in Joseph's dream which is obviously referring to Israel. In his dream, the sun, moon, and stars were symbols of Joseph's family (Gen. 37:9-10).

John sees this woman in heaven but it is a portrayal of something that is taking place on earth. Perhaps he sees it as a vision in heaven while it is happening on earth.

We should not be surprised this is Israel. After all, the Tribulation Period is the seventieth week of Daniel's seventy-week prophecy and God is dealing with Israel (Dan. 9:24).

Rev. 12:2 And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

The woman is in labor pains. Israel certainly has travailed in the bringing of the Christ child into this world. The persecution of the Jews has been merciless and unceasing. She is in travail at this present moment for the world's hatred for Israel is on the increase. This travail will reach its height during the last half of the Tribulation Period.

The second person

John sees a great red dragon who plans to devour the male child (which is Satan) (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.

The "great red dragon", like the woman in verse 1, is a symbol and not an actual dragon. John tells us the dragon is the devil (12:9). The devil is called the dragon thirteen times in the book of Revelation.

Satan is called the "dragon" at least twelve times in this book (12:3, 4, 7, 9, 13, 16, 17; 13:2, 4, 11; 16:13; 20:2).

The description of the dragon tells us what the devil acts like, not what he looks like.

The color "red" is a symbol of war. We saw that with the red horse that took away peace (6:4). Jesus said the devil was a "murderer" (Jn.8:44). The devil hates, he hates God, he hates God's people, and he hates anything good. His hatred compels him to attack anything good or godly. Chapters twelve and thirteen show us how he launches an all-out attack on the Jews and Gentiles who have accepted Jesus as their Lord.

The "seven heads" speak of seven empires he has, or will, establish. Six of these have already existed. They are Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. The seventh will be the form of government the Antichrist will establish during the Tribulation Period.

The "ten horns" represent ten nations that will join together to make up the kingdom of the Antichrist. Daniel tells us these ten horns are ten nations (Dan. 7:24). This ten-nation confederacy will fight against Israel and ultimately against Jesus Himself.

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 "stars of heaven" refers to the angels that followed Lucifer when he rebelled against God (cf. 12:9; Job 38:7). Perhaps God refers to angels as stars because of their movement through the heavens.

This is an excellent example of the unchronological nature of Revelation. Lucifer persuaded these angels to follow him sometime before the fall of man. Also, the time between his rebellion and his attempt to kill the child is not mentioned in this verse.

His ability to persuade 1/3 of the angels to follow him after they had been so wonderfully taken care of by God is nothing short of remarkable. He still deceives. Sadly, 1/3 of the angels would turn against God, but that means twice as many remained faithful as rebelled.

The word "drew" means "drag" and implies dragging down. The devil's path always leads downward. He has dragged millions to perdition.

The devil was ready to attack the Son as soon as He was born. He used King Herod to attempt to kill Jesus. When he failed he had all the male babies two years old and younger put to death in hopes of killing Jesus in the process (Mt. 2:16-18). The devil tried to kill Jesus several times before He went to the cross.

During the Tribulation Period, the devil will launch his last attempt to overthrow God. Of course, he will, once again, fail miserably, but, in the process, he will cause a great deal of pain to God's people.

The devil does not know the future but he does know God's plan for Israel. He is doing all he can to stop God.

The fact that the devil hates Israel so much is proof that God is not finished with her. Some believe the church has replaced Israel, but the fact that the devil is still attacking the people of Israel tells us that is not so. If the church had replaced Israel there would be no reason for the devil to abuse her so terribly.

Why does the devil hate Israel as he does? I believe it is because he knows what the Bible says about the future of Israel. He knows the promises God has given to Israel. If he can stop God from doing what He said He would do, he will make God a liar.

Through the ages, the Jews have been terribly abused. Even today, anti-Semitism is growing at alarming rates. Many, if not most, of the professors at our institutions of higher learning have a hatred for the Jews. At the time of this writing, the world has exploded with anti-Semitism that is beyond my comprehension. Hundreds of thousands of pro-Palestinian protesters are calling for the annihilation of Israel. Their phrase, "From the river to the sea", is a cry to annihilate all of Israel from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea.

Harper's Magazine published an article, about a Muslim mother who was interviewed after she learned of her son's death in a suicide bombing that not only killed her son, but ten Jews as well. She said, "Because I love my son, I encouraged him to die a martyr's death for the sake of Allah. Jihad is a religious obligation encumbered upon us and we must carry it out. I sacrificed my son as a part of my obligation. I asked Allah to give me ten Israelis for my son, and Allah granted my request. My son made his dream come true, killing ten Israeli settlers and soldiers. Our God honored him even more in that there were many Israelis wounded".

The third person

*A male child is born and caught up to heaven (which is Jesus)
(12:5)*

Rev. 12:5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.

In this verse, John mentions only the birth, ascension, and rule, of Jesus. He mentions nothing about Jesus' humility or death on the cross. His emphasis is on the Lordship of Christ and how He will rule over the entire world with a "rod of iron" (20:4-6).

Reigning with a "rod of iron" speaks of how Jesus will reign with strict justice during His Millennial Reign. Even though the curse will be at least partly removed, sin will still be possible. Later, in the new heaven, since all sin is done away with, there is no mention of the rod of iron.

Israel flees to the wilderness and God protects (12:6)

Rev. 12:6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

John says nothing about it, but the church age takes place between verse 5 and verse 6.

The devil's attack on Israel causes her to flee into the "wilderness". Jesus spoke of this when He said, "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return to take his clothes" (Mt. 24:15-18).

The situation will be so dire that the Lord tells Israel to not even go to their houses to get supplies for their journey. They are to literally run for their lives. Jesus continued by saying "And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: (Mt. 24:19-20). Expecting a baby, winter weather, or the Sabbath, would slow their flight.

Most Bible students believe the Jews will flee to the city of Petra. Petra is an ancient city located near Mount Hor. Its secluded location would make it perfect for the Jews to hide from the Antichrist. There is only one, very narrow, entrance which makes it nearly impossible to penetrate.

I know men who have traveled to Petra to place Bibles and information about the Antichrist so the Jews will be able to find them when they flee to this place.

The fact is, we are not told exactly where the Jews will hide from the Antichrist. If God desires, He could hide them in plain sight. God kept His people safe from the army of Pharaoh at the Red Sea (Ex. 14:22-31). Jesus passed through the midst of the crowd that wanted to kill Him (Lk. 4:28-30).

The 1,260 days are the last half of the Tribulation Period. As previously mentioned, this time is figured from the Jewish calendar, which has 360 days in a year.

The words "they" tell us God will use someone to feed the hideaway Jews. God could feed these Jews miraculously as He did the people of Israel in the wilderness (Ex. 16:13-21). Instead, as He so often does, He uses people.

We do not know for certain, but more than likely, it will be believers who God uses to "feed" them. We do know, that those who help the Jews will be rewarded at the end of the Tribulation Period at the Judgment of the Nations. The basis of this judgment will be how they treated the Jews during the Tribulation Period (Mt. 25:35-46). Assisting the Jews does not save them, assisting the Jews proves they are saved.

Since the Antichrist will put to death anyone assisting the Jews, it is highly unlikely anyone but a true believer would do so at a time. Jesus said, "Ye shall know them by their fruits" (Mt. 7:16). This will never be more evident than during the Tribulation Period.

The fourth person

Michael and the devil at war in heaven (12:7-12)

Rev. 12:7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

The "heaven" mentioned here is the atmospheric heaven just above the earth (Eph. 6:12). We realize the devil is stirring up trouble on earth, but we seldom think about all the disturbance he is causing in the heavens. There is a spiritual realm that cannot be seen by human eyes. We would be amazed if our eyes could be opened so we could see what is taking place all around us.

Michael is the archangel Michael (Dan. 10:13-21; 12:1; Jude 9). It seems God has assigned him as a special guardian of Israel. He fights for God's chosen people (Dan. 12:1). He is called the "chief prince" (Dan. 10:13), "your prince" (Dan. 10:21), and the "great prince which standeth of the children of thy people" (Dan. 12:1).

An example of this fight is seen in the book of Daniel. The "prince of the kingdom of Persia" hindered an angel from bringing the answer to Daniel's prayer (Dan. 10:12-13). Michael came to the aid of the angel and brought the answer to Daniel's prayer. God didn't tell Daniel about this conflict until it was over.

The devil and the fallen angels (1/3 of all original angels) wage war on God (Michael and the angels). The devil and his angels will be defeated and will be cast to earth (cf. 12:9). More of the details of this attack are recorded in verses 13-17.

Rev. 12:8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

The devil picks a fight he can't win. He "prevailed not" over Michael and God's angels. By this time, the devil will be recognizing how serious his situation has become. He knows what the Bible says about the events that are taking place on Earth, so he is not holding back.

God must want to make sure we don't miss the fact that the devil loses and is cast out of heaven. This is the first of three times He will mention it (cf. v. 8, 9,10).

For more details please read the comments on verse 10.

Rev. 12:9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Here, John identifies the dragon to be the devil.

God calls him a "serpent" to emphasize his crafty and deceitful nature. Earlier, he was called "the" serpent (Gen. 3:1), here he is called the "old" serpent. He has been fighting against God for a long time.

The word "Devil" comes from a word that means "slanderer". He is called the "accuser" of the brethren in the next verse.

The word "Satan" refers to the fact that he is our adversary. He desires to wreck and ruin the lives of all believers (1 Pet.5:8).

The word "deceiveth" means "deceive" but it carries with it the idea of wandering. The devil causes people to wander from that which is good and godly. The person who believes they are above the devil's allurements is in a dangerous place (cf. 1 Cor. 10:12).

The devil is the one who "deceiveth" the "whole world". He is a master of deception (Mt. 24:24; Jn. 8:44; 1 Cor. 11:3; 2 Tim. 3:13; Rev. 13:14; 19:20; 20:3; 20:8; 20:10). A deceiver is one who tells you a lie and convinces you it is the truth. The devil is an expert.

This is the second of three times God tells us the devil and his angels are cast out of heaven (cf. v. 8, 9,10).

Imagine how many demons will be roaming the earth at this time. All those cast out of heaven, the four demons loosed from the River Euphrates, and the two hundred million that were loosed out of the bottomless pit (Rev. 9:16), will all be on earth at one time. Add to this, all the judgments that are being sent by God and we can see it is going to be a terrible time to live on earth.

The announcement of the victory of the saints and the day of Satan's wrath

Rev. 12:10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

Even though the content in verse 10 can be applied to all believers of all times, the "brethren" in this verse refers specifically to those who will be living during the Tribulation Period. We know that because the next verse describes circumstances related to Tribulation saints.

This announcement declares the victory of God and the defeat of Satan.

The "loud voice" may be those who have already been killed by the Antichrist for they talk about the accuser of "our brethren". Saying "our" God implies a believer, or group of believers, is speaking.

The "salvation" mentioned here refers to physical deliverance and not spiritual salvation. God saves these Tribulation believers from certain death by the devil. He will also give them "strength" for the rest of the Tribulation Period. The physical demands on those living during the Tribulation Period will be indescribable.

The "kingdom of our God" refers to the thousand-year Millennial Kingdom which Jesus will set up at the end of the Tribulation Period.

All these things will be accomplished through and by the "power of his Christ". No one else can claim any credit.

Of course, the "accuser of our brethren" is the devil.

The devil was "cast down". This is the third time in three verses that God tells us He casts the devil out of heaven (cf. v. 8, 9,10).

The devil's original fall is described in Isaiah 14:12-14 and Ezekiel 28:12-18 when He unsuccessfully attempted to overthrow God. At that moment, the devil was defeated. Even though he is defeated he still has the freedom to move around. He told God he had been "going to and fro in the earth" and "walking up and down in it" (Job. 1:7). At this present time, God allows him limited access to heaven. I personally believe he can not enter into the very presence of God but can come to what we might call the outskirts of heaven.

This verse tells us, that during the Tribulation Period, God will cast him out to where he will no longer have access to heaven. At a later date, God will bind him in the bottomless pit for the one thousand years of the Millennial Kingdom (20:1-3). Eventually, he will be cast into the lake of fire where he will be tormented forever (20:10).

The devil is cast out but he does not give up.

- The devil attacks

The Bible calls the devil our "enemy" (Mt. 13:28). An enemy attacks. He wants to hurt and destroy. God tells us he is like a roaring lion, walking about, seeking someone he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8). He certainly attacked Job (Job 2:5). Jesus told Peter, "Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat" (Lk. 22:31).

- The devil accuses

The word "accuser" means "to bring a legal charge against". The devil is relentless in that he accuses the believers "day and night".

No doubt, some of the devil's accusations are inaccurate. Since he is a liar (Jn. 8:44), he doesn't mind falsely accusing a believer. He accused Job of serving God only for His blessings (Job 1:9-11). Job proved him wrong by continuing to be faithful after God sent burdens instead of blessings (Job 1:21-22).

However, some of the devil's accusations are accurate. There are times when he is telling the truth. We do things we should not, we say things we ought not, we think things we should not, and we fail to do that which we ought to do.

No doubt, the devil constantly reminds God of how worthless we are, how holy He is, and how He cannot ignore sin of any type. He points to those who are adversely affected by our unspiritual failures. He tells God He should smite us immediately with the most severe of judgment.

Thankfully, God gives no heed to the devil's accusations. Paul wrote, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth" (Ro 8:33). All of our sins have been forgiven (Col. 2:13; Heb. 1:3; 1 Jn. 1:7). God's love and mercy is greater than the devil's accusations. Because Jesus took the punishment for our sin upon Himself on the cross, we are free from all condemnation (Jn. 3:18; 5:24; Rom. 4:7-8; 5:1; 8:1; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13).

By no means, does this give a believer permission to sin (Rom. 2:4; 6:1-2; Gal. 5:13). Our failure to live godly breaks God's heart, disgraces God's family, and defeats God's purpose for our lives.

- The devil allures

The devil accuses the believer, but he also tries to allure the believer into sin (Gen. 3:1-5; Mt. 4:3; 1 Th. 3:5). He watches an individual believer discover their weaknesses, and attacks accordingly. He twists the natural desires of our human nature to cause perversion. The natural desire for physical relationships, he twists into cohabitation, homosexuality, and transgender perversion. He perverts the desire for self-preservation into greed and covetousness. He takes confidence and makes it pride and arrogance. In short, the devil tries to take the good things God has given man and twists them into something sinful and wicked.

Considering all the above, it is no wonder why God tells us to not be ignorant of the devil's tricks (2 Cor. 2:11). The believer can be victorious because "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 Jn. 4:4).

The believers overcome the devil's attack

Rev. 12:11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

These words are a continuation of the announcement in the previous verse.

The words, "And they overcame him" are some of the most delightful words in the Bible. Way too often, believers lose the battle between themselves and the devil. As we will see, there is absolutely no reason for us being defeated. Through Christ Jesus, we are victors.

The word "by" means "because of". John tells us how they overcome.

First, they overcome the devil by the "blood of the Lamb". That means they recognize their victory comes by the finished work of Calvary. They realize the cross did more than just provide their forgiveness. The believer's salvation, sanctification, service, and security, are possible because Jesus shed His blood on Calvary. The believers who overcome during the Tribulation Period will do so by accepting by faith the victory provided them by Christ. That fact will give them the grace they need to stand for Christ in the most difficult time this world has ever seen. This is the only way of victory, for them, or for us.

Jesus' blood refers to His death on the cross. His blood is not some magical formula that mysteriously makes our sin disappear. John wrote, "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 Jn 1:7). Because of his sacrifice on Calvary, all of our sin is gone and we stand clean before God.

Believers have victory because Jesus overcame sin and Satan on the cross. We need to see the devil as a loser and ourselves as victors. Paul said, "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:57). We do not have to cower to the devil. We are never told to fear the devil but we are told many times to fear God (Dt. 8:6; 13:4; Ps. 22:23; 34:9; Ecc 8:12; 12:13; Mt. 10:28; 1 Pet. 2:17; Rev. 14:7).

Secondly, they overcome the devil by the "word of their testimony". The "word of their testimony" refers to that which they proclaim publicly by their lips and their lives. They openly declare they are children of God and prove it by their godly lifestyles.

The modern believer knows only of giving their testimony in climate-controlled buildings among loving believers. The Tribulation believers proclaim their testimony in a world where wickedness reigns and the devil is actively searching for anyone who professes to know Christ. The spiritual fortitude it takes to live in such a manner is what keeps them faithful to God during those difficult times. The person who is willing to take such a stand does so because they are depending on God. That faith sees them through the horrors of the Tribulation Period.

We may not be living in circumstances as severe as those during the Tribulation Period, but we do live in wild and wicked times. It will take faith to give us the spiritual boldness to stand unashamedly in this ungodly world.

Thirdly, they overcome the devil because they "loved not their lives unto the death". The word "loved" is the Greek word *agapao* which is a self-sacrificing love. That means they are willing to live for God even if it costs them their lives. They would rather die for God than to live for self.

They will truly believe what Paul said about it being "gain" to die (Phil. 1:21). He also said "For I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 21:13). Jesus said, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it" (Mk 8:35).

You can't defeat the person who is willing to die for what they believe. The person who loves God more than anything in the world and fears nothing, including death, is indestructible.

How much we love the Lord tells us a lot about ourselves. Jesus asked Peter, "Lovest thou me more than these" (Jn. 21:15). What we love will determine how we live. Demas forsook Paul because he loved the present world (2 Tim. 4:10).

Most believers love themselves more than they love the Lord. Very few are willing to live for the Lord, let alone be willing to die for Him. The smallest of problems will cause them to question God. One prayer without a quick answer will cause them to give up on God and quit praying. One snicker in the break room will cause them to quit witnessing. One financial setback will cause them to quit giving.

What are you willing to give up for God? Are you willing to give your career, popularity, finances, or your very life for Him? The good shepherd was willing to give His life for the sheep (Jn. 10:11). The sheep should be willing to give their lives for the good shepherd.

Rev. 12:12 Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

The voice from heaven (v. 10) continues to speak.

The believers who have already made it to heaven are told to "rejoice". They can rejoice for the simple fact that they are in heaven. Their battles are over, their journey is complete, and they have reason to celebrate. But, they can further rejoice because the devil has lost another battle and can no longer accuse the brethren.

Once again we see the difference between what is happening in heaven and what is happening on earth. While they rejoice in heaven there is "woe" on earth. Heaven rejoices because the devil is cast out, but there is woe on earth because he has come down and is angry.

The words "is come down unto you" tell us there is a purpose in his madness. He has "great wrath" which means he is angry at God and he is going to take it out on the people on earth.

Another reason for his aggressiveness is the fact that he knows "he hath but a short time". He knows what the Bible says so he realizes he has no time to waste. He is going to do as much damage as he can with the amount of time he has left.

I wonder if the devil, even after all the times he has lost his battle with God, believes he will be able to win this time. If the Bible teaches us anything about the devil, it is the fact that he never gives up. He has lost many battles, but he lives to fight another day. Thankfully, he will lose in the end (20:10).

The words "of the earth and of the sea" mean the earth in its entirety.

The word "Woe" is an expression of grief.

As I have mentioned earlier (8:13), the word "inhabiters" means "to house permanently". It refers to those who love this present world and live for temporal things. This world is temporary (Isa. 40:7; Mt. 5:18; 2 Cor. 4:18; 1 Pet. 1:24). It is unwise to devote ourselves totally to that which will not last.

The woman is protected from the dragon (12:13-17)

Rev. 12:13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.

As we discovered in verse one, the "woman which brought forth the man child" is referring to Israel.

Being kicked out of heaven infuriates the devil, so he attacks the one who brought forth the Son. Instead of giving up, his determination is enhanced. He turns his anger toward the Jews on earth at that time (cf. 12:17).

The devil hates the Jews, and he hates believers. He hates the Jews because they represent God's work in the Old Testament and His promise to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3). He hates believers because they represent God's work in the New Testament and His promise to the church (Mt. 16:18).

Rev. 12:14 And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

As mentioned before (12:6), "her place" probably refers to the city of Petra.

John calls it "her" place. God often has a place for His children. For Elijah, it was a brook (1 Kg. 17:2-6), and a widow's house (1 Kgs. 17:8). If we want to enjoy God's blessings, we need to get in the place of God's blessings.

The eagle's wings speak of God's protection and provision for the Jews. Their journey will be faster and easier than normal. God intervenes even in the routine circumstances of our lives. He carried Israel on "eagle's wings" when He brought her out of Egypt (Ex. 19:4).

A "time" equals one year, "times" equals two years, and "half a time" equals one-half year. Daniel spoke of this (Dan. 7:25; 12:7). It deals with the last half of the Tribulation Period. This is the third time we are told about a period of 3 1/2 years. It is described as 42 months (11:2) and as 1,260 days (12:6).

The "face" means his "presence". The devil will be doing his best to track down and destroy the fleeing Jews. He will still be walking about, seeking whom he may devour. He will search for Israel but God has hidden her away.

Rev. 12:15 And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.

As mentioned earlier, the word "as" refers to something symbolic as opposed to something literal (cf. 1:10; 1:14; 3:3; 4:7; 6:13; 6:14; 13:11; 16:15; 19:12; 21:2).

It seems obvious that the flood coming from the mouth of the Antichrist is symbolic of him initiating an attack of his army upon the Jews who have fled to the place God has prepared.

To spew a literal flood from a literal mouth seems highly unlikely at best. On the other hand, the Antichrist speaking the word that unleashes an attack seems very reasonable. The Bible speaks of armies coming as a flood (Isa. 59:19; Jer. 46:8; 47:2).

The word "carried" continues the picture of a flood for it means "overwhelmed by a stream". It is figurative language describing his intense desire to totally wipe the Jews off the map.

We may not know the exact details but we do know the devil is doing his best to kill every believer he possibly can.

Rev. 12:16 And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

The word "helped" means "aid or relieve". The earth itself comes to the defense of the Jews. Of course, we know God is the One who controls the earth and everything in it. Man says it is Mother Nature, the Bible says it is God.

We are not told exactly how the earth helps the Jews but we do know God drowned Pharaoh and the Egyptians by taking off their chariot wheels and by making the Red Sea return to its place (Ex. 14:24-28). He can certainly hinder the Antichrist by similar means. I believe this is one of the prophecies that will not be clear until it takes place. As I have already mentioned, some prophecy is not clear until it actually happens. You don't see it until you see it.

Apart from God's protecting hand, such an attack would be impossible to escape. God continues to protect His people.

The fifth person

John sees the Jewish remnant (12:17)

Rev. 12:17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

The devil was "wroth with the woman". He is enraged. Nothing makes a madman more angry than for things to not go the way he wants.

The "woman" refers to the Jewish race as a whole, but, he is especially angry with the Jews who have become believers.

The word "remnant" means "remaining ones". He fails in his attack against the Jews God has hidden away, so he turns his attention towards any believing Jew anywhere around the world.

Of course, those who "keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" is referring to believers. Though not mentioned specifically, he goes after all believers, whether Jew or Gentile.

By this time, the devil has lost his battle to keep Jesus from the cross, he has lost his battle against the church, and he realizes he is losing the battle against Israel. Yet, he does not give up. We modern-day believers could certainly learn something from his determination.

The manner in which he will "make war" will be described in the next chapter. He will try his best to destroy all of Israel (12:4) and those who get saved during the Tribulation Period (11:7; 13:7). The devil will find a person he can work through.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

In chapter twelve, the devil was cast out of heaven. From this point, the earth becomes the primary battlefield between God, the devil, and mankind.

In chapter thirteen, John mentions two more persons, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet, in his record of the end-time events. The devil works on earth through these two men and forms a satanic trinity. The devil as God the Father, the Antichrist as God the Son, and the False Prophet as God the Holy Spirit.

Though the devil can do work himself (Job 1:14-19), for at least part, of his work, he needs a human body. That's why the demons asked Jesus to send them into the swine (Mt. 8:31). They would have rather been in the body of a pig than cast out with nobody to work through.

As frightening as it is, that means the devil is controlling every unbeliever on earth. Paul said, "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*" (Eph 2:2 emphasis added). Jesus said of the Pharisees, "Ye are on your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do" (Jn. 8:44). Every person may not be a drunkard or a prostitute but every person is, at the very least, influenced, and at the most, totally controlled, by the devil.

As I have mentioned, in chapter twelve, John takes us back to the beginning of the Tribulation Period and shows us the career of the Antichrist. Please refer to the earlier comments I have made about the Antichrist (6:2).

Daniel tells us a good bit about the Antichrist (Dan. 7:8-9, 14, 21-24; 8:23-25; 9:27; 11:36-45). Jesus confirms what Daniel said (Dan. 7:13 cf. Mt. 24:30 and Dan. 9:27 cf. Mt. 24:15).

The Antichrist will certainly be possessed and empowered by the devil. He is not the only man who has been possessed by the devil. John tells us the devil "entered into" Judas (Jn. 13:27). But, more than likely, he will be more under the absolute control of Satan than any other man who has ever lived.

It is important to realize, that the Antichrist will certainly be the worst, but he will be one of many antichrists. Even during the early church days, John warned God's people about antichrists who were at work. He said, "Even now are there many antichrists" (1 Jn 2:18). The devil has been for hundreds of years, and is at this present time, building up to this final battle.

Since pride was found in the heart of Lucifer he has wanted to establish his own kingdom on earth. God has stopped his every attempt but he keeps trying. These verses tell us of another one of his attempts to become the leader of the world.

The sixth person

John sees a beast coming out of the sea (who is the Antichrist) (13:1-10)

THE ANTICHRIST AND HIS PEOPLE 13:1a

Discerning the nationality of the Antichrist is difficult, if not impossible, to determine. There is no specific Bible verse that tells us whether the Antichrist will be a Jew or Gentile. We will try to examine this subject in detail.

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 upon his heads the name of blasphemy.

Now John is standing upon "the sand of the sea". There are occasions where God uses sand to illustrate people (Gen. 12:17; 41:19; Josh. 11:4; 1 Kgs. 4:20; Hos. 1:10; Rom. 9:27; Heb. 11:12; Rev. 20:8). We are not told whether John standing on the sand of the sea means he saw himself standing in the midst of humanity or simply meant he was standing on the shore of the Isle of Patmos.

The word "beast" means "dangerous or wild animal". This man will live up to his name.

John saw a "beast" that shows a remarkable resemblance to the dragon (Satan). Like the dragon (devil), he has seven heads and ten horns (12:3). However, this beast is not the devil because he gets his power from the devil (13:2). Someone has said he looks an awful like his daddy.

This is the "beast" that John mentioned earlier (11:7) that is commonly called the Antichrist. Daniel (Dan. 8:23; 9:26; 11:21), Zechariah (Zech. 11:16-17), and Paul (2 Th. 2:8-9), prophesied about this man.

Some believe this beast is merely a political system. He will be in control of a worldwide system, but it is obvious he is a man and not just a world power.

As we will see, he does head up a worldwide system but he is still a man.

We know he will be a man and not just a political system because...

First, he will be worshipped as God. You can't worship a system. Second, John says his number is the number of a "man" (13:18). Third, Paul called him the "son" of perdition (2 Th. 2:3). Fourth, he will eventually be cast into the lake of fire (20:10). You can't cast a system into the lake of fire.

This beast is a man but he is also the leader of an empire. His name and empire are used interchangeably. The same is being done now with Vladimir Putin and Russia. When we say Putin attacked Ukraine, we mean his country (Russia) and not Putin himself.

The beast John sees "rise up out of the sea". The "sea" speaks of the Gentile nations.

For this reason, some believe the Antichrist will be a Gentile.

As a side note, in ancient days the sea was something terrifying and mysterious. Our modern equipment has enlightened us to the wonders of the sea but all they knew was that which would come to the surface. Try to imagine their view of the sea without any knowledge about what lurked underneath the surface. Certainly at least part of John's description of this monster of a man coming out of the sea was referring to the terror of his appearance.

As I have already mentioned, there is no specific Bible verse that tells us whether the Antichrist will be a Jew or Gentile.

Jesus said, "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive" (Jn 5:43). His "own name" is no indication as to whether he will be a Jew or Gentile.

- Some believe the Antichrist will be a Jew for the following reasons

Since Jesus was a Jew, the Antichrist must also be Jewish.

No where in the Bible is a Gentile used as a type of Christ.

They believe the tribe of Dan is excluded from the 144,000 witnesses (7:4-8) because the Antichrist will come from that tribe. The problem is, that God does not tell us why the tribe of Dan is left out.

They believe the Jews would never accept a Gentile as their Messiah. As we will see, the Jews may recognize the Antichrist simply as a mighty political leader and not their Messiah.

- Some believe the Antichrist will be a Gentile for the following reasons...

The Antichrist is the last ruler during the "Times of the Gentiles" (Lk. 21:20-24). The "Times of the Gentiles" refers to the period of time when the Gentiles will rule over the Jews.

That period began in 586 BC when Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple (2 Kgs 25:1-21). It will end at the Second Coming of Christ when He defeats the Antichrist and his followers (Zech. 14:3-9; 19:11-16). Since there will be no Jewish leader who rules during the Times of the Gentiles it stands to reason that the Antichrist will be a Gentile.

The Antichrist is a picture of Antiochus Epiphanes who was a Gentile. Antiochus desecrated the Temple by slaughtering a pig on the altar and erecting a statue of Zeus. The Antichrist will also desecrate the Temple (2 Th. 2:4).

The Antichrist is pictured coming out of the "sea" (13:1; 17:15). The sea is a reference to Gentile nations.

When speaking about the crucifixion Daniel said the "people of the prince that shall come" (Dan. 9:26). The "people of the prince" refers to the Romans who destroyed the Temple and the city of Jerusalem in 70 AD, and were obviously Gentiles.

The Antichrist is of Roman descent and will represent the Revived Roman Empire (Dan. 9:27). The Revived Roman Empire is a powerful government that will dominate the world during the end times. Daniel connects the beast with this empire (Dan. 2:33, 40-45).

The obvious question is how will the Jews be convinced to worship a Gentile. Two things come to mind in response.

One, Paul tells us God will send a strong delusion that will cause the Jews, and the world, to believe the lie of the Antichrist (2 Th. 2:11). Without the enlightening of the Holy Spirit, the whole world will walk in ignorance.

Two, the Jews may accept the Antichrist as a political leader but not as their Messiah. The Jews have signed peace treaties with Gentiles before. An example being with Yasser Arafat at the Oslo Accords in 1993.

The fact is, at present, even though some Jews want to return to the Old Testament system, the majority of Jews care little about spiritual matters. They, like the entire world, want a man who can lead them out of the chaos of their daily lives. The Antichrist will seem to be the man who can do just that. He will come across as a hero who is saving the world. A man with that kind of charisma, who is energized by the devil himself, will have little problem convincing the Jews, and the world, to follow him. We should remember, Adolph Hitler was the 1938 Time Magazine Man of the Year.

All this being said, it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine the nationality of the Antichrist. As I have mentioned before, some prophecies will not be made clear until they are fulfilled.

The beast has "seven heads" and "ten horns". Daniel (Dan. 7:24) and John (Rev. 17:12) tell us the "ten horns" are ten kings. The ten horns refer to the last Gentile world power that will consist of a ten-nation confederation.

The "seven heads" refer to seven kings (17:10), which means, the Antichrist will be connected to seven world empires.

The ten horns correspond with the ten toes of the image in the book of Daniel.

King Nebuchadnezzar dreamed of an image that revealed five world powers (Dan. 2:31-45). These five empires would rule over Israel.

THE FIVE EMPIRES OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S IMAGE (Dan. 2:31-45)

The image was 90 feet high and 9 feet wide (Dan. 3:1).

FIRST EMPIRE

Head of gold represents the Babylonian Empire (Dan. 2:37-38).

Viewed as a lion (Dan. 7:1-4)

SECOND EMPIRE

Chest and arms of silver represent the Medo-Persian empire (Dan. 2:39a; 5:1-6, 17-30).

Viewed as a bear (Dan. 7:5)

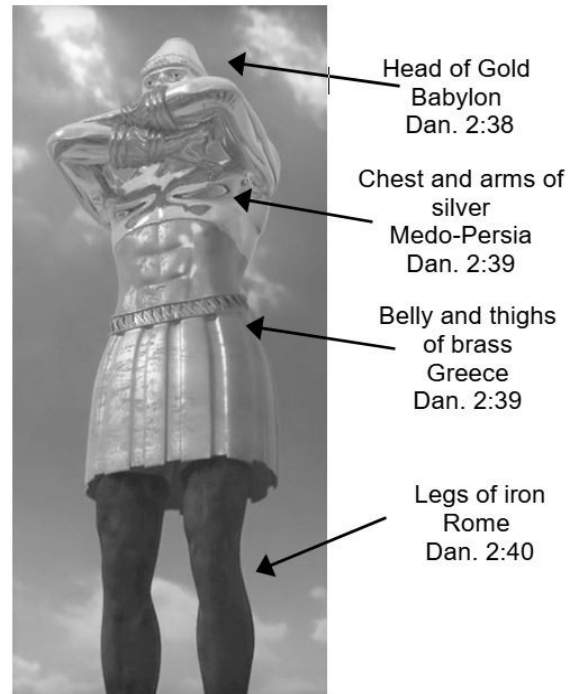
THIRD EMPIRE

Belly and thighs of brass represent the Grecian Empire (Dan. 2:39b). Viewed as a leopard (Dan. 7:6).

FOURTH EMPIRE

The legs of iron represent the Roman Empire (Dan. 2:40). This was the kingdom in power when Jesus walked this earth but it ended in 476 AD.

Viewed as a monster (Dan. 7:7)



Four of these five empires have come and gone (Rev. 17:10). The fifth, commonly called The Revised Roman Empire is yet to come. This is one part of Nebuchadnezzar's dream that has not yet been fulfilled (Dan. 2:40-44).

THE FIFTH AND FINAL EMPIRE

The feet and ten toes represent the fifth empire (Dan. 2:41). The Antichrist will rule over this fifth empire and will lead a coalition of ten nations (ten toes) (Dan. 7:17-28; Rev. 13:1; 17:12-13).



The feet and toes were made of a mixture of iron and clay (Dan. 2:41-42). The iron legs of the image represent Rome (Dan. 2:40), so, the mixture of iron and clay suggests Rome will be a part of this fifth empire. For this reason, it is called The Revised Roman Empire.

Daniel tells us a stone cut without hands destroys the entire image (Dan. 2:34, 44). This is a reference to the Second Coming of Jesus when He comes and destroys the Antichrist and his empire (19:11-16). The words cut out "without hands" means man has nothing to do with this event.

The "stone that smote the image" became a "great mountain and filled the whole earth" (Dan. 2:35, 44). This refers to Christ setting up His Millennial Kingdom.



THE ANTICHRIST AND HIS PERVERSION 13:1b

As we will discover, the Antichrist will be a man of absolute perversion. He will hate the God of heaven and do everything within his power to blaspheme His name.

Rev. 13:1b ... and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.

This beast has the "name of blasphemy" on his heads (cf. 17:3).

As mentioned earlier, blasphemy is a verbal reproach of God, His name, character, or works. The Antichrist will blaspheme God by making himself equal with God and by speaking in a slanderous way towards God (2 Th. 2:4; Rev. 13:6). He hates God and lives in a disrespectful manner. His entire way of operating will have no respect for God or His people.

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.

The word "beast" means "dangerous animal". The nature and behavior of the Antichrist will be like a wild and vicious animal. John describes his wicked nature even further in this verse.

John said the beast will be like a "leopard", a "bear", and a "lion". His description helps us understand what kind of man the Antichrist will be. He will possess all the viscous characteristics of a leopard, bear, and lion. A leopard is wild, swift, and ferocious. A bear has large and powerful feet and claws with which he tears his victims apart. A lion's mouth terrorizes its prey with its debilitating roar and consumes it with its sharp teeth and powerful jaws.

The leopard, bear, and lion are also connected with the ancient empires that Daniel spoke of (Dan. 7:4-6). The lion represented Babylon, the bear represented Medo-Persia, and the leopard represented Greece. John's listing of these beasts is in reverse order of Daniel's because Daniel is looking ahead to something that had not yet happened, and John is looking back to that which has already taken place.

John is also telling us that the kingdom of the Antichrist will include all the evil characteristics of the four kingdoms (Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome) that preceded it.

The Antichrist will be the world's worst leader. He will be worse than Nero, Salin, Hitler, and Saddam Hussein combined. He will be an absolute tyrant demanding complete obedience.

THE ANTICHRIST AND HIS POWER 13:2b

Rev. 13:2b ... and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

The dragon (devil 12:9) gives the Antichrist his "power", his "seat" and his "great authority". The Antichrist will be totally possessed and totally controlled by the devil himself.

Satan is called the "dragon" at least twelve times in this book (12:3, 4, 7, 9, 13, 16, 17; 13:2, 4, 11; 16:13; 20:2).

The word "power" refers to his ability. He is able to do what he does because the devil is working through him. The devil works through the Antichrist like the Holy Spirit works through the believer. He is not just a man of extraordinary intelligence and charisma, he is a man empowered and energized by Satan.

The word "seat" means "throne" and refers to his ability to control people. The devil, through this man, seems to be getting the admiration he has always wanted. It will be short-lived, 42 months to be exact (13:5). This forty-two-month period is commonly called "The Great Tribulation" (Mt. 24:21).

The word "authority" speaks of having the right to demand. A Mayor oversees the city business because of his position, not his physical strength or mental ability. His authority comes from his position.

Somehow, the Antichrist will receive a position that gives him the legal authority to do what he does. He will do what he wants and no one will resist or question him.

He will be lord of the entire world. No other man in history can rightly claim that. The devil tried to overthrow God so that he might rule the world. This is probably as close as he will ever get.

The Antichrist is able to do what he does because God allows it. We will see in verse 5, that God is still the One who is holding the reins. God always puts a limit to how far the devil can go (cf. Job 1:12). No created being has power unless God gives it. That includes all of mankind, whether saved or lost. It also includes the devil and all his demons.

THE ANTICHRIST AND HIS POPULARITY 13:3-10

The Antichrist will become the most popular man who has ever lived.

The Antichrist receives what appears to be a fatal wound (13:3)

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.

This verse talks about a wound that causes death, the healing of the wound, and the world's reaction.

First, let's look first at the wound that was healed.

We are not told exactly how he will receive this wound but John tells us it will come from a sword (13:14).

John tells us, "one of his heads" was "wounded to death" and his "deadly wound was healed". There are two views connected with this wound.

One, some believe since John tells us the seven heads are seven kings (17:9-10), he was referring to the empire (Revived Roman Empire) of the Antichrist being destroyed and revived. The fact that he says "one" of his heads was wounded gives weight to this view.

Two, some believe this refers to the Antichrist himself. Some believe this means he will be assassinated.

If this speaks of the Antichrist himself, the question arises, does he actually die and resurrect or does he fake his death and resurrection? Is it real or is it fake?

