

# Revelation

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Welcome to a study of *Revelation*. You will find outlines, web links, Bible texts, and interpretation. Probably no book in the Bible has been more written about, this in spite of, or perhaps due to, John's warning

[Authorship](#)

22.18 I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this book; 19 if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away that person's share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

[History](#)

The intent of this study will be to discover what the words are--not to add to them or to take away, but to hear and understand them more clearly. To that end, the reader is provided a *KJV* text; I will be quoting throughout from the *NRSV*.

[Models Interpretation](#)

[Revelation 1](#)

In beginning a study of *Revelation*, I find myself agreeing completely with five principles laid out by the *Oxford Companion to the Bible* (underlining is mine):

[Revelation 2](#)

Through the centuries the Apocalypse has been the object of widely divergent systems of interpretation. It can be best understood when one takes into account the following considerations. (1) This book comprises the substance of real visions that repeat with kaleidoscopic variety certain great principles of God's just and merciful government of the whole creation. By centering attention on these principles, the church in all ages has been encouraged and sustained despite the fiercest antagonisms of both human and demonic foes. (2) The book is written in apocalyptic style, a recognized literary genre (see "[Introduction to the Apocalyptic Literature](#)"). It contains other elements as well, such as the seven letters in [Revelation 2](#) and [Revelation 3](#) and the several prophetic utterances scattered here and there throughout its pages, but its

[Revelation 3](#)

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difficulty will be found to arise largely from our unfamiliarity with apocalyptic writings. (3) As an apocalypse, the message of the book is couched in symbolism, involving numbers, strange beasts, and other typical apocalyptic features. Throughout one must recognize that the author's descriptions are descriptions of the symbols, not of the reality conveyed by the symbol. (4) Although the key for understanding some of the symbols has been lost, in other cases a comparison with the prophetic symbolism of the Old Testament sheds light on the intended meaning. This is understandable in view of the author's frequent allusion to the Greek Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Scriptures; of the 404 verses in Revelation, some 275 include one or more allusions to passages in the Old Testament. (5) The structure of the book involves a series of parallel and yet ever-progressing sections; these bring before the reader, over and over again, but in climactic form, the struggle of the church, and its victory over the world in the providence of God Almighty. There are probably seven of these sections, though only five are clearly marked. The plan of the whole is, then, something like the following: Prologue; [Revelation 1.1–8](#); seven parallel sections divided at [Revelation 3.22](#); [Revelation 8.1](#); [Revelation 11.19](#); [Revelation 14.20](#); [Revelation 16.21](#); and [Revelation 19.21](#); Epilogue, [Revelation 22.6–21](#).

One of the problems found in approaching *Revelation* is the same problem frequently encountered with the *Gospel of John*; the book obviously addresses that which is spiritual and earthly: *Revelation* specifically addresses the end or consummation of time: if, however, the time being addressed is God's time, then one misunderstands completely when placing all events in human time. The problem becomes even more complex: in addition to literal time and eternal time, *Revelation*, also, obviously addresses a historical time--the first century. Generally, it is agreed that "Although parts of the book (e.g. [Revelation 11](#)) may have been reduced to writing before the fall of Jerusalem in a.d. 70, it is probable that the author, whose name is John ([Revelation 1.1](#); [Revelation 1.4](#); [Revelation 1.9](#); [Revelation 22.8](#)), put the book in its present form toward the close of the reign of the Emperor Domitian (a.d. 81 - 96)" (*OCB*).

Concerning comparisons with the *Gospel of John*, the Catholic Encyclopedia points to the following source (underlining is mine):