Is it real?

The way John words his description certainly makes it sound like it will really happen. He says simply, "I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed". His comments in verses 12 and 14 make it sound more like a person than an empire. He later describes the beast by saying "the beast that was, and is not, and yet is (17:8).

It is fake?

We know the Antichrist will be a master of deception (Mt. 24:24). Paul says he will come with "lying" wonders (2 Th. 2:9). Is this another one of his acts of deception? This should be a warning to us. We would do well to examine anything we see, even that which is in the church.

Some believe the death is real because the word "wounded" is the same Greek word translated "slain" that speaks of Jesus' death on the cross (5:6). While this is true, it does not necessarily mean this particular death is real. John used the word "death" 15 times in the book of Revelation.

This also brings us to the question, does the devil have the ability to raise someone from the dead? He did miracles through his magicians before Moses (Ex. 7:11, 22; 8:7, 18-19; 9:11), he did miracles when dealing with Job (Job 1:15, 16, 17, 19), he did "many wonderful works" through unbelievers during New Testament times (Mt. 7:22). But, even though the devil can do great wonders, there is no indication in Scripture that he is able to raise the dead or to give life. If he could do so, there is no telling the extent of evil he would cause.

Personally, I struggle with thinking the devil could raise anyone from the dead. No indication in Scripture would suggest the devil has the power to give life in the sense of human life. God may allow him to be the cause of someone's death, but there is a great deal of difference between taking life and giving life. Of course, we cannot say it is impossible for we do not know what God may allow.

I believe the best option is the Antichrist somehow fakes his death and makes it appear that he has risen from the dead.

The fact is, the Bible records several men raising the dead. They are Elijah (1 Kgs. 17:17-24), Elisha (2 Kgs. 4:18-37), and Peter (Acts 9:36-41). If these men were able to, might we not wonder if the Lord might not, at least on this one occasion, allow the devil to do the same? This resurrection is one of the keys to why the world follows him and is mentioned several times in the book. It isn't his charismatic personality or the other miracles he does. To say the least, it is important. His resurrection causes the world to worship him. Someone may ask if that is so, why does Jesus' resurrection cause the world to worship Him? The one major difference is the fact that Jesus demands righteousness of those who follow Him, the Antichrist will make no such demand and will, in fact, encourage those who follow him to sin as much as they like.

As with other matters in the book of Revelation, this is difficult to be dogmatic about this subject.

Second, let's look at the world's reaction.

Whatever the means, the survival of the Antichrist will be remarkable. Whether this death and healing is an empire or a person, real or fake, it is a spectacular event. John said, "all the world wondered after the beast". The word "wonder" means "to admire or marvel". This is the most important part of this issue. Real or fake, the world will believe it is real. This may be a part of the "the lie" Paul talks about (2 Th. 2:11).

By this time, the Antichrist will have already astounded the world with his political, military, and oratory genius. This will further convince the world he is who he claims to be and will draw them even more towards him and his ungodly system. As John describes in the next verse, their adoration turns to worship.

The dragon and the beast are worshiped (13:4)

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?

The world will worship the "dragon" (devil) because he lives in, and totally consumes, the Antichrist. That does not mean he will have no choice. Much like Judas (Jn. 13:27), he willingly turns himself over to the devil's control. He accepted the deal with the devil that Jesus refused (Mt. 4:8). I do not mean the devil will come personally to him as he did Jesus, but the idea is the same. He will willingly sell himself out to Satan.

As we will see, the False Prophet will play a part in causing them to worship the Antichrist (13:12). Some will worship being fully aware, others in ignorance, but, either way, the vast majority of the world will be worshipping the devil. He will finally get what he has wanted for so long.

Notice, they worship the dragon and the beast. That means they serve the Antichrist, not because they are forced to, but because they want to. Service can be forced but worship is voluntary. The people of Israel were forced to serve Pharaoh. The world will follow the Antichrist, not because they are forced to, but because they want to. Daniel tells us "none of the wicked shall understand" (Dan. 12:10). What they do, they do blindly, but they do willingly. As we will see (13:7), the only ones who oppose him are the believers.

Many today are ignorantly associating with the devil by playing with astrology, ouija boards, seances, mediums, and such matters. They think they are visited by the spirit of their dead loved one when it is actually a demon talking to them.

Their adoration for the Antichrist is seen in the words, "Who is like unto the beast". They see him as more than a wonderful person, they truly believe he is God in flesh. Jesus said, "If another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive" (Jn 5:43).

They say, "Who is like unto the beast". When this statement is found in the Bible it is used as an expression of worship of God (Ex. 15:11; Ps. 35:10; 71:19; Isa 40:18; 40:25; 46:5). This statement demonstrates, not only their acceptance of the Antichrist, but their rejection of God. The worship is meant only for God, they will be giving to the devil.

The words, "Who is able to make war with him" actually mean, who is mighty enough to overcome him? He is so mighty no one will think they can defeat him and he is so popular no one will want to try. The answer to their question will come when Jesus returns and destroys him and all those who follow him simply by speaking (19:15, 21). The God who created the universe by speaking the word (Gen. 1:1) does not need a sword.

So, the world will follow him, not because they are forced to, but because they want to. As we will see (13:7), the only ones who oppose him are the believers.

The beast speaks great things and does great works (13:5)

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.

Once again, John reminds us how the Antichrist will have a power that is more than human. He will be a tool in the hands of the devil.

The dragon (devil) has "given" the beast his power (cf. 13:2). The devil will give the Antichrist what he needs to do his will. God does the same for His children. What He calls us to do, He equips us to do (Eph 13:20; Phil. 2:13; Eph 4:12).

He will speak "great" things. He speaks like no other man who has ever lived. No one is like this man. He will be more than a tremendous politician who can control the masses, he will have the charisma that makes him truly likable. He will be the type that you would love to have as your best friend.

He will boast of his wonderful accomplishments. King Nebuchadnezzar said "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty" (Da 4:30). By the way, he paid the price for his pride (Da 4:31) and so will the Antichrist.

The word "power" is different here than in verse 2. Here it means "freedom". This means God has given the Antichrist the freedom to do as he desires. God takes a step back and lets the Antichrist do and say what he wants. But, this freedom has a limit, it will last for "forty and two months". That means God is still in control. Neither the Antichrist nor the devil has complete control. God limits the Antichrist to forty-two months. If the devil was in control, he would certainly not limit this man to just forty-two months.

The beast blasphemes God (13:6)

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.

The pride of the Antichrist is revealed by his willingness to speak "blasphemies" against God. As mentioned earlier, blasphemy is speaking in a slanderous way towards God.

We are not told what all he will do but we are told he will stand in the Temple and proclaim that he is God (Mt. 24:15; 2 Th. 2:4). It is quite possible that he will openly confront God and demand He prove Himself somehow. He may shake his fist toward heaven and demand God strike him with lightning.

He will not be the first who would do something so dumb. He will unashamedly oppose the God of heaven. In our day, as bad as it is, we can still say most of mankind has enough decency to, at least, respect God. However, at this time, much of the world will have no respect for God (16:11).

He will be opposed to anything and anyone connected to God. Paul said, "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped" (2 Th 2:4). He will literally hate God.

The "name" of God refers to everything God is. A person's name speaks of their reputation, or that which their lives have demonstrated to the world.

God's "tabernacle" is heaven (Ps. 2:4; 18:13; 115:3; 123:1).

Those who "dwell in heaven" are the believers who have already gone to heaven, including those who went in the Rapture.

He will despise God, God's house, and God's children.

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.

The same one who gave him a mouth to speak great things (13:3), will give him power to attack and overcome believers, both Jew and Gentile. Daniel tells us he is "dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly" (Dan. 7:7). Daniel also says he "shall wear out the saints of the most High" (Da 7:25). Believers will constantly have to hide, scrounge for food, and do their best just to survive. John will comment more about this in verse ten.

The Antichrist will "make war with the saints". Many will be killed, but some will endure until the end (Mt. 24:13), some are hidden away by God (12:14), and some are protected by God as promised by the measuring of the Temple (please refer to comments on 11:2). Those who are killed will be rewarded. John saw them sitting on thrones in heaven (20:4).

Daniel tells us the Antichrist will spend much of his finances on financing war (Dan. 11:38).

The word "overcome" means "to conquer". These are some more of the "fellowservants" John told us about earlier (6:11). Once again, the evil heart of the Antichrist is revealed. He has no reservations about putting innocent people to death.

Why does the Antichrist hate the Jews and Christians so much to where he tries to kill them all? He tries to do away with the Jews to stop the kingdom God promised them. And, he tries to stop the Christians because he hates Christ.

His having power over "all kindreds, and tongues, and nations" means he has control of the entire world. Many others have tried, but he will be the first man to conquer and control the entire world.

Daniel tells us the "little horn" (Dan. 7:8,22), the harlot (17:6), the Antichrist (Rev. 13:7), and the image of the beast (Rev. 13:15) wreak havoc on the saints.

We may ask, why would God allow the devil to cause such heartache among His people? I believe the answer is the same as to why God allowed Pharaoh to cause such havoc with the people of Israel. God told Pharaoh He had raised him up to show him His power and that His name might be declared throughout the world (Ex. 9:16).

He may take their lives but he will never destroy their faith. He may overcome them physically, but he will not be able to touch their spirit. I'm convinced the Spirit of God will give them the same grace the early church saints experienced. They were willing to walk straight into danger (Lk. 22:33; Jn. 11:16; 13:37), they rejoiced during times of extreme suffering (Acts 16:25), they continued to preach when ordered not to (Acts 4:16-20; 5:27-29; 8:1), and they died courageously (Acts 7:59-60). The reason for their courage was the fact that they were filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:31). The same Spirit that enabled them will do the same for the Tribulation saints. In his attempt to cause them pain, the Antichrist will be sending them to a place of bliss.

Some say this is referring to the church because they are called the "saints". But, we must remember, the Old Testament believers were also called saints at least 31 times in the Old Testament (Dt. 33:3; 1 Sam. 2:9; 2 Chr. 6:41; Job 5:1; 15:15; Ps. 16:3; Hos. 11:12).

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.

As I have mentioned earlier (3:10; 6:10; 11:10), the phrase "dwell on the earth" is found five times, and "dwell upon the earth" is found three times in the book of Revelation. These phrases always refer to those who are lost (3:10; 6:10; 11:10; 13:8; 13:14; 14:6; 17:8). The word, "dwell" means "to house permanently", which means, these are earthly people as opposed to heavenly people (cf. Phil. 3:20). It means they have lived only for the things of the world.

This verse divides the population of the earth into two categories, those who worship the beast and those who do not. Jesus (Jn. 3:18; 3:36), Paul (1 Cor. 7:12), and John (1 Jn. 5:10) divided all mankind between those who believe and those who do not. There is no in-between, we are saved or we are lost.

Those who worship the Antichrist are those "whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb". Those who are saved will not accept the Antichrist's lies, nor will they accept his mark (13:16-18).

As I have mentioned earlier, I believe, as many others do, the Book of Life contains the names of all those for whom Jesus died, namely, all of humanity. Those who refuse to accept Jesus as their Savior will be blotted out of this book. That means, eventually, only the names of those who accepted Jesus will remain. At the Great White Judgment, those who are not in this book will end up in the lake of fire (20:15).

The "book of life" deals with spiritual, or eternal, life (Lk. 10:20; Phil. 4:3; Rev. 13:8; 17:8; 20:15; 21:27). Also called the "Lamb's book of life" (Rev. 13:8; 21:27). In essence, it is heaven's roll book.

Simply put, those who are lost will worship the beast and those who are saved will not.

This book is called the "Book of Life of the Lamb" because it was His death that made eternal life possible.

The Lamb's Book of Life should not be confused with the "Book of the Living" (Ps. 69:28). The "Book of the Living" is a book that deals with physical and not spiritual life. Moses was referring to the Book of the Living when he asked God to blot him out of His book (Ex. 32:32-33). He was asking God to take his life also if He put the people of Israel to death because of their sin.

Rev. 13:9 If any man have an ear, let him hear.

These words are found several times throughout the New Testament (Mt. 11:15; 13:9; 13:43; Mk. 4:9; 4:23; 7:16; Lk. 8:8; 14:35; Rev. 2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:29). No more solemn exhortation has ever been spoken. John is saying, that if you can hear the Spirit of God speaking, you had better give heed and do what He says. There is no greater privilege on earth than to hear God speak. Unfortunately, many willingly reject God's voice (Zec 7:11; Acts 7:54-60).

The words, "He that hath an ear, let him hear" are found eight times in the book of Revelation. The first seven are directed to the seven churches (2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:29; 3:6; 3:13; 3:22). The one noticeable difference with this eighth occurrence is the fact that the words "what the Spirit saith unto the churches" are not included. No doubt this is because the church was taken in the Rapture back in chapter four (4:1-2).

These words are directed to all who are alive at that time.

One, this is a call from a loving God to a lost sinner. God is speaking to the person who hears His call of conviction and is telling them to listen and be saved.

Two, this is a call from a loving Savior to a believer. God is trying to prepare His people for what is coming next. If they listen now, they will be more apt to be ready for what comes later.

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 law of reaping what we sow applies to this verse. What we give, we get in return. God said, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Ga 6:7).

I see four thoughts in this verse.

First, these words are meant to serve as a comfort to the believers living during the Tribulation Period.

John says, "Here is the patience and the faith of the saints". In other words, the believers living during the horrible persecution of the Tribulation Period are to take comfort in the fact that God will make it right in the end. God will make sure the Antichrist and his followers will not get away with mistreating His people. He that "leadeth into captivity" and "killeth with the sword" refers to those who, under the direction of the Antichrist, imprison or put to death believers. Those who cause God's children to suffer, will themselves, suffer the wrath of God (Mt. 18:6). Knowing these things should settle the hearts of the saints and give them help to keep going.

Secondly, these words are also meant to serve as a warning to the believers living during the Tribulation Period.

God is telling His children, that if they take up the sword against the Antichrist and his followers, they will encounter His wrath. The law of reaping what we sow applies to the believer just as it does to the unbeliever. Jesus was talking to believers when He said, "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword" (Mt. 26:52).

Thirdly, these words are also meant to serve as an exhortation to the believers living during the Tribulation Period.

God's message to His people is found in the words, "Here is the patience and the faith of the saints". Even during the worst of times, God tells His children to have "patience" and "faith" and to not strike back or resist their attackers.

Fourthly, these words are a message to the believer living today. If the Tribulation believers are to trust God during trials, surely we are to do the same. We should accept whatever God allows to come our way, and not resist it. The Bible clearly teaches that God uses suffering to develop His people (Dt. 8:2; Ps. 34:19; Ps. 119:71; Rom. 5:3-4; 2 Cor. 4:17; Phil. 3:10; 2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Pet. 4:12-13; 1 Pet. 5:10; Jn. 16:33; Jam. 1:2-4). When we resist the suffering, we are resisting the hand of the Lord.

The human tendency is to fight back against those who trouble us. But God tells us to let Him fight our battles for us. God said, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Ro 12:19). That is what Jesus did, "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (1 Pe 2:23).

By the way, this is not just a New Testament concept. In Leviticus, God told His people, "Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD" (Le 19:18).

How foreign this is to the modern-day cry for believers to stand up and demand their rights. There has always been a militant-minded group among God's children who feel their lot in life is to organize a spiritual army that will rise up and demand their rights. The modern thought says we should stand up for ourselves because no one else will. The Bible, like usual, is contrary to man's point of view.

As a side note, these words are a wonderful example of what is commonly called the perseverance of the saints.

The word "patience" means to continue in spite of difficulties, opposition, or failure. The doctrine of the "perseverance of the saints" means a true believer will continue their walk with God no matter what. It is one aspect of the eternal security of the believer and answers the question, "Can a true believer lose his salvation?". The perseverance of the saints, though one of the five points of Calvinism, is a Biblical doctrine and does not require a commitment to Calvinism.

From God's point of view, perseverance means He keeps us, from man's point of view, it means man will keep on going. Perseverance means God will not abandon the believer and the believer will not abandon God.

- The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints is not dependent upon the believer

The perseverance of the saints does not mean sinless perfection. It does not mean a believer will grit their teeth and determine to keep serving God. It does mean the true believers, if they sin, will be convicted of their sin, repent, and continue their walk with God. Some use the term "Once saved, always saved".

- The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints is totally dependent on God

Please read the following passages (Jn. 5:24; 6:37; Rom 8:28-29).

God convicts (Lk. 18:13), converts (Acts 26:18; 1 Cor. 6:11; Titus 3:7), seals (Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30; 2 Cor. 1:22), keeps (Jn.17:12), guides (Jn. 16:13), enables (1 Tim. 1:12), disciplines (Heb. 12:8), and then takes us home.

God does not start our salvation and then leave the end of it to us. He is the author and the "finisher" of our faith (Heb. 12:2). The writer of Hebrews tells us, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost" (Heb 7:25). The word "uttermost" means "completion". God doesn't stop halfway. God keeps those who are truly His.

Jesus said, "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (Jn 10:28). God continues His work on those who are His. Paul wrote, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6).

- The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints leads to a more godly lifestyle

Some say believing such a doctrine will lead to carnal living but it actually promotes a more godly lifestyle. It causes the believer to live godly out of love and gratitude instead of necessity. They live clean because they want to, not because they have to.

This is not to say we cannot backslide or grow cold spiritually. A glance at David, Samson, Jonah, or Peter, shows us a believer can do such a thing. However, a true believer cannot walk away from God's will and remain joyful. The person who can return to, and live happily in sin, was never really saved.

The true believer cannot quit God. If we try, we will pay, and it will hurt. Everyone who has tried to walk away from God has regretted it.

- The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints answers the question about apostates

An apostate is someone who once claimed to be saved but then turned away from their profession. John explains this type of person by saying "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us" (1 Jn 2:19).

Clearly, those in this case, no matter how genuine their profession seemed, were never really saved.

By his own admission, Charles Templeton is a perfect example of someone who made a false profession of faith. For over twenty years, he preached the gospel to as many as 30 thousand. Yet, his last book is entitled "Farewell to God, My reasons for leaving the Christian Faith". That does not mean he lost his salvation, it means he never had it.

- The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints brings assurance of salvation

God admonishes us to examine ourselves to make sure we are truly saved (2 Cor. 13:5; 2 Pet. 1:10).

More have made false professions than we would like to admit.

Before I got saved, I would go to church with a friend of mine whose parents were believers. One Sunday morning, this friend told me if I would go to the altar during the invitation and pretend to get saved his dad would let us ride around in his car longer that afternoon. During the invitation, I went to the altar and pretended to get saved. To say the least, my friend's parents were delighted with my "conversion" experience. My friend had done the same thing a few months earlier. Later that afternoon, he said to me, "I rubbed my eyes when I went so they would think I had been crying".

The seventh person

John sees a beast coming out of the earth (who is the False Prophet) (13:11-18)

The seventh person in the end-time events is introduced here. This is the man called the False Prophet (Rev. 16:13; 19:20; 20:10). The Antichrist establishes a one-world political system and the False Prophet establishes a one-world religion. They will be the most ungodly duo in human history. This duo would be something like our President (a political man) and the Pope (a religious man) joining forces.

This partnership continues throughout the Tribulation Period and will end with them both being cast into the lake of fire (19:20).

Humanly speaking, having a religious partner will be a stroke of genius. Such a man would influence religious folks that others would not. Religious people listen to religious people.

That means the False Prophet will be vital to the Antichrist because he will have such an influence over the religious people of the world. Humanly speaking, having a religious partner is a stroke of genius. Doing so will draw an enormous amount of people into the fold of the Antichrist. At present, 84% of the world's population considers themselves to be religious. Granted, some of these are born-again believers who will not follow the Antichrist, but a vast number are unsaved and will end up helping the Antichrist dramatically.

Religion unites people like nothing else on earth. There are times when the devil attacks the church by joining it.

Whether they realize it or not, man is looking for something bigger than himself to worship. He has an emptiness inside that only God can fill. Sadly, he tries everything on earth and refuses to turn to the one Who can satisfy his emptiness.

There have been some great false preachers who have claimed unbelievable powers and influenced millions. But, there has never been a preacher like this preacher.

THE FALSE PROPHET AND HIS MESSAGE 13:11

The False Prophet will preach the message of the devil

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.

The word "beast" means "dangerous or wild animal". Like the Antichrist, this man will live up to his name.

This other "beast" is the False Prophet (19:20). Like an unholy trinity, the devil, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet work together against God and His people.

Being called a "prophet" and referred to as a "lamb" tells us he will be a religious man.

The word "another" means another of the same kind. That means, that even though the False Prophet pretends to be a religious man, he will be as ungodly as the Antichrist.

Some believe this beast is a system the Antichrist uses to accomplish his desire on earth. But, a system cannot be cast into the lake of fire (20:10). Also, a system cannot stand "before" (in the presence of) the Antichrist (13:12). Jesus said he would "stand in the holy place" (Mt. 24:15). Daniel (Dan. 11:37), and Paul (2 Th. 2:9) refer to him as a man.

The first beast came out of the sea, this one came out of the "earth". Some believe the earth represents Israel which would mean the False Prophet will be a Jew. This cannot be proven by Scripture but is certainly possible.

The Antichrist is described as a leopard, a bear, and a lion, but this man is described as a lamb. He, like a little lamb, will appear mild and gentle, but he is just as wicked and vile as the Antichrist. With his mild manner personality and his sugary sweet words, he will tell the world how wonderful the Antichrist is and how they should follow him.

We are not told exactly what this man will say but we can be sure he will not speak of sin. He, like many today, will tell his listeners God understands and they should not worry about their little "slip-ups". He may even talk about how Christians have lied about an eternal fire and a God who judges sin. This message will be accepted by the multitudes. We see the same thing happening already. Those behind the pulpits who mention nothing about sin are attracting people by the droves.

He will be the epitome of a wolf in sheep's clothing (Mt. 5:17). What could be more dangerous than a wolf that appears as a lamb?

He speaks "as a dragon" which probably means that even though he speaks with smooth words and in a gentle tone, his message is the same as the Antichrist. Like the dragon, he speaks in lies. There is no doubt about it, he will be the mouthpiece of the Antichrist. He has the same desire and goal the Antichrist has.

As I have mentioned, the devil is a master of deception. He and his messengers have disguised themselves as angels of light (2 Co 11:14-15).

The False Prophet will cause the world to worship the beast. This means he will convince the Buddhist, the Hindu, the Mormon, the Scientologist, the Jehovah's Witness, and the unbelieving Baptist to turn from that which they have believed. This is no small accomplishment. He will do it because he will be empowered with all the power of the devil himself.

The False Prophet will deceive mankind into believing the Antichrist is the answer to all the problems of the world. Jesus' prediction will have come to pass. He said, "If another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive" (Jn 5:43).

THE FALSE PROPHET AND HIS MISSION 13:12

The mission of the False Prophet will be to convince the world to worship the Antichrist

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.

The False Prophet exercises the same power as the Antichrist because they both get their power from the same source. Everything he does and says will be to support the Antichrist.

The word "causeth" means "to make to do" and carries with it the idea of agreeing. That means the world will not just believe his lies, they willingly do what he says. He convinces them the Antichrist is the solution to all their problems and that they should worship him.

As I mentioned earlier (13:3), the fact they worship him shows they will willingly commit themselves to him. They are not dragged before the Antichrist kicking and screaming, they want to come. He will develop a one-world religion that demands everyone worship the Antichrist. He rejects all other religions, which will include the gospel of Christ, and declares them illegal and punishable by death.

As a side note, the time will come when the Antichrist no longer needs this world religion (17:16). He will destroy it and establish his own satanic religion.

The New Testament preachers rely on the Holy Spirit to move the hearts of their listeners. The False Prophet will be enabled by the power of Satan. He will be one of the world's greatest preachers. He will have the ability to move a crowd to tears or stir them into a frenzy.

Of course, the "earth and them that dwell therein" refers to unbelievers. True believers will not be deceived. Jesus said, "For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, *if it were possible*, even the elect" (Mk 13:22 emphasis added). Thank the Lord, true believers will not be deceived because they know the truth. The truth shall make you free (Jn. 8:32).

Whether the "deadly wound" is real or fake (cf. 13:3), the False Prophet will convince the world it is real and that they should follow the man who could do such a magnificent thing.

THE FALSE PROPHET AND HIS MIGHT 13:13-15

The False Prophet will have the power to do miracles and call fire from heaven

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,

The False Prophet will have the ability to do all kinds of miracles that will help persuade many to worship the Antichrist.

It is no coincidence that the word "miracle" is the same word used of the miracles Jesus did (Jn. 2:11; 2:23; 6:2).

The words, "in the sight of men" mean, he will do these miracles in the very presence of people. He will be able to, at his will, call fire from heaven. Imagine how convincing it would be for him to wave his hand and balls of fire fall instantly and precisely where he is pointing. Elijah called fire from heaven (1 Kg. 18:38) but he had to pray first. The False Prophet will simply speak and the fire will fall. There will be no doubt about who is doing it. The Greek tense indicates he does this frequently.

The False Prophet deceives the world

Re 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.

Once again, we find the phrase, "dwell on the earth". As I have mentioned earlier (3:10; 6:10; 11:10), this phrase means these are earthly people as opposed to heavenly people (cf. Phil. 3:20). It means they have lived only for the things of the world.

The False Prophet does such amazing miracles that the world is convinced he should be worshipped.

This should be a warning to those today who are obsessed with miracles. Everyone who does miracles is not of God. Paul warned about the "seducing spirits" that would come (1 Tim. 4:1). Jesus said false prophets would come and "shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect." (Mk. 13:22).

In "the sight of the beast" speaks of their union and how they work together in their diabolical plan.

The False Prophet will convince the people to build an image in honor of the Antichrist. This image will be mentioned a total of eight times (13:14; 13:15; 14:9; 14:11; 15:2; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4) and will become the focal point of the worship of the Antichrist.

The Antichrist himself will stand in the Temple and proclaim himself to be God (2 Th. 2:4), but he will also place this image in the Temple. Daniel calls the placement of this image the "abomination that maketh desolate" (Dan. 11:31; 12:31). Jesus called it the "abomination of desolation" (Mt. 24:15). The Temple was supposed to be a holy place and respected as such. Imagine someone setting a Buddha in your local church and demanding you worship it.

This ungodly act was foreshadowed in 168 BC when the Greek king Antiochus Epiphanes invaded Jerusalem, sacrificed a pig on the altar of incense, and placed a statue of the Greek god Zeus in the Temple.

The Antichrist will desecrate the temple, but, in a real sense, it had already been desecrated by those blinded souls who will be attempting to please God with their animal sacrifices. By doing so, they were trampling the blood of Christ under their feet. They are trying to approach God without the blood of Christ.

The False Prophet, seems, to give the image life

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.

The word "image" means "likeness" and gives the idea of a statue or a profile. More than likely, the image will be a statue-like representation of the Antichrist.

It, at least appears, to come to life for John tells us the False Prophet will "give life" unto the image. Also, it will be able to "speak" and may have some type of mental intelligence for it will "cause" many to worship the beast and call for those who refuse to "be killed".

The question arises, will the image actually be alive or will it be some type of elaborate hoax? As we discussed earlier (13:3), the Bible does not seem to indicate that the devil has the power to give life in the sense of human life. The fact is, we do not know for certain.

Some believe it will be nothing more than a dramatic display of technical ingenuity. Disney's "Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln" makes it seem as though Abraham Lincoln is actually present and speaking. We must not forget, Paul said the Antichrist would come with "lying" (false) wonders (2 Th. 2:9).

There are two problems with this view.

One, John says "they" should make an image (13:14).

A magician or technical expert is able to do indescribable acts because he constructs the equipment he uses. But, this image isn't something the False Prophet will construct himself.

Two, John says the False Prophet gives the image "life".

This certainly makes it sound like there is more to it than some electronic hocus-pocus. The word "life" is the Greek word "pneuma" which means "breath or spirit". This is the same word translated "Spirit" when speaking of the restoration of life of the two witnesses (11:11). It is used when referring to the Holy Spirit (Mat. 3:16; 4:1; Acts 2:4; Rom. 8:9; Gal. 3:2; Eph. 3:16; Phil. 1:19; 1 Th. 1:5), to demons (Mat. 8:16; 10:1; 12:43), and to the spirit of man (Mat. 22:43; 26:41; Rom. 1:9; 8:15; 8:26; 1 Cor. 2:4; Col. 2:5). Paul used this word when he spoke of Jesus consuming the Antichrist when He returns (2 Th. 2:8).

Some have suggested it may be that a demon enters this image and speaks on behalf of the devil, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet. Several times in the Bible, we find either the Holy Spirit (Mat. 10:17; Acts 21:11; 28:25; 1 Cor. 12:13) or demons (Mk. 3:11; 5:9; Acts 16:17) speaking through men. Certainly, demons are usually found possessing people and not objects, but that is not to say it could not happen.

All this being said we may not be certain about some of the details of this image, but we can be certain about its mission. It will be a tool of the devil to draw people away from God and to the devil.

Not only will the False Prophet have the image built, but he will demand all mankind bow to and "worship" the image. Worshiping the image is worshiping the Antichrist because the image represents the Antichrist.

Those who refuse will be put to death, some by being beheaded (20:4). Of course, all true believers will refuse to worship the image but not all believers will be killed. As mentioned before, some will endure until the end (Mt. 24:13), some are hidden away by God (12:14), and some are protected by God as promised by the measuring of the Temple (please refer to comments on 11:2). Those who are killed will be rewarded. John saw them sitting on thrones in heaven (20:4).

Those who live through the Tribulation Period will go into the Millennial kingdom in their natural bodies and have children. Their children will be the ones the devil will tempt when he is loosed from the bottomless pit for a season (20:4).

THE FALSE PROPHET AND HIS MARK 13:16-18

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:

Acting on behalf of the Antichrist, the False Prophet will cause all mankind to receive a "mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads". This mark is commonly called "The Mark of the Beast".

As we discussed earlier (cf. 13:12), the word "causeth" means the False Prophet convinces them to give heed to what he says and they willingly do as he says.

It, like the image of the beast, will become a focal point through the rest of the Tribulation Period (14:9, 14:11; 15:2; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4).

This mark will become that which identifies the unbeliever as well as the believer. It is the means whereby the Antichrist can easily distinguish those who are for him and those who are against him. For this reason, it will probably be visible and easily recognized and not something placed invisibly under the skin. Some have suggested it will be some type of barcode tattooed on the hand or forehead. We must be honest, since the Bible gives us no more detail than it does, much of our discussion is little more than speculation.

No doubt, one reason for this mark is the devil's attempt to imitate God. God will seal His people during the Tribulation Period (7:3; 14:1; 22:4). He also seals every believer with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30).

It is interesting to note, the Jewish women wore clothing that covered much of their bodies, but their hands and foreheads were exposed.

It is a mark of commitment

Those with the mark will be easily identifiable.

Taking this mark means the person is accepting the message of the Antichrist and is committing themselves to him. It is a mark of ownership. Marking for ownership is not something new. One, a king had a signet that bore his seal. Anyone under this seal was guaranteed the protection and provision of the king. Two, slaves were branded to show who they belonged to. Three, soldiers would brand the name of their General on themselves to show their devotion. Much like the company logo and name tag on the uniform of an employee, this mark will identify the person as one who belongs to the Antichrist. Those who wear this mark will be like the Marine who proudly wears his metals or the athlete who wears his jersey proudly.

John saying the "small and great, rich and poor, free and bond" tells us all classes of people will be included. It also tells us all these very different types of people will become one. All who accept the mark of the beast will become a part of the evil system of the Antichrist.

This mark will also identify who has refused the message of the Antichrist and False Prophet.

Those without this mark will be easily identifiable.

These facts tell us the mark of the beast is not something someone can take by accident. It isn't like agreeing to receive a free gift and later realizing you unknowingly signed up for a magazine you didn't want. It will take a conscience decision involving a submission of the mind and heart.

It is a mark of communication

Though we are not told specifically, this mark will likely connect the individual to the electronic system where all their personal information will be made available. Perhaps, like the bar codes in stores and the chips in our credit cards, it will give access to an individual's personal information.

We can rest assured, the medical and financial implant chips of our day are not the mark of the beast but they are helping to get the world used to the idea. The first microchip was implanted by British scientist Kevin Warwick in 1998.

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.

It is a mark of commerce

Without this mark, a person will have no connection to commerce. Without it, no man can "buy or sell".

To control the world, one must control the finances of the world. More than likely, cash will be done away with and all financial transactions will be done electronically. That will require a global network of communications. Until recent years, this has raised questions among unbelievers and believers alike. Unbelievers were quick to say it was impossible and the Bible was a myth. Believers, even though they believed it, were baffled to explain it.

That certainly is not the case today. The date of January 1, 1983, is considered the official birth date of the internet. At that time Transfer Control Protocol/Internetwork Protocol (TCP/IP) was made public which allowed computers to talk to each other and making possible that which seemed impossible. This is another example of some prophecy not being clear until it actually happens.

A one-world communication system would not, as some have suggested, require a one-world currency. Our modern computer systems would have no problem with the exchange rate between different countries.

All the necessary technology is ready and waiting. The devil has been working on the details of his plan for a long time.

The False Prophet will probably talk about the importance of cooperating with this new system. He will speak of its convenience, how it unites everyone, and how those who refuse should not profit from its benefits. His message will seem reasonable and be quite convincing.

Since those who refuse the mark cannot "buy or sell" they will be forced to beg or steal their daily essentials.

It is a mark of condemnation

More important than commitment, communication, or commerce, this mark will be a mark of condemnation. The person who takes this mark will be sealing their eternal destiny for they will never be able to be saved or forgiven. John tells us the destiny of those who take the mark, "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb" (14:10).

By accepting this mark they are doing more than agreeing to an electronic monetary system, they will be uniting with the Devil and the Antichrist and separating themselves from God at the same time. As a result, they will face the wrath of God now and forever (14:9-11).

The bottom line is, this mark will cause people to decide on going with God or the devil.

I have heard people say if the Rapture takes place they will get saved during the Tribulation Period. Few things are more foolish than this. There are three reasons why I say this.

One, those who have heard the gospel will not have a chance to get saved after the Rapture. God will send them "strong delusion" so that they will believe the lies of the Antichrist (2 Th. 2:11-12).

Two, unbelievers will be deceived by the indescribable miracles of the Antichrist. His works will be so unexplainable, that even believers would be deceived if it were not for the Lord (Mt. 24:24; 2 Th. 2:9-10).

Three, during the Tribulation Period, the hearts of mankind will be harder than ever. Men will call for rocks to hide them from the wrath of God but refuse to repent (Rev. 6:16). Giant hail stones weighing up to 100 pounds will fall, but instead of repenting, man will blaspheme God and curse His name (16:21). More often than not, the more a person refuses the gospel, the harder their hearts become.

The fact is, it will be more difficult to accept Christ during the Tribulation Period than any other time in human history. Getting saved has never been easy because it means we are willing to turn from our old life and give up our sin. But, during the Tribulation Period, a sinner will realize getting saved will mean they will be sought out, and perhaps killed, by the Antichrist. They will know they will have to beg or steal for food, medicine, and daily essentials.

All these factors lead to one conclusion, if you, as a lost person, are contemplating getting saved, you should not delay another second. God says, "*Now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation" (2 Co 6:2 emphasis added). Do it now, not next year, or next week, at this present moment, turn from your sin, and call on the Lord to forgive you.

The words "the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name" show us how closely associated the man and the number will be. Name or number refers to the same ungodly person.

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.

John began his statement by saying "Here is wisdom". He appeals to those who possess spiritual understanding and asks them to take seriously what he is about to write.

Of course "Six hundred three-score and six" is 666. This number has caused much distress among God's people. Some have tried to connect it with certain dates but the number is connected to a person and not a date.

John said, "It is the number of a man", so we know this number is associated with the Antichrist and will, somehow, identify him.

There have been all sorts of elaborate mathematical formulas invented in an attempt to explain the number 666. Some have given numerical equivalency to the letters of the alphabet. Supposedly, the names, Hitler, Henry Kissinger, John F. Kennedy, and Jerry Falwell add up to 666. By the way, so does "Windows 95". One of the many problems with this theory is the fact that we are not told what language we are supposed to use.

The Antichrist will not be revealed until the Holy Spirit is removed from this world during the Rapture (2 Th. 2:7-8). So, trying to guess who he will be is useless. The point is, we do not know who he is, but those who live during this this will know. It will confirm to the believers, that this is him.

First, let me say without a doubt, that numbers do have significance in the Bible. For instance, the number 1 means unity, 4 means earth, 6 means man, 7 means perfection or completeness, 8 means new beginnings, 10 means law, and 40 means trials. In my opinion, some have gone way too far in studying numbers.

John said, "it is the number of a man". He connects the number with the man.

Keeping in mind that 6 refers to man and 7 refers to God we realize man always comes short of God and what His demands. The fact that man comes short of God is probably the most important factor of this verse. Paul said man has "come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

The three sixes may point to the unholy trinity (devil, Antichrist, and False Prophet) and how they fall short of the heavenly Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). The devil keeps trying but he always falls short.

So, after all the discussion, distress, and disagreement, the correct explanation is probably that which is the most simple. The three sixes represent the three of the unholy trinity of the Devil, Antichrist, and False Prophet.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The third pause (interlude) ends (14:1)

As previously mentioned, in chapters 12-14 we find the third pause (interlude). At the end of chapter 14, the pause will end and John will bring us back to the last seven judgments of God (15:1). This pause is a perfect example of how the book of Revelation is not in chronological order.

Chapters 12-14 give us a bird's eye view of the entire Tribulation Period.

Chapter 12 took us back in time and described the devil's hatred of Jesus and the people of Israel (12:1-17). Chapter 13 took us back to the beginning of the Tribulation Period to give us a look at the career of the Antichrist (13:1) and the False Prophet (13:11). Chapter 14 will tell us of how God reaches out to His beloved people of Israel and how He judges those who refuse His offer of forgiveness. In this chapter, we are also shown the end of the Antichrist and those who follow him.

As we will see, the events in this chapter are not in chronological order. It seems the Lord places the events by way of importance and not by its timing. Some have said this chapter is like an index of the events that are to follow. John describes in capsule form what is ahead.

God uses angels a great deal in this chapter.

The Lamb and the 144,000 on Mount Sion (14:1-5)

Rev. 14:1 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.

The words "I looked" indicate a change in John's subject matter.

In chapter 13, we saw the devil having his hay day, but the beginning of chapter 14 is like a breath of fresh air. Those who have endured the attack of the Antichrist are singing a song of victory.

Once again, John sees the Lamb of God (cf. 5:6). This time, he is standing on Mount Sion. Mount Sion, the same as Mount Zion, is a mountain on the southeast side of Jerusalem.

With Jesus, are the 144,000. Some believe this group is different than the 144,000 mentioned in chapter seven (7:4-8) but there is no Scriptural evidence to suggest that. It would be strange to have two different groups, of the exact number, and both bearing the seal of God.

We are not told the timing of this event. If it takes place any other time than at the end of the Tribulation Period it would mean Jesus will return to earth before the Tribulation Period ends. We have no indication in Scripture of Him doing so. It seems they are standing with the Lord and getting ready to enter the kingdom.

This means the 144,000 will survive the Tribulation Period even though the Antichrist will try his best to put them to death. God will protect them as He promised.

Them "having his Father's name written in their foreheads" reminds us of them being sealed by God (7:4). They belong to God and He always takes care of His own.

Some say this describes the Rapture but it clearly says the Lamb "stood on the mount Sion". The Lord does not come to the earth at the rapture. The saints will be "caught up together with them *in the clouds*, to meet the Lord in *the air*" (1 Th.4:14 emphasis added).

Heaven's choir

Rev. 14:2 And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:

John heard two things.

First, he heard a "voice from heaven" that sounded like a mighty "many waters" (mighty waterfall) and "great thunder". It was loud enough to be heard from heaven to earth.

Second, he heard the sound of "harpers" playing "their harps". Though loud, there was a sweetness about the music.

The song of the 144,000

Rev. 14:3 And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.

The combination of voice and music seems to refer to singing from heaven. As we will see, this is a song for the 144,000.

We are not told who is singing. We are told they are in heaven and singing "before the throne", the "four beasts", and the "elders". The "four beasts, and the elders" are the same we learned about earlier (4:4; 4:6). That seems to suggest neither the "four beasts" nor the "elders" (church) are listening and not singing.

This song is specially written for the 144,000 who "were redeemed from the earth" for they only can "learn that song". More than likely, it is a song about their victory over the Devil, Antichrist, and False Prophet. It's a "new song" because no one else has had the experience of the 144,000.

We are told they "learn" the song but we are not specifically told they will sing it. In my opinion, it would seem unlikely they would learn a song and not sing it.

I believe the 144,000 on earth and the harpers in heaven will, at least for a few moments, form a combined choir. The harpers are playing and the 144,000 are singing the song.

God created and ordained music and singing for His glory. The book of Psalms, which accounts for 7 percent of the Old Testament, is a collection of songs to be sung by God's people. We find music or singing in the Old Testament (Gen. 4:21; 31:27; Ex. 15:1-18; Dt. 32:1-43; Judges 11:34; 1 Sam. 16:23; 18:6, 23:1; 1 Chr. 15:16; 23:5; Isa. 5:12), and in the New Testament (Mt. 9:23; 26:30; Lk. 1:46-55; 15:25; Acts 16:25; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Jam. 5:13; Rev. 15:3).

Lucifer is no stranger to music and singing. It is possible that he, before his fall, was the heavenly music director. Ezekiel speaks of his, "tabrets" and "pipes" (Eze 28:13).

He did not lose his knowledge of music when he fell but he certainly has used it for his own wicked purposes. When Moses descended the mount, the people of Israel were singing and dancing as they worshipped the golden calf (Ex. 32:18-19). Nebuchadnezzar used music in the worship of his image (Dan. 3:5).

Unfortunately, music and singing, though they can be used to glorify God and bring joy to His people, have done much to separate children from parents, contaminate society, and draw people into sin.

The spirituality of the 144,000

Re 14:4 These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.

To understand these verses we must begin with the fact that God is absolutely holy. God is omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent, but His primary attribute is holiness. The angels around God's throne cry out "Holy, holy, holy" (Isa. 6:3), which means each of the three members of the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) are equally holy. Paul said, "who knew no sin" (2 Cor. 5:21). God has no sin nature and therefore cannot be tempted by evil (Jas 1:13).

Recognizing God's holiness should affect our lives. Our thoughts, deeds, and motives should be controlled by the fact that there is a holy God who we are accountable. When Isaiah saw God's holiness, he said, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips" (Isa. 6:5). Peter "fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Lk. 5:8).

Since God is holy, He is satisfied with nothing less than holiness. He demands holiness because He is holy. He said, "be ye holy: for I am the LORD" (Lev. 20:7). He also said, "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Pe 1:16). Peter said, "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation" (1 Pe 1:15). God meant what He said. God meant what He said.

The word "holy" means "sacred, morally blameless, devout, godly, dedicated". It carries with it the idea of something being set aside for the Lord's use. That which has been set aside is to be used for nothing other than for the Lord's purpose. The Ark of the Covenant was nothing but a box but it was built for the Lord's service in the Tabernacle and Temple. Once it was built, it was not to be used for anything other than for the Lord's purpose. To treat it as an ordinary box brought the swift and severe judgment of God. Uzzah found that out the hard way (2 Sam. 6:6-7).

In like fashion, we as servants of God are to be used only to do His will. God said, "For I am the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth" (Le 11:44). That means, we should set ourselves apart for God and keep ourselves from anything God says is unholy.

The bottom line is, that being holy means we are different from the world. Despite this fact many who claim to know God live much like the world.

Those things being said, let's take a look at this verse.

John describes the spirituality of the 144,000. They are true believers who lived godly lives in what may be the worst time in human history. If they can, we can also. If they do, we ought to also.

By this time the 144,000 has suffered through a time of trials unlike any other group in history. They have endured plagues, pestilences, famine, sickness, war, the rampage of demons, and the attack of the Antichrist and his followers. And yet, they are still alive and well. And yet, they have remained faithful to their Lord, lived clean in a wicked world, and proclaimed the gospel to the lost world. After all this, I guess they deserve their song.

Not "defiled with women" tells us these are all men.

Their being "virgins" tells us they are all unmarried. That means, these men are willing to deny themselves pleasures that they might do the Lord's will. Jesus (Mt. 19:12), and Paul (1 Cor. 7:7) spoke of this.

This is not suggesting that being single is more spiritual than being married. The book of Hebrews tells us, "Marriage is *honourable* in *all*, and the *bed undefiled*" (Heb 13:4 emphasis added). God ordained marriage and the physical relationship for the enjoyment of a husband and wife and the continuation of the human race.

However, the persecution during the Tribulation Period will make it especially difficult for those with wives and children. Remember Jesus said, "And woe unto them that are with child" (Mt. 24:19). Paul talked about staying single because of the "present distress" (1 Cor. 7:26). He meant there, as John means here, the persecution is so great it would be unsafe for a wife and family.

They "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth" means they obeyed the Lord in all things no matter what the consequences. Many are willing to do the Lord's will until it becomes inconvenient or difficult. Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they *follow me*" (Jn 10:27 emphasis added).

The reason they live clean lives in a dirty world and give up that which others partake of is explained by the words "redeemed from the earth". Their outward purity is a sign of their inward purity. They had not just proclaimed to be redeemed, they have lived the life of the redeemed. Unfortunately, many who profess redemption today do not live like they are redeemed.

Re 14:5 And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.

They are called the "firstfruits". The firstfruits are the first fruit that comes off the vine at harvest time. It is called firstfruits because it is the first and because it is a promise of more to come.

The 144,000 will be the firstfruits of the many who will be saved during the Tribulation Period, live through the Tribulation Period, and enter the Millennium in their natural bodies.

The word "guile" means "to deceive by trickery" and has the idea of being dishonest or deceitful. This means they speak the truth but it also means they do not participate in the lie of the Antichrist.

What we say reveals what is in our hearts. Jesus said, "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart" (Mt. 15:18). That's why Paul said "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Ro 10:9). A person confessing with their mouth does not save them, it is simply them saying with their mouth what has happened in their heart.

The words "without fault" mean without blame or flaw. It is used when describing the requirement of no blemish on the animals brought for sacrifice. Jesus is called a "lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. 1:19).

They are without fault "before the throne of God". They stand before God completely pure, not because of their own deeds, but because of the righteousness God has given them. Paul said, "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness" (Phil. 3:9). If we stand before God in our own righteousness, we will be condemned. It is one thing to appear righteous before our fellow man, it is quite another to be righteous before God.

If we should learn anything from this group, it should be that we have no excuse to slack off or quit serving God.

Three angels speak God's message (14:6-13)

God sends three angels to deliver His message. The first comes with the "everlasting gospel" (v. 6-7), the second says "Babylon is fallen" (v.8), and the third tells of the destiny of those who worship the Antichrist (v. 9-12).

The first angel (14:6-7)

Rev. 14:6 And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,

Once again we find the words "I saw". As I have mentioned, these words tell us something new is on the way and John is moving us from one event to another.

John saw "another" angel (cf. 7:2; 8:3; 10:1). Saying "another" does not suggest there was an angel immediately before this one. John has seen many angels, the last one in chapter 12, this is simply another one. This is the first of six angels mentioned in this chapter (v. 8, 9, 15, 17, 18).

This angel is flying through the air proclaiming the everlasting "gospel". This is the only time the word "gospel" is found in the book of Revelation. The word, "gospel" means "good news". We usually associate the "gospel" with God's message during the church age. However, the word "everlasting" tells us God has always had a message of "good news".

God's message, whether Old Testament, church age, or Tribulation Period, has always been forgiveness to those who believe and repent, and judgment to those who refuse.

The next verse tells us there is judgment included in the angel's message. The good news of the gospel always includes the bad news of judgment. A gospel that excludes judgment is not a true gospel. The good news is the fact that God has provided a way of forgiveness and an escape from the coming judgment.

As mentioned previously (3:10; 6:10; 11:10; 13:8; 13:14), the phrase "dwell on the earth" is found five times, and "dwell upon the earth" is found three times in the book of Revelation. These phrases always refer to those who are lost (3:10; 6:10; 11:10; 13:8; 13:14; 14:6; 17:8).

This message will be to "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people". Every unbeliever on earth will hear the message and decide to go on in their rebellion against God or to turn from their sin and be saved.

I believe this is the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy which says, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Mt. 24:14). Many misinterpret Jesus' comments by saying the gospel must be preached to the world before the Rapture takes place. The coming He had in mind was His Second Coming, not the Rapture.

Rev. 14:7 Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

The angel's message is warning those who have not received the mark of the beast about God's coming judgment and pleading to them to turn to God and worship Him.

Creating "heaven, and earth, and the sea" proves God is the only real God and therefore the only one truly worthy of worship.

John lists three things every believer should do.

- One, we're told to "Fear God"

The word "fear" speaks of having a reverence for God but it also means "to frighten". Most Bible students emphasize reverencing God and exclude the "frighten" aspect of fearing God. We must not do so. When God means what He says when He tells us to "fear" Him. Jesus used the same word two times in one verse when He said, "And *fear* not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather *fear* him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Mt. 10:28 emphasis added).

A simple reading of His statement tells us He was speaking of fear and not "reverence" toward man. If He meant fear of man, He also meant fear of God. Both instances of the word "fear" refer to a genuine fear.

We should never forget the importance of having a healthy fear of God. Salvation and forgiveness always begin with "fear". The fear of God's judgment and the fear of going to hell, causes a person to repent and believe.

They are to fear God and not the Antichrist. We are to fear God and no one else.

- Second, we're told to "give glory to him"

To "give glory to him" is to acknowledge who God is and what He has done. Getting the glory is the same as getting the credit. We should never try to take credit to ourselves for that which God has done. Lucifer (Isa. 14:14) and King Herod tried (Acts 12:20-25) but both suffered the consequences.

God shares His glory with no man. He said, "I will not give my glory unto another" (Isa. 48:11). For us, demanding the credit is sinful and a sign of pride, but not so with God (Isa. 48:11b; 1 Tim. 6:15). God deserves the glory because He is the One who has done all things well (Mk. 7:37). John said, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Re 4:11).

- Third, we're told to "worship him"

The word "worship" comes from the old English word "worthship", which denotes the worthiness of the one receiving a special honor.

Worship is seeing God as He is and acknowledging His greatness through our words and works. He is the One who "made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters".

Since only God deserves worship (Acts 10:25-26; 1 Jn. 5:21; Re 19:10; 22:8-9) it should be reserved for God only (Ex. 20:3; 34:14; Dt. 11:16-17; Lk. 4:8).

Jesus said those who worship God must "worship him in spirit and in truth" (Jn 4:24). That means, we should worship from our hearts and we worship the way God demands.

Worship can be public (Ps. 22:22; 35:18; 95:6; 100:4; Heb. 13:15), or private (Job 1:20-21; Isa. 25:1).

Worship is personal. The leper returned to give thanks and worship (Lk. 17:15).

Worship is pleasing. It pleases God when we worship Him. Jesus said, the "Father *seeketh* such to worship him" (Jn. 4:23 emphasis added). Worship is praising (Ps. 7:17; 9:1; 52:9; 86:12; 111:1; 145:2; Isa. 25:1).

Worship isn't something we do in expectation of receiving something in return. Insincere worship displeases God (Pro. 21:27; Isa. 1:13-15; Jer. 6:20; Amos 5:21-23).

Worship requires a clean heart. We may sing with a dirty heart, we may preach with a dirty heart, we may even witness with a dirty heart, but we will never truly worship with a dirty heart.

Worship leads to, and includes, obedience to God. The first time the word "worship" is found in the Bible is when Abraham was obeying God's command to offer his son Isaac. He told the servant, "I and the lad will go yonder and worship" (Ge 22:5).

The word "for" connects the end of John's statement with the beginning. The angel tells mankind to fear God and give Him glory because the "hour of his judgment is come". The time to settle the account is coming. God's undiluted wrath is coming, but for those who will believe and repent, He still grants grace. That means those who refuse this message will perish (1 Cor. 1:18; 2 Th. 2:10; 2 Pet. 2:12). They, like those who rejected the preaching of Noah (1 Pet. 3:20), will not escape God's judgment.

The "hour of his judgment is come" refers to the coming judgment described in verses 9-11. At the end of the Tribulation Period, Jesus will come and overcome the Antichrist, the False Prophet, and all those who followed them (19:11-21).

It seems as though many will ignore this angel. The next verse speaks of another angel who will come announcing judgment.

The second angel (14:8)

Rev. 14:8 And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

Man's rebellion against the message of the previous angel brings about a message of judgment from another angel.

Another angel announces the fall of Babylon as though it has already happened. The Greek word "fallen" is in the aorist tense. That means it speaks of a future event that is so certain that it is spoken as though it has already taken place. The actual fall of Babylon is recorded in chapters 17 and 18.

In the context of this verse, Babylon represents the political, economic, and religious system of the Antichrist and False Prophet. God is announcing its certain fall. God will win in the end.

There is more about Babylon in the Book of Revelation than there is about heaven. Eleven percent of this book is about Babylon. God warns us about Babylon and its evil influence.

The original city of Babylon was a cesspool of idolatry. Those living there built the Tower of Babel which was the first place of organized rebellion against God (Gen. 11:1-6). As we will see later in this book, it also represents the last organized rebellion against God.

Much like the astrologers of our day, they believed the stars controlled the events of their lives. For this reason, they attempted to build a tower whereby they might view the stars (Ge 11:4). Unfortunately, when God confounded their language, instead of repenting, they spread their idolatry across the world (Ge 11:8).

The Babylon spoken of in this verse will be just as wicked as the original. God will judge this Babylon because she "made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication". That means the influence of sinful Babylon will cause the world to become addicted to its wicked pleasures.

The prophecy about the fall of Babylon is also a prophecy of the victory of the Lamb of God. He will utterly destroy the system of the Antichrist.

Those who participate in the sin induced by Babylon will suffer the same judgment. God will be longsuffering, but the time will come when He will deal with sin, and He will do so harshly.

God's warning should not be taken lightly (Heb. 12:25). Paul used the same word when he wrote "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). We should never think we are beyond falling.

The angel's message is a warning of coming judgment. The declaration has been given and the judgment will come at the time God determines.

As we are about to see, that which is a message of judgment to those who follow the Antichrist is a message of deliverance to those who refuse the mark of the beast.

The third angel (14:9-12)

Judgment is coming for those who accept the mark of the beast

Rev. 14:9 And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand,

A third angel, apparently also flying through heaven, comes with a message of gloom.

This verse makes it clear that worshiping the Antichrist and receiving the mark of the beast are connected. As I have already mentioned, accepting the mark of the beast is a conscious decision to dedicate oneself to the Antichrist and is a submission of the heart and mind. As we will see in the next verse, those who do so will suffer the consequences.

The repeating of the word "fallen" emphasizes the subject. The Greek language uses repetition to emphasize the statement (Gen. 22:11; 46:2; Acts 9:4; Mt. 27:46; Lk. 22:31).

Rev. 14:10 The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:

The message of the angel promises judgment to those who worship the beast. Notice the details of his message.

- First, his message describes God's judgment as God's "wrath"

There are two Greek words in the Bible for the word "wrath". The first word is "thumos", which means "boiling indignation" or "an outburst of passion". It refers to an anger that erupts is over with. The second word is "orge", which means "abiding wrath". It refers to an anger that lasts.

The interesting thing is, we find both of these words in this one verse. The first occurrence, the word translated as "wrath", is the Greek word "thumos". It means God's wrath is something that erupts quickly at the first sign of sin. The second occurrence, the word translated "indignation" is the Greek word "orge". It means God's wrath abides over the sinner who refuses to repent. The Bible says, "God is angry with the wicked every day" (Ps 7:11). The word "wrath" is used to describe the punishment that comes from man's disobedience (Jn. 3:36; Rom. 5:9).

Those who resist God's mercy and accept the mark of the beast will experience God's immediate wrath, but they will also experience His everlasting wrath when they are sent to hell.

God and man express wrath but man is usually unjustified and God is always justified. God's wrath is just and right because He is holy (Josh. 7:1; Ps. 78:58). God commands us to refrain from unjustified anger (Rom. 12:19; Eph. 4:26; Col. 3:8-10). Only by being controlled by the Holy Spirit will we be able to keep our anger under control (Acts 11:24; Gal. 5:22-25; Eph. 5:18).

- Second, his message likens God's wrath to wine in a cup

Those who take the mark of the beast drank the wine of idolatry by worshiping the Antichrist (cf. v. 9). Now, they will drink the wine of God's wrath.

Jesus drank of this cup at Calvary when He died for our sin (Isa. 53:8b; Mt. 26:39). Every individual will decide to drink this cup themselves or accept the fact that Jesus drank it for them. Those who refuse Him now will one day stand before Him and confess that He is Lord (Phil. 2:11).

- Third, God's wrath will be "poured out"

It is as though God holds the cup in His hand. That means He is in control of His wrath. God never loses His temper and acts inappropriately. No one will ever rightly accuse God of judging wrongly.

There are times when God's wrath comes immediately when a person sins (Dan. 4:30-31; 5:30-31; Acts 12:23). But, His wrath is also being stored up for a later date (Zep 1:15; Rom. 2:5; Eph. 5:6; Rev. 14:19).

- Fourth, God's wrath will be poured out "without mixture"

In ancient times, they would often dilute wine with water to lessen its potency. The wrath spoken of in this verse is 100%. There is no mixture of God's grace or mercy.

- Fifth, God's wrath involves "fire and brimstone"

Those who receive God's wrath will be "tormented". The word means "torture".

The word "brimstone" means "sulfur". It speaks of burning rocks like that in volcanic eruptions. As difficult as it is to comprehend, the brimstone makes the fire more intense.

We have no reason whatsoever to think this is referring to anything other than real fire. To say otherwise is to do an injustice to Scripture. There is no way to overstate the agony of such torment. Those who brag about having a party with their friends when they go to hell have no idea how foolish they are.

Such judgment seems extreme to us because we do not see how wicked sin is and how holy God is. God's judgment is never more severe than it should be. He is a just judge. A good judge cannot let a crime go unpunished.

This is one of the most serious of all warnings in the Bible. When the God who loves beyond explanation speaks such words, man would do well to give heed.

- Sixth, God's wrath involves "those who worship the beast"

Those who go to hell are those who worship the beast. Hell is not just a place to send evil and ungodly men like Hitler or Mussolini. Everyone would agree that they deserve to go to hell. But, hell is a place designed for those who refuse God's plan of forgiveness.

The wrath of God is a terrifying thing. Anyone who disagrees has no concept of Biblical wrath. Thankfully, He is willing to turn from His wrath when we accept His remedy for our sin. Those who obey God's command will be "saved from wrath" (Rom. 5:9).

In words "in presence of the Lamb" may surprise us. Does this mean God will be in hell, or the lake of fire?

One thing it tells us is the fact that the devil will not be in charge of hell. He will not be standing over tormented souls cracking a whip and laughing as they suffer. God will rule over hell just as He rules over all of His creation.

Some believe this means God and the angels will be present at the time of sentencing of those who will be sent to hell. We do know Jesus will say, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mt. 25:41).

Others believe this means the presence of God will actually be in hell.

We know God is omnipresent, which means, He is everywhere at the same time. It means, there is no place where God is not. The Psalmist said, "if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there" (Ps 139:8).

Yet, we are told Jesus will say, "Depart from me" when He casts people into hell (Mt. 25:41). The Bible clearly speaks of those being in hell being absent from God (Mt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30; 2 Th. 1:9).

What is the answer to this seeming contradiction?

The explanation would seem to be that, in hell, God's wrath and justice will be present, but His mercy, compassion, or forgiveness will not be. Those in hell will wish God's presence wasn't there. Just as there is none of God's wrath in heaven, there will be none of God's mercy in hell. This fact will only magnify the torment of hell. Those who occupy the pit of torment will be aware of the awful presence of God but have no way to communicate with Him. Their cries for mercy will go unheeded.

This warning is more than a promise of judgment, it is a plea for repentance. The angel is pleading to those who have not yet received the mark and asking that they turn to the Lord. Dear sinner friend, that same plea is extended to you from God right now. He sent His Son to die on the cross so that you might be forgiven of your sin. Please turn to Him right now by faith, confess your sin, and ask Him to forgive you. You'll never be sorry if you do.

Rev. 14:11 And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

The "smoke" ascending gives evidence of the agony of this place. As a child living in New Bern North Carolina, I remember seeing the smoke of the fires that would often devour the pine forests. The billowing smoke testified to the heat of the flames.

The worst part is not the fire, the brimstone, or the smoke, the worst part is the length. Their torment will be "for ever and ever". There will be no end! Those words fall far short of the significance of their meaning. How can you express the thought of burning forever with no hope of escape or relief? All the languages of the world are not sufficient.

Some teach the fire of hell will consume the sinner and their torment will be over. No where in the Bible is this even slightly suggested. This verse says the smoke of their "torment" is forever. Their torment never ends means they will forever be conscious.

In the lake of fire, their torment never lessens for the payment for their sin is never paid (Rom. 6:23).

The angel emphasizes the reason for the torment of those who go to hell. They go to hell, not because they were the worse of sinners. They go to hell because they "worship the beast" and received the "mark of his name". In other words, they worshipped the Antichrist instead of the real Christ. That is the one reason why people go to hell.

Believers are admonished to remain faithful

Rev. 14:12 Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

Once again the "patience of the saints" is spoken of. This is another example of what is commonly called the perseverance of the saints. Please refer to my comments on 13:10. The true child of God will continue to walk with Him. James said, "I will shew thee my faith by my works" (Jas 2:18). Paul said, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (Eph 2:10).

This verse speaks to the believer in three different ways.

- First, the saints are to endure their trials and stay faithful to God.

The word "patience" means "cheerful endurance" and has the idea of bearing up under difficult circumstances. By God's grace, they endure the worst persecution in the history of the world. We should measure our spirituality when our life is falling apart, not when things are running smoothly.

- Two, the saints are to endure the trials and "keep the commandments of God".

Their spiritual patience is revealed by them doing the commandments of the Lord. Obeying God is not a requirement of salvation, but it is a sign of salvation.

A godly lifestyle is evidence of faith in Christ. James said, "I will shew thee my faith by my works" (Jas 2:18). Paul said, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (Eph 2:10).

The difference between believer and unbeliever will be even more evident during this time of severe tribulation. The trials of life reveal what they really are.

- Three, the saints are to endure the trials by having "faith of Jesus"

They are able to keep the commands of God, not because they have great stamina, but because they have put their faith in Jesus. When most of the world is falling before the Antichrist, the believers continue to put their faith in Christ. That will not be easy considering what they are enduring. But, their faith will sustain them.

This verse serves as a warning to anyone thinking about walking away from God's will. The true believer cannot quit God. Everyone who has tried to walk away from God has regretted it. David, Solomon, Sampson, Jonah, Peter, or a host of others, would be glad to testify to that fact.

Since those who die lost will go to hell, we who believe should stay faithful and never quit living clean and sharing the gospel message to lost souls around us.

Rev. 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.

This is the second of seven beatitudes in this book (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7; 22:14). As mentioned earlier, these blessings assure us of the book's credibility. If it were not from God, these promises could never be kept.

Once again, John hears a "voice from heaven" instructing him to continue to write. The message is directed toward those who "die in the Lord".

The contrast between this verse and verse 11 is beyond description. Unbelievers go to a place of eternal torment but believers go to a place of eternal tranquility.

The "henceforth" means "from now on". Death for the child of God has always been a blessing, but it will be even more so during this time. Many believers will be tortured to death in indescribable ways. Certainly, death will be a welcome friend.

I see three points of interest in this verse.

- One, this message makes me think of the word "reassurance"

The promise of eternal bliss will reassure the Tribulation believers they are on the right path. Certainly, under such tremendous persecution, the devil will try to make them question their faith. Occasionally, every believer will need the assurance that what they believe is really the truth. We who know the Lord can be at peace about death. The believer never dies alone (Ps 23:4). Peter saw Jesus standing to welcome him home (Acts 7:55).

- Two, this message makes me think of the word "rest"

The word "labours" speaks of something hard, difficult, and exhausting. When Paul talked about his labors he spoke of stripes, prisons, beatings, shipwrecks, robbers, death, watchings, painfulness, hunger, thirst, fastings, and nakedness (2 Cor. 11:23-27). After reading this list, I hope I won't stand near Paul at the Bema Seat.

This rest does not mean we will float around heaven on a cloud and do nothing. No doubt, there will be many ways for us to serve the Lord when we get to heaven, but the exhaustion of our labor will be a thing of the past.

- Three, this message makes me think of the word "reward"

Their "works do follow them" means they will receive eternal rewards for the sacrifice they made on earth. It will be more than worth it. Paul said the sufferings on earth "are not worthy to be compared with the glory" of heaven (Ro 8:18). He also spoke of a crown waiting for him (2 Tim 4:8). The wonders of heaven make our trials on earth seem as nothing (Ro 8:18).

Paul says believers will stand before the Lord that their works might be put tested by fire (1 Cor. 3:11-15). The works we did that were not of the Spirit (wood, hay, stubble), will be consumed and provide no reward. However, those works we did through the power of the Spirit (silver, gold, precious stones) will survive the fire and provide eternal rewards.

The above comments are not suggesting a believer will never fear, or dread, death.

That does not mean believers will never fear death. A believer can be as vulnerable to natural fear as any lost person. Also, the devil may his best to use death as a tool in his attempt to rob us of our peace.

However, God can give peace to the saint who believes His Word and trusts in Him. Paul said, "to die is *gain*" (Phil. 1:21 emphasis added). Death is the means of escape from a world of heartbreak and misery and entrance into a world of peace and contentment.

The Son of Man comes on a cloud

In verse 14, we will find the words "And I looked" which indicate a change of events in John's writing of this book.

As I have mentioned earlier, in chapters 12-14, John goes back to the beginning and takes us through the Tribulation Period with an emphasis on the Antichrist. The events described in the last verses of chapter 14 bring the pause (interlude) to an end and show us how the Antichrist will be overcome by the Lord Jesus Christ. His defeat is certain.

Various views have been given as to the meaning of verses 14-20. Some believe they refer to two separate events, while others believe they refer to one event.

Since two sickles are mentioned (verse 14 and verse 17) it would seem two harvests are being described.

A harvest is viewed in Scripture as both, the gathering of the godly, and the cutting down of the wicked (Mt. 13:30). We see both of these aspects of a harvest in verses 14-20. In verses 14-17, we see the Tribulation saints being gathered in preparation for the coming kingdom. In verses 17-20, we see the gathering of the ungodly to the Battle of Armageddon that takes place at the end of the Tribulation Period (16:16; 19:17-18).

Jesus described these events in His parable of the wheat and the tares (Mt. 13:37-43). The believers (wheat) will be kept safe and taken into the Millennial Kingdom. The unbelievers (grapes) will be judged and cast into hell. In that parable He said, "The field is the world", "the good seed are the children of the kingdom", "the tares are the children of the wicked one", "the harvest is the end of the world", "the reapers are the angels", and "the tares are gathered and burned in the fire".

Only God is able to discern the good from the bad. That is why Jesus said, "Let both grow together until the harvest". We are presently in that time of letting them grow together.

These events will lead up to the Battle of Armageddon (Isa. 63:1-6; Joel 3:12-14; Zep. 3:8). The battle itself actually takes place at the end of the Tribulation Period (16:12-16; 19:11-21).

As is so often the case in this book, God will use angels extensively in the events described in the next few verses.

Reaping the harvest of the earth (14:14-20)

Rev. 14:14 And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.

This "white cloud" may refer to the Shekinah Glory cloud. The Shekinah cloud, which marked the manifested presence of God, appeared when the people of Israel were escaping Egypt and led them into the wilderness (Ex. 13:20-22; 14:24), it hovered over the ark of the covenant (Ex. 40:34; Lev. 16:2), it engulfed Moses when he met with God (Ex. 33:9), it filled the house of God (1 Kg. 8:10-11), and it received Jesus up to heaven when He ascended (Acts 1:9).

The "Son of man" is Jesus Himself. John mentioned the "Son of man" back in chapter one (1:13) and there was no doubt he was talking about Jesus. Jesus will return to earth on a cloud (Dan. 7:14; Lk. 21:27; Acts 1:11; Re 1:7).

The "crown" is the Greek word "stephanos" which refers to a victor's crown. This type of crown was worn by a victorious king after he defeated his enemy. Later, we will see Jesus wearing the crown of a Monarch and declaring "KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS" (19:16).

Who other than Jesus is worthy to wear such a crown? Jesus Himself prophesied of this event when He said "And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory" (Lk. 21:27).

The title "Son of man" speaks of Jesus' humanity. He was 100% God, but He was also 100% man. Jesus used this title quite often as He walked this earth because He was identifying with man.

This is the last time Jesus will be referred to as the Son of man in the Bible. The first time this title is found in the New Testament is recorded by Matthew where Jesus said, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Mt. 8:20). So, the first time tells us He owned nothing in this world, and the last time tells us He owns it all and is on the way to claim it.

The "sharp sickle" is a razor-sharp harvesting tool that has a curved blade. The curved blade would cut the stalks of wheat but was used also to gather the stalks in a bunch. These bunches of wheat are gathered and carried to the threshing floor for winnowing. Harvesting with such a tool was violent but it got the job done.

Rev. 14:15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.

Another angel (fourth in chapter 14) comes out of the heavenly temple, which is God's dwelling place (cf. 11:19), crying with a "loud voice" that the time of harvest has arrived.

The message comes, not from the angel, but from God the Father who sits in the temple in heaven. This means the coming judgment is right. God's justice is always right. No one will ever be able to rightly accuse God of judging unjustly.

The angel speaks to the One that "sat on the cloud" and says, "Thrust in thy sickle". This angel is not commanding the Son of God, he is simply repeating the message he has received from God the Father.

The word "thrust" has the idea of being used for a particular purpose. It speaks not only of the action of the sickle but its purpose. The swinging of a sickle seems so violent and out of control. But, this sickle comes with a purpose and it will accomplish its task precisely.

The word, "ripe" means "to shrivel" and actually has the idea of a piece of fruit that is beyond ripe and drying up. Fruit that has gotten to this stage of ripeness must be harvested quickly and without delay. Perhaps this word is used because of the weariness of the Tribulation saints. The trials they have endured have drained them.

The particular word translated "harvest" is found only here in the book of Revelation. Jesus used this word when He spoke of the wheat and the tares (Mt. 13:30).

Rev. 14:16 And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.

The Son of God follows the instruction of the angel because the angel has just got his message from God the Father in the heavenly temple.

As I have mentioned, this refers to the gathering of the believers in preparation for the coming Kingdom.

The word translated "thrust" here is different than the one in verse 15. Here, it means "to strike violently". It emphasizes the violent action of the reaper's swing of the sickle. God's anger though never out of control, is violent. The writer of Hebrews wrote, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb 10:3).

Rev. 14:17 And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.

This speaks of a different harvest than the one in the previous verses. This will be a harvest of "grapes".

Reaping is a sign of the end of the growing season. God has allowed the seeds of man's sin to produce their wickedness and now mercy is being replaced with justice. The time of reaping the harvest for sin has come.

Another angel (fifth in chapter 14) comes out of the temple in heaven.

We discover here that the temple is indeed the temple "which is in heaven" and not the one on earth. Another angel comes out of the heavenly temple with a "sharp sickle".

Rev. 14:18 And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.

Another angel (sixth in chapter 14) comes from the altar in heaven.

The "altar" reminds us of the praying martyrs mentioned earlier (6:9-11). They were told then to wait but God has not forgotten their prayers. This verse speaks of the time when He will send the "fire" of His judgment upon those who reject His Son. Jesus said the "tares are gathered and burned in the fire" (Mt. 13:40).

The word "ripe" found here is different from the one in verse 15. This is the only time this word is found in the Bible and means ripe to perfection. It is like a grape so full of juice that explodes when you bite it. The time to reap the harvest has come, the mercy of God has run its course, and the time of judgment has come. Joel prophesied of this judgment (Joel 3:13-14).

The "vine of the earth" can refer to one of two things. Since it is called the vine of the "earth" it may refer to the counterfeit vine of the Antichrist and False Prophet. Or, it could also refer to the people of Israel living during the Tribulation Period. The Psalmist (Ps. 80:8, 14-15), Ezekiel (17:5-8), Isaiah (Isa. 5:1; 27:2), Jeremiah (2:21), Hosea (10:1), and Jesus (Mt. 21:33) refer to Israel as a vine.

Isaiah talks about how God planted and tended the vine of Israel, but she brought forth "wild grapes" (Isa. 5:1-7). The reaping of this vine reminds us how the Tribulation Period will be a time of God's wrath on Israel. They will pay for rejecting His Son.

Whether the vine of the Antichrist or Israel, it is a vine that has yielded the corrupt fruit of sin God is dealing with unbelievers.

Rev. 14:19 And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

The grapes are cast into the "great winepress". In John's day, grapes were harvested and placed in a winepress where workers would remove the juice by stomping on the grapes. The juice would run down a channel into a vat.

This harvest is of people instead of grapes and blood instead of grape juice.

This winepress is referred to as the great winepress of the "wrath of God". His judgment is come upon those who rejected His Son and followed the Antichrist. Their blood will flow like the stream of grape juice in the winepress.

Rev. 14:20 And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

This is a preview of the events that lead up to the Battle of Armageddon. Chapter 16 gives some details of this battle (16:12-16) but it actually takes place in chapter 19 (19:11-21). We will discuss these events in more detail later.

The words "without the city", mean the battle of Armageddon will take place outside the city of Jerusalem in the land of Palestine. The actual city of Jerusalem will survive and will be used by God during the Millennial kingdom.

Throughout human history, the land of Palestine has been the place of the greatest spiritual victories and the worst spiritual defeats. At this place where so much has happened, God will face off with the Antichrist and his army. Jesus will return to overthrow the Antichrist and His army that has crossed the Euphrates River to do battle with Jesus and His people.

John uses a "winepress" to illustrate the severity of this battle. The blood of men shall flow like the grape juice in the winepress. Their blood will flow because they rejected the flow of Christ's blood from Calvary.

Up to the "horse bridles" (approximately 4 feet) may not mean the blood is that deep. It could mean the blood will splatter that high. If you step on a grape lying on the ground, the juice may go a few inches high. But, in this case, the juice will spatter up to four or five feet high. This speaks of the absolute devastation.

A "thousand and six hundred furlongs" is approximately 180 miles. With the primitive warfare of John's day, a battlefield that large would be inconceivable. This amount of land mass would pose no problem with our modern weapons and machinery.

Ezekiel tells us it will take seven months to bury the dead (Ezk. 39:12-13). There will be so many dead bodies that the Lord called it the "supper of the great God" (19:17). Is it any wonder why God said it would be like grapes in a winepress?

7. THE SEVEN VIAL JUDGMENTS (chapters 15-16)

Chapter fifteen is the shortest, but by no means, the least important chapter in Revelation.

In chapter fifteen, the third pause (interlude) ends and John brings us back to the last seven judgments of God.

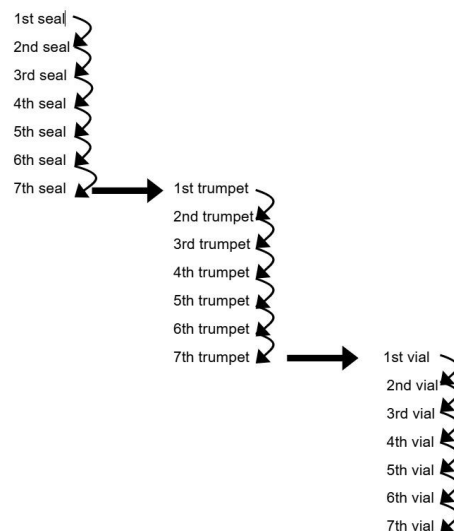
Chapters 15-16 tell us of seven angels with seven vials filled with God's wrath. These are the last of God's judgments during the Tribulation Period. They come in a rapid-fire fashion and each one grows in intensity.

These seven judgments will bring an end to the rebellion of the Antichrist and his followers and help prepare the way for the Millennial Kingdom.

The word "vial" refers not to a bottle with a small neck but to a broad shallow bowl. It has an open top which makes it easy to dump its contents. For this reason, they are often referred to as bowls. However, since the Bible uses the word "vial", I will do the same.

As mentioned before, and as this diagram shows, the seventh trumpet (11:15-19) contains the seven vial judgments.

Chronologically, the events in chapter fifteen come after chapter eleven and verse fifteen.



CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Prelude to the seven vials of God's wrath (15:1-8)

The vial judgments are introduced in Chapter fifteen and actually poured out in chapter sixteen.

Rev. 15:1 And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.

Once again we find the words "I saw". As I have mentioned, these words tell us something new is on the way and John is moving us from one event to another.

John's attention suddenly moves toward heaven.

What John saw was "great and marvellous". These are words that indicate astonishment. What he sees amazes him. After all, John has seen up to this point, what he sees now must be spectacular.

The word "last" means "final" and tells us these are the final judgments during the Tribulation Period. These judgments will conclude with the Second Coming of Jesus (19:11-21). The devil's rampage is about to be brought to an end. The God of heaven wins.

Some believe the trumpet and vial judgments take place at the same time. These two sets of judgments are similar but there are enough differences to show us they are two distinct and separate events. Also, in this verse, the vial judgments being called the "last" judgments show us the seals, trumpets, and vials will be three separate events, the vials being the "last" of the three.

The word "plagues" means "wound". Like the seal and trumpet judgments, this judgment will cause death and devastation.

The word "wrath" is the same as found in chapter fourteen which means "boiling indignation" or "an outburst of passion" (please refer to the comments of 14:10). This word is found only eleven times in the New Testament and ten of them are in the book of Revelation. It speaks of a sudden outpouring of anger but, since it comes from God, we know it is deserved. God never loses His temper and overacts.

The words "filled up" means "to complete" and carry with it the idea of reaching a goal. Jesus used the same Greek word when He said it is "finished" on the cross (Jn. 19:30). Here, it means the ending of God's judgments against the Antichrist is about to begin. The pouring out of His wrath began with the first seal judgment (6:1). Shockingly, almost half the world's population has already died during the Tribulation Period, but there is more judgment to come.

Rev. 15:2 And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.

The words "as it were" tell us this is symbolic language and not a literal sea. John saw something that, to him, looked like a "sea of glass mingled with fire". More than likely, this is what he saw in 4:6.

Since those present are standing "on" the sea of glass, it is unlikely it is a sea of water like we usually think of. As mentioned earlier, it seems that God's throne rests on a transparent glass-like platform.

Any attempt to describe what John saw would be futile but we can use our imaginations. A sea of what looks like glass that is mingled with fire would reflect the glory of God's presence. Also, the saints who are standing on the sea are wearing bright white garments. So, we have the glow of the glory of God, which reflects against the glass-like sea, the fire, and the saints with white garments. I can think of only one word that would describe this sight, bright, it will be bright. Is it any wonder why John struggled to describe what he saw?

The fact that the sea is "mingled with fire" speaks of God's judgment that proceeds from His Holiness. He is too holy to let sin go unpunished. Once again, He is about to strike.

John sees those who had "gotten the victory over the beast". These are those who "loved not their lives unto death" (cf. 12:11). The Antichrist has been successful in his attack on these believers. They refused to worship him, so he slaughtered them like animals. Little did he realize, that by putting them to death, he was actually setting them free. It was they who had won the victory.

Their death was a victory because they remained steadfast to the end. They did not give in to the Antichrist and they said "no" to sin.

Their death was a victory because it set them free from the Antichrist. The Lord delivered them from the rage of the Antichrist, the False Prophet, and all their followers. Their time of suffering is over, it is time to rejoice, it is time to sing.

Those John saw had "harps of God" in their hands. I am so glad there is music and singing in heaven. The songs of heaven will be songs of worship, praise, and joy. No one will be singing "Gloom, despair, and agony on me" in the heavenly city.

Rev. 15:3 And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.

Those standing on the sea are singing.

The definite article "the" suggests these are two different songs and not just one. They may be two songs but they both speak of deliverance. The "song of Moses" celebrates the deliverance of Israel from the bondage of Egypt (Gen. 15:1-21). The "song of the Lamb" celebrates the deliverance of sinners from the bondage of their sin. Both songs give glory to the God who defeated the enemy and provided a way of deliverance to anyone who would accept it.

These songs reveal the perfect blend of the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament Law was that which caused us to see our sin and bring us to the Lamb (Gal. 3:24).

They are singing a song, but is no ordinary song. They sing this song much like an American soldier would sing the National Anthem. It is a special song to them for it is the story of God's work in their lives while on earth. There will be no muttering out their words as is so often the case in many churches of our day.

Their focus is not the street of gold or the gates of pearl, it is the "Lord God Almighty". The first stanza of this song is "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty". What a wonderful way to start. To them, their God is great and marvelous for He took care of them through, at least part, of the Tribulation Period, and then ushered them home to heaven when their time on earth was finished.

Notice, there isn't one word about what they accomplished or what they did. The song speaks of what God has done (great and marvellous works), and who God is (just and true). The word "just" means He does the right thing. God always does right no matter what the circumstances. Man, on the other hand, tries to use their circumstances as an excuse to do wrong. The word "true" means God always tells the truth (Num. 23:19; 2 Tim.2:13; Tit. 1:2). He always keeps His promises. Again, an area where man fails miserably. Man comes from the womb speaking lies (Ps. 58:3).

This is the only place in the Bible where Jesus is referred to as the "King of the saints". Perhaps this refers to the fact that we, as New Testament saints, will reign with Him during the Millennial Kingdom (1 Cor. 4:8; Rev. 1:6). The Bible speaks often of the entire world worshiping God as one (Ps. 66:1; 72:8; 86:9; Isa. 2:2; Dan. 7:14; Zech. 15:9).

Rev. 15:4 Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.

The recognition of who God is as described in the previous verse leads to the two questions in this verse.

The first question is, "Who shall not fear thee".

Seeing God as He is should produce a genuine fear. Certainly, He is a good and kind God, but He is also a God who will, as we are seeing in these verses, deal with sin severely. The person who does not have a fear of God does not see the God of the Bible.

When Isaiah saw Him, he cried "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips" (Is 6:5). When Peter saw Jesus as He was, he "fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man" (Lk. 5:8). This is so different from our modern concept of seeing God as a good ole' buddy.

The second question is, who will not "glorify thy name"?

We glorify God by living in a way that honors Him. We can glorify God by having a godly thought life (Ps. 1:2), talking right (Pro. 25:2), abstaining from sin (1 Cor. 6:20), loving others (Rom. 15:7), dressing right (1 Cor. 11:7), and by doing our best (Col. 3:23). We are to glorify God in everything we do (1 Cor. 10:31). When a person sees how wonderful God is, how could they not glorify Him?

The words "For thou only" means God is the only One who truly deserves worship and praise. He really does deserve it. He really is worthy. Since that is true, it is wrong for us to not worship and praise Him.

All "nations shall come and worship" refers to the Millennial Kingdom when Christ sits on His throne in Jerusalem. All nations, whether Jew or Gentile, will worship Him (Ps. 46:10; 86:9; Zech. 8:20-23). The Psalmist said, "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee" (Ps 22:27).

Rev. 15:5 And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened:

Once again we see the words "And after that I looked" which means something new is about to happen. God's plan for the earth continues as planned.

Here, John sees the heavenly sanctuary opened.

In this verse, the "temple" refers to an inner portion (Holy of Holies), of the Old Testament Tabernacle. The "tabernacle of the testimony" refers to the Ark of the Covenant that sat in the Holy of Holies. The ark was called the tabernacle of the "testimony" because the tablets of stone that contained the Ten Commandments were in the ark which was in the Tabernacle (Ex. 32:15). John had seen the ark in heaven earlier (11:19).

What John is seeing is the heavenly model God used when He instructed Moses to build the Old Testament Tabernacle (cf. Ex. 25:9, 40; Acts 7:44). John is seeing the real thing. He sees the heavenly equivalent of the Holy of Holies in the earthly Tabernacle and Temple. It was the spot where the presence of God met with man.

Rev. 15:6 And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles.

Seven angels come out of the heavenly temple, each of them is carrying a vial that contains a judgment from God. These angels are sent straight from the throne of God.

On earth, the priests were the ones who served God in the Temple. Now, it is angels doing the bidding of God. On earth, the service of the priests was to help man approach God and obtain His mercy. However, the service of these angels will be judgment, and not mercy, from God.

Just as a soldier wears the uniform of the country they represent, these angels wear garments that represent God. Their garments are "pure and white". Their appearance tells us they are on a mission from the God who is holy and pure. That means, what they are doing is right and just.

As with all the preceding judgments, even though God uses angels, the judgment comes from Him. They do not work of their own volition.

The wording of verses 6 and 7 can be somewhat confusing. It seems like the angels receive the seven plagues in verse 6. Yet, verse 7 says one of the creatures gives the angels the golden vials. Do they receive the vials in verse 6 or verse 7?

The solution is simple when we realize, that verse six is a summary of the events that are described afterward. So, verse 6 is a summary of the seven angels with the seven vials of judgment, and, from verse 7 to the end of chapter 16, the details are given.

At times, the Bible makes a summary statement and afterward describes the details of that statement. The first verse in the Bible is a perfect example. It says, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Ge 1:1). Verse one states what God did, and the verses that follow describe how He did what He did.

Rev. 15:7 And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever.

These "four beasts" are probably the four living creatures John saw earlier (4:6-9). One of these four creatures gives seven golden vials of the wrath of God to seven angels.

The word "full" speaks of the completeness of God's wrath and the devastating result of these judgments. God's mercy, like a dam, had been holding back His judgment for the sin of man. But, the dam is about to break and His judgment will pour out.

The statement "who liveth for ever and ever" is a reminder of how these judgments will have results that go far beyond what will take place on earth. Those who God is about to judge will suffer on earth but they will suffer forever in the lake of fire (20:14-15; 20:10)

As mentioned earlier, these "vials" are not bottles with narrow necks as we would think. They, like a bowl, are open at the top which allows the contents to be poured out quickly.

Vessels of this type were used in the earthly Temple (1 Kgs. 7:50; 2 Kgs. 25:15). The vessels used in the earthly temple were used to assist those desiring mercy from God. These vials will be vessels used to judge those who refused God's mercy.

Rev. 15:8 And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.

The "smoke from the glory of God" reminds us of the cloud that filled the Tabernacle when the presence of God descended (Ex. 40:34-35), and later at the dedication of the temple (1 Kgs. 8:10-11). Just as Moses was not able to enter the Tabernacle then, no one will be able to enter the heavenly temple until the seven plagues are finished.

During this time of judgment, God allows no one to enter the heavenly temple. This is certainly unusual. We are not told why but we are told this will last until the seven plagues are "fulfilled". It may be that God refuses to allow anyone to approach Him in an attempt to ask that He have mercy on those He is judging. Their chance for mercy is gone, they are doomed, and God will not hold back the judgment they deserve. Once these judgments start, there is no stopping them.

Some have suggested the events described in the next verses are a natural occurrence of nature and not a miraculous work of God. This short period would not give sufficient time for acts of nature to develop. They are, as the Word of God says, the result of God's wrath on sinful man. They are a miraculous work of God.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

The first vial judgment is poured out (16:1-2)

Sores on those who worship the beast and his image

Rev. 16:1 And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.

Since no one is allowed in heaven, this "voice" must be God Himself. As always, He is the One in charge. The word "great" means "loud" and carries with it the idea of being fearful. The One who can speak with a still small voice (1 Kgs. 19:12), can also thunder out when the situation calls for it.

He instructs the angels to go their way and "pour out the vials of wrath of the God upon the earth". The angels do not move until they receive instructions from God. It would do every believer well if they would follow this example.

Each angel has his own instructions.

The word "pour" means "to pour forth or gush" and carries with it the idea of turning upside down suddenly. It is the same word used to describe Jesus overturned the money changer's table and poured their money out (Jn. 2:15). It means, every bit of the judgment is released.

Upon the "earth" tells us these judgments deal with the entire earth and not just localized calamity. ???

The following judgments, like the ones before, are literal and not symbolic.

In chapter eight, we read, "The first angel sounded" (8:7), and then "the second angel sounded" (8:8), and so forth. Here the seven angels are together to go and pour out their vials. The language implies these seven judgments come quickly, one coming after the other without any delay. Of course, we are not given a time frame, but it is probably over a period of days or weeks at the longest.

Rev. 16:2 And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.

The first angel has the ability to cause horrible sores.

The first vial judgment will be purified and painful sores. These are festering, oozing sores. The word "grievous" means "painful".

Notice, that these sores come only on the followers of the Antichrist. All believers are excluded. This, like so many other miraculous works of God, is completely in His control. God is precise with His blessings and His cursings.

These sores may be like the ones that God sent to the Egyptians (Ex. 9:11).

*The second vial judgment is poured out (16:3)
Seas turned to blood and all sea creatures die*

Rev. 16:3 And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea.

The second angel has the ability to turn the seas and oceans into blood.

The second vial judgment causes all the oceans and seas to turn instantly to blood.

The blood will not be regular blood, it is like the blood of a dead man. It will be a coagulating, congealing, thickening, blood. This will kill every living thing in the ocean. The stench and the bacteria from the decaying bodies will be indescribable.

There was a day when Jesus turned water into wine, now, an angel sent by God will turn water into blood.

The word "soul", in this context, speaks of every living creature.

*The third vial judgment is poured out (16:4-7)
Rivers and springs turn to blood*

Rev. 16:4 And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.

The third angel has the ability to turn the inland waters into blood.

The third vial judgment causes all the inland water sources to turn to blood. All the rivers, streams, ponds, canals, and swamps, will be turned to blood. All the oceans and seas (v. 3), and all the inland water sources, will all be blood.

This means there will be no water anywhere on earth. No water for cooking, bathing, washing dishes or clothes, and especially, absolutely no water to drink.

The need for water surpasses all other human needs. Generally, experts say a person can survive only three days without any water at all. The Guinness World record for is 18 days held by Andreas Mihavecz, an Austrian man from Bregenz.

This shows us these judgments can not last long or all of humanity would perish. Jesus said "And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (Mt. 24:22). I have suggested other times throughout this study when, unless God intervened, the world's population would perish (8:12; 11:13). That certainly is the case here.

Once again, this judgment seems like what God did in Egypt (Ex. 7:17-18).

Rev. 16:5 And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus.

The angel speaks a message that declares God to be right in doing what He is doing.

The word "righteous" means "just" and carries with it the idea of being innocent. God, not only is not wrong, but He is right, to judge the sinners on earth. No one, anywhere, can accuse God of doing wrong.

The Bible says God is not mocked, they are finding out it is true. They are reaping what they have sowed.

Again, we find the description of God as the One who is, was, and shall be. He is eternal. He never had a beginning, and He will never have an end. That is an astounding truth.

Rev. 16:6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.

In this verse, the angel explains why, God is right to judge.

They shed the blood of those God sent to them, and they rejected the blood Jesus shed for them on Calvary, so they deserve to have blood to drink. They are getting exactly what they deserve.

Rev. 16:7 And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.

Another angel agrees with the angel of the waters who spoke in verse five. The angel of the waters spoke of God being right, this angel says what God is doing is right.

The fourth vial judgment is poured out (16:8-9)

Men scorched by the sun

Rev. 16:8 And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire.

The fourth angel pours the fourth vial judgment on the "sun". The word "scorch" means "to burn". The sun, which has given light and life, now becomes a deadly killer. The tremendous heat combined with no fresh water to drink will be more than uncomfortable, it will be deadly.

More than likely the "men" refers to the followers of Antichrist, as in verse 2. Once again, God spares His children from His wrath.

Some in our society are frightened about global warming. This is true global warming but it will not be the result of the exhaust fumes from an SUV. This increase of heat would cause all the polar ice caps to melt causing a tremendous rise of ocean levels and water surges over the land mass.

Amos prophesied of this when he wrote "And the Lord GOD of hosts is he that toucheth the land, and it *shall melt*, and all that dwell therein shall mourn: and it *shall rise up wholly like a flood*; and shall be *drowned*, as by the flood of Egypt" (Am 9:5 emphasis added).

Rev. 16:9 And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory.

Isaiah (Isa. 24:6; 42:25) and Malachi (Mal. 4:1) prophesied of these events.

This "great heat" comes immediately after the waters of the earth are turned to blood (cf. 16:4). The first thing these people will want is water to drink and bathe in, but there will be none.

This seems to confirm it is only the followers of the Antichrist who are suffering from this judgment. Unbelievably, they still refuse to repent. They continue to blaspheme the God who gave them life. As mentioned earlier, the word "blasphemed" is a verbal reproach of God, His name, character, or works. You would expect them to fall on their faces and beg God for forgiveness. But, instead of repenting, they blaspheme God even more. Their hearts will grow progressively more hard.

They continue to refuse to repent. They heard the message from the 144,000 (7:4), and refuse to repent. They heard the two witnesses (11:3), saw fire consume those who opposed them, and saw them rise from the dead, and refuse to repent. They heard the angel flying through heaven preaching the gospel (14:6), and refuse to repent. They will see how God protects His people through all the persecution, and they still refuse to repent.

Their hatred for God and His people will continue to grow until by the time of the Battle of Armageddon they are ready to do battle. They are not only willing to reject God no matter how much judgment it brings, but they are willing to fight against God. Of course, their attempt will be futile (19:15).

The difference between believers and unbelievers is demonstrated here. Believers can face horrific trials and keep praising God. Unbelievers, instead of thanking God for sparing their lives and turning to Him in repentance, curse Him and grow even more hard-hearted.

They may not bow before God here but they will one day. Paul said, "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth" (Phil. 2:10 emphasis added).

The fifth vial judgment is poured out (16:10-11)

Darkness on the beast and his kingdom

Rev. 16:10 And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain,

The fifth vial judgment seems to be a preview of hell (cf. Mt. 25:30).

The fifth angel has the power to send darkness.

The fifth vial judgment brings darkness. The sun, moon, and stars will give no light. This will not be a normal darkness for it is much more than just the absence of light. Isaiah (Is 60:2), Joel (Joel 2:2, 31), and Jesus (Mk. 13:24-25) prophesied of these events.

The word "seat" means "throne" and refers to the headquarters of the Antichrist. This judgment starts at the headquarters of the Antichrist but it does not stop there. It will spread until his entire "kingdom" (the world) is "full of darkness".

The fact the beast has a seat is further proof that he is a man and not a system as we discussed in chapter 13.

Since all life on earth is totally dependent on light this judgment cannot long. This is another indication that these final judgments come quickly and in rapid progression.

This is not the first time darkness was a part of God's judgment. God sent darkness to Egypt that could be "felt" (Ex. 10:21). Darkness was also present at Calvary when Jesus was paying for the sin of mankind (Mt. 27:45). Also, the lake of fire is a place of "outer darkness" (Mt. 8:13).

Some believe this darkness will include anything that gives light. In other words, lights in houses, cars, flashlights, and even matches will not work. Of course, we cannot be certain of this, but it is possible.

God is giving man what they have wanted. Man rejects God's light because they love darkness. They love darkness because their deeds are evil (Jn. 3:19). Mankind has rejected the light of creation (Gen. 1:3). They would rather believe in evolution than creation. Mankind rejected the light of Christ (Jn. 3:19; 9:5). And, mankind has rejected the light of Christians (Mt. 5:14). Man will eventually get what he wants, eternal darkness.

The word "gnawed" means "to chew". It will be such severe pain, they will chew on their tongues. The vial judgments have come so quickly that they are still suffering from the sores from the first vial (16:2).

Rev. 16:11 And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.

They are still suffering the "pains" from the "sores" of the first vial judgment.

Once again, the lost world refuses to repent. This is the last reference in Revelation to man's refusal to repent (cf. 2:21; 9:21; 16:9).

As we have seen before, blasphemy is a verbal reproach of God, His name, character, or works. The fact that they blaspheme God shows they know their suffering is a result of His judgment. They are angry at God, but they ought to be angry at themselves.

The sixth vial judgment is poured out (16:12-14)

The river Euphrates is dried up, three unclean spirits gather kingdoms for battle

The next four verses give us a preview of the events that lead up to the Battle of Armageddon. The conflict begins earlier but is brought to a head and concludes near the end of the Tribulation Period. As we will see, the Antichrist will use demonic influence to draw the kings of the earth to gather their armies in an attack on Israel and Jesus Himself (16:13-16). At that moment, Jesus will return to earth with the believers who have died and defeat the Antichrist, the False Prophet, and all their armies (19:11-20; Mt. 25:31). Jesus will stand on the Mount of Olives which will split down the middle (Zech. 14:4). He will cast the Antichrist and the False Prophet into the lake of fire (Rev. 19:20), and bind Satan in the bottomless pit of 1000 years (20:1-4). The Psalmist (Ps. 2). and Joel (Joel 3:9-11) prophesied about these events.

Rev. 16:12 And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.

The sixth vial judgment causes the Euphrates River to dry up. Some try to make this symbolic but a literal interpretation is the only one that makes sense.

The 1,740-mile-long Euphrates River is called the "great river" five times in the Bible (Gen. 15:18; Dt. 1:7; Josh. 1:4; Rev. 9:14; 16:12). It is the eastern border of the Promised Land (Gen. 15:18; Ex. 23:31; Dt. 11:24) and serves as a barrier between opposing nations. Drying this river will remove the boundary between east and west.

It is important to note, that much of the source of the Euphrates River is from the snow-covered Mount Ararat. The increased heat from the sun will cause this ice and snow to melt, which will cause severe flooding of the Euphrates River. There are dams built on this river today but such a flood would break them like match sticks. That means God will dry the river at a time when it is at its highest point ever. The God who parted the Red Sea (Ex. 14:21) and the Jordan River (Josh. 3:14-17) will have no problem doing this.

The Euphrates is dried up that the "kings of the east" might cross over. During the Tribulation Period, these national leaders joined forces with the Antichrist in his attack against Israel and the believers on earth. As the end of the Tribulation Period approaches, these leaders will unite in an all-out attempt to, once and for all, do away with all those who have rejected the Antichrist. They think the drying of the Euphrates provides the opportunity to do so. Little do they realize, they are walking straight into a trap and into the waiting hands of God (cf. 16:16). They will be marching to their own death and destruction.

Zechariah (Zech. 14:1-5) prophesied of these events. God says "For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle".

At the present moment, the kings of the east could include Japan, China, India, and some lesser nations.

God is setting the stage to do away with the Antichrist and his followers while delivering His people at the same time. He had used the Euphrates River as a boundary to protect Israel for many years. Now He will remove that protection so that the final battle can take place.

Rev. 16:13 And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.

Once again we find the words "I saw". As I have mentioned, these words tell us something new is on the way and John is moving us from one event to another.

The word "like" tells us these are not literal frogs. The next verse tells us they are demons. The word "unclean" refers to spiritual uncleanness. These are vile and ungodly demons that come from the unholy trinity of the devil, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet.

The words "out of the mouth" are found often in the book of Revelation (1:16; 9:17; 11:5; 12:15; 19:15; 19:21). It means these demons were released by the unholy trinity.

Satan is called the "dragon" at least twelve times in this book (12:3, 4, 7, 9, 13, 16, 17; 13:2, 4, 11; 16:13; 20:2).

Rev. 16:14 For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

John tells us the frogs in the previous verse are "spirits of devils". These are among the number who followed Lucifer in his rebellion against God (Isa. 14:14).

These demons go throughout the world influencing kings to gather for battle. I can't help but wonder if this does not explain some of what we are seeing in our government today.

The events of our modern day help us to understand how the world can be convinced to get behind a cause. The internet, social media, and the News industry have the power to control the entire world.

The demons have the ability to perform miracles which will help them convince the kings of the earth to join the Antichrist in the upcoming battle.

They are sent out by the unholy trinity but, without realizing it, doing the work of the Holy Trinity. As we will discover, God is at work in all of this.

The pain from their sores and burnt bodies, nor the darkness, will not stop these nations from going to battle against God. The world is gathering for the final world war (Ps. 2:2-3; Joel 3:2-4; Zech. 14:1-3).

Rev. 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.

This is the third of seven beatitudes in this book (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7; 22:14). As mentioned earlier, these blessings assure us of the book's credibility. If it were not from God, these promises could never be kept.

These words are spoken by Jesus Himself. He is the only One who comes "as a thief" (1 Th. 5:2; 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 3:3). He is referring to His Second Coming, not the Rapture.

The fourth pause (interlude) (16:15)

I believe this to be the fourth pause (interlude) of Revelation, though it is a brief one.

These words are to the believers and unbelievers who are on earth.

I see two reasons why Jesus will speak to believers.

One, He is reassuring the suffering believers that God is still in control and everything is running according to His plan. They need not be alarmed.

Two, He is reassuring the believers He will keep His promise to come and deliver them (Mt. 24:27; Rev. 3:11; 22:7; 22:12; Acts 1:11; Heb. 10:37).

These are those whom Jesus spoke of when He said "But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Mt. 24:13). The word "endure" refers to those who survive the Tribulation Period. The word "saved" refers to physical life, not eternal life. In other words, those who survive the Tribulation Period, Jesus will save by coming to get them at His Second Coming.

I see two reasons why Jesus will speak to unbelievers.

One, He is reminding the unbelievers about Him coming to judge.

Two, He is extending one more opportunity for them to get saved.

Sadly, the seventh vial judgment is about to be poured out. When that happens, all opportunities for repentance and forgiveness will be withdrawn. Their time is quickly running out, if they are going to repent, they had better do it now.

Jesus compares His coming to the coming of a thief. A thief comes quickly and takes from those who are not prepared. The unsaved are not prepared.

At His Second Coming, Jesus will judge the unbelievers and cast them into hell. He will also, gather the believers who have survived the Tribulation Period so that they can join Him in the 1,000 millennial kingdom.

Jesus does not come as a "thief" to those who are saved. Paul said, "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief" (1 Th. 5:4). A thief is someone you fear and dread. Believers long for Jesus' coming at the Rapture.

The words "keepeth his garments" refer to the garments of the guards of the Temple.

The "shame" of a guard was to be found sleeping while on duty. At night the captain of the Temple would make his rounds. If any guard was found sleeping, he would be beaten or his clothes would be set on fire. It was a disgrace (shame) for a guard to fall asleep on duty.

The word "shame" is found only here and in Romans 1:27. In Romans, Paul is speaking of unbelievers for he writes of those who left their natural affections and gave into their ungodly desires. The use of this word in these two verses is no accident. Obviously, both refer to unbelievers.

The kings of the earth are gathered to Armageddon (16:16)

Rev. 16:16 And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.

The word "Armageddon" comes from a Greek word that means "Mount of Megiddo" which is 60 miles north of Jerusalem. This is the place of Barak's victory (Judges 4), and Gideon's victory (Judges 7). This battle will extend the entire length of the land of Palestine (cf. 14:20). We will see much more about this place later.

The "he" in this verse refers to God, not the devil. As is the theme through the entire Tribulation Period, this will be an outpouring of God's wrath upon deserving people.

The seventh vial judgment is poured out (16:17-21)

A great earthquake, the great city is divided, Babylon is remembered

This vial leads to the battle of Armageddon and the overthrow of Satan. The actual battle is described in chapter 19.

Sadly, this judgment brings to an end any opportunity for repentance or forgiveness.

Rev. 16:17 And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done.

The seventh vial judgment brings great devastation.

The word "done" means God's work of judgment is complete. On the cross, Jesus finished God's work of redemption. Here, He will finish God's work of judgment.

The words "into the air" mean simply into the sky.

The "voice out of the temple of heaven" must be God the Father since the temple was closed during the vial judgments (cf. 15:8). This is the last time this temple will be mentioned in this book because there will be no temple in the new heaven (21:22).

The message, "It is done" means the wrath of God has done its job and is about to come to an end. This will be the last of the judgments of the Tribulation Period. This is truly the beginning of the end of the world system devised by the devil.

Rev. 16:18 And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.

As mentioned before, thunder is often a sign of coming judgment (1 Sam. 2:10; 2 Sam. 22:14; Rev. 8:5; 11:19; 16:18). This will be the last of the judgments of the Tribulation Period but there will be no doubt that it will be God's judgment.

This is the most severe earthquake in the history of mankind.

There have been many earthquakes during the Tribulation Period (6:12; 8:7-10; 11:13), but this is the worst.

Rev. 16:19 And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.

This verse describes how God is making final plans to bring an end to His judgment and begin His rule on earth as He has promised. There are two cities mentioned here that play a large role in these final events.

The first city is the city of Jerusalem.

The "great city" is Jerusalem, not Babylon as some suppose. God will protect Jerusalem because He will use it as the capital city of the Millennial Kingdom. The city being divided into three parts is a preparation for it becoming the capital city.

The second city is the city of Babylon. Some believe this refers to the system of the Antichrist but it makes more sense to believe it is the city of Babylon.

The city is located near the center of the earth's geographical landmass. This makes the city even more vulnerable to the earthquake.

Babylon can be traced back to the Tower of Babel where man rebelled against God's instruction to replenish and cover the earth (Gen. 11:1-9). At the Tower of Babel, mankind attempted to establish his own government and reject God's. The Antichrist and his followers have the same rebellious mindset.

The words "Babylon came into remembrance" mean God, as He did at the Tower of Babel, will overcome the rebellious system of the Antichrist. He overcame the rebellion at the Tower of Babel by confounding their language. He will do much more this time. As we will see in chapters 17 and 18, He will totally destroy the system of the Antichrist and everyone involved.

The "cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath" will be poured out on the evil system of the Antichrist. The destruction of Babylon will be a total devastation so that it will never be inhabited by humans again. It seems as though it will become a prison for demons (Isa. 13:21-22; Re 18:2).

This earth has never experienced any earthquake even remotely similar to this. All the "cities of the nations" will be included. Imagine an earthquake so severe that cities like New York (27 million), Bangkok (20.5 million), Cairo (22.1 million), or Guangzhou (76.8 million). These cities alone represent 146 million who will be completely destroyed in an instant.

Rev. 16:20 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

The "islands fled away" means all the islands will be gone. The "mountains were not found" means, they will be leveled to where there is no mountain. Since an island is nothing more than a mountain rising out of the sea, it seems as though the earth, land, and sea, are being leveled.

This may mean, that this earthquake levels the entire earth and make Jerusalem the highest spot on earth. If this does happen, it would make the place of Christ's throne during the Millennial kingdom even more predominant.

It seems this great earthquake will not only level the greater cities of the world but will also, except for the land of Israel, change the entire topography of the earth.

These changes, though the result of God's judgment, will also prepare the earth for the millennial kingdom (Isa. 40:4-5).

Rev. 16:21 And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.

Depending upon who you ask, a talent is from 65 to 100 pounds. Whatever the case, these hailstones will kill many and cause tremendous damage. A normal hailstorm can be terrifying. One like the one described here would be unimaginable.

In trying to grasp this event, the largest recorded hailstone on record fell in Bangladesh, on April 14, 1986. It weighed 2 lb. 25 oz. There were 92 people who died from that storm. Imagine a hailstone fifty times bigger than that stone.

Mankind has developed all sorts of guide missiles and thermonuclear bombs. God uses chunks of ice.

And yet, man continues to blaspheme God, refuse to admit their sin, or accept Christ.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

8. THE FALL OF BABYLON (17:1-19:10)

As I have mentioned previously, the Antichrist will use the rebuilt city of Babylon as the center for his ungodly worldwide religious, political, and economic system.

Chapters 17-18 temporally take us away from the vial judgments and describe the downfall of Babylon.

In the next two chapters, the fall of Babylon which God announced earlier (14:8) is about to take place. These two chapters describe the coming downfall of the Antichrist and his worldwide system. The destruction of the headquarters of the Antichrist, the city of Babylon, is described in these two chapters. Through the years, Babylon has been important as a great political power as well as a tremendous religious power. Chapter 17 describes the destruction of the religious aspect of Babylon and chapter 18 describes the destruction of the political, economic, and commercial aspects of Babylon.

When the Antichrist and False Prophet come, it will not be just a one-world government. It will be a one-world system economically, socially, and religiously. The devil's plan to combine the religious with the political is a stroke of genius. Those who are religious are willing to stand for what they believe. Those who are political have the influence to move nations. However, God is about to bring both of these down.

It is vitally important that we understand the fact that the city of Babylon represents much more than a city. It's like the city of Washington DC. Washington D.C. is a city but it represents the entire American system. When we speak of Washington, we are talking about the entire United States and all it represents. In the same way, the city of Babylon is the center of false religion and represents a worldwide false religious system.

As previously mentioned, the original city of Babylon was a cesspool of idolatry. It is mentioned first in Genesis 10 where Nimrod, the great-grandson of Noah, began an ungodly movement to rebel against God and His will (Gen. 10:8-10). Nimrod attempted to build a tower where they could examine the heavens (Gen. 11:4). Much like the astrologers of our day, they believed the stars controlled the events of their lives. Unfortunately, when God confounded their language, instead of repenting, they spread their idolatry across the world (Ge 11:8).

The Tower of Babel was the first place of organized rebellion against God (Gen. 11:1-6). As we will see in the next two chapters, it also represents the last organized rebellion against God.

It is important to realize, that the corrupt system of Babylon was thriving during Daniel's day. The prophecies in the Book of Daniel tie into the events of the Book of Revelation.

The city of Babylon fell while Nebuchadnezzar was its king (Dan. 5:1-30). In the 1970s, Saddam Hussein made an unsuccessful attempt to rebuild Babylon. Today, the city is little more than a ghost town but the remains of Saddam's attempt to rebuild can still be seen.

The city of Babylon is mentioned more in the Bible than any other city (286 times), except for the city of Jerusalem (811 times). Babylon is the opposite of what Jerusalem is supposed to be. Jerusalem is the city of peace, and Babylon is the city of war. Jerusalem is the city of God, and Babylon is the city of man. Jerusalem is supposed to be the spiritual capital of the world, and Babylon is the sin capital of the world.

Babylon is a perfect picture of a man trying to live for himself apart from God. That is seen at the Tower of Babel, (Gen. 11:3-4) the Babylonian Captivity (2 Kgs. 24:5-16), and as it being the headquarters of the Antichrist during the Tribulation Period.

Just as God destroyed the Tower of Babel, He will destroy modern Babylon and the entire system of the Antichrist. He did not allow Nimrod and his followers to finish the Tower of Babel, and He will not allow the Antichrist his plans to take over the world.

It started with man and God at the Tower of Babel and God will bring it back to this city in the end.

Through the years nations have come and gone, but the anti-God system has continued and is very much alive today. Paul talks about those who have a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof (2 Tim. 3:5).

Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon during Daniel's day, is an example of the Antichrist. He saw himself as a god and did his best to build an empire. He said, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty" (Da 4:3). God put an end to his plans and he became like a wild animal for seven years (Dan. 4:31-34). Other men like Darius, Alexander the Great, and Napoleon and attempted unsuccessfully to rebuild this city.

The Antichrist will be the last person who tries to rebuild this city. He, like those who have come before him, will fail. God will make certain that he, like all the others, fails.

Once again, as a reminder, chapters 12-14 gave a bird's eye view of the Tribulation Period. So, the events we will find in chapter 17 match up with those described in chapter 14.

We do not have to struggle with the interpretation of this chapter. John describes the scene in verses 1-6, and an angel explains what it means in verses 7-18. The Bible is always the best commentary on the Bible.

John said ...	The explanation ...
Re 17:1 "the great whore" Re 17:3 "a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast"	Re 17:18 "the woman which thou sawest is that great city"

This tells us the "whore" and the "woman" refer to a city. We are told later (17:5, 18), this city is Babylon.

As mentioned earlier, the city of Babylon represents much more than a city. It's like the city of Washington DC. Washington D.C. is a city but it represents the entire American system. When we speak of Washington, we are talking about the entire United States and all it represents. In the same way, the city of Babylon is the center of false religion and represents a worldwide false religious system.

John said ...	The explanation ...
Re 17:1 "whore that sitteth upon many waters"	Re 17:15 "The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues".

This tells us the "many waters" refers to people.

John said ...	The explanation ...
Re 17:3 "scarlet coloured beast"	Re 17:8 "The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition"

This tells us the "scarlet coloured beast" is the "beast" (Antichrist) John spoke of earlier (11:7; 13:1-10; 14:9). So, the beast represents the Antichrist and the system he heads up during the Tribulation Period.

John said ...	The explanation ...
Re 17:3 "seven heads and ten horns" Re 17:7 "the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns"	Re 17:9 "The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth" Re 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" Re 17:12 "the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings"

This tells us the "seven heads" (v.3) are seven mountains (v.9) and the "ten horns" (v.3) are "ten kings" (v.12).

There are all kinds of opinions about what these verses mean. We do so much better when we let the Bible speak for itself.

We must remember, that in chapter 17, we are shown the destruction of the false religion of Babylon. What began at the Tower of Babel will be forever done away with.

The scarlet woman and the scarlet beast (17:1-6)

Rev. 17:1 And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:

The words "Come hither", as mentioned before, warn us something important is about to happen. It is time to pay attention and take notice.

One of the seven angels comes to show John a woman who is called the "great whore". The language is strong but it describes this woman precisely.

As I have already mentioned in the introduction of this chapter and as John tells us later (cf. 17:5, 18), this "whore" refers to the city of Babylon and the false religious system that will be set up by the False Prophet during the Tribulation Period.

God calls this false religion a harlot. A harlot refuses to be faithful to one man. The religion of the False Prophet denies the true God.

As mentioned, many "waters" represent the people (nations) of the world (cf. 17:15). Sadly, the world has accepted the lies of the devil.

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.

The "kings" (leaders) and the "inhabitants" (common population) have believed the lies of the False Prophet and united with the Antichrist. Remember, this is speaking of the religious aspect of the Antichrist system.

John tells us why this harlot is being judged. She has committed fornication. The word "fornication" reiterates the idea that these people will turn against the true God.

The religions of the world will unite into one power like another tower of Babel.

How is it possible that the many different beliefs of the world will join together?

I can think of four reasons.

One, this is a part of the "strong delusion" God promised to send (2 Th 2:11).

Two, when all the believers are removed in the Rapture it will leave a spiritual void throughout the world. This will give the devil a window of time to unite all the religions of the world.

Three, most people don't really know what they believe and, under the right circumstances, they could be convinced of just about anything.

Four, there are always those in the world who think we should all just unite together. The cry of our present world is "Let's get along". The message of the False Prophet will be music to their ears.

Some believe this is speaking of the Roman Catholic Church. Even though the Roman Catholic Church has characteristics that are similar, this must be more than Roman Catholicism. This harlot resides over many religions but Roman Catholicism resides over only one. What is described in these verses is much bigger than the Catholic church.

The "wine of her fornication" refers to the wicked and ungodly exaltation of self and rejection of the true God.

The words, "have been made drunk" mean they, like a drunk, are completely consumed and controlled by the harlot (v.1). They will be convinced the False Prophet is right and will dedicate their all to him and the Antichrist.

Rev. 17:3 So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

Once again we find the words "I saw". As I have mentioned, these words tell us something new is on the way and John is moving us from one event to another.

The angel carries John "in the spirit" into the wilderness.

John continues to describe the harlot.

The "woman" represents the God-hating religion of the False Prophet. His religion is not new. It is the same God-defying religion that began at the Tower of Babel.

The "scarlet coloured beast" represents the Antichrist and His ungodly political system (cf. 13:1).

There are three things we can draw from John's description.

One, these are two separate powers (a harlot and a beast). The False Prophet and the Antichrist will be real men with real agendas.

Two, these two powers will work together. The religion of the False Prophet will unite with the political and commercial system of the Antichrist. Nothing good ever comes from trying to mix religion with the world. That is especially true when the religion and the world is corrupt.

Three, the False Prophet, like a rider on a horse, will depend on the Antichrist but will also have a great deal of influence on the Antichrist. A rider depends on the horse while, at the same time, influences on the actions of the horse. She will influence him but, there is no doubt about it, he is the one who is really in control.

The "names" refer to her characteristics, or what type of person she is. Like the name of a business on the owner's uniform, the name says who he is and what he is.

The word "blasphemy" means "to speak evil against". Blasphemy is a verbal reproach of God, His name, character, or works. This harlot hates God and is quick to speak against Him. As we have seen, the False Prophet joins with the Antichrist in claiming the Antichrist is God. (13:1; Dan. 11:36).

As I have mentioned, John tells us later, that the "seven heads" are "seven mountains" (17:9). Some believe these seven mountains speak of Rome, but John tells us they are seven kings (17:10). We will discuss this in more detail in verse 10.

John tells us later, that the "ten horns" are ten kings (17:12). We will discuss this in more detail later. It shows the vastness of the Antichrist and False Prophet system.

Rev. 17:4 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:

Her attire tells us a good bit about her.

One, she is rich and powerful.

The colors of her garment speak of her wealth and influence. The color purple, made from sea snails in the Mediterranean Sea, was extremely expensive to manufacture. In John's day, one ounce of this fluid was worth more than a pound of gold. The rich man was clothed in purple (Lk. 16:19).

Also, the gold, stones, pearls, and golden cup speak of riches. The land around the ancient city of Babylon is rich in oil. Some have said its oil would rival Saudi Arabia. This oil was one of the reasons why Saddam Hussein wanted to control that part of the world. He wanted the oil to help him finance the rebuilding of the city of Babylon.

Two, she is ungodly.

The Bible also connects the "scarlet" color with sin and perversion (Isa. 1:18).

The cup full of "abominations and filthiness of her fornication" reveals her ungodly character. We would not usually associate religion with perversion but false religion always claims to be something it is not.

Rev. 17:5 And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

The true character of this woman is revealed by the band around her head. The prostitutes wore scarves around their heads with their names on them. This lets the "customer" know what she was. The harlot John saw proudly publicizes her depraved actions. They have no shame or conviction about their wickedness. Their consciences will be totally seared by this time.

The capitalization of the letters indicates a title (cf. Mt. 27:37).

She is called "MYSTERY BABYLON". As we have discussed previously (cf. 10:7), a "mystery" is something that has been hidden in the past but has now been revealed. The church was a mystery that was not revealed in the Old Testament (Eph. 3:9). The mystery of this harlot was not revealed until John penned it down. That means the details of the Antichrist system will not be fully comprehended until this time comes. John tells us more about this mystery in verse 7.

Of course, the title "BABYLON THE GREAT" refers to the corrupt religious religion that is connected to Babylon and the Tower of Babel. As I have mentioned often, as Babylon was important as a political power and a religious power so will be the system of the Antichrist and False Prophet.

Her being the "MOTHER OF HARLOTS" tells us she has been around a long time. Babylon is the wellspring of all false religions. As I have mentioned, this vile religious system can be traced back to the Tower of Babel.

She is a "mother" which means she has many children who believe and behave as she does. She has turned the hearts of men away from the God of heaven.

A note of interest, this woman (Babylon) is admired here but the admiration will turn to hatred later (cf. 17:16-17).

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.

This woman will be responsible for the deaths of many of God's people. We have seen this through much of the book of Revelation.

These verses show us that Babylon's false religious system has been alive for a long time.

The "saints" probably refer to the Old Testament believers who were killed for their testimony. Jesus (Mt. 23:31, 37), Stephen (Acts 7:51), and Paul (1 Th. 2:15-16) talked about those who killed the Old Testament prophets.

The "martyrs of Jesus" speak of those killed during the church age and during the Tribulation Period. This takes us back to when we are told about the Tribulation martyrs crying out for retribution (6:10). God has not forgotten their prayer.

Being "drunken" means it is what gives her pleasure. Like a drunk who gets intoxicated from alcohol, they get exhilarated from the death of the saints. The death of the believers excites them as wine does a drunk.

Like a drunk for his wine, they love it and long for more. Of all her wicked and vile actions, she is drunk on the blood of the saints. Putting God's people to death excited them more than any of it. It's difficult to believe anyone could be so heartless but a look at the history of God's people will show us millions who have been put to death.

The word "admiration" means "to wonder". John is not impressed with this woman. He is astonished when he realizes how wicked, powerful, and destructive, she is. It's like being amazed at a person like Hitler. It's difficult to comprehend that one person could be so cruel and be responsible for so much heartache.

The word "admiration" means "to wonder". John is astonished when he realizes how powerful and destructive the woman is.

The mystery of the woman and beast explained (17:7-18)

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.

John marveled because this was persecution like nothing he had ever seen. God's people have been persecuted since Cain killed Abel, but this will be like no other time in man's existence. What makes it worse is the fact that it will be persecution from that which claims to be of God.

The Antichrist and his system were described as having "seven heads and ten horns" earlier (12:3). John will tell us later, that the 10 horns represent 10 kings who will join with the Antichrist (17:12-13). They will eventually turn on the woman and try to destroy her (17:16-17). Near the end of the Tribulation Period, these kings will make war with the Lamb (17:14).

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.

Notice, that the beast is described as the one who "was, and is not, and shall ascend".

As we see so often, the devil tries to impersonate God. Jesus is the One "which is, and which was, and which is to come" (1:8).

The words "was and is not, and shall ascend" refer back to the Antichrist's supposed resurrection (cf. 13:3-4, 2-14).

The words "shall ascend out of the bottomless pit" probably refer to the fact that the power behind the Antichrist is none other than the devil. John wrote earlier that the dragon "gave power unto the beast" (13:4).

And "go into perdition" reminds us of the certain end of the Antichrist, False Prophet (19:20), and Satan 20:10).

The word "wonder" means, "to marvel or admire". All those whose names are not written in the "book of life" will "wonder" at the Antichrist. For further explanation about the "book of life" please read my comments on Revelation 3:5. All unbelieving humanity (people, rulers, and "kings") will fall for the lie. It is astonishing how they can marvel at the Antichrist but be unmoved by the real Christ.

That means, not one true believer will be deceived by, or follow, the Antichrist.

We should not be upset about these names being written in the book "from the foundation of the world". The same thought is mentioned about the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (13:8). In the mind of God, these matters were settled before He ever created the universe. That is not to say He decreed it to be so and that man has no ability to decide on his own. From Adam on, man has made decisions, some according to, and some contrary to, God's will.

As previously mentioned (3:10; 6:10; 11:10; 13:8; 14:6), the phrase "dwell on the earth" is found five times, and "dwell upon the earth" is found three times in the book of Revelation. These phrases always refer to those who are lost (3:10; 6:10; 11:10; 13:8; 13:14; 14:6; 17:8).

The word, "dwell" means "to house permanently", which means, these are earthly people as opposed to heavenly people (cf. Phil. 3:20). It means they have lived only for the things of the world.

Rev. 17:9 And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.

The subject of this verse does not end with the word "sitteth". We must continue reading if we are going to understand its meaning.

Some believe the "seven mountains" refer to Rome but there are some problems with that interpretation.

One, the city of Rome is on seven hills, not mountains. The word for "mountains" is used here, not the word for "hills".

Two, that which is described in these verses is much bigger than Rome. Certainly Rome, and the Roman Catholic Church, has flourished for centuries but what John speaks of is much bigger.

Three, in the next verse, John tells us the seven mountains are seven "kings". If the mountains represent kings it is obvious they are not literal mountains and do not refer to Rome.

We should remember, that the Bible uses mountains to represent kingdoms or forms of government (Ps. 30:7; Jer. 51:25; Dan. 2:35).

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.

The "seven kings" refers to seven different types of world empires.

The five that have fallen are Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medio-Persia, and Greece. The one thing all these forms of government had in common was the fact that they all hated God and oppressed the people of Israel. The Book of Daniel described these kingdoms. Please refer to the comments about "THE FIVE EMPIRES OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S IMAGE" back in chapter 13 of this study. Daniel does not include Egypt because Egypt was in power before he lived.

The one that "is", was Rome. The Roman Empire was in power when John was writing the Book of Revelation.

The one that "is yet to come" will be the form of government the Antichrist establishes during the Tribulation Period. It was "yet to come" when John was writing the book of Revelation, and it is still "yet to come" in our day.

A "short space" refers to the fact that the Antichrist will rule for a short time (cf. 12:12). His seven-year rule is significantly short compared to the other six kingdoms.

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.

This verse summarizes the career of the Antichrist on earth. It takes us from his beginning to his end.

He "was" refers to how he will establish his form of government on earth during the Tribulation Period. As we have discussed, he comes offering peace and seems to be the answer to the problems of the world (6:1-2).

He "is not" refers to his deadly wound and his apparent death. As we discussed earlier (please refer to our comments on 13:3), whether real or fake, it seems that he is killed and resurrected.

It is my opinion that the words, "he is the eighth" refer to Antichrist's work on earth after his apparent resurrection (cf. 13:3). This seems to suggest a significant difference in his attitude and actions after his supposed resurrection. His true evil self is revealed and it becomes abundantly obvious that he, instead of delivering the world of its problems, intends to dominate the world by any means necessary. The difference in his actions is so significant that God refers to it as another (eighth) kingdom.

The eighth being "of the seven" means the kingdom of the Antichrist, like the world kingdoms before him, will have the same God-hating attitude.

As I have mentioned, this is man's last man-made empire.

This will be the last world empire made by man. Sadly, this means the last man-made kingdom will hate God and oppress Israel just as the past kingdoms did before it.

Thankfully, all is not lost. Jesus will return and set up the absolute last world empire in Jerusalem (20:1-7).

The word "perdition" means "ruin or loss" and speaks of eternal punishment in the lake of fire (Mt. 7:13; Phil. 3:19; 2 Pet.3:7). Paul called the Antichrist the "son of perdition" (2 Th. 2:3).

The Antichrist, will go "into perdition". God will cast him into the lake of fire.

The 5 kingdoms that "are fallen" (v.10) Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medio-Persia, and Greece (Dan. 2:31-45)	The one kingdom "that is" (v.10) (Rome) The kingdom in existence during John's day	The kingdom "is not yet come" (v.10) The first part of the Antichrist's work on earth	The eighth kingdom (v.10) The later part of the Antichrist's work on earth
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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.

The "ten horns" represent ten kings who had not received their kingdoms when John was alive.

These ten men will live during the Tribulation Period and will give their allegiance to the Antichrist (Rev 17:11-13, 15-17). They are kings in name only for there will be no question that the Antichrist is the one in charge. They will rule with him in some fashion during the Tribulation Period.

The words "one hour" are found here and three times in chapter 18 (18:10, 17, 19). It does not speak of a 60 minute period but simply a short span of time.

The fact that they have power for "one hour" tells us these are ten men who live at the same time. It also tells us their authority lasts for a short period of time.

Rev. 17:13 These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.

These ten kings have "one mind" with the Antichrist. They have the same ungodly desire and willingly devote themselves, and the nations they represent, to the Antichrist and his kingdom.

They have no idea there is a higher power behind their inward desires. Of course, the devil is doing his part in this evil. But, as we will discover, God is working to draw them to their end (17:17). They have rejected the truth of God to such a degree that it is too late for them to find mercy. They have gone past God's deadline and He has given up on them (Rom. 1:24).

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.

The angel simply gives a preview of events that will happen later. The "war" he speaks of will conclude with the battle of Armageddon (19:11-21).

Of course, the "Lamb" refers to Jesus. He is the "Lord of lords, and King of kings" (1 Tim. 6:15; Dt. 10:17; Ps. 136:3). This title emphasizes His authority and supremacy over all.

The Lamb "shall overcome them". They will make war with the Lamb by attacking those who follow the Lamb. However, it is the Lamb that overcomes them. Jesus returns to fight for His own.

The word "overcome" means "to subdue" or "to conquer". That means it will not be a close fight where Jesus just barely pulls out a victory. It means Jesus will wipe up the floor with them. Jesus wins in the end.

The word "for" means "because". John was saying, the Lamb shall overcome them "because", and then he gives two reasons why Jesus will win.

First, He wins because he is the "Lord of lords, and King of kings". There is none like Him. No one has ever started a fight with Jesus and won.

Second, He wins because He is fighting for those who are "with him". These are those who have remained true through the worse circumstances of any of God's children in the history of mankind.

John goes on to explain why these will remain with Jesus. They "are called, and chosen, and faithful". They are genuine believers. They have been washed in the blood of the Lamb and filled with the Spirit of God. They will have nothing we do not have. They are victorious because of the same grace of God we enjoy.

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.

Here John explains what he said in verse one.

The "waters" refer to the worldwide influence of the false religion. So, the religion and the government is world-wide.

The words "peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues" simply refer to the entire world.

She sitting, on a throne, speaks of her powerful influence throughout the world.

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.

At the time when Babylon and its ungodly religious system is thriving and at the pinnacle of its existence, everything falls apart. Her destruction will be complete.

The Antichrist, his ten assistants, and all of his followers turn on the harlot religion that is connected to ancient Babylon. At first glance, this seems like a good thing. The problem is, in discarding the false religion, the Antichrist sets himself up as the only true God and demands the world worship him.

After the Antichrist has used the false religious system to gain control of the world, he, and the ten kings under him, will turn against and overthrow the harlot's one-world religion. From this point on, he will not allow anyone to worship anything or anyone other than himself. He literally becomes the god of the earth.

As is his practice, the devil uses what he can to get what he wants. Then, once he has drained it dry, he discards it.

The first aspect of the harlot's destruction is hatred. They "hate the whore". The word "hate" means "to detest". Those who have loved her, now despise her. These are the ones who believed her lies and worshiped her gods.

The second aspect of the harlot's destruction is to make her desolate. The word "desolate" means "to lay waste" or "to bring to nought". The one who had been rich beyond belief will be brought to poverty.

The third aspect of the harlot's destruction is to make her "naked". The word means "nude". She had been dressed as royalty, now she will have no clothing at all.

The fourth aspect of the harlot's destruction will be the eating of "her flesh".

The fifth aspect of the harlot's destruction will be that she will be burnt "with fire". This speaks of total and complete annihilation. Fire consumes everything and leaves nothing of worth or value.

This verse tells us what will happen. The next verse tells us why this will happen. It may surprise us.

Rev. 17:17 For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.

As I mentioned, this verse tells us why the people of the earth turn against the harlot religion.

Notice what John tells us in this verse.

First, it is God who is working. It is because "God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will". The power of God is seen here as much as anywhere in the book of Revelation.

Second, as we saw in the previous verse, the people of the world turned away from the harlot religion of ancient Babylon. They will gladly turn against that which they had been devoted to.

Third, they give their all to the Antichrist. They not only turn away from the false religion of Babylon, they turn to, and worship, the Antichrist. They "give their kingdom unto the beast".

Fourth, all this is done so that the "words of God shall be fulfilled". As we have seen so many times in this book, God is the One who is at work behind the curtain. He "put in their hearts to fulfill his will". We must never miss the hand of God with the affairs of life (Gen. 50:20).

This does not mean these people had no choice of their own. Every one of them will make a conscience to do what they do. However, having made their decision, they will have to live with the consequences. Sadly, that will include coming to the place where God leaves them to their own will.

Rev. 17:18 And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

The "great city" is Babylon. As we have discussed before, it includes the ungodly belief system that began with the Tower of Babel and continues until Jesus returns and sets up His Millennial Kingdom.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

The fall of Babylon is proclaimed (18:1-24)

As mentioned earlier (please read the introduction to chapter 17), chapters 17 and 18 describe the fall of Babylon which God had announced earlier (14:8). The rebuilt city of Babylon has become the center of the world-wide religious, political, and economic power of the Antichrist. It will become the capitol of the entire world.

Chapter 17 described the destruction of the religious aspect of Babylon and chapter 18 describes the destruction of the political, economic, and commercial aspect of Babylon.

The ungodly system of Babylon is more than the religious system described in chapter 17. It is a great political, economic, and commercial giant. Nebuchadnezzar said "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty" (Da 4:30).

The ungodly religion of Babylon imprisoned man spiritually, the ungodly economic aspect of Babylon imprisoned man financially, and the ungodly political aspect of Babylon imprisoned man socially. And, God is about to bring it all down.

These two chapters also describe the coming downfall of the Antichrist and his world-wide system.

Rev. 18:1 And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.

Once again we find the words "I saw". As I have mentioned, these words tell us something new is on the way and John is moving us from one event to another.

As before (cf. 4:1; 7:1; 18:1; 19:1), the words, "after these things" or "after this" indicate a change of circumstances. Something new and dramatic is about to happen. We should always pay close attention when we see these words.

The word "another" refers to another of the same kind. That tells us, this is not one of the seven angels with the seven vials (cf. 17:1), but is the same type of angel. It also tells us this is not Jesus as some have supposed.

The word "power" means "authority" and tells us God has given this angel has an important mission and the authority to do it. Sadly, his mission is one of judgment.

As we have seen before, God uses angels in indescribable ways. However, He always limits the angel to the task at hand. God never gives an angel free run to do he pleases. God reserves certain rights to Himself.

The words "lightened with his glory" is probably a result of him coming from the presence of God. If the reflected glory from one angel fills the earth with glory, what must it be like to be in the very presence of God Himself? Moses' face glowed after he spent forty days in the presence of God (Ex. 34:35).

As far as we know from what the Bible has told us, the earth is still covered in darkness from the sixth vial judgment (16:10). If this is so, this brilliant light will be quite dramatic.

Rev. 18:2 And he cried mightily with a strong voice, 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 and hateful bird.

The words of the angel remind us, as I have mentioned, he is representing God and is not on a mission of his own. No one but God has the authority to judge.

The words "Babylon the great is fallen" are written in a tense, like we saw earlier (cf. 14:8), that speaks of a future event that is so certain that it is spoken as though it has already taken place.

God is announcing the demise of the city of Babylon and the ungodly system it represents. He is keeping His promise about Babylon (Isa 13:20-22). He said no one would ever dwell there permanently (Isa 13:20; Jer 50:3, 39; 51:29, 43, 63).

The repeating of the words "is fallen" speaks to the certainty of the statement. That which had been "great" will become the dwelling place of demons and scavenger birds.

The words "devils" and "foul spirit" refer to demons.

The word "habitation" means "place of dwelling". This is another indication that Babylon refers to a real city and not just a system. Demons cannot dwell in a system.

After its fall, the city of Babylon will become the dwelling place of demons and all kinds of scavenger birds. Some believe the "unclean and hateful" birds are symbolic and not literal. I believe them to be literal birds. The Bible does use "birds" as an illustration of the devil's work (Je 5:27; Is 34:11; Mt. 13:4, 19), but I believe these birds are real birds. Scavenger birds gather where there is death and the city of Babylon is about to die. They are like birds gathering together waiting for their prey.

The words "hold" and "cage" refer to a place of confinement where someone can be guarded. The gathering of these demons and birds are a work of God. He may be gathering the scavenger birds in anticipation of them devouring the flesh of those who will be killed later at the Battle of Armageddon which will take place a few miles away in the Valley of Megiddo (cf. 19:17).

The word "hateful" means "to hate or detest". Most people despise scavenger birds.

Rev. 18:3 For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.

The pronoun "her" continues the description of the "whore" (17:1). We must not forget, we are talking about people here. This is more than some inanimate mechanical system. These are real people who live real lives and make real decisions that have real consequences. We should keep this fact in mind every time we read the word "her".

The "wine of the wrath of her fornication" refers to God's judgment for their rebellion against Him. God's wrath is viewed as poured out wine (14:10).

The "kings of the earth" refers to the world leaders who followed the Antichrist and speaks of the governmental aspect of the one-world system of Babylon. The one-world government is about to crumble.

They have become powerful by giving their allegiance to the Antichrist but they are about to lose it all. They will weep and mourn over their loss for they loved the things of the world. More is said about this later (18:9-10).

The "merchants of the earth" refers to the business men and women who gave their allegiance to the Antichrist and his system and speaks of the economic and commercial aspect of Babylon. They forsook God and devoted themselves to riches and prosperity.

They have become rich and prosperous but that is about to change. The finances of the one-world system are about to be wiped out. More is said about this later (18:11-19).

It is interesting to note, commercial experts say there is no better place on earth for a world trade center than where ancient Babylon once stood. Being located at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and Africa, it could be an excellent hub of commerce.

Her "delicacies" refers to the fact that they live only for their own pleasure. The love of money is always conceived from a selfish heart.

Rev. 18:4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.

The words "my people" tell us the "voice from heaven" is God Himself.

As difficult as it is to comprehend, the words "Come out of her" proves some of God's people have allowed themselves to affiliate with the affairs of the one-world system of the Antichrist. This speaks of those who have gotten saved during the Tribulation Period. Since they are true believers, it is unlikely they would be a part of the religious aspect of Babylon. However, the allure of the economic and commercial aspect of Babylon has entrapped them.

I know of no better proof of the corruption of man than this verse. God has saved them by His grace and protected them from the many judgments of the Tribulation Period, yet they still allow themselves to mingle with the world.

These words should warn the modern believer of the danger of being influenced by the world. Believers who would never participate in the ungodly perversion of the world can be caught up in the business affairs of the world. Lot is a perfect example. Lot sitting at the gate of Sodom (Gen. 19:1) means he was involved with the business affairs of the city. More than likely he was not participating in the sins of Sodom, but he certainly was a part of the business of Sodom.

Where perversion doesn't get us, the desire for prosperity or power can. Achan (Josh. 7:20-21) and Judas (Mt. 26:14-16), are just two of the many who have been corrupted by the desire for things. Jesus tells us we cannot serve God and mammon (money) at the same time (Mt. 6:24). The love of money has corrupted many (1 Tim 6:10).

God tells His people in no uncertain terms to "come out". This is not the first time God has told His people to come out of Babylon (Je 50:8; 51:6). If they want to escape that coming judgment, they had better get out immediately. Those who decide to play with the world will have to suffer the consequences of doing so. This is not the first time God has told His people to come out of the world (Num. 16:21, 26, 45; Is. 52:11; Acts 2:40; 2 Cor. 6:17).

Notice how God calls them "my" people. They have joined themselves with the affairs of the world, yet they are still God's people. This is one of the many Biblical proofs that salvation is eternal.

God has specific instructions for His people. First, the words "that ye be not partakers of her sins, mean God is telling His people to separate themselves from the sins of Babylon. Second, the words "that ye receive not of her plagues" mean they are to flee before God's judgment begins.

If they refuse to follow these instructions, they will endure the coming judgment. God told Israel to come out of Egypt and Lot to come out of Sodom that they might escape the coming judgments.

Rev. 18:5 For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.

Her "sins have reached unto heaven" tell us God has been keeping a record of their deeds. Their sins, not being forgiven, have been piling up. Sin doesn't just dissipate over time. Only confession and repentance takes sin away. As I have mentioned, the sin of Babylon began at the Tower of Babel. God has been more than patient, but the time of judgment has come.

The word "remembers" means more than it came to God's mind. The word "remembered" is often used to describe how God takes action in any given situation (Ge 8:1; 19:29; 30:22; Ex 2:24). Here, God will remember their sin and take action to judge them for it.

God is merciful but He sets a limit to man's sin (cf. Gen 15:16). His mercy will go just so far. Once man passes that point, God will deal with his sin.

Rev. 18:6 Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double.

The voice from heaven (18:4) speaks again and says "Reward her even as she rewarded you". The voice calls for God to treat Babylon as Babylon treated the people of God. As we have mentioned, they hated, persecuted, and killed God's people.

The word, "Reward" means "to pay a debt". God will give the wicked city of Babylon, and the ungodly system it represents, exactly that which they deserve.

They are to be paid "double". The Old Testament demanded a crook to pay back double what they stole (Ex. 22:4).

Those who have followed the Antichrist have abused and killed God's people. Now God will make them regret the day they decided to turn against His children.

Rev. 18:7 How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.

She "hath glorified herself" speaks of their proud and boastful attitude. They care only about themselves. They are quite proud of their accomplishments. However, that which they have done has angered a holy God.

She has "lived deliciously" speaks of an enormously successful financial boom. The one-world system of the Antichrist will be tremendously successful for a time. As we will see, they will live in the lap of luxury and there will be no sign of it ending. However, it all will change dramatically.

She "saith in her heart" refers to their opinion of themselves.

Their attitude about themselves is seen in what they say about themselves.

She says, "I sit a queen". This speaks of their pride and how they see themselves as better than others. This attitude is so prevalent today. From Hollywood to Wall Street, to the White House, there is a superiority complex like never before.

Her saying she is not a "widow" refers to their sinful relationships with the world leaders of the earth (17:2).

Shall "see no sorrow" means they see themselves as invincible and think nothing can happen to bring them down. But, they are forgetting about God.

This is often the attitude of those who have things going their way. They forget about their great need for God and start depending on themselves. God warns them (Pro 11:2; 16:18). God said "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool" (Pr 28:26), and "Pride goeth before destruction (Pr 16:18), and "A man's pride shall bring him low" (Pr 29:23).

The words "so much" speak of their punishment being equal to their sins.

Rev. 18:8 Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.

The Antichrist, and his worldwide system, which seemed so invincible, will be brought to nothing.

All the "plagues" listed here come at once. Their laughter will be turned to "mourning" and their feasting will be turned to "famine".

The words "one day" speak of the suddenness of the fall of the Antichrist's one-world system. This will not be the first time God judges Babylon. His judgment came just as suddenly when He dealt Belshazzar, the king of Babylon, during Daniel's day (Dan. 5:5). The Bible says "In the same hour" judgment came (Da 5:5). God's judgment can be swift. The rich man lost it all in one night (Lk. 12:20).

Isaiah predicted that God would destroy the city of Babylon as He did Sodom and Gomorrah (Is 13:19). Jeremiah tells us Babylon shall fall suddenly (Jer 51:8).

In verses 9-19, John describes the reaction of those who have been affiliated with the Antichrist when his one-world system comes crumbling down. He speaks of the world leaders (kings) (v. 9-10), the businessmen and women (merchants) (v. 11-16), and the mariners (shipmaster) (v. 17-19). The downfall of Babylon affects all the commercial and social life of the entire world.

The one thing that is most noticeably absent is any sign of remorse or repentance over their sin.

The governmental system falls apart 18:9-10

Re 18:9 And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, Shall bewail her, and lament for her, When they shall see the smoke of her burning,

The "kings of the earth" refer to the world leaders and governments that joined forces with the Antichrist.

They "committed fornication and lived deliciously with her". They devoured the worldly benefits while things seemed to be going well.

The word "bewail" means to "sob loudly". The word "lament" means "to beat the chest".

They shall "bewail her, and lament for her". They participated in the wickedness and enjoyed the benefits while things were going well. Now, they shall lament its downfall.

The power they enjoyed while working with the Antichrist has been suddenly taken away. That which they loved so dearly is instantly gone.

The "smoke of her burning" seems to suggest God will do to the city of Babylon something like He did to Sodom. John says more about this later (v.18).

Rev. 18:10 Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.

The world leaders (kings) are "Standing afar off for the fear of her torment". Those who once stood with Babylon, now stand at a distance, lest they be consumed with it, and watch as it goes up in smoke.

The words "Alas, alas" speak of their mournful groans as they grieve the fall of that which they devoted their lives to. Those who enjoyed the riches of Babylon will be devastated by it's demise.

The words "one hour" are found three times in this chapter (v. 10, 17, 19) and refer to the suddenness of God's judgment. The suddenness of God's judgment was described as one "day" earlier (v. 8), here it is one "hour".

The "great" and "mighty" city has become a heap of ashes.

The economic system falls apart 18:11-16

Rev. 18:11 And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more:

The world leaders (kings) mourn the loss of their power and authority (v. 9-10), and the businessmen (merchants) will mourn their loss of their earnings. The thriving economy had made them rich but now no one is buying their merchandise. They are, by no means, ready to give up their riches.

The 1929 depression will be nothing compared to this economic collapse. The entire world's economy will fall apart.

Rev. 18:12-13 The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men.

John describes the merchandise that will be a part of a one-world system of the Antichrist. Their costly jewels (gold, silver, precious stones, and pearls), fine fabrics (fine linen, purple, silk, and scarlet), expensive furniture (wood, brass, iron, and marble), costly perfumes (odours, ointments, and frankincense), fine food products (oil, fine flour, and wheat), abundance of livestock (beasts and sheep) means of travel (horses and chariots) and human laborers (slaves). This list reveals the far-reaching influence of the one-world system.

The "souls of men" show us there is more than dollars and cents involved. The souls of men and women hang in the balance. That which is happening has an effect, not just for that present time, but for eternity.

Rev. 18:14 And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all.

These words are spoken by the Lord.

The "fruits" refer to the prosperity and riches they gained. They bought and sold the merchandise listed in the previous verses (v. 12-13) to make the money they loved so dearly.

The word "lust" means "longing". Though not always (cf. Lk. 22:15), this word is often used to describe the sinful desire for that which is forbidden by God (Mk. 4:19; Jn. 8:44; Rom. 1:24; Gal. 5:16; 1 Tim. 6:9; 2 Tim. 2:22; Jam. 1:14; 1 Pet. 2:11; 2 Pet. 3:3; Jude 1:16).

They "lusted" for the things of the world. All the things listed in verses 12-13 reveal their abnormal love for wealth and luxury and their total denial of God and His will for their lives. It is little wonder why they fall apart when all these things are suddenly taken away.

All the things they love so dearly are "departed" and shall be found "no more at all". It is all gone forever.

As previously mentioned, in all their grief over what they have lost, there is not even the slightest hint of remorse or repentance over their sin.

Rev. 18:15 The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing,

Just as the kings stood afar off (v. 9-10), the businessmen and women will stand at a distance for "fear" of perishing with the city of Babylon as it burns. They stand back and watch all that meant so much dissolving away before their eyes.

Once again, John mentions their "weeping and wailing".

Rev. 18:16 And saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls!

They mourn as the kings did (v. 10) over the loss of that which they loved so deeply.

They express the same words of grief ("Alas, alas") as the kings (v. 10).

Their selfish and sinful hearts are revealed by the words they use as they cry out in grief. They speak of the "fine linen" the "gold", the "precious stones, and the "pearls" but do not utter one word about the souls of men and women who are perishing.

The maritime system falls apart 18:17-19

Rev. 18:17 For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off,

The kings mourn the loss of their power and authority (v. 9-10), the merchants mourn over their loss of revenue (v. 11-16), and the ship captains and crew of the shipping vessels grieve over their loss of business. Nothing is being bought or sold, so nothing is being shipped.

As mentioned earlier, the ancient location of the city of Babylon is an excellent location for shipping.

These, like the kings (v. 9-10), and the merchants (11-13), stand at a distance and watch the city of Babylon burn.

Rev. 18:18 And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city!

The cries of the ship captains are similar to the kings (v. 9-10), and the merchants (11-13). They remember what the city once was.

Rev. 18:19 And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate.

They grieve the loss of that which they love. And yet, as with the kings, and the merchants, there is no remorse or repentance over their sins.

Heaven rejoices over the fall of Babylon

Rev. 18:20 Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.

On earth, the ungodly leaders and merchants are heartbroken about the fall of Babylon. On the other hand, in heaven, the "holy apostles and prophets" rejoice when they are informed about God's judgment on Babylon.

The word "heaven" refers to all those who dwell with the Lord. That includes the angels, the New Testament believers (apostles), and the Old Testament believers (prophets).

To some, it may seem harsh that God would tell His people to rejoice about such a severe judgment.

We may struggle to accept the severity of God's judgment. It is difficult to accept things like...

A flood where only 8 people live (Gen. 7:23).

Fire and brimstone that totally destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah and everyone in them (Gen. 19:24-25).

An eternal lake of fire where people are tormented forever (Mt. 13:50; Rev. 14:11).

However, calling for God's justice is fairly common in the Bible. The imprecatory Psalms are a good example (Psalms 5, 10, 17, 35, 58, 59, 69, 70, 79, 83, 109, 129, 137, and 140). These psalms call for God to bring swift judgment upon the guilty.

The attitude behind these psalms, and every other call for God's justice, is extremely important. It is a call that God's holiness be satisfied and not a call for selfish revenge. It deals with God's justice, not some out-of-control hostility.

Looking at God's judgment from His viewpoint makes a big difference. The person who ignores, insults, accuses, blames, disobeys, and denies God, deserves His judgment. God has provided the way of forgiveness and has been very patient. He loves the guilty person and is grieved when He is forced to judge them. But, He cannot, and will not, overlook their sin.

The words "avenged you on her" mean God judges those who have wronged His people. They are paying for how they mistreated the children of God.

John describes in greater detail the results of God's judgment on Babylon 18:21-24

Rev. 18:21 And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.

A "mighty angel" throws a "great millstone" into the sea. Of course, a giant millstone crashing into the sea would cause all sorts of disturbance. The initial splash-down would be violent but the resulting waves would extend in every direction.

The words "Thus with violence" tell us the millstone is a symbol of what God will do with the city of Babylon. The idea is, the city will not have a natural and gradual decline, it will suffer a violent demise.

The disruption of the giant millstone crashing into the sea is a symbol of the judgment God sends to the city of Babylon. It will be violent and devastating.

A similar event of judgment took place in Jeremiah's day (Jer. 51:61-63).

No more music or singing

Rev. 18:22 And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee;

Verses 22-24 show how daily life will be altered. This speaks of total and complete devastation. Nothing will be left.

There will be no more music or singing. The harpers, musicians, pipers, and trumpeters are heard no more. No doubt God mentions this aspect of the city of Babylon because it had been a place of musical entertainment and merriment. Now, it is silent. There is no reason to play music or to sing.

All forms of industry (craftsman) will cease.

The "sound of a millstone" not being heard refers to the devastation of businesses. The financial system that had been so productive comes to a halt.

Rev. 18:23 And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived.

There will be no lights, no weddings, no business transactions at all. Normal life has come to a halt and the city is dead and cold.

Rev. 18:24 And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.

Babylon will be most remembered, not by her beauty, music, or riches, but by the blood of the people of God. As we have seen, since the Tower of Babel, the ungodly system of Babylon has been the result of the death of many of God's people.

Many of these will lose their lives at the hand of the Antichrist during the Tribulation Period. The city of Babylon, being his headquarters, will be the place where he gives the command to persecute and kill God's people.

And, one more time, as previously mentioned, in all their grief over what they have lost, there is not even the slightest hint of remorse or repentance over their sin. There are no calls among the people to get right with God.

Chapter 18 closes with the once great city of Babylon, and the one-world system it represents, in a heap of ashes. Like Sodom, Babylon will become a symbol of the results of man's sin against a holy God.

Before we are so quick to judge those who will be living during the days we have just examined, we need to take a good and long look at ourselves. How often are we overly involved in the finances and delicacies of the world? I am afraid the health and wealth mentality has more effect on us than we realize.

The downfall of Babylon should be a reminder to the modern believer.

Dear believer, there may be times when it seems the devil is winning and those who live for sin and self are having it better than you are. Just remember, the Lord is keeping watch and He will settle it all in the end. It will be worth it all when we see Jesus.

The downfall of Babylon should also be a reminder to the modern unbeliever.

Dear unbelievers, please remember the things of this life are temporary. Jesus said "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul (Mt. 16:26). If you own the whole world but end up going to hell, what have you gained?"

CHAPTER NINETEEN

The fifth pause (interlude) of Revelation is found in Chapter 19. These verses record what John saw between the sixth and seventh vial judgments.

The first ten verses announce the defeat of wicked Babylon and the coming of the marriage of the Lamb. In verses 1-5, the saints in heaven are rejoicing about that which has happened (fall of Babylon). In verses 6-10 they are rejoicing about what is about to happen (marriage of the Lamb). There is a war on earth and a wedding in heaven.

Let's take a look at the war on earth.

The fifth pause (interlude) 19:1-10

The saints in heaven rejoice about the fall of Babylon

The fifth pause (interlude) is found in verses 1-10 of this chapter. These verses record what John saw between the seventh vial judgment and the Second Coming of Christ.

Rev. 19:1 And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God:

As before (4:1; 7:1; 18:1; 19:1), the words, "after these things" or "after this" indicate a change of circumstances. Something new and dramatic is about to happen so we should always pay close attention when we see these words.

John hears a sound from heaven of many people rejoicing loudly. The word "great" means "loud". Heaven will not be a quiet place. Believers should praise God with heartfelt enthusiasm. Sadly, most modern believers know little about praise. I remember when praise was common. I believe it grieves God when His children refuse to praise Him (Ps. 33:2; 107:8, 15, 21, 31; 135:3; 150:1-6).

The word "*alleluia*" is the same as Hallelujah, which means "praise the Lord". It is found only four times in the New Testament and all four are in this chapter.

In this context, the words salvation, glory, honour, and power, are referring to God's deliverance from wicked Babylon. God's "salvation" is seen in that He has pardoned, preserved, and provided for, those who came to Him by faith during the Tribulation Period. His "power" is seen in Him overcoming the Antichrist and his wicked system. He, and He only, deserves the "glory and honour".

The words "unto the Lord our God" mean all the credit for the redemption of the world belongs to God alone. No man can claim any of the credit.

Rev. 19:2 For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.

This verse tells us why those in heaven are rejoicing. They rejoice because God has judged the "great whore" (17:1, 15, 16; 19:2). The fall of wicked Babylon causes all of heaven to shout for joy. The prayer of those who cried for their blood to be avenged (6:9-10) is finally answered.

We need to slow down and take a good look at what is happening in these verses. Chapter 19 records God's first step in the process of doing away with sin completely. To say the least, this is an important part of the book of Revelation.

In these verses, God is not just judging the Antichrist and his followers, He judging the entire system of wickedness that can be traced back to the Tower of Babel. As I have mentioned so often throughout this study, the wickedness of the city Babylon that exists during the Tribulation Period can be traced back to the Tower of Babel where man rebelled against God (Gen. 11:1-9).

When God stopped the Tower of Babel it did not stop man's sin. The wickedness of mankind continued. However, when God stops the Antichrist, He will not quit until He does away with sin entirely. He will not quit until He casts the devil into the lake of fire where he will be tormented forever.

God's judgment is "true and righteous". God's judgment being "true" means there is nothing He is concealing. Sadly, there are corrupt judges in our judicial system who conceal facts that lead to unjust verdicts. God's judgment being "righteous" means His judgments are always equal with the crime. There are times when our judges adjust their verdict according to their own desire. The word "avenged" means "to punish on the basis of what is rightly deserved". God never loses His temper or overreacts. He judges only those who deserve it and only as is fitting the violation.

I believe this gives us some insight to the attitude of the saints when they get to heaven. They see things from God's point of view. God finds no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezk. 18:23, 32) but His holiness demands sin be judged.

Rejoicing about God judging may seem harsh but there are at least three reasons why it is right to rejoice about the ungodly being judged.

One, the ungodly willing and knowingly disobeyed God's Word. Disobedience to God's law demands and deserves justice.

Two, the ungodly persecuted and murdered God's children. God will judge them to avenge "the blood of his servants". Believers who are being mistreated should take heart in this fact, God will take care of His children.

Three, the ungodly rejected God's offer of forgiveness. The people living during the Tribulation Period will have perhaps the greatest gospel witness of any who have ever lived.

- They will hear and reject the preaching of the 144,000

The 144,000 will be mightily empowered evangelists who preach with the anction of God's Spirit (7:1-10).

- They reject the two witnesses

The two witnesses will preach the truth (11:3), devour their enemies with fire (11:5), stop rain (11:6a), turn water to blood (11:6b), work miracles (11:6c), and be raised from the dead (11:9).

- They reject the message of the angel who flies through the sky preaching the gospel

This angel warns of coming judgment and admonishes everyone to "Fear God" (14:6-7).

- They will experience the many judgments that obviously come from God

They know these judgments are coming from God but they still refuse to repent (6:15-17; 9:20-21; 16:20-21).

- They will be unmoved by the believers who reject the mark of the beast and willingly go to their death with joy

An untold number of believers will be persecuted horribly and put to death violently (6:9). Such a witness should have a dramatic affect on the unbelievers.

Considering all the above, those who reject God's forgiveness during the Tribulation Period will certainly deserve the judgment they receive.

As a note of interest, this verse does not necessarily mean the saints in heaven can see what is happening on earth. They were informed about God avenging their blood and instructed to rejoice (cf. 18:20).

Rev. 19:3 And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.

The smoke is a symbol that God's judgment was complete and wicked Babylon would never rise again. They will never cause heartache to God's people again.

Rev. 19:4 And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.

As we have seen earlier (4:4), the 24 elders represent the New Testament church and the four beasts are angelic beings.

The word "Amen" means "so be it". They agree with God's actions.

As mentioned earlier, the word, "Alleluia" means "praise the Lord". It carries with it the idea of enthusiasm. They are worshiping God for His holiness and His judgment on sin.

Rev. 19:5 And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.

This seems to be referring to every creature in heaven. Saints, angels, cherubim, and seraphim, all willingly, gladly, and wholeheartedly, erupt into praise.

The saints in heaven rejoice about the marriage of the Lamb (19:6-10)

Rev. 19:6 And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

The praise that began in verse 3 continues here. The sound is so massive it is like the sound of a gigantic waterfall or mighty thunder.

The word "omnipotent" means "all powerful". It means, God can do anything and there is nothing He cannot do.

The words the "Lord God omnipotent reigneth" remind us of the fact that God has always reigned as the Almighty God. However, the Satan, sin, and sinners, have hindered His will from being done entirely. God defeating the Antichrist and wicked Babylon will be one more step closer to Him reigning without any resistance at all.

This includes the deliverance of all creation. Paul said creation itself is groaning to be delivered (Ro 8:21–22). Paul went on to say "we ourselves groan within ourselves" waiting to be delivered from the effects of sin (Ro 8:23).

The bride is ready for her wedding 19:7-8

John sees a wedding. We've looked at the war on earth, now let's look at the wedding in heaven. Jesus gave a parable about this wedding (Mt. 22:1-14). Sadly, He said many would refuse to attend (Mt. 22:5).

Rev. 19:7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

The content of the praise in heaven is given in this verse.

The Lamb of God is united with His bride (the New Testament church). Jesus being referred to as the "Lamb" will remind every believer of the sacrifice of Christ and the cost of providing a way to heaven.

In the Old Testament, Israel is likened unto the wife of God, who is unfaithful (Hos. 2:19-20, Jer. 3:14; Isa. 54:5-6). In the New Testament, the church is likened unto the bride of Christ (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:25-27).

This wedding is called the marriage of the "Lamb" and not the marriage of the bride because the Lamb is the One who paid the price to make it possible (Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:25-27).

The "wife" is referring to the bride of Christ. The bride of Christ consists of all believers who were saved from the day of Pentecost to the Rapture.

This bride, like all brides, has prepared herself for the wedding. A bride spends a great deal of time and effort in preparation of her wedding.

Knowing the customs of a Jewish wedding will help us understand the events described in these verses.

A Jewish wedding involved several steps.

First, there was a marriage contract signed where the bride agreed to marry the groom. At this point, a dowry would be paid by the groom or his father.

This corresponds with a sinner being convicted of their sin, turning to the Lord in faith and repentance, and being saved. Jesus paid the "dowry" when He died on the cross (Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 6:20; Eph. 5:25-27).

JEWISH WEDDING			
	Event	Description	Scripture
1.	Marriage Contract. A dowry is paid by groom or groom's father.	The bride agrees to marry the groom. (like a sinner turning to Christ in faith and repentance) (Jesus paid the price)	Acts 20:28 1 Cor. 6:20 Eph. 5:25-27
2.	One year betrothal period (much like our engagement period)	Groom returns to his father's house and prepares a place for his bride. The bride waits at her home and prepares for the return of her groom.	Jn 6:62; 14:2 Acts 1:9
3.	The groom returns to take his bride	At the end of the betrothal period the groom goes to the home of the bride, takes his bride, and returns to his father's house	Jn 14:3 1Th. 4:13-18
4.	The bride is cleansed	The bride undergoes a ritual cleansing	1 Cor. 3:12-15, Rev. 19:7-8
5.	The wedding ceremony	A private ceremony where the bride and groom are legally declared husband and wife	Rev. 19:7
6.	Physical consummation	The couple complete the marriage by a physical consummation	Rev. 19:7 Mt. 26:29; Rev. 14:13; 21:3; 22:3
7.	Marriage supper	A seven day wedding feast with the invited guests	Mt. 22:2-14; 25:1-13

Second, a year long betrothal period would begin (Mt. 1:18). This is a period of waiting much like our engagement period. During this time, the groom is preparing a place for his bride as his father's house and the bride is preparing herself so she will be ready for the return of her groom. Knowing her groom could come at any moment, she would make sure to stay ready for his arrival.

This corresponds with the present time while believers wait for Jesus' arrival (Jn. 6:62; 14:2; Acts 1:9).

Third, at the end of the betrothal period, the groom would leave his father's house, come the house of the bride, get his bride, and return to his father's house for the wedding. Jesus said "I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (Jn. 14:3).

This corresponds with the Lord's coming in the clouds and the Rapture of the church (Jn. 14:3; 1 Th. 4:13-17).

Fourth, the bride goes through a ritual bathing.

This corresponds with the Bema seat where believers will gain or lose rewards according to their works (1 Cor. 3:12-15; Rev. 19:7-8).

Fifth, there is a private ceremony making them legally husband and wife.

I believe there will be a ceremony of some sorts where the bride of Christ will be presented to her Groom.

Sixth, the couple consummates the marriage with a physical union on the first night at the groom's father's house.

This speaks for the eternal state of intimacy between Jesus and His beloved bride (Mt. 26:29; Re. 14:13; 21:3; 22:3).

Seventh, once the marriage was consummated, there would be a seven day feast to celebrate the marriage. As with modern weddings, guests would have been invited to participate in these festivities.

This corresponds with a seven year period of celebration commonly called "The marriage supper of the Lamb" (Mt. 22:2-14; 19:9).

The guests invited to this wedding are undoubtedly the Old Testament saints who are already in heaven. They are not a part of the bride of Christ, and they have not yet received their glorified bodies, but as invited guests, they will enjoy the celebration.

There is much discussion about the exact time of the marriage supper of the Lamb. I believe it will be celebrated in heaven during the seven year Tribulation Period.

The words "made herself ready" speaks volumes. The time of waiting for her groom has not been easy. She endured misery, mistreatment, and misunderstandings. Sadly, there were been times she failed her beloved. There were times when she grew weary and wondered if He would ever come. Thankfully, there were also times when it felt like He was right beside her. He comforted her and encouraged her to be patient. His presence walked with her during the dark and difficult times. She rested in the fact that she knew she could believe His promise. He will come, and it will be worth it all when He does.

Rev. 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.

The "fine linen" refers to her bridal gown. The bridal gown is perhaps the most important thing of the entire wedding ceremony.

The word "granted" means "to give". That means, unlike the bridal gowns of our day, this garment is provided by the groom. That also means God has given His children that which is needed for them to live godly and grow spiritually.

The "fine linen" garment is a picture of the "righteousness of the saints".

The word "righteousness" as it is found here, speaks not of the imputed righteousness given to believers at salvation (Rom. 4:22; Jam. 2:23), but speaks of the good deeds of believers. These righteous deeds are the result of being saved. This is what the Bible calls the "fruits" of righteousness (Phil. 1:11a). Like an apple is the fruit produced by an apple tree, good works is the fruit that is produced by a true believer. Paul said, "not having mine own righteousness" but the "righteousness which is of God by faith" (Phil. 3:9).

Paul went on to say, these fruits are "by Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:11b). It is Christ in us that produces our good works. Paul said, "For we are His workmanship" (Eph. 2:10). That means, it is God working in us. It is the new man working in us that causes us to do God's will (Eph. 4:24). Jesus said we are to "let" our lights shine (Mt. 5:16). We don't make our light shine, we let our light shine.

The bride, knowing her groom could come at any moment, will keep herself ready for his arrival. In like fashion, the believer is to be constantly growing spiritually (1 Cor. 13:11; Rom. 12:2; Phil. 1:6; Eph. 4:14-15; 2 Pet. 3:18; Heb. 6:1).

This implies these believers have already stood before the Lord and received their rewards for their faithfulness. This garment refers to that which survived the testing at the Bema Seat. What we do for self glory will be consumed. Only that which is done for Christ will last. This tells us the bride has already been stood before the Lord as described in 1 Cor. 3:9-15.

The garments being "clean and white" probably refers to the total absence of sin.

Rev. 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.

This is the fourth of seven beatitudes in this book (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7; 22:14). As mentioned earlier, these blessings assure us of the book's credibility. If it were not from God, these promises could never be kept.

Being commanded to "Write" seems somewhat strange since John has already been writing what he has seen and heard. The Lord may have made a point for John to write this down as an extra word of encouragement to those living during the Tribulation Period. The ones these words apply to will definitely need a word of encouragement.

John says those are "called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb" are "Blessed". The Jewish wedding supper was the most joyful of all occasions in the life of the people of Israel.

To be invited to any wedding is an honor, but this is not your average wedding. There has never been a wedding like this wedding. This is the wedding of the Son of God.

But, who are the "called" John is speaking of? They are the guests who are invited to the wedding. It isn't the bride because a bride does not get invited to her own wedding.

Having spoken of the marriage of the Lamb in the previous verses, John now speaks of those who are invited to the wedding.

As I mentioned earlier, I believe the "marriage supper of the Lamb" takes place in heaven.

So, who are these invited guests?

First, they are the Old Testament saints who went in heaven before the day of Pentecost when the church began.

Second, they are those who were killed and went to heaven during the Tribulation Period.

These will join in the celebration between Jesus and His bride at the wedding supper of the Lamb. Jesus gave a parable describing this event (Mt. 22:1-3; Lk. 14:16).

The words "These are the true sayings of God" reinforce the fact that this message comes straight from God. We need to be reminded every once in a while that we are hearing from God.

Rev. 19:10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

John, being overcome with the magnificence of the angel and the wonder of his message, fell at the feet of angel to "worship him". The angel stopped him immediately. While we should respect all of God's creation, we should never worship anything, or anyone, but God.

The words "worship God" are a direct command. No one but God deserves worship. Any creature created by God is inferior to God and should not be worshiped.

The angel made it clear that his message was from God and not from himself. He was simply God's delivery boy. He, just like John and the other disciples, was a simple servant of the Lord.

The "testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" means all prophecy points to Jesus. Prophecy is about more than dates and events, it is about Jesus. In fact, the entire Bible points to Jesus. If we take Jesus out of the Bible, there is no Bible.

The Second Coming of Christ and the battle of Armageddon 19:11-21

In verses 11-21, John describes the last events of the Tribulation Period. The devil will draw the kings of the earth to attack the land of Israel (16:13-16). Jesus will return to the earth with the saints from heaven (Mt. 25:31; Col. 3:4; Rev. 19:14). His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives causing dramatic topographical changes. The Mount of Olives will split in two and a valley will be opened running east and west (Zech. 14:3-4). He will overcome the army of the Antichrist with the word of His mouth (19:15-16), cast the Antichrist and False Prophet into the lake of fire (19:20), bind Satan for 1,000 years in the bottomless pit (20:1-6), and establish His Millennial reign on the throne for 1,000 years.

To say the least, this is one of the highlights of this book. Jesus' coming proves He is God and shows His authority over mankind. Jesus' Second Coming is mentioned more in the Bible than His first coming. It is mentioned in, at least, 17 Old Testament books. Jesus spoke of it at least 21 times. Seven out of every ten chapters in the New Testament mentions His Second Coming.

9. THE DEFEAT OF THE LAMB'S ENEMIES (19:11-20:15)

The King of Kings returns to earth (19:11-16)

In verses 11-16, John describes Jesus before he tells us what Jesus is doing.

Rev. 19:11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

Once again we find the words "I saw". As I have mentioned, these words tell us something new is on the way and John is moving us from one event to another.

The mere fact of heaven being "opened" is dramatic enough alone. A simply sunrise on earth can take your breath away. This opening of heaven is just the beginning.

The words, "heaven opened" are an indication of the magnificence of this event. Jesus said it will be like lightning that can be seen all across the sky (Mt. 24:27). John said "every eye" shall see Him (Rev. 1:7). All the world, believers and unbelievers, will see Jesus coming. Many ignored Him when He came the first time but none will this time.

John sees a white horse with a rider. This is not the first white horse with a rider he has seen (6:2). The first was the Antichrist, this is the Christ. The first came with a false peace, this one will come making war and settling the account with sinful man. The first came with selfish ambition, this one will come to deliver the people of God.

Of course, John is describing the Second Coming of Christ. Jesus is coming to deliver Israel, defeat the Antichrist and his followers, lock the devil up, and set up the kingdom He promised Israel.

Jesus is coming to "make war". This war is called the Battle of Armageddon. This battle is really an extended conflict that will last through a good bit of the Tribulation Period and will conclude at the end of the Tribulation Period when Jesus comes.

As we have seen, near the end of the Tribulation Period, in a rage, the Antichrist and all the nations of the world will gather together against the little nation of Israel.

Most wars are the result of selfish people trying to increase their possessions or gain more power. This war is the result of God determining to deal with sin and selfishness and to establish peace in the world. This truly, is a war for peace. Jesus will not start this battle, but He certainly will finish it.

Jesus will be riding a white horse. In John's day, a white horse was used as an instrument for battle. When Jesus came the first time, He rode a colt (Mt. 21:1-11), this time a mighty white stallion. He came the first time in humility, this time in might and power. The first time He came as a Lamb, this time He comes as LORD.

There are four names given for the Lord in this chapter. The first is "Faithful and true" (19:11), the second is unnamed (19:12), the third is the "Word of God" (19:13), and the fourth is "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" (19:16).

There will be at least three completely different responses to Jesus coming.

First, the Antichrist and all of his followers will be smitten with fear. As we will see, Jesus destroys them all with the word of His mouth. Jesus spoke of the tribes of the earth mourning when they see the Son of man coming (Mt. 24:30).

Second, the believers will be delighted because Jesus comes to deliver them from the Antichrist and the horrors of the Tribulation Period.

Some time during the process of Jesus coming and destroying the Antichrist and his armies, the people of Israel will see Jesus, recognize Him as the Lord, repent, and be saved.

Zechariah recorded Jesus words when he prophesied of this event. He wrote, "And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, And they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son" (Zec 12:10). Jesus also told of this event when He said "Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Mt. 23:39).

The words "in righteousness" means it is right.

It is right for Jesus to "judge". As previously mentioned, He always judges and He always judges rightly.

It is right for Jesus to make "war". The Antichrist, all his followers, and the devil himself, deserve what they get. They are all guilty.

Jesus is "Faithful". We can always depend on Him.

Jesus is "true". He keeps the promises He makes.

With this thought in mind, we can rest assured that these things will come to pass. Scoffers have denied and saints have wondered, but He always tells the truth and does what He says.

Rev. 19:12 His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.

John continues to describe Jesus in this verse.

As mentioned earlier, the word "as" refers to something symbolic as opposed to something literal (cf. 1:10; 1:14; 3:3; 4:7; 6:13; 6:14; 16:15; 21:2).

His eyes being like a "flame of fire" speak of the penetration of His sight. He sees clearly. He knows the deeds, thoughts, and motives of mankind. He sees the good, the bad, and the ugly. These are the same eyes that wept over Jerusalem (Mt. 13:34) and at Lazarus' graveside (Jn. 11:43).

These are the eyes that will look into the hearts of those who stand before Him. They will be guilty, He knows it, and they will know He knows it.

The "crowns" refer to crowns that are taken from those who He has defeated. As a symbol of his victory, a victorious king would take the crown of the king he had just defeated. Many have come against Jesus, but He has conquered them all. God never loses the battle. He is the King of kings. He no longer wears a crown of thorns (Mt. 27:29).

The name written, that "no man knew, but himself" tells us Jesus is inexhaustible. In all our discoveries about Him, there is so much more to learn. I am convinced throughout all eternity, we will still be discovering new things about our great God.

Rev. 19:13 And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

His name being the "Word of God" assures us this is none other than Jesus Himself. When speaking of Jesus, John said "The *Word* was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (Jn. 1:14 emphasis added).

We communicate with each other by our words. Jesus being called the "Word of God" reminds me God communicates to mankind through Jesus.

His vesture is "dipped in blood". The word "dipped" means "to cover wholly". It is the same word used by the rich man when he asked that Lazarus "dip" his finger in water (Lk. 16:24). It is used also by Jesus when He "dipped" the sop (Jn. 13:26).

There are two opinions about the blood on Jesus' garment.

One, it is a symbol of the blood Jesus shed at Calvary.

Two, it is the blood of His enemies and not His own. John describes this in verse 15.

Jesus' garment will be so drenched in blood that it will appear as though it has been submerged into a vat of blood. Isaiah wrote of a time when Jesus would be asked about the blood on His garment (Isa. 63:2). His reply will be "I have trodden the winepress alone; And of the people there was none with me: For I will tread them in mine anger, And trample them in my fury; And their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, And I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, And the year of my redeemed is come (Isa. 63:3-4 emphasis added). This speaks of Jesus' "anger", "fury" and "vengeance". Certainly, this does not refer to Calvary, for on the cross, He said "Father forgive them" (Lk. 23:34).

Rev. 19:14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

Jesus is not alone. The "armies" of heaven follow Him on "white horses".

Who are these on white horses?

Some believe they are the believers who make up the church, or the bride of Christ. They have already received their glorified bodies at the Rapture.

Some believe this army will include the Old Testament saints. If this is so, they will, more than likely, receive their glorified bodies at this time.

Either way, Jude prophesied of this event when he wrote, "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all" (Jude 14-15a).

These garments are obviously different than His vesture in that they are "white and clean". Their garments are not covered with blood because He is the One doing the fighting. The truth is, there really will not be much of a fight. What could man possibly do in a battle against Jesus?

Rev. 19:15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

As I have already mentioned, on earth, the Antichrist and his armies will be gathered together in their last effort to do away with the Jews. Things are not looking good for Israel, but then, Jesus comes from heaven.

When Jesus comes He will destroy the unbelievers and gather the believers together for His kingdom.

The Antichrist and his armies will try to overthrow Jesus (cf. v.19). How foolish it is to try to overthrow God. Lucifer tried and failed. Those who hung Jesus on the cross tried and failed. Anyone else who tries will fail.

Jesus fights with words instead of weapons. The "sharp sword" coming out of His mouth means He defeats the followers of Antichrist simply by speaking (cf. Heb. 4:12; Re 1:16). This show us the power of His spoken word. The God who created all things by speaking (Gen. 1:3), does not need atom bombs and cruise missiles. He can speak and His enemies will be consumed. When they came to arrest Jesus, He simply said "I am he" and they fell backward (Jn 18:6).

Every believer knows what it is like to be stricken by God's Word. It hurts tremendously but it brings about a good end.

God's Word can do great and wonderful things. It can comfort, challenge, calm, correct, convict, and convert. But, His Word can also destroy. It can bring life, but it can also bring death.

The battle is likened to grapes being crushed under the feet of a winemaker. Instead of grapes, there will be bodies. Instead of grape juice, it will be blood.

As we shall see, the Antichrist and False Prophet will be saved alive and will be cast into the lake of fire (19:20). The battle against Israel becomes a battle against Jesus.

He shall "rule them with a rod of iron" refers to the Millennial Kingdom (Ps. 2:6, 8b). The next step in God's plan will be setting up the kingdom He promised Israel. God will wipe out the governments of this world and replace them with His rule from Jerusalem. We will discuss this in more detail in chapter 20.

Rev. 19:16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

The "thigh" is the most visible place of a soldier riding on horseback. Usually, a soldier would carry a sword on his thigh. Instead of a sword, the words "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" will be written on Jesus' thigh. His power comes from who He is, not what He carries.

Also, in ancient times, it was common for a king to have his title engraved or embroidered into his garments. Seeing the name of a famous soldier on the thigh of the enemy would strike terror in the heart of a soldier. What terror it will be for the enemy of Christ to see "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" engraved on His thigh.

Jesus defeats the Antichrist, his armies, and the False Prophet (19:17-21)

Rev. 19:17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God;

This tells us how bright this angel is. He can be seen even though he is "standing in the sun". His brilliance is from the glory of God and not of himself.

The angel cries to the birds of the air and tells them to "gather" for the "supper of the great God". This "supper" is a tremendous contrast to the marriage supper of the Lamb (cf. 19:7-8). This supper takes place at the end of the battle of Armageddon. The "meal" will be the flesh of men and animals that die during the battle.

Notice, that God sends out this invitation before the battle ever begins. He knows what is coming and He knows He will win.

These words are one more indication that God's mercy has run out.

Rev. 19:18 That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.

This invitation is to the birds that will eat the decaying flesh of those who will die. Jesus spoke of this time when He said, "For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together" (Mt. 24:28).

John told us some of the details of this battle earlier when he wrote, "And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs" (Re 14:20). That is a distance of almost 200 miles. This is why John used the illustration of grapes being trampled in a winepress to describe these events.

These words tell us all classes of people will die. Their standing in society does not affect the outcome. They are judged by their sin, not their standing. God's judgment is not a respecter of persons.

This world categorizes people by their personality, popularity, or possessions. These things do not affect God's judgment. The judgment of God looks at all men equally.

Rev. 19:19 And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.

I believe the words found in this verse are some of the most astounding in the Bible. We are told the Antichrist and his armies are gathering to make war against "him that sat on the horse". Who could be so foolish as to try such a thing? And yet, people do the same thing every day when they refuse to give heed to God's voice. They stubbornly continue their lives of rebelling against God and His Word. By doing so, they are indeed, fighting against God.

The battle of Armageddon is introduced in this verse.

As we have seen, near the end of the Tribulation Period, the Antichrist and all the nations of the world will gather together against the little nation of Israel.

Of course, the power behind it all is none other than Satan himself (cf. 16:13-14). The devil has done his best to do away with Israel throughout the Tribulation Period. Now, he pulls out of the stops and launches an all-out attack on those he hates so much.

This is truly a David and Goliath story. The entire world comes against the little nation. Just when it seems that Israel is a goner, Jesus comes from heaven with His own army (19:11). At that instant, the battle shifts from being against Israel to being against Jesus. The battle of all battles will take place.

As a note of interest. There may be some disagreements among the nations who have joined the Antichrist. Either way, the appearance of Jesus in His Second Coming causes them to unite as one in an attempt to overthrow Him.

John called this the "battle of that great day of God Almighty" (16:14). That means, this battle is not about the devil or the Antichrist, it is about God. It is God who is in control and it is God who will win.

Notice, there is nothing said about the army following Jesus having swords or armor. The reason, this army will not be doing any of the fighting. It really won't be much of a battle. Jesus will simply speak the word and the enemies of God will be destroyed.

Rev. 19:20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

Notice, the Antichrist, and False Prophet are described as those who "wrought miracles" and "deceived". These are two of the devil's most successful weapons against God.

First, the devil is able to work miracles. A miracle is someone doing something that can't be explained by natural means. There is a power involved that is greater than man. We should remember, that the devil can work miracles but he uses them only for his own benefit. He never has the good of others in mind.

Second, the devil uses deception to accomplish his desires. The devil is a master of deception. He is a liar (Jn. 8:44). A liar is someone who can convince someone he is telling the truth. That's why Eve partook of the fruit (Gen. 3:4). He is convincing because he has transformed himself into an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14).

The "mark of the beast" was first mentioned in chapter 13 (13:16-17). We are about to see the seriousness of deciding to reject Christ and follow the Antichrist.

We aren't told who, but Jesus or an angel, takes the Antichrist and the False Prophet and casts them alive into the "lake of fire" (cf. 20:13-14).

The Bible tells us about two places of torment for those who refuse God's forgiveness. The first is what most people refer to as "hell" (Mt. 11:23; Rev. 1:18; 6:8; 20:13-14). This is a temporary place of torment and the place where the rich man went (Lk. 16:23). The second place of torment is the place John speaks of here which is called the "lake of fire". The "lake of fire" is an eternal place of torment for unbelievers (Mt. 5:22, 29-30; 10:28; 23:33). The day is coming when God will remove those who are in hell and will place them into the lake of fire where they will stay in torment forever (20:14).

This means the Antichrist and the False Prophet will be the first ones to be cast into the lake of fire. John will mention them later (20:10). After 1,000 years of torment, they are still there suffering.

Some try to soften the reality of a place of eternal torment but the Bible is clear. God is too holy to let the ungodly go to heaven.

Rev. 19:21 And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

The "remnant" refers to those who somehow survived the battle of Armageddon. They will not escape the judgment of God for they are put to death by the "sword" out of the mouth of Jesus.

And so, chapter 19 ends with every unbeliever on earth being killed and the birds devouring their flesh.

However, there is good news that we should not overlook.

As we have seen, Jesus' Second Coming will bring judgment to the Antichrist and his followers, but it will bring deliverance to the Jews. Israel, as a nation, will turn back to God. The Bible speaks often of God converting the people of Israel (Dt. 4:29-30, Jer. 30:7; Ezk. 20:37-38; Zech. 12:10; 13:1; Hos. 6:1-2; Rom. 11:25-27; Mt. 23:37-39; Acts 3:19-21; Rom. 11:25-27).

John wrote in the first chapter of this book, "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him" (Re 1:7).

Those who "pierced" him is referring to the Jews who were responsible for having Him crucified, not the soldiers who drove the nails (Jn 19:34). The Jews said, "His blood be on us, and on our children" (Mt. 27:25).

Zechariah wrote, "And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, And they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son" (Zec 12:10). These words could be spoken by no one other than Jesus. Notice, they do not mourn until they see the One they pierced. The final fulfillment of this prophecy takes place when Jesus returns the second time.

When Jesus returns, the people of Israel will see Him, realize He was the One who was crucified, turn to Him, and believe. Isaiah wrote of this when he said, "shall a nation be born at once" (Isa. 66:8). Paul said, "And so all Israel shall be saved" ("Ro 11:26).

It is vitally important to realize, this does not mean God will convert the entire nation of Israel as a whole. This conversion, like every real conversion, will be a work of God's conviction in the hearts of individuals. Every individual will be convicted of their sin, believe, repent, and be saved. This fact makes it even more miraculous.

This verse concludes with a horrible reminder of the carnage

And with these words, the horrible seven-year Tribulation Period comes to an end.

CHAPTER TWENTY

Chapter 20 tells us about the devil being chained in the bottomless pit (v. 1-3), the Millennial Kingdom of Christ (v. 4-6), the Great White Throne Judgment (v. 11-12), and the terrible lake of fire (v. 13-14).

Satan is bound in the bottomless pit for 1,000 years (20:1-3)

Rev. 20:1 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

Once again we find the words "I saw". As I have mentioned, these words tell us something new is on the way and John is moving us from one event to another.

John sees an angel come from heaven who has a "key" to the bottomless pit. The "key" means there is no access without authority.

The words "bottomless pit" are from one Greek word that means "abyss". Also called the "deep" (Lk. 8:31; Rom. 10:7), it seems to be the same "bottomless pit" where the demons were released earlier (9:1-3). As I have mentioned earlier (9:1), the word "bottomless" is found seven times in the book of Revelation (9:1, 9:2, 9:11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1; 20:3) and always speaks of the abode of demons.

The fact that the angel comes down from heaven may imply this bottomless pit is near, or in, the earth. Some believe it is the "great gulf" between paradise and hell in the center of the earth (Lk. 16:26). Paradise, also called Abraham's bosom, was the place of pleasure where Old Testament believers went after death (Lk. 16:22). When Jesus ascended, He took those in paradise up to heaven (Eph. 4:8). Hell, the place of torment for unbelievers, is still in the center of the earth (Num. 16:30-33; Isa. 14:9; 14:15; Mt. 5:22; Lk. 16:23; Eph. 4:9; Rev. 20:13). Those in hell will eventually be cast into the eternal lake of fire (20:10,13-15).

The angel is carrying a "great chain". The next verse tells us what he will do with this chain.

Rev. 20:2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,

The angel, with power and authority given by God, lays hold of the devil and binds him for a thousand years. Once again, I am amazed at what an angel can do when his authority comes from God. This angel will lay hold of Satan, bind him, throw him in the bottomless pit, lock him in, put a seal on him, and turn him loose at the end of the 1,000 years.

God did not tell us the name of this angel. Some believe it is Jesus but we are not told. I hope God uses one of His lowest-ranking angels for this task. It would be even more thrilling if God demonstrated His power by using a buck private angel to lock away His most powerful enemy.

This shows us that God can do away with the devil at any time. God has always had authority over the devil. The fact is, He is using the devil for His own purpose.

The description of the devil given here is similar to that which was given earlier (please read comments on 12:9). Of course, "dragon", "serpent", "Devil", and "Satan" refer to the same evil being who used to be called Lucifer.

The angel binds the devil with the "great chain" mentioned in the previous verse. Since Satan is a spirit, some believe this chain cannot be literal. God certainly will have no problem making a chain that will hold the devil. Whether it is literal or figurative, it means Satan will be locked away in the pit, unable to escape or do his evil work.

Some believe this binding of Satan was done by Jesus when He hung on the cross. This can not be correct for at least three reasons. One, this binding does not take place until Jesus' Second Coming. Two, an angel binds Satan, not Jesus. Three, Satan is locked in the bottomless pit. A quick glance at this present world will show us Satan is very active and not locked in a pit.

The angel binds the devil in the pit for "a thousand years". As we will discuss later, this thousand year period is commonly referred to as "The Millennium".

Some believe the 1,000 is a metaphor for an unknown amount of time but there is no reason to believe this. The word "thousand" is found six times in this chapter. If we are to take the 144,000 (7:4-8) as a literal number, there is no reason to do differently with the 1,000. Certainly, if God meant anything other than a literal 1,000 years He would have said so.

The verse doesn't say it, but it seems as though all the demons will also be bound at this time. This would have to be so if there is to be peace during the kingdom that follows.

Rev. 20:3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

The devil is not only chained up, he is "shut" up. That means the devil cannot get out and he cannot cause any trouble on earth.

The "seal" is placed on Satan himself. He will no longer be free to go "to and fro in the earth" as he had been (Job 1:7; 2:2). In other words, his work is not just restricted, he is completely bound. While in the pit, his works of deception are halted.

This is the third of four times Lucifer will be cast out. First, when he tried to overthrow God (Isa. 14:12-15; Ezk. 28:14-17), second, when he was forbidden any access to heaven (12:7-9), third, when he was cast out of the earth and into the bottomless pit (20:3), and fourth, when he is cast into the lake of fire forever (Rev. 20:10).

Notice the reason given for locking him in the bottomless pit was that he might not "deceive the nations". The devil's primary weapon has always been deception. As soon as he is released from the bottomless pit, he will go out to "deceive the nations" (20:7).

When the thousand years are ended, the devil will be released from the bottomless pit for a "little season". The obvious question is, why does God turn the devil loose? Our court system lets convicted criminals out on bail only to see them commit more crime. But, why would God do such a thing?

One reason is that he might tempt those who have been born during the 1,000 year Millennial kingdom. The believers who survive the Tribulation Period will go straight into the Millennium in their natural bodies. Over a period of 1,000 years, there will be a multitude of babies born. These children will be raised having never known what it is like to be tempted by the devil.

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

The reign of Christ was announced back in 11:15. Now, it actually comes to pass.

Rev. 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

Once again we find the words "I saw". As I have mentioned, these words tell us something new is on the way and John is moving us from one event to another.

In this verse, John sees the beginning of the 1,000 year Millennial Kingdom. The word "millennium" is from two Latin words that mean "a thousand years." The Millennial Kingdom is the 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ on the earth when He will rule the world from the throne of David in Jerusalem.

Interestingly, this chapter is the only place in the Bible where we are told the length of this kingdom.

John saw "thrones, and they sat upon them". I believe the ones John sees sitting on these thrones are the twelve apostles. Jesus told the twelve, "ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, *ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones*, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Mt. 19:28 emphasis added). On another occasion Jesus said, "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Lk. 22:29–30 emphasis added).

Of course, a throne speaks of authority. They will be reigning "with" Christ during the Millennium. That tells us they will have authority but everything they do will be under the authority and direction of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is in charge and there is no doubt about it.

Also, John said "judgment" was given unto them. The word "judgment" means "decision". That means the apostles will be able to make decisions in managing the government that will exist on earth during the kingdom. The kingdom, while under the authority of Christ, will be managed by the saints. As with any government or any business, there are different levels of responsibility. So it will be during the reign of Christ. We will look at the details of the kingdom later.

John also saw the "souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus" and "had not worshipped the beast, neither his image" nor "received his mark". Of course, these are the martyrs of the Tribulation Period.

The word "lived" means "to come to life". This is the same word used by Jesus when He said I am "alive" for evermore (1:18). It is used also in Revelation 2:8 where Jesus is described as the One who was dead but is "alive". In other words, these martyrs are resurrected and receive their glorified bodies. This is worded in a way that seems to suggest John actually saw them resurrected. This resurrection takes place after the Tribulation Period and before the Millennium.

Rev. 20:5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

The "rest of the dead" refers to the unbelievers whose bodies had not been resurrected. These can be only those who died without God's forgiveness. The reason is, that by this time, all believers of all times have already been raised. The New Testament believers were raised at the Rapture (1 Th. 4:13-17), the Tribulation saints, and probably the Old Testament saints, were raised before the Millennial kingdom begins (20:4). There are no other believers to be raised.

That means, the "rest of the dead" includes every person who has died having rejected God's way of forgiveness since the fall of Adam. It began with Cain and doesn't end until the last person dies without Christ.

John says this group "lived not again until the thousand years were finished". We will look at this later in this chapter (20:11-15).

Here John calls the resurrection he mentioned in verse 4, the "first resurrection". The first resurrection is more than one event. It is actually a series of resurrections.

This may make it easier to understand if we look at the first resurrection like we look at a harvest of crops. There is one harvest each year but that one harvest consists of several "harvests". The workers go into the fields and gather the crops several times during the harvest season. Yet, there is really just one harvest.

The same is true of the "first" resurrection. We know this is true because Jesus' resurrection is called the "firstfruits" (1 Cor. 15:23). The firstfruits are the first of the harvest, but it is also a promise of more to come. Jesus' resurrection was the first of many.

That means, the "first" resurrection John talks about includes the resurrection of Jesus, the resurrection of the saints when Jesus rose (Mt. 27:52-53), the Rapture of the church (1 Th. 4:13-18), the resurrection of the martyrs of the Tribulation Period (20:4-5), and probably the resurrection of the Old Testament believers.

So, we are talking about two resurrections. A "first" resurrection certainly suggests a second resurrection is to follow. The first resurrection is the resurrection of believers. The second resurrection is the resurrection of unbelievers who will face a holy God at the Great White Judgment (20:11-15).

Jesus spoke of these resurrections when He said, "And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (Jn 5:29). Daniel also spoke of two resurrections. One to "everlasting life" and the other to "everlasting contempt" (Dan. 12:2).

John describes this resurrection of the dead in more detail in verse 13, where he says, "And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works".

Rev. 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.

This is the fifth of seven beatitudes in this book (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7; 22:14). As mentioned earlier, these blessings assure us of the book's credibility. If it were not from God, these promises could never be kept.

Those who have part of the first resurrection are truly blessed.

First, they are blessed because they don't have to go to hell.

They escape the "second death". The "second death" is synonymous with the lake of fire (2:11; 21:8). It is called "second" because it follows physical death. The second death is mentioned at the Great White Throne Judgment (20:14-15; 21:6).

Second, they are blessed because they will serve as "priests of God and of Christ" and "reign" with Christ 1,000 years.

MORE DETAILS ABOUT THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

Before we move on, I believe it would do us well to take some time to look at a few of the details of the 1,000 year Kingdom of Christ.

While the devil is bound in the bottomless pit, the earth will experience what it has not experienced since Lucifer was cast out of heaven (Isa. 14:12-14).

God will completely destroy the world system of the Antichrist and will build His own government with Jesus being the leader of it all. He is not coming to improve what man has done, He is coming to annihilate it and establish His own.

This kingdom is literal. Jesus spoke of this kingdom just before He ascended (Acts 1:6).

THE PREPARATION CONNECTED TO THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST

In preparation for His kingdom, Jesus will judge those who lived during the Tribulation Period (Mt. 25:31-46). This judgment is called "The Judgment Of The Nations" or "The Judgment Of The Sheep And The Goats".

At this judgment, Jesus will judge the Gentile nations according to their treatment of the Jews during the Tribulation Period (Mt. 25:34-46).

The point is, that their treatment of Israel during the Tribulation Period will be evidence of whether they are lost or saved. The Antichrist and his followers will be quick to put to death anyone found assisting the people of Israel. Therefore, only those who are really saved will be willing to take a chance of being executed.

At this judgment, the lost will be sent to hell and the saved will enter the Millennial Kingdom with Jesus.

THE PROMISES CONNECTED TO THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST

The unconditional promises of God will be kept. He will set up the earthly kingdom He promised.

He will keep His promise to Abraham. God promised Abraham a land (Gen. 12:2-3).

He will keep His promise to David. God promised David a king would rule from his throne (2 Sam. 7:10-13).

He will keep His promise to Mary. God promised Mary that her child would sit on a throne and rule over a kingdom (Lk. 1:31-33).

He will keep His promise to Israel. God promised the people of Israel a kingdom (2 Sam. 7:12-17; Ps. 89:3-4, 29-39; Isa. 9:6-7; Jer. 23:5-8; 30:8-9 33:14-17; Ezk. 37:22-25; Amos 9:11; Zech. 8:22-23; Lk. 1:30-33; 22:29-30; Acts 1:6; 15:15-17).

He also promised to open the eyes of the people of Israel and call them to Himself (Jer. 31:33; Ezk. 36:28; Isa. 59:20-21). He restated this promise in the New Testament (Rom. 9-11).

None of the promises mentioned above have been granted. But, one day, they will.

THE PLACE CONNECTED TO THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST

The kingdom will be worldwide but the capital will be the city of Jerusalem. Jesus will rule His kingdom from the throne of David (Zech. 8:3).

A new Temple will be built (Ezk 40-48, Ezk. 37:26-28, Amos 9:11, Ezk. 20:39-44).

THE PEOPLE CONNECTED TO THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST

Who will be in the kingdom?

- Jesus will be there

Of course, Jesus will be the focal point on the entire kingdom as He rules and reigns (2 Sam. 7:16; Ps. 72:8; 89:20-37; Isa. 2:1-4; 9:6-7; 11:1-16; 16:5; 24:23; 32:1; 40:1-11; 42:3-4; 52:7-15; 55:4; Jer. 33:19-21; Dan. 2:44; 7:27; Micah 4:1-8; 5:2-5; Zech. 9:9; 14:16-17).

- The twelve apostles will be there

Jesus told the twelve, "*ye which have followed me*, in the regeneration when the Son of man *shall sit in the throne* of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Mt. 19:28 emphasis added).

- The martyrs who were put to death during the Tribulation Period will be there

John also saw the "souls" of those who were "beheaded" and "had not worshipped the beast" nor "received his mark" (20:4). These obviously are the believers who were martyred during the Tribulation Period. They suffered terribly while living through the Tribulation Period, but they are rewarded during the kingdom.

- The New Testament believers, or the church will be there

The church will also have some type of authority during the kingdom. Paul was talking to the New Testament church when he wrote, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world" (1 Cor. 6:2). The Bible has a good bit to say about this (Mt. 24:47; Lk. 19:12-27; 2 Ti 2:12. Re 2:26-27). When speaking to the church of Thyatira, Jesus said, "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations" (Re 2:26).

- The Old Testament believers will be there

The Old Testament saints will be a part of the kingdom. There is no doubt about it, Israel will be involved in this kingdom. After all, it is their kingdom. It is the kingdom God promised the people of Israel.

- The believers who survived the Tribulation Period will be there

The believers who survived the Tribulation Period will go into the kingdom in their natural bodies.

- The children who are born during the 1,000 years will be there

Those who dwell in their natural bodies will have children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. There will be multitudes born during this 1,000 period. Later, when they decide to follow the devil, their number is described as "the sand of the sea" (Rev. 20:8).

THE POWER CONNECTED TO THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST

As I have mentioned, there will be no doubt who is in charge of the world. Jesus will rule as a king with a rod of iron (Isaiah 11:1–10; Rev. 2:27; 12:5; 19:15).

Others will assist Jesus in managing the government of the kingdom. Isaiah tells us "And princes shall rule in judgment" (Isa. 32:1). Jesus told the twelve apostles they rule with Him (Mt. 19:28). The New Testament believers will assist in some capacity (Lk. 19:11-17; 1 Cor. 6:2; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 2:26-27; 3:12, 21; 20:4).

It is quite possible that this kingdom will be similar to the structure of our governments today. There are federal, state, and local authorities. There are different offices of service, such as President, Governors, Mayors, City Council members, county clerks, and garbage collectors.

THE PROSPERITY CONNECTED TO THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST

There will be prosperity in the area of agriculture.

Micah wrote, "And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruninghooks: Nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war any more" (Mic. 4:3). The "pruning hooks" refer to the abundance of agriculture.

It seems as though the curse (Gen. 3:14-19; Rom. 8:20) will be lifted during the kingdom. This will cause the earth will flourish as it did in the Garden of Eden (Ps. 67:6-7; 72:16; Isa. 35:1; 55:13; 65:22; Joel 2:24-26; 3:18; Amos 9:13-14).

There will be prosperity in the area of finances.

Just the fact that no money will be spent on war will add a tremendous surplus that can be used for the welfare of the people. America spent 1.5 trillion on its military budget in 2022. Imagine if that money could be used for things other than the military.

Also, Isaiah wrote "And they shall *build houses*, and inhabit them; and they shall *plant vineyards*, and eat the fruit of them" (Isa 65:21 emphasis added). This tells us the kingdom will not be a time of laziness.

There will be prosperity in the area of God's spiritual blessings.

God's people will experience God's unspeakable joy (Isa. 12:3-4). Isaiah wrote, "Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation" (Is 12:3). Genuine salvation will bring them abiding peace and joy.

The people of Israel will experience God's unrestricted blessings (Micah 4:6-7). They will become the superpower of the world (Isa. 2:1-3; Ezk. 17:22-24; Amos 9:11-15). After all, it is the kingdom God had promised them.

There will be prosperity in the area of physical life.

Those in their natural bodies will enjoy health and long lives (Isa. 65:20).

THE PEACE CONNECTED TO THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST

There will be peace in the animal kingdom.

Isaiah says, "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, And the leopard shall lie down with the kid; And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little child shall lead them" (Is 11:6).

He also said, "And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp" (Is 11:8).

There will be peace among mankind.

The devil will be locked in the bottomless pit so his influence to sin will be gone.

There will be no war. Micah spoke of this time when he said, "And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruninghooks: Nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war any more" (Mic 4:3).

God said, "And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, And in sure dwellings, And in quiet resting places" (Is 32:18).

Joy will fill the earth. God said through Isaiah, "And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: And the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying" (Is 65:19).

THE PURITY CONNECTED TO THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST

During the kingdom, true salvation will be the norm. The only ones who may not be believers are those who are being born. The believers will willingly submit to the leadership of Jesus. Isaiah wrote, "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Is 11:9). Habakkuk wrote, "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Hab. 2:1).

As I have mentioned, when Jesus returns to this earth, the people of Israel will recognize who He is and repent (Zech. 12:1-12). God tried to give them a kingdom, but they rejected it (Jn. 1:11; 3:11, 32; 5:40, 43; 12:37). They will not reject Him this time.

Also, a new Temple will be built during the kingdom. They will be asked to go to this Temple once a year (Zech. 14:16). Micah tells us the people will say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, And to the house of the God of Jacob; And he will teach us of his ways, And we will walk in his paths" (Mic 4:2). Sacrifices will once again be offered, probably as a reminder of God's work of salvation in the past (Ezk. 20:39-44; 37:26-28; 43:18-27; Amos 9:11).

Of course, there will be babies born during this time who will have to decide, like everyone else, whether to accept or reject the gospel. Some will receive, some will reject.

We must realize the circumstances described above are the result of a spiritual awakening accomplished by a move of God's Spirit. This will be a genuine righteousness, not like the self-righteousness the Pharisees had. For several years many Jews have been returning to the land of Israel. In 1948, when Israel was declared a nation, there were just over 800,000 Jews in Israel. In 2024 there were almost 10 million. Sadly most are still in unbelief. However, as we have seen, their eyes will be opened and they will repent and believe.

THE PROBLEMS CONNECTED TO THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST

The world will be different but it will not be without problems.

There will be death.

The length of life expectancy will be greatly increased but death will not be totally abolished. The expectancy of life will be such as to where if a person dies being a hundred years old, they will be considered as a child (Isa. 65:20b).

There will be disobedience.

Even without the devil, man will still be man. Those who are living in their natural bodies will still have an old nature so they will occasionally do what they want instead of what God wants.

THE PUNISHMENT CONNECTED TO THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST

As I mentioned, people will be expected to go to the Temple once a year (Zech. 14:16). If any refuse to do so, God will withhold their rain (Zech. 14:17).

Sadly, as we are about to see in the next verses, many who are in their natural bodies will decide to reject Christ and follow the devil in his last attempt to overthrow God.

Satan is loosed for a short season to deceive the nations 20:7-8

Rev. 20:7 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,

When the one thousand years ends, the roaring lion (1 Pet. 5:8) is turned loose from the bottomless pit.

The word "expired" means "complete" and carries with it the idea of reaching a goal. God has accomplished the purpose He intended with the 1,000 years.

The "prison" is the bottomless pit (20:1)

The battle of Gog and Magog

Once released from the bottomless pit, the devil will gather the unbelievers who lived through the millennial kingdom for one final rebellion against God. This futile attempt ends in a battle commonly called "The battle of Gog and Magog".

Rev. 20:8 And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

Once free from the bottomless pit, the devil back to his usual activity. He goes out to "deceive". The "four quarters" refers to the entire globe. He leaves no part out.

Of course, the only ones he can tempt are the ones who were born during the Millennial kingdom (Isa. 11:6; 65:20). Several facts are true about them. One, they are still in their natural bodies. Two, they have not put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Three, since the devil has been chained in the bottomless pit, they have never experienced his temptation. Four, they will be faced with the decision of going with God or the devil.

Notice, that he is not simply looking for people who will follow him, he is gathering an army. Once again, he will try to overthrow God's people. He still longs to be God (cf. Isa. 14:14).

God will allow him to gather his army. Shockingly, many decide to join him. Their number is as the "sand of the sea".

Thankfully, not all those who face this temptation will go with Satan. Though John does not mention it specifically, many will reject the devil's temptation. God always provides the grace needed to do His will.

The loosing of Satan will prove four things.

One, a perfect world and perfect environment have no effect on the hearts of mankind.

How can anyone live their entire lives in a world of prosperity, peace, purity, and where the knowledge of the Lord filled the earth (Isa. 11:9) then be so foolish as to follow the devil afterward? We could ask Adam and Eve the same question for they disobeyed God while living in the perfect environment of the Garden of Eden.

Only God's grace, not the environment, can change the heart of man.

Two, the devil will never change. His 1,000 years of imprisonment had absolutely no positive effect on him. In fact, during his confinement, he has grown even more angry. He has been making plans and as soon as he is free he does that which he has longed to do.

Three, their judgment is justified. Those who go with the devil deserve to suffer the same consequences he does.

Four, God is still God. He will come in the nick of time, overthrow the devil, and deliver His people (20:9).

Rev. 20:9 And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

The "beloved city" can only mean Jerusalem, which will be the capital city of the world during the Millennium.

The devil's army will gather, circle the camp of the saints and the city of Jerusalem, and completely cut them off from outside help. Just when it seems like the saints are goners, God sends fire from heaven and consumes the devil's army.

The devil's last attempt to overthrow God and His people is a failure. This judgment fire will remove the last of the sinners left on earth so that not one lost person is left alive. The only person left will be the devil himself and the next verse tells us what will happen to him.

Satan is defeated and cast into the lake of fire forever (20:10)

Rev. 20:10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

God will cast the devil into the lake of fire which God prepared for him and his angels (Mt. 25:41). It is possible that all the fallen angels will also be judged at this time (Jude 6).

This is one of my favorite verses in the Bible. Finally, the one who caused so much trouble will get what he deserves. Thank the Lord, the devil's reign of terror will come to an end.

The devil will suffer in hell like everyone else who goes there. He will not be standing over suffering souls cracking a whip and laughing with glee. His torment will be greater than anyone else who inhabits the horrible halls of hell. Jesus said, "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required" (Lk. 12:48). Lucifer received more light than any other being in the history of God's creation. He will, therefore, receive greater torment than any other.

The words, "for ever and ever" are beyond my comprehension. Wrapping my mind around the fact that hell will never, ever, end is more than I can comprehend.

Hell must be forever because unforgiven sin never lessens or diminishes. A million years in hell will not lessen the severity of the sinner's sin or the payment required. Those suffering in hell will never finish paying the payment for their sin (Rom. 6:23).

The fact that the devil will be "tormented day and night for ever and ever" tells us he will never have another chance to try to overthrow God (Isa. 14:14).

The Great White Throne Judgment (20:11-15)

The Great White Throne Judgment is not a general judgment where all people stand before God. There is no such thing in the Bible. It is the judgment of all of lost humanity. This judgment does not determine whether a person goes to heaven or hell for everyone there will be cast into the lake of fire. This judgment determines the severity of the punishment of those being judged.

The judge (20:11)

Every court has a judge who decides the destiny of the accused. The judge in this courtroom is none other than Jesus Christ.

Rev. 20:11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

Once again we find the words "I saw". As I have mentioned, these words tell us something new is on the way and John is moving us from one event to another.

John sees a "great white throne". The word "great" means "mega" or "big". There is no other throne like this throne. Its description speaks not of the structure itself, but of the authority and power of the One sitting on it.

It is a "throne". It is not a table or a couch. This is not a conference table where they will gather to debate their differences. This is not a couch where they will lie to discuss their issues. This is a court, they are on trial, and they are about to receive the sentence they deserve.

The throne being "white" refers to the purity of God. That means, what happens at this throne will be right. There will be no fraud or bribery involved with this judicial system.

John describes the judge simply by saying "him that sat". The One on this throne is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (Jn 5:22). Those standing here will be judged by the very One who died to pay for their sin. He could have been their Savior, now He is their judge.

Some believe the words "from whose face the earth and heavens fled away" refer to the coming destruction of the earth and heaven (2 Pet. 3:7). As we will see later (21:1), God will burn up the present earth and heaven.

However, I do not believe that is what John is referring to. I do believe the destruction of earth and heaven comes immediately after the Great White Judgment but I also believe the earth and heaven "fleeing away" simply is a statement that speaks about the overwhelming presence of God. This is not the only place where creation is shaken by the presence of God. The psalmist wrote, "The earth shook and trembled" (Ps. 18:7), and "the waters saw thee, they were afraid" (Ps. 77:16), and "Tremble thou earth, at the presence of the Lord" (Ps. 114:7). Habakkuk wrote, "The mountains saw thee, and they trembled" (Hab 3:10) and "The sun and moon stood still" (Hab. 3:11).

Also, the words "fled away" mean simply "to run away". That does not sound like the destruction of the earth and heaven which will be a catastrophic event. Peter wrote, "the heavens shall pass away with a *great noise*, and the *elements shall melt with fervent heat*, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Pe 3:10 emphasis added). There is no "great noise", "fervent heat" or anything "burned up" in John's description.

If the creation itself trembles in fear at the presence of God, how much more should mankind? Every judge on earth causes some degree of fear in the hearts of those being accused of a crime. However, this judge is like no other judge in the history of mankind. Those who talked so boldly against God while on earth, will tremble in fear then.

There was "found no place for them". God's glorious presence so fills the universe to where there is nowhere to hide.

The judged (20:12a)

All unbelievers of all times are being judged at this judgment.

In our human way of thinking we may wonder how billions of people can possibly be judged here. From our viewpoint, such an event would take thousands of years. However, God is not bound to our human limitations. Just as the devil was able to show Jesus all the kingdoms of the world in an instant (Lk. 4:5), our Lord will be able to judge each and every detail of each and every person and do it without error in a moment of time.

I believe the believers will be there but as witnesses and not as the judged. Perhaps in the background, we will watch while the unbelievers are judged. How sad it will be to see some of our friends and family as they stand before God and are then cast into the lake of fire. We need to do all we can to win them to the Lord while we have the chance.

Rev. 20:12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

20:12a And I saw the dead, small and great...

The "dead" refers to the spiritually dead. Unbelievers are considered "dead" in their sin (Mt. 8:22; Eph. 2:1, 5; Col. 2:13; 1 Tim. 5:6). We'll see more details of this in verses 13-15.

The "small and great" refers to everyone from the beggar to the executive. Some held positions of great authority, but that carries no weight at this judgment. Some endured lives of misery, but that brings no mercy at this judgment.

John saw the dead "stand" before God.

First, that means, they have been raised. We know believers were raised in the "first" resurrection (cf. 20:6). These are the "rest of the dead" that John wrote about in verse 5. We'll see more about this in verse 13.

Second, that means they are in the posture of receiving their sentence from the judge (cf. Heb. 9:27). A defendant is always required to stand when the judge reads the verdict. They stand before the all-knowing, all-seeing, God. There is nowhere to hide and no way to escape. There will be no mercy nor grace, only the undiluted judgment of an absolutely holy God.

The judgment (20:12b)

Why are they here? What does this judgment accomplish?

As I have mentioned, their works will be examined so that they might receive their deserved sentence. There will be no lawyers to plead their case or come to their defense.

They are not there to determine if they are going to the lake of fire, that has already been decided. They are there to determine how severe their punishment will be.

Those standing at this judgment will be judged "according to their works". As with any trial, the actions of the accused is that which determines the outcome.

The record of their ungodly deeds continued even after their death. Their ungodly actions influenced others to do wrong. The seeds they sowed will continue to bring forth a harvest. All these things will make their time in the lake of fire even more miserable. They will deserve exactly what they are getting. God never exaggerates His justice.

20:12b... and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

Like with any trial, evidence will be presented. The "books" and the "book" contain the evidence against them.

The record books

The "books" mentioned are the records God kept of the lives of those being judged. As in any courtroom, there is evidence of guilt. Paul wrote, "Who will render to every man according to his deeds" (Ro 2:6).

The books will contain an accurate record of their every thought (Ex. 20:17; Ps. 101:3; Mt. 5:22, 28), every word (Pro. 13:3; Mt. 12:36-37), and every deed (Ps. 62:12; Pro. 24:12; Jer. 17:10; 32:19; Mt. 16:27; Rom. 2:6; Rev. 2:23).

That includes the secret things that no one knew about (Ec 12:14; Lk. 8:14; Rom. 2:16). The God who is everywhere, sees everything, and knows everything, has recorded every second of their lives. He knows the secrets of man's heart (Ps. 44:21b). God said, "be sure your sin will find you out" (Nu 32:23b). The record is precise and undeniable and nothing is left out, or forgotten.

Every individual will give an account of their own life (Rom. 14:12). What others did will not be considered. The excuse of "My friend made me do it" will not hold water then.

This tells us something very important. It tells us it matters how a lost person lives their life. It also tells us, it does matter how much spiritual light they are exposed to. Jesus said, "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required" (Lk. 12:48). Those who heard the gospel will be held to a higher standard than those who never heard.

The sad thing is the fact that every one of their sins could have been washed away by the blood of Christ (Eph. 1:7, 14; Heb. 9:14; 1 Jn. 1:7).

The roll book

The "book of life" contains the names of all those who received Jesus as their personal Savior during their lifetime.

As I have mentioned earlier, I believe, as many others do, the book of life contains the names of all those for whom Jesus died, namely, all of humanity. Those who refuse to accept Jesus as their Savior will be blotted out of this book. That means, eventually, only the names of those who accepted Jesus will remain. At the Great White Judgment, those who are not in this book will be cast into the lake of fire (20:15).

The "book of life" deals with spiritual, or eternal, life (Lk. 10:20; Phil. 4:3; Rev. 13:8; 17:8; 20:15; 21:27). It is also called the "Lamb's book of life" (Rev. 13:8; 21:27). In essence, it is heaven's roll book.

The book and the books prove their guilt. They deserve to go to the lake of fire. What a statement. It is one thing to say that someone is not good enough to go to heaven, but it is quite another to say they are bad enough to deserve to go to hell. Many think hell is a place where horrible people like Hitler or Mussolini should go. They refuse to accept the fact that all unbelievers really deserve to spend eternity in the lake of fire.

Rev. 20:13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

The "sea gave up the dead which were in it" refers to those who died at sea. Their bodies went into the ocean but their souls went to hell.

The word "Death" is another word for the "grave". So, "Death" refers to the bodies, and "hell" refers to the souls of those who died without being born again.

Hell is a temporary place of punishment where the lost are kept until they are cast into the eternal lake of fire. It is said of the rich man, "And in hell he lift up his eyes" (Lk. 16:23).

The words, "delivered up the dead" mean God will bring their soul from hell and their bodies from wherever and reunite them.

It was a common belief in John's day that not even the gods could reassemble a body that had been lost at sea or was scattered after death. For this reason, they mummified people in an effort to keep their body parts together. Their bodies being decomposed will cause no problem for God. Whether a body was eaten by sharks, blown to pieces by bombs, buried in unmarked graves, or cremated, God will raise it when the time comes.

Both believers and unbelievers will receive bodies suitable for their destination. The believer will receive a body that is designed to fully enjoy the delights of eternal heaven. The unbeliever will receive a body designed to feel intently the eternal agony of the lake of fire, yet never be consumed.

More than likely, the lost person who goes to the lake of fire will take their ungodly nature with them. If this is so, their evil desires will be more intense than ever before. They will still have the same craving for sin but no way to fulfill it. They will still hate and lust. Contrary to what some believe, there will be no friends nor parties in the lake of fire.

The word, "every" man means no one will escape. God said, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but *after this the judgment*" (Heb 9:27 emphasis added).

That also means every individual will stand before God alone. The reality of an individual standing alone before Almighty God is beyond my comprehension. The friends who influenced their actions while on earth will not come to their aid. The excuses they used for living in sin on earth will not hold water when they stand before God.

The justice (20:14-15)

Those being judged will not be cast into the lake of fire to be rehabilitated. They are sent there because they are guilty and must pay the price for their sin.

Rev. 20:14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

Being cast into the "lake of fire" is called the "second death" (cf. 21:8). Their first death was when their souls were separated from their bodies. The second death is when their souls are separated from God. Just as a believer's future is eternal life, an unbeliever's future is eternal death.

Rev. 20:15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Why is the "book of life" present if only unbelievers are being judged? It is there to prove they have never been forgiven for their sin. For an explanation of the "book of life" please read my comments on Revelation 3:5.

They are being judged for their works but the real reason is because they refused the forgiveness provided by God. They refused to hear the voice of God. They rejected the voice of creation (Ps. 19:1; 8:3; Rom. 1:20), the voice of conscience (Rom. 2:15; Jn. 8:9), and the voice of conviction (Jn. 16:8).

The words "not found" may imply a careful search of the Book of Life to make sure there are no mistakes and also to provide proof to the individual. The memory of that empty spot where their name could have been will make the eternal lake of fire even more horrible. They will remember they did not have to go.

The word "cast" means "to throw". Interestingly, the same word is used when Judas "cast down" the pieces of silver he received for betraying Christ (Mt. 27:5). It is a word that carries with it the idea of a violent throwing down.

Before we move on to chapter 21, let's look at what the Great White Throne Judgment teaches us.

- God is angry at the sinner (Ps. 7:11)

God has a right to be angry. He is rightfully angry because of the sinner is guilty of breaking His law. He is rightfully angry because of He provided a means of forgiveness, and they have rejected it. The Lord said through Paul, "they are without excuse" (Rom. 1:20).

- The account of the sinner continues to worsen

Every sinner is daily adding to their account against God. Paul wrote, "thy hardness and impenitent heart *treasurest up* unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath" (Ro 2:5 emphasis added). The words "treasurest up" mean "to lay up". Their sins keep piling up and their punishment keeps getting greater.

That means, the longer a sinner lives the more sin they will be accountable for and the greater their punishment.

- The time of reckoning could come at any moment

Jesus said, God's wrath "abideth" on those who refuse to accept His forgiveness (Jn 3:36). That means, at any moment, God's wrath may be unleashed on those who have refused His plan of forgiveness.

- Some who end up in the lake of fire thought they were going to heaven

Jesus was speaking of this judgment when He said "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works" (Mt. 7:22). That means, some who thought they were going to heaven. For this reason, we need to make sure we are ready to leave this world. Jesus gave an illustration of a coming storm and the importance of being prepared (Mt. 7:25-27).

- There is a way of forgiveness

The "book of life" proves there is a way to be forgiven of our sin.

What does God say to the sinner? He "commandeth all men every where to repent" (Acts 17:30). Jesus said, "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Lk. 13:5).

If you have never been forgiven of your sin, please stop right now, call on the Lord in prayer, admit to Him your sin and your need for forgiveness, and ask Him to forgive you and birth you into His family. Do as the publican did when he prayed "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Lk. 18:13).

If there is anything in the Bible I would like to tear out, it is the fact of an eternal lake of fire. Some say it is merely a symbol but doing so does not lessen its torment or shorten its length. The rich man is still there and still crying for one drop of water. One day he will be removed just long enough to stand before God in the judgment we just looked at. He will then cast into the everlasting lake that never shall be quenched. If you have never had your sin forgiven, please call on the Lord now.

- Every believer should remember

As I have mentioned, I think believers will be present at this judgment. We will not be judged but we will be there to witness it all. We will see family members and friends being cast into the lake of fire. It will be too late to witness then. With that in mind, we should be doing all we can to reach those who are lost. We should pray earnestly, witness faithfully, and live righteously.

10. **THE ETERNAL DESTINY OF THE REDEEMED** 21:1-22:5)

The last two chapters of this book describe the new heaven, the new earth, and the new Jerusalem, as they will be in their eternal state. God will make all three suitable for those who will inhabit them. As I have mentioned, the third heaven, God's abode, will not be made new because it has never been contaminated by sin.

A note of interest: we must be careful to not confuse verses about the Millennial Kingdom with verses about heaven.

CHAPTER TWENTY ONE

Chapter 21 begins by telling us of new heavens and new earth and ends by describing the new Jerusalem. It is like a breath of fresh air after the misery and woe of the previous chapters.

By this time, the Rapture (1 Th. 4:15-17), Tribulation Period, battle of Armageddon (Rev. 19:17-21), chaining of Satan and Millennial kingdom (Rev. 20:1-3), Satan's final rebellion and defeat (Rev. 20:7-10), and the Great White Throne judgment (Rev. 20:11-15), are behind us. All unbelievers, including Satan and all his demons, are in the lake of fire. The history of man on earth is coming to an end, but God is not finished.

Verses 1-8 give us an introduction to the new Jerusalem. Then, beginning at verse 9, John gives a more detailed description of the city.

The new heaven and new earth (21:1a)

Rev. 21:1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

21:1a And I saw a new heaven and a new earth:

Once again, we find the words "I saw". As I have mentioned, these words tell us something new is on the way and John is moving us from one event to another. This has never been more true than in this chapter for John sees a new heaven and earth. We'll find John saying it three times in the chapter (21:1, 2, 22).

The destruction of the heavens and the earth (2:1b)

21:1b... for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

John mentions a "new heaven and the a new earth". But, for there to be a new, there must be a destruction of the old. Let's look at the doing away with the old before we look at the making of the new.

Let's ask ourselves some questions about the destruction of the first heaven and earth.

- What part of God's creation is involved with this destruction

We know the earth is included, but what is meant by the "first heaven"?

To begin with, the word "first" means "foremost" or "first in order". It speaks of God's original creation. So, what God created in the beginning is what He will destroy in the end.

Also, the Bible speaks of three heavens. The first is the atmosphere around us where the sky and clouds are (Is 55:10; Ps 147:8; Ge 1:20). The second is where the planets and stars are (Ge 1:8, 15). The third is where God dwells (2 Co 12:2; Is 57:15; Ps 102:19). So, from this we know, the earth, the atmosphere (first heaven), and outer space (second heaven) will be included in this destructive act of God.

John tells us, that in the New Jerusalem, there is no need for the sun or moon (Rev. 21:23). We cannot be certain, but this may mean the stars and planets are included in this destruction and will no longer exist.

The third heaven, where God dwells, is not included in this destruction. Even though Lucifer's rebellion began in the third heaven, it is a place that has never been contaminated by sin. Since this is true, it needs no cleansing.

- When does this happen

We are not told precisely when it takes place but it undoubtedly happens between chapters 20 and 21. That means it happens immediately after the Great White Throne judgment.

- What exactly happens to the heavens and earth

John said the first heaven and first earth had "passed away", but what does that mean?

The words "passed away" mean "to perish". The Psalmist said, "They shall perish" (Ps. 102:26). In other words, the universe as we know it will be destroyed.

Peter tells us "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Pe 3:10). The words "great noise" mean "a great crash".

Peter said the "elements" of creation shall "melt with fervent heat" (2 Pet. 3:10). The word "element" speaks of that which something is made of.

- Are the heavens and earth totally annihilated

There is a great deal of discussion about whether the heavens and earth will be totally annihilated or merely remade.

A clue to this question is found in what Peter wrote in 2 Peter 3:5-7. Peter compares the earth during the flood with the earth at the time of this final destruction. That tells us, as God judged the earth with the flood (Gen. 6:17), so He will judge this earth with fire.

I believe this means, that as the flood devastated, but did not annihilate the earth, so will be the final judgment. The fire will cleanse and purify the heavens and earth but it will not eliminate it totally.

Peter wrote also, "the earth also and *the works* that are *therein* shall be burned up" (2 Pe 3:10 emphasis added). The judgment by fire will be more thorough than the flood for it will permanently eliminate all sin. The fire does not do away with the heavens and earth, it simply purifies it and removes the stain of sin.

Paul writes that creation "groaneth and travaileth in pain" as it waits for its deliverance (Rom. 8:22). By this, he seems to be saying the present creation will be remade, not totally done away with.

Peter said the present heavens and earth are "kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment" (2 Pet. 3:7). That sounds like something less than annihilation.

Later, John will record God saying, "I make all things new" (21:5). The word "new" used there is the word that means remade and not something brand new. It's like a house that has been completely remodeled and is new in structure but not new in time.

God will do with the heavens and earth as He will do with the bodies of the believers. The glorified body will be changed from the old body (1 Cor. 15:51). Paul said our earthly house (bodies) will be "dissolved" (2 Cor. 5:1). When our earthly bodies die, they do not dissolve into nothingness, they return to the dust from which they were made (Ecc. 12:7). Peter used the same word when he said, "all these things shall be dissolved" (2 Pet. 2:11-12).

Also, Job, when speaking of his resurrection, said "in my flesh shall I see God" (Job 19:26). That means, the bodies we have now will be the bodies we have in heaven, only glorified. In like fashion, God will remake the earth and heavens, only much better than before.

- Why does God destroy the heavens and earth

The current heavens and earth are still under the curse caused by sin (Gen. 3:17). Before man can move into an eternal state with God, this problem must be dealt with. This re-creation will remove this curse (22:3).

- What lesson can we learn from all of this

Once again we can get our answer from our brother Peter. When talking about the judgment of the heavens and earth, he also said, "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness" (2 Pe 3:11).

We should learn to live for that which is permanent. Everything in this world is temporary. Jesus said, "lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt" (Mt. 6:20). Life goes by quickly. James said it is like a vapor (Jam. 4:14). What we do for Christ we must do while we can.

21:1c ... and there was no more sea.

Since there will be no sea, the new earth will have a substantially larger land mass. Since the earth's surface is presently three-fourths water, this will be a significant addition to inhabitable space.

That means the new earth may not be dependent on water. That would be a dramatic difference since, at present, every living thing on earth needs water to survive.

This may mean there will be no rainfall or evaporation. What a dramatic difference this would be. At present, so much of our lives is influenced, and even controlled, by the weather.

An earth with no sea would be a delight to the Jews. The Jews, unlike Americans who see the sea as something beautiful, viewed it as a place of disturbance, danger, and death. They saw it as a necessity for travel and commerce but avoided it as much as they could otherwise. For that reason, a place without seas would be a delight to them.

No doubt, John, being exiled to the Isle of Patmos, saw the sea as something that kept him from those he loved. I'm sure he was delighted to hear about a place where there would be no more seas.

The new Jerusalem (21:2-22:5)

John's attention is immediately directed to the new Jerusalem, a four-square city that descends from heaven. This city has been described as the capital city of God's eternal creation. It is a link between the new earth and the new heaven. This city was first mentioned in this book back in Revelation 3:12.

Rev. 21:2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

- It is a pure city

21:2a And I John saw the holy city

John describes the "new Jerusalem" as a beautiful city but he first calls it a "holy" city. It not only is a place where there is no sin, but it is a place where there is no potential for sin. Sin will not be possible. What a difference this will be compared to the wicked world we are forced to live in.

This Jerusalem is vastly different than the earthly city of Jerusalem. The earthly Jerusalem had become so spiritually corrupt that crucified the Lord of heaven (Mt. 23:37-38).

Notice, John said the city comes down from "God". He could have said it was coming down from heaven, but he is making the point that this is something that God is doing. It is designed, built, and placed by God Himself.

- It is a prepared city

21:2b...coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

John described the city as a bride who had prepared for her wedding day. It is "prepared" as a bride adorned for her husband. A Jewish bride planned and prepared for her wedding for at least a year.

The word "adorn" means "to decorate". It carries with it the idea of having everything in its proper place. This city is like a bride, who on her wedding day, makes sure every detail is exactly right.

This verse speaks of the city's location and origination. Its location is "out of heaven". Its origination is "from God".

Some believe the city will rest upon the new earth, others believe it will hang suspended above the earth. Certainly, the God who hung the planets in space would have no difficulty in suspending a city above the earth.

This is the place that Jesus went to prepare (Jn. 14:2). That means, that when Jesus ascended, this city already existed in some form. If Jesus went to prepare a place there had to be a place to go to.

Jesus said to His disciples, "In my Father's house *are* many mansions (Jn 14:2 emphasis added). That means, the place He spoke of was already there, and it was in His Father's house, which certainly is the third heaven.

Jesus continued by telling His disciples, "I go to prepare a place for you" (Jn 14:3). When those disciples died they went to this city.

At present, every believer who dies goes to this city. At the Rapture, Jesus will take all believers to this city.

- It is a personal city

The city is personal in that the Lord will live among His people. As we will see later, all the saints of all ages will have access to this city.

Rev. 21:3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

The idea of a city speaks of people, relationships, and communion. The most grand of all wonders of this city is the fact that God Himself will be there.

The word "tabernacle" means "tent". John used a word akin to this when he wrote how Jesus would "dwelt among" mankind (Jn. 1:14). Amazingly, God will walk among man in the new Jerusalem as Jesus did while on earth.

Imagine, being able to live in the very presence of God. We've enjoyed the presence of His Spirit in this life but we have never been in His actual presence. We've heard about Him, read about Him, but never seen Him (1 Jn. 4:12). One day, we will.

The Garden of Eden was a place of indescribable beauty. However, the most wonderful part of that garden was the presence of God (Gen. 3:8). In like fashion, the most wonderful thing about the New Jerusalem will be the fact that God is there.

They "shall be his people" and He shall "be their God" speaks of an intimacy that could not be experienced while on earth. As wonderful and personal as the fellowship between God and His children is on earth, it is nothing like what we will experience in heaven.

- It is a pleasurable city

Rev. 21:4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

New Jerusalem will be a place of indescribable pleasure. Jesus said He was preparing a place "for" the believer. It will be pleasurable, not only because of what will be there but because of what will *not* be there.

Not only will all things be completely new, but the old things will be forever gone. I will not miss them at all.

21:4a And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes...

God will "wipe away" our tears like a mother who wipes the tears of her hurting child.

A note of interest: God does not completely wipe our tears away until this point. I can think of at least two occasions where a believer may weep after they go to heaven. One, at the Bema seat (2 Cor. 5:10). When we see how little we did for the Lord, I'm sure we will shed tears of remorse. Two, at the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15). I'm sure we will weep when we see our family and friends being cast into the lake of fire and realize we did not do all we could to reach them for Christ.

Some have suggested this wiping away of tears is symbolic and not literal. However, when John mentioned this earlier (7:17), he connected the wiping of tears with the Lamb of God feeding and leading those in heaven. Since the feeding and leading are literal, so is the wiping away of tears.

Somehow, God will enable us to put all the negative things behind us. He will wipe our tears away, never to weep again.

With our tears will go all heartache and sorrow. Not since the Garden of Eden has man been able to enjoy the full blessings of God. Not since the Garden of Eden has man been free from the horrible effects of sin. But, at this point, it will become a reality.

21:4b ... and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain:

Pain has been so much a part of mankind. No person has ever lived on this earth without experiencing pain. There has been pain because of disease, death, disappointment, desertion, depression, and denial. None of these things will be a part of life in this city.

You can make your own list of things that will not be in New Jerusalem. Write down all the things that make your life difficult, list them all, and then throw the list away.

Re 21:4c ... for the former things are passed away.

These words are a summary of all that has been said in this verse. All the bad things will be gone because that which caused it, the "former things", will have "passed away".

As long as there is death, sorrow, or pain, there will be tears. Even Jesus wept while on earth (Jn. 11:35). The next verse emphasizes this fact even more.

Thank the Lord, we who know the Lord will spend eternity in a place where there is no sin, sorrow, sickness, selfishness, separation, sorrow, or Satan.

Jesus summarized heaven when He gave the parable of the good steward. The lord of the faithful steward will say, "enter into the *joy* of thy lord" (Mt. 25:21 emphasis added). Heaven is a place of uninterrupted, unending joy.

God speaks

In verses 5-8, God speaks, not to John only, but to the whole world. He speaks to anyone and everyone who might read, or hear, the words written in the book of Revelation. He reassures the believer and warns the sinner.

Rev. 21:5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.

The One who sat on the throne speaks, not to John only, but to the whole world.

He is the One who sits on the "throne" of heaven. His position proves He has the authority to say what He is saying. The "throne" speaks of His omnipotence and His Lordship over all things. He is God and He speaks with all the authority of God over all His creation.

God Himself has become part of the conversation. It is almost like God interrupts the conversation about the end-time events to speak to anyone and everyone who might read the book of Revelation.

In verses 5-8, God speaks.

First, God speaks that He might reassure John (v. 5)

Second, God speaks to offer salvation to those who will believe and repent (v. 6).

Third, God speaks to reassure believers (v. 7).

Fourth, God speaks to warn the sinner of the coming judgment (v. 8).

God tells John to "Write" because "these words are true and faithful". These words will be repeated later (22:6). There was no reason for John to doubt what he was hearing or what he was writing.

The word "true" means "truthful". There is no reason to doubt anything John has written in this book. It all comes from God and is, therefore, the truth. God can be believed because of who He is. He cannot lie (Num. 23:19; Ti. 1:2).

The word "faithful" means "trustworthy" or "reliable". It means what John wrote is not just the truth, but it can be relied on. Believing is accepting the facts, and relying on is placing our trust in that which we have believed.

We can, without fear or doubt, base our eternity on what is written in this book. If God said it, we can believe it. Those who have trusted God with their lives will not be disappointed when their life comes to an end.

God said, "Behold, I make all things new". The word "new" is the same as found in 2 Corinthians 5:17, where it speaks of a believer being a "new" creature. God makes believers "new" creatures so that they might be ready for the "new" creation. This world is not our home. We are strangers and pilgrims in a strange land (1 Pet. 2:11; Heb. 11:13). There is a problem when we get too "at home" on earth.

Rev. 21:6 And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

God continues to speak to anyone who reads or hears the words of the book of Revelation.

He says "It is done". These three words are one word in the Greek language. It means "to cause to be". It speaks of something being finished. It is the same word Paul used when he said "I have finished my course" (2 Tim. 4:7). More importantly, it is the word Jesus used when He said "It is finished" while hanging on the cross (Jn. 19:30).

God is reiterating the fact that what is said in these verses is settled, it will happen, and nothing can be done to stop it. That means, anyone hearing these words before the Tribulation Period begins, had better give heed.

"Alpha" is the first and "Omega" is the last letter of the Greek alphabet. It is another way of saying from the beginning to the end. God is the One who started all things and He will be the One who brings it to an end. In the end, God will bring all things to His glory.

The word "athirst" means "to be thirsty". This same invitation will be extended one more time in the closing remarks of this book (22:17).

He extends an invitation to anyone who sees their need of a Savior. The thought of being thirsty is often used to speak of a desire for God (Isa. 44:3; Ps. 42:2; 63:1; Mt. 5:6).

Jesus told the woman at the well "whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him *shall never thirst*; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water *springing* up into everlasting life" (Jn 4:14 emphasis added). The word "springing" means "gushing up". This refers to the abundant life and blessings that come to the believer.

Rev. 21:7 He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

This is the eighth time the word "overcometh" is found in the book of Revelation. The other seven times were spoken to the seven churches (2:7, 2:11, 2:17; 2:26, 3:5, 3:12, 3:21).

As mentioned before, the word "overcometh" means "to conquer" or "to get the victory".

The ones who "overcometh" refer to believers in general. Those who are "born of God" are the overcomers (1 Jn. 5:4). He continues to say the ones who overcome are the ones who have believed that Jesus is the Son of God" (1 Jn. 5:5).

This is an astounding statement. Those in the family of God become His heirs. It will take all of eternity for us to comprehend what all that means.

The overcomers also experience a fellowship with God like a father and his son. What a blessing.

- It is a protected city

To begin with, it is protected when God burns the old heaven and earth.

But, it is protected also in that nothing harmful will be in this city. Lucifer invaded God's first creation. God will see to it that nothing like that will ever happen again.

Rev. 21:8 But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

God continues to speak to those reading or hearing the words of the book of Revelation.

John tells us who will not be in the New Jerusalem.

God gives a list of sins that were committed by those who will go to the lake of fire. This does not imply their deeds are the reason they end up there. Their sins were simply proof that they were sinners and had never been born again.

Interestingly, he puts the "fearful" at the first of the list. Those who were fearful on earth were those who refused to get saved because they were afraid of what others would think about them.

The "unbelieving" are the opposite of believers. They refused to believe the Biblical facts of their sin (Rom. 3:23), the sacrifice of Jesus (Rom. 5:8), and salvation by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8).

Telling us who will not be there tells us a great deal about who will be there. Those who live there will be incapable of the sins listed in this verse. There will be none of these things because the sinful nature of man which caused these things will not be there.

The word "part" means "portion" or "share". They are getting what they deserve.

The contrast of the place for sinners and saints could not be greater. The saint will enjoy the pleasure of heaven, with the presence of a loving God. The sinner will endure the pain of a place where only the wrath of God is found.

John is shown the city (21:9-27)

Rev. 21:9 And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.

An angel calls John to come so that he might show him the "bride, the Lamb's wife".

The Lamb's bride is called His "wife" because the wedding has been completed. A bride always becomes a wife after the wedding.

Interestingly, the angel who shows John the "holy Jerusalem" is the one who had brought the seven vial judgments. The angels of God, like the children of God, have various areas of service. Every believer should determine what God desires of them and be sure to do it. Every member of the body of Christ is important and every member should do what it is designed to do.

Rev. 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,

John is taken in the spirit to a "great and high" mountain where he is shown the city of new Jerusalem. It is called a "great" and "holy" city.

The size of the city requires this "high" location. As we will see, the city is so high that if John had stood one mile away, he would not be able to see the top. The ground level base of this city is 2.2 million square miles.

In verse 1, the angel told John "I will shew thee the bride". In verse 2, he took John to the city where the bride was.

As before (21:2), John said the city is "descending" out of heaven" from God". That speaks of its location and its origination. Its location is "out of heaven". Its origination is "from God".

As I mentioned earlier (21:2), we are not told exactly where the city stops. Some believe it rests on earth, others believe it is suspended above the earth. I believe it will be suspended above the earth.

We learn more about this later when John tells us (22:3), the "throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it". This means either, that the city proceeds directly from the throne of God in the third heaven and will be suspended somewhere above the earth, or that God will set up a throne in the new Jerusalem that is different than the one in the third heaven.

Rev. 21:11 Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;

John has already told us God will be in this city (21:3). The "light" of the city is His "glory". There is no need for the sun for God's presence will provide the light. Since God is inside the city, the light comes from inside the city itself. The entire city is like a gem that glows from within itself. Imagine a 1500 square mile, transparent gem suspended above the earth that has light shining from within.

The light itself is pure white but it shines through the many colors of the city.

We can look up at the stars at night and be amazed at the beauty of the lights against the darkness. This city will hang above the earth with the brilliance of its inner glow. It will truly be indescribable.

The glow of the city had the appearance of a "jasper stone". The "jasper" stone is a beautiful sea-green color. Many colors weary the eyes but this green hue is pleasing to the eyes.

Its being "clear like crystal" speaks of its transparency and not its color. It means, no flaw would obstruct the light.

Most "precious" means that which is most valuable or expensive. The materials of this city are of those that are considered the most valuable and rare on earth.

The wall and gates of the city

Rev. 21:12 And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:

John describes the wall as "great and high".

On earth, a wall speaks of security. Even though all evil will have been done away with, this wall will be a symbol of the absolute security of this city. It will remind us how nothing impure or dangerous will ever enter.

On earth, a wall also speaks of intimacy. Those inside a wall belong to the family. This city will be for God's family. We, like never before, will enjoy a closeness without hindrance.

A gate gives access. The "twelve gates" mean there is access to this city. The believers will not be confined to this city. We can come and go as we will. Those living on the new earth will also have access to this city.

At each gate, an angel is stationed. On earth, a watchman being assigned to a gate was common (Isa. 62:6; 2 Chr. 8:14). These angels will probably serve more as honor guards than security guards.

On each gate, the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel is written.

We must remember, this is the capital city of the universe. Every capital city on earth has landmarks as a reminder of certain aspects of their state. The names of the tribes of Israel will be an eternal reminder of how salvation came through the Jews. Without Israel, there would be no Law, covenants, prophets, temple, and no Jesus. Jesus said, "salvation is of the Jews" (Jn 4:22). The gospel was opened to the Gentiles because the Jews rejected it.

Verse 14 will tell us the foundations of the city bare the names of the twelve apostles. This city is constructed in such a manner as to remind us of Israel's role in bringing the Law and the apostle's role in bringing the gospel to mankind.

Rev. 21:13 On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.

The location of the gates is given in this verse. Three gates face in all four directions.

The foundations of the city

Rev. 21:14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

The "wall" of the city has "twelve foundations". Each foundation has one of the names of the twelve apostles written on it.

A foundation is that on which a wall or building is built. The wall or building stands because of its foundation.

The fact that this wall is built on the names of the twelve apostles means it is built on the message the twelve apostles proclaimed. Their message was Jesus Christ and Him crucified (Acts 4:2; 5:42; 8:4, 25,35; 10:36; 11:20; 13:32-33; 14:7, 21; 15:7, 35; 17:3, 18; 20:24, 27; 26:23). Without the gospel, there would be no new Jerusalem, there would be no heaven, there would be no hope.

As the names of the tribes of Israel on the gates will be a reminder of Israel's part in salvation (21:12), the twelve names of the twelve apostles on the foundations will be a constant reminder of the church's part in God's plan. The twelve apostles laid the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20).

It must have been emotional for John to see his own name on one of the foundations.

The names of the twelve tribes (21:12) and the twelve apostles (21:14) tell us we will be ourselves when we get to heaven. If they are remembered as themselves, so will all believers.

The size of the city

Rev. 21:15 And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof.

The angel had a "golden reed" that he would use to measure the city. A reed was an instrument used like a measuring stick.

Rev. 21:16 And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.

The word "foursquare" means "four-cornered". This tells us, the length, width, and height are the same, but it does not tell us the exact shape of the city. Some believe it will be a cube, others believe a pyramid.

Some believe it will be a cube because the Holy of Holies was a cube (1 Kgs. 6:20). The problem is, that the Bible makes no connection between this city and the Holy of Holies.

A furlong is 582 feet, which means the city is approximately 1,500 miles in length, width, and height. That means, even if it rests upon earth, the top will reach far into outer space.

There will be more than enough room for those who will live in this city. To begin with, those on the new earth will have access to this city but will live on earth.

Rev. 21:17 And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.

The wall measures 144 cubits, which means, it is over 200 feet thick.

The words "according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel" mean the wall was measured by an angel but he used human measures to do so.

The materials of the wall

Rev. 21:18 And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.

The description of the materials of the wall and the city should cause us to consider three important facts.

One, some of the materials listed seem to be different from anything we know of on earth. The eternal state will be something like we never experienced. How do you describe something that is beyond anything man has ever seen?

Two, the materials are the sort that are extremely valuable on earth. The value system of eternity will be totally different. What is valuable on earth is used for foundations and pavement in eternity.

Three, the materials listed are all completely pure. There are no impurities or flaws.

The description may suggest the city is transparent like a diamond. If so, the inner light from the glory of God (21:11) will reflect and refract through its twelve foundations and give the appearance of a brilliant rainbow.

The wall itself is made of "jasper".

The entire city is described as being made of "pure gold" that is like "clear glass". Some scoff at the thought of gold being transparent. The simple fact is, the gold in heaven does not have to be like the gold on earth. For one thing, it certainly will be more pure.

Obviously, the gold of this city is designed to allow the glory of God to shine through.

Rev. 21:19-20 And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.

The "foundations" of the wall are described in this verse.

There are twelve foundations, laid one on top of the other, each made of a different precious stone.

The jasper was sea-green, the sapphire was deep blue, the chalcedony was sky blue, the emerald was deep green, the sardonyx was white with bands of red streaks, the sardius was deep red, the chrysolite was gold colored, the beryl was teal, the topaz was golden green, the chrysoprasus was pale-green, the jacinth was pale violet, and the amethyst was rich purple.

The glow of the glory of God will make these different colored stones breathtaking. The different colors will glisten brilliantly as the light of God's glory shines through.

The gates of the wall

Rev. 21:21 And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

Each of the twelve gates is one solid pearl.

Interestingly, God chose the pearl as the material of the gates. The making of a pearl is a process of dealing with pain. It is a common belief that a pearl is made when a grain of sand gets inside the oyster shell. Actually, oysters can eject sand and bits of shell. Pearls are made by an oyster as a natural defense against an irritant such as a parasite that has entered their shell.

No doubt, the pearl gates will be an eternal reminder of the agony of the cross.

The word "street" being singular has caused some to believe there is only one street in this city. This street is on the side of the river of life and there is only one river of life (22:2), but there could be many streets that are simply not described here. God can do whatever He desires and He doesn't have to tell us about it.

The street and much of the city are made of transparent gold.

As I have already mentioned, the glow of the golden street will be enhanced by the brilliance of the glory of God. Imagine seeing this city from a distance as the glow of God's glory passes through the multi-colored foundations and golden streets.

The description of the city

Rev. 21:22 And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.

This is the last time the words "I saw" are found in this book. As I have mentioned, these words tell us something new is on the way and John is moving us from one event to another (1:12, 1:17, 4:4; 5:1, 5:2; 6:1; 6:2; 6:9; 7:1; 7:2; 8:2; 9:1; 9:17; 10:1; 13:2; 13:3; 14:6; 15:1; 15:2; 16:13; 17:3; 17:6; 18:1; 19:11; 19:17; 19:19; 20:1; 20:4; 20:11; 21:1; 21:22).

There will be "no temple" because the presence of God will fill the entire new heaven and new earth.

On earth, God gave the Tabernacle (Ex. 26:1) and the Temple (1 Chr. 17:1-15) to provide a place where His people could go to meet with Him.

Those living in the new Jerusalem won't have to go anywhere to meet with God because He will be where they are.

Imagine being able to live in His very presence. We've enjoyed the presence of His Spirit in this life but we have never been in His actual presence.

I am thankful for the delightful privilege to pray. But, when we get to our heavenly home, we will no longer have to go to prayer to talk to God. We will be able to simply go to Him in person.

Our fellowship with God while on earth, while wonderful, is limited at best. In the new Jerusalem, it will be without restriction. We often fear God here, but that fear will be gone then. That is not to say that we will lose our sense of awe of God. In fact, our awe of Him will be enhanced. Even with our glorified minds, we will never fully comprehend God. We will forever stand in amazement of Him.

We should be excited about being able to live with God, but we seldom think of how He longs for us to be with Him. Jesus said, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am" (Jn 17:24). I know He does not need me there but I am thrilled that He wants me there.

Rev. 21:23 And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

There is "no need" for the sun or moon because the "glory of God" lightens the city. This probably refers to the Shekinah glory mentioned so often throughout the Bible. The Psalmist said "The LORD is my light" (Ps. 27:1). John tells us "God is light" (1 Jn. 1:5). James called Him the "Father of lights" (Jam. 1:17). Jesus said, "I am the light of the world" (Jn. 8:12).

Every square inch of the city will be illuminated by God's glory. As mentioned earlier (21:1), we cannot be certain, but this may be an indication that the sun and moon no longer exist.

The fact that only God the Father and God the Son are mentioned here does not mean the Holy Spirit is absent.

Some believe the absence of the sun and moon means time will cease. However, time began before God created the sun and moon. God created evening and morning on the first day (Gen. 1:5) but did not make the sun and the moon until the fourth day (Gen. 1:16).

Time as a twenty-four hour day may cease. But, as we will see later (22:2) will not be done away with totally.

Verses 24-27 give us a bird's eye view of the eternal universe. The earth will be made new (21:1), and the heavenly new Jerusalem has descended out of God's throne from the third heaven (21:2). As far as we know, the third heaven remains unchanged.

These verses tell us in the future eternity God will establish a new, and eternal, governmental order.

Rev. 21:24 And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.

This verse tells us five things.

One, this verse tells us the differences we had on earth will be carried into eternity.

Some mistakenly look at eternity as one big melting pot where everyone becomes the same. The word "nations" speaks of people who are separated by their nationality. We will be known in eternity as we were known on earth. Moses and Elijah were recognized as themselves on the mount of transfiguration (Mk. 9:4). The twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles are remembered as they were on earth in the twelve gates (21:12) and the twelve foundations (21:14).

This seems to suggest in eternity future we will keep our earthly nationality. The uniqueness and differences from our life on earth will be evident and yet everyone will be united as one. It will certainly take heaven to see this accomplished.

Two, this verse tells us the new earth and the new Jerusalem will be inhabited by people. The church, the bride of Christ, will live in the new Jerusalem (21:9-10). The "nations" and the "kings of the earth" refer to those who will be living on the new earth.

They will "bring" their glory "into" it means they have to come from outside the city.

Those who live on the new earth are all those who are not a part of the bride of Christ. That will include all believers before (Old Testament), and after (Tribulation Period and Millennium), the church age.

We should remember, that God gave the Promised Land to Abraham and his descendants (Gen.12:7; 15:18-21). This land was promised to them forever (Gen. 17:7-8). Interestingly, Abraham, and all his descendants, died without receiving the Promised Land. God will make good His promise when they live on the new earth throughout eternity.

Three, this verse tells us there will be different levels of authority.

The fact that there are "kings" tells us there will be different levels of authority. God is a God of structure, of which, eternity future will be the supreme example.

As I have just mentioned, eternity will not be a big melting pot where everyone is equal, but that will not be the case. Subordination of ranks will be a part of God's governmental order throughout eternity. Even so, there will be no disagreements, jealousy, envy, or pride.

Four, this verse tells us the new Jerusalem will become the focal point of God's new universe. It will be, as I have mentioned before, the capital city of the eternal universe.

The people living on the new earth will come to the new Jerusalem to worship God. Them bringing glory and honor refers to the ancient practice of kings who would present themselves to the authority of a greater king. They will come into the new Jerusalem to worship the Lord and return to the earth where they will be living.

The words "do bring" are in the present tense in the Greek language which refers to something that happens repeatedly or continuously. This submission and worship of the God on the throne is an everlasting attitude, not a one time event.

Five, this verse shows us there are some things we will have to wait to fully understand. I am convinced this verse says much more than we can comprehend. As I have mentioned (17:5), some prophecies cannot be fully comprehended until they actually happen.

Rev. 21:25 And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.

The gates remaining open tell us access and communication between the new earth and the new Jerusalem will be unrestricted.

Someone may ask, if the gates are never shut, why even have gates? I believe they are a reminder of how the way into heaven was shut until Jesus opened it. It took the death and resurrection of Jesus to open the way to heaven.

The gates of a city on earth are shut for two reasons. One, when darkness came. Two, when an enemy was attacking. But, there is "no night" and no enemies to attack this city.

Rev. 21:26 And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.

This phrase is repeated in verse 24.

Rev. 21:27 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.

This verse tells us anyone who enters this city will do so because of the grace of God and not of any self-merit. Only by the grace of God will anyone enter this eternal city.

We will experience the total and complete fulfillment of Jesus' work on the cross. Isaiah tells us "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows" (Isa. 53:4). Finally, in this eternal home, all of our sorrows will be forever behind us.

Instead of trying to tell us all that is in the New Jerusalem, God tells us the things that are not there. None of the things on earth that harmed, hurt, haunted, or hindered us will be there.

The words "there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth" means this city will never be contaminated by anything ungodly. That means the citizens are undefiled. Imagine never having to battle with our flesh, never failing God, never feeling guilty, and having to repent.

For an explanation about the "book of life" please read my comments on Revelation 3:5.

These words should excite the believer, but they should warn the unbeliever. They are a warning to anyone who is not ready to die.

CHAPTER 22

In chapter 22, we are taken inside the city. We could call this chapter Heaven's brochure. It sounds like the description of an amazingly beautiful garden.

This last chapter is one final warning and invitation to anyone who has not yet been saved.

The River of the water of life

Rev. 22:1 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.

The angel shows John the river of life flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

The word "proceeding" means "to come from". It is the same word Jesus used when He said "every word the proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Mt. 4:4).

This river symbolizes the flow of God's provision to His people. Eternal life and eternal blessings come from God.

Like the river, God's grace flows from Him. Jesus said, "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (Jn 7:38). All good things come from God. James wrote, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights" (Jam 1:17).

It proceeding from the "throne of God" means God is its source. He is continually sending it forth, which means, it is constantly new and fresh.

The river is "clear as crystal". There are no impurities at all. Only good and perfect things come from God.

The river of life flows through the middle of the city. If, as many have suggested, the New Jerusalem is in the shape of a pyramid, it is quite possible that this river flows from the peak of the pyramid and downward in all four directions.

The "throne of God and of the Lamb" reveals how God will be God throughout eternity. There is one ruler.

Rev. 22:2 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.

It is difficult to visualize all that John has described. It seems that the river of life flows down the center of the street with the tree of life growing on each side.

Some believe the tree is large enough for its branches to hang on both sides of the river. Others believe it is a row of trees that line both sides of the river.

It is difficult to determine the exact characteristics of the "tree of life" but here are six facts we can be sure of:

One, we know we will eat after we receive our glorified bodies. Jesus ate after His resurrection (Lk. 24:42-43). We will eat, not because we have to, but because we will want to. Imagine being able to eat that which is indescribably delicious and not have to worry about calories. Jesus said, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (Re 2:7).

Two, I believe we are safe to assume that the tree John saw is the same type of tree that was in the Garden of Eden" (Gen. 2:9; 3:22, 14). The tree of life in the garden had qualities that gave life (Gen. 3:22). After man sinned, God put an angel to guard the tree lest man would eat of it and "live for ever" (Gen. 3:22). That tells us, somehow, the fruit from the tree provided life to man.

In like fashion, the tree in the new Jerusalem obviously does more than provide nourishment. Of course, this tree has nothing to do with salvation or the forgiveness of sin. That type of life comes directly from God and the only means of forgiveness is the blood of Christ (Heb. 9:22).

Three, there will be unrestricted access to this tree. It bears twelve types of fruit and bears it twelve times a year. This shows us the variety in heaven. The monthly harvest is an indication that the blessings of heaven are continual and never ending.

Four, the fact that the tree yields fruit every "month" tells us the production rate is much greater than on earth. Harvest times in most places on earth happen only once a year. All things are greater in this heavenly city. The joy will be greater, the food will be better, the fellowship will be sweeter, and the peace will be more satisfying.

Five, the fact that the tree yields fruit every "month" tells us that there will be some type of consciousness about time. We will not feel the pressure of time and deadlines as we do on earth, but it certainly seems, we will be aware of the passing of time.

Six, the leaves of the tree will provide health. This healing is for the "nations" who, as we saw earlier (21:24, 26), are those living on the new earth.

This tree and its fruit will be a constant reminder. Even in heaven, when we have glorified minds and bodies, God does not want us to forget His grace that provided our way to heaven.

All these details are somewhat confusing to my human mind but we can accept what the Bible says as truth. We may not understand all the details of this tree, but we can accept them as fact. If God says, we can, and must, believe it.

Rev. 22:3 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:

This verse reveals three delightful truths.

One, there is "no more curse".

All that is bad is forever gone. Nothing hurtful or harmful will invade our lives. That which made life on earth difficult will be forever gone.

Two, the "throne of God and of the Lamb" shall be in it.

The "throne" speaks of God's holiness and the "Lamb" speaks of His love. A holy and loving God will be in control. We know He will do right and we know He loves us. What a wonderful combination.

Three, His "servants shall serve him".

The inhabitants of this city will be more than sons of God, they will also be "servants" of God. Service for Him will be a delightful activity and not strenuous toil. The sweat of the brow that the curse brought (Gen. 3:19) will be forever gone.

Some talk as though they are looking forward to doing nothing when they get to heaven. Not me. Being idle has no appeal to me. I am so glad we will not be floating around on a cloud throughout eternity.

On earth, service can be humiliating and difficult. It will not be so in eternity future. Service to God will be satisfying. Our flesh that causes us to be reluctant to serve Him now, will be gone then. There will be no resistance or reluctance to His will.

Since a crown speaks of authority, the crowns we receive may be connected to our service in heaven. In other words, the more crowns we receive the greater service we will be entrusted with.

Rev. 22:4 And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.

Being able to "see his face" tells us they have glorified bodies (1 Jn. 3:2). No mortal can see the face of God and live (Ex. 33:20). Moses was able to see His "back parts" but not His face (Ex. 33:23).

Seeing His face speaks of close and intimate fellowship.

His "name" being "in their foreheads" means they belong to Him.

Rev. 22:5 And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

This verse reassures us that God's eternal universe will never diminish or come to an end. That means God will forever be the light that never goes dim. The angel reminds us that since there will be "no night", there will be no need of a candle or light of the sun.

That means also, God's people will never change. They shall "reign for ever and ever" affirms the fact that their standing in heaven is forever secure.

The words "for ever and ever" are beyond my comprehension. Of course, I believe totally in life never ending but my human brain cannot take it in.

Everything on earth wears out or grows old. It will not be so in heaven.

The message is trustworthy (22:6)

Rev. 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.

The angel assured John the message of this book was true. We must remember, that John was still exiled on the Isle of Patmos with no evidence that he would ever be set free. Certainly, the devil attacked him, as he did Eve, in an effort to make him doubt what God had said. The devil has not changed his tactics. He will do the same with every believer.

This is not the first time the words "faithful and true" are found in this book. The first two are when Jesus is called "Faithful and true" (3:13; 19:11). Now, we are told His words are "faithful and true". If He is faithful and true, His words will be also.

The word "faithful" means "trustworthy or reliable". That means we can believe whatever God tells us. God cannot lie (Ti 1:2).

The word "true" means "truth". Truth deals with facts. Unfortunately, our modern, politically correct, society tells us everyone has "their truth". They believe truth is subjective and based on one's perception and emotions instead of the facts. The truth is, facts are facts no matter our perception.

God is called the "Lord God of the holy prophets". Those holy men of old did what they did, not because of their own inclinations, but because their God moved on them and empowered them (1 Pet.1:11; 2 Pet. 1:21).

The word "shew" means "to show or reveal". As I have mentioned before, this book is meant to reveal, not to confuse. God does not tell us all that He knows, but He does tell us all He wants us to know.

This book opens and closes with similar things. It opens (1:1) and closes (22:6) with angels speaking for God. It opens (1:3) and closes (22:7) with a promise of blessings. It opens with things that must "come to pass" (1:1) and closes with things that must shortly be "done".

The blessing to those who obey this book (22:7)

Rev. 22:7 Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

The end of the book was near and Jesus was talking with John personally when He said, "Behold, I come quickly".

This is the first of three times in this chapter where Jesus says He will come quickly (v. 7, 12, 20). But, is He talking about the Rapture or the Second Coming at the end of the Tribulation Period?

To answer this question it is important to realize, that the book of Revelation had taken John through hundreds of years of future events but he did not travel through time himself. At the end of the book, John was in the same time as when it began. The seven churches of Asia were still in existence and John was still in exile on the Isle of Patmos.

Keeping this in mind tells us Jesus must have been talking about the Rapture for it was the next major event for the people of God.

The word "quickly" is the same as found earlier (2:5; 3:11; 11:14). It means "without delay". It means it could happen at any moment. It also means, when He comes, it will happen so quickly there will be no time to react.

Once again, God promises a blessing to those who keep the sayings of this book.

This is the sixth of seven beatitudes in this book (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7; 22:14). As mentioned earlier, these blessings assure us of the book's credibility. If it were not from God, these promises could never be kept.

Keeping the "sayings of the prophecy of this book" means we listen intently to the facts found in this book, we believe what it says about the end time events, and we give ourselves to the will of God in preparation for that which this book says is coming.

John starts to worship the angel (22:8-10)

Rev. 22:8 And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things.

John "saw" and "heard".

This is the last, of 41 times, the word "saw" is found in this book. All but 3 of these 41 occasions refer to that which John saw. However, of all these instances, only this one that says he saw and heard.

John attempted to worship the angel.

This is the second time John attempted to worship an angel (cf. 19:9-10). On both occasions, his worship came after a promise made to God's people that involved the coming of Christ. Even though his worship of the angel was inappropriate, his excitement about the promise was justifiable. A believer should get beside themselves when thinking about the coming of Christ. To do otherwise is unspiritual.

No doubt, the dazzling appearance of an angel would be overwhelming but it was the angel's message, not the angel himself, that overwhelmed John. He was so overwhelmed by the message, he overreacted to the messenger.

Rev. 22:9 Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.

The angel stopped John from worshiping him. How different was his attitude from that of Lucifer's (Mt. 4:9)?

Angel worship was common in John's day but it was totally inappropriate. Paul warned against it (Col. 2:18).

The angel not only stopped John from worshiping him but told him why.

First, as he had done before (cf. 19:10), he told John he was a "fellowservant". The word "fellowservant" means "co-slave" and refers to two servants of the same master. The angel, like John, was a creature made by God.

Second, he told John to "worship God". Only God is worthy of worship (Ex. 34:14; Mt. 4:10).

- God deserves our worship

God deserves our worship because He is absolutely holy (1 Sam. 2:2; Ps. 99:5, 9; Lk. 1:49; 1 Pet. 1:15-16). He deserves our worship because He made us (Ps. 100:3) and sustains us (Acts 17:28).

- God desires our worship

Jesus told the Samaritan woman "the Father *seeketh* such to worship him" (Jn 4:23 emphasis added). God desires we worship Him because He loves us and wants us close. God desires we worship Him because worship is beneficial to the believer. Worshiping God puts our hearts and minds in the right place. It reminds us of who we are and who God is. It keeps Him first place in our lives. It fills our hearts with thanksgiving. And, most importantly, it causes us to give ourselves to God and His will.

- God demands our worship

The first of the ten commandments tells us we should have no other gods before the One true God (Ex. 20:3). There should be nothing, or no one, before God.

As such, the angel, John, and the prophets were to "keep the sayings" of this book. All of God's creatures are obligated to obey the spiritual principles found in the Word of God.

The next verses will tell us how we "keep" the sayings of this book.

John told to not seal the book (22:10)

Rev. 22:10 And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.

The word "sayings" refers to that which is said in this book. Jesus said those who keep His "sayings" are wise (Mt. 7:24).

John was told to "seal not" the book. Daniel was told to "shut up the words, and seal the book" (Dan. 12:4). The fulfillment of Daniel's message was distance while John's was closer. Both Daniel's and John's messages are now open.

The "time is at hand". The message of this book started with the seven churches of Asia that existed when John was alive. Its message was for those living during John's day and beyond. Its message was needed by those who would live through the horrors of the Tribulation Period. Its warnings were needed by those tempted to believe the lies of the Antichrist.

We also, in our day, need what is in this book.

Rev. 22:11 He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.

This verse tells us what happens in this life will determine what happens in the next life. That which is true on this side of the grave will be true on the other side. We will carry our spiritual condition into eternity. Whether lost or saved, we will forever have the desires and attitudes of what we were on earth.

If anything, these things will become even more intense. Those who go to heaven will continue to learn and grow more in love with the Lord. It would seem logical that those who go to the lake of fire will become even more ungodly. Their hatred for all that is good will worsen and their longings for the ungodly will become even greater than they had on earth.

Rev. 22:12 And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

This is the second of three times in this chapter where Jesus says He will come quickly (v. 7, 12, 20).

The word "reward" means "pay for service". It speaks of getting what is deserved, whether it be good (Mt. 5:12; 10:42; Lk. 6:23; 1 Cor. 3:14), or bad (2 Pet. 2:13, 15; Jude 1:11).

This verse refers to the judgment seat of Christ for believers (2 Cor. 5:10-11) but is true also of the judgment of the lost at the Great White Judgment (Rev. 20:11). It is meant to be a joy to the believer and a warning to the unbeliever.

Since our spiritual condition at death is set for eternity (v.11), and Jesus could come at any moment (v. 12), we should make sure we are ready.

Jesus gave a parable to make this point (Mk. 13:33-37). We are to faithfully and consistently do the Master's will because we have no idea when He will return. We should work while we can for, as Jesus said, "night cometh, when no man can work" (Jn. 9:4).

God rewards according to the faithfulness of the individual (1 Cor. 4:2). No act of willing obedience will be forgotten. Jesus said even giving a cup of cold water in Jesus' name would not be forgotten (Mt. 10:42).

This is another reminder of how heaven will not be a melting pot where everyone will be the same. There are degrees of reward in heaven just as there are degrees of punishment in the lake of fire.

Rev. 22:13 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

Christ is the beginning and the end, and everything in between. He existed before creation and will continue to exist throughout eternity.

The blessings to those who obey (22:14-16)

Rev. 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.

This verse speaks of the "just" (cf. v. 11) who prepared for Christ (cf. v. 12) by accepting Christ as their Savior.

This verse contains the seventh of seven beatitudes in this book (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7; 22:14). As mentioned earlier, these blessings assure us of the book's credibility.

The promise of blessings for keeping, or doing, this book (1:3) is repeated here. That means, this book of the Bible that is neglected the most, is the one that promises a blessing to those who do not neglect it.

This phrase speaks volumes about the will and way of God. God blesses those who willingly obey His "commandments".

Doing "his commandments" begins with accepting Him as our personal Savior. Jesus said, "*This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent*" (Jn 6:29 emphasis added).

Doing "his commandments" proves we are true believers. Doing God's will does not make us believers, it proves we are believers. John wrote, "And hereby we do *know* that we *know him*, if we *keep his commandments*" (1 Jn 2:3 emphasis added). True believers do His will.

Those who "do his commandments" are those who are "Blessed". The world says we are blessed when we do that which pleases ourselves. Jesus said, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (Jn 13:17 emphasis added). God reserves His best blessings for those who give Him their best.

The world sees the commands of God as a heavy burden. God said His "commandments are not grievous" (1 Jn. 5:3 emphasis added). The word "grievous" means "burdensome". The real load comes from trying to find satisfaction in this world without Jesus. Solomon said it is all "vanity" (Ecc. 1:1-3). That's why Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mt 11:28).

The "right to the tree of life" and permission to "enter in through the gates into the city" are one and the same. Both refer to salvation by grace through faith which provides the way to heaven.

Doing "his commandments" does not give them the right to heaven. Doing His commandments proves they are true believers and that is what gives them access to heaven.

It astounds me to realize having the righteousness of Christ applied to my account makes me truly worthy of heaven (Rom. 3:22; 2 Cor. 5:21).

Rev. 22:15 For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.

This verse speaks of the "unjust" (v. 11) who did not prepare for Christ (v. 12). This list is similar to that found earlier (21:8).

The believers described earlier as having access to heaven (v. 14), here the unbelievers are described as those who are "without". They have no rights to heaven.

The "dogs" are those who reject Christ. False apostles are called "dogs" (Phil. 3:2). Those around the cross were referred to as "dogs" (Ps. 22:16). The Jews viewed the Gentiles as unholy and referred to them as dogs (Mt. 15:26). Unbelievers were referred to as dogs because most dogs were half-wild scavengers during John's day.

The "sorcerers" are those who pretend to produce spiritual acts by human or devilish means.

The "whoremongers" are those who practice adultery, fornication, or homosexuality.

The "idolaters" are those who put anything, or anyone, before the true God.

Those who "loveth and maketh a lie" are akin to Lucifer (Jn. 8:44; Rom. 1:25). The word "maketh" means "to practice" or to perform repeatedly.

This list refers to those who regularly practice these sins. A believer may occasionally fall into one of these sins but they will not live it as their lifestyle.

Rev. 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 words, "I Jesus have sent mine angel" are meant to assure John. He, being human, needed the assurance that what he had heard and seen was truly from God.

These words are meant to assure the modern believer also. Jesus truly is the author of this book.

Jesus put His stamp of approval on the entire book of Revelation. In essence, He was saying, "I am Jesus, and I agree with this ad". Parts of this book are horrible, and parts are wonderful, but it is all true.

The "churches" refer directly to the seven churches of Asia but ultimately to all churches of all times that preach the gospel and stand for the truth.

This is the first time the church is mentioned since Jesus addressed the seven churches.

The word "root" means Jesus is the source of David (Isa. 11:1), which means He came before David. The word "offspring" means Jesus is the descendant of David (Mt. 1:1, which means He came after David. In other words, David came from Jesus and Jesus came from David. He is an ancestor and a descendant. The only way this is possible is that He is God. Jesus said, "Before Abraham was, I am" (Jn. 8:58).

The "morning star" is the first star to appear at night and the brightest star in the heavens. Since the Jewish day started at 6 PM, the morning star was the promise of a new day and a new beginning. Only Jesus can give us a real new start.

This is the last invitation in the Bible. God closes His message with an altar call.

Rev. 22:17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

This verse contains the response to Jesus' statement found in verse 12 where He says "I come quickly".

The "Spirit and the bride say, Come".

This means first, the Holy Spirit longs for the coming of Christ.

It means secondly, the church should long for His coming. The child of God should be weary of this world. To be otherwise is a reproach. We are told to not love the world, neither the things that are in the world (1 Jn. 2:15a).

As believers, we should be excited about the Rapture but we should be burdened about those who are not saved. Certainly, we should be looking up for Jesus, but we should be looking around for those who aren't ready.

A warning to not tamper with this book (22:18-19)

Rev. 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: 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.

I notice four things about this verse.

- There is a blessing and a curse connected to the book of Revelation

Those who hear and keep the words of this book are promised blessings (1:3; 22:4). Those who do otherwise are promised judgment.

The punishment for adding or taking from God's Word is described in two ways. They receive to punishment of the lake of fire and forfeit the blessings of heaven.

- God is serious about protecting His Word

The warning about adding or subtracting is meant specifically for the book of Revelation but it certainly can be applied to all of the Bible. This is not the first warning about tampering with God's Word (Dt. 4:2; 12:32). Every word in Scripture comes from God (2 Tim. 3:16) and should be treated as such.

- Adding to, or taking from, the Word of God reveals an unbelieving heart

This is not saying a believer can lose their salvation. Obviously, this refers to unbelievers only. Taking away "his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city" means they will not have an opportunity to accept Jesus as their personal Savior and will, as a result, be condemned to the lake of fire forever.

Adding to, or taking from, is not talking about someone mistakenly misinterpreting the Scripture. This speaks of the person who sees the Scripture as incomplete or incorrect. It refers to people like Joseph Smith (founder of Mormonism) or Charles Taze Russell (founder of the Jehovah's Witnesses). They do not totally deny Jesus but they deny the Jesus the Bible talks about.

- Believers should also give heed to this warning

These verses speak of unbelievers but believers should learn something from them. God's children should never tamper with God's Word (Dt. 12:32; Pro. 30:6).

The modern translations of the Bible do exactly what John is warning against. Many modern church members want a Bible that is easier to understand. They seem totally unconcerned about the changes made to make an easy to understand version.

We need to stick with God's Word as it is and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal it to us. Jesus said, "he will guide you into all truth" (Jn 16:13).

Rev. 22:20 He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

These are the last words spoken from heaven.

"These things" refer to all that is written in the book of Revelation.

This is the third of three times in this chapter where Jesus says He will come quickly (v. 7, 12, 20).

The word "surely" means "without doubt". In other words, there is no doubt about the fact that Jesus is coming.

John expressed his personal desire by saying "Even so, come, Lord Jesus". He was ready to get out of this world. No doubt, he longed for deliverance from sin and suffering. Clearly, there was nothing in this world that made him want to stay.

Sadly, not all believers can say the same. Some, though they are saved, are not ready for the Lord's return.

The closing benediction

Rev. 22:21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

John was the last apostle delivering the last Word from God.

This book, and the entire Bible, end by exalting the "grace" of God. God's grace saves us (Rom. 3:24; Eph. 1:6; 2:8; Ti. 3:7), secures us (Eph. 2:9), sanctifies us (1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Tim. 1:9; Ti. 2:11-13), sustains us (Acts 20:24; Eph. 4:2), strengthens us (1 Cor. 3:10; 2 Tim. 2:1; Jam. 4:6; Heb. 4:16) and satisfies us (2 Th. 2:16).

And so we come to the end of the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

God led John to write the seven churches of Asia, and to all of God's children through the ages to come. What he wrote was meant to encourage the weary, strengthen the weak, and warn the wicked.

In this book, we have seen seven churches, the removal of the bride of Christ, the judgment of Israel and unbelievers on earth throughout the Tribulation Period, the rule and defeat of the Antichrist and False Prophet, the return and reign of Christ during the Millennial kingdom, the temporary binding and loosing of the devil, the Great White Throne Judgment, the new heaven and earth, and the eternity future where God will forever reign.

My study of this book has brought me to the conclusion that God told the truth. Those who read, hear, and keep this book do indeed receive a blessing (1:3).

My study of this book has also given me assurance that God is still God and very much in control of the events we see transpiring all around us.

My study of this book has taught me that I can trust the Bible even when I do not understand all its details.

My study of this book has encouraged me to walk on in faith until He comes to get me.

My study of this book has inspired me to say along with my brother John, "Even so, come Lord Jesus".

And so, we conclude our thoughts on the book of Revelation. May our walk through this book make a difference in our daily walk with our Lord.