### THE APOCALYPSE COMPARED WITH THE FOURTH GOSPEL

The relation between the Apocalypse and the Fourth Gospel has been discussed by

**Revelation 22****Conclusions**

authors, both ancient and modern. Some affirm and others deny their mutual resemblance. The learned Alexandrine Bishop, Dionysius, drew up in his time a list of differences to which modern authors have had little to add. He begins by observing that whereas the Gospel is anonymous, the writer of the Apocalypse prefixes his name, John. He next points out how the characteristic terminology of the Fourth Gospel, so essential to the Joannine doctrine, is absent in the Apocalypse. The terms, "life", "light", "grace", "truth", do not occur in the latter. Nor did the crudeness of diction on the part of the Apocalypse escape him. The Greek of the Gospel he pronounces correct as to grammar, and he even gives its author credit for a certain elegance of style. But the language of the Apocalypse appeared to him barbarous and disfigured by solecisms. He, therefore inclines to ascribe the works to different authors (Hist. Eccl., VII, 25). The upholders of a common authorship reply that these differences may be accounted for by bearing in mind the peculiar nature and aim of each work. The Apocalypse contains visions and revelations. In conformity with other books of the same kind, e.g. the Book of Daniel, the Seer prefixed his name to his work. The Gospel on the other hand is written in the form of an historical record. In the Bible, works of that kind do not bear the signature of their authors. So also as regards the absence of Joannine terminology in the Apocalypse. The object of the Gospel is to prove that Jesus is the life and the light of the world, the fullness of truth and grace. But in the Apocalypse Jesus is the conqueror of Satan and his kingdom. The defects of grammar in the Apocalypse are conceded. Some of them are quite obvious. Let the reader but notice the habit of the author to add an apposition in the nominative to a word in an oblique case; e.g. iii, 12; xiv, 12; xx, 2. It further contains some Hebrew idioms: e.g. the Hebrew word equivalent to erchomenos, "the one that is to come", instead of esomenos, i, 8. But it should be borne in mind that when the Apostle first came to Ephesus he was, probably wholly ignorant of the Greek tongue. The comparative purity and smoothness of diction in the Gospel may be adequately accounted for by the plausible conjecture that its literary composition was not the work of St. John but of one of his pupils. The defenders of the identity of authorship further appeal to the striking fact that in both works Jesus is called the Lamb and the Word. The idea of the lamb making atonement for sin by its blood is taken from Isaias, liii. Throughout the Apocalypse the portraiture of Jesus is that of the lamb. Through the shedding of its blood it has opened the book with seven seals and has triumphed over Satan. In the Gospel Jesus is pointed out by the Baptist as the "Lamb of God . . . him who taketh away the sin of the world" (John, i, 29). Some of the circumstances of His death resemble the rite observed in the eating of the paschal lamb, the symbol of redemption. His crucifixion takes place on the selfsame day on which the Passover was eaten (John xviii, 28). Whilst hanging on the cross. His executioners did not break the bones in His body, that the prophecy might be fulfilled: "no bone in it shall be broken" (John, xix, 36).

The name Logos, "Word", is quite peculiar to the Apocalypse, Gospel and first Epistle of St. John. The first sentence of the Gospel is, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God". The first epistle of St. John begins, "That which was from the beginning which we have heard . . . of the word of life". So also in the Apocalypse, "And his name is called the Word of God" (xix, 13).

The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume I

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Bart D. Ehrman (*The New Testament: A Historical Interpretation of the Early Christian Writers*, Oxford 1997) in discussing the author for *Revelation* also makes a comparison between the *Gospel of John* and *Revelation*:

1. "One of the ironies of the New Testament is that the Fourth Gospel, which does not claim to be written by someone named John, is called John, whereas the book of Revelation, which does claim to be written by someone named John, is not called by that name."
2. Theological emphases are different: "In the Gospel of John there is virtually no concern for the coming end of age (contrast the Synoptics, with their proclamation of the imminent arrival of the Son of Man); in the book of Revelation, the end is nearly the entire concern."
3. Writing styles are different: "the author of Revelation was principally literate in a Semitic language, probably Aramaic, and knew Greek, as a second language. His Greek is clumsy in places, sometimes even ungrammatical. This is not at all the case with the Gospel of John, which is written in an entirely different style and therefore by a different author."
4. When the author of Revelation, mentions the Apostles, he does not mention being one of them (21.14), and when he talks about the twenty-four elders around the throne of God, we have no indication he sees himself (21.12,14).
5. The Beast of Babylon is said to have seven horns on its head, representing seven rulers, but with which ruler should we begin counting?

Another problem is, of course, the nature of apocalypse; as apocalypse, the

language is couched in imagery, myth, and symbolism. *Revelation* repeats themes and motifs; the book as a whole suggests eponymous meanings or literary representations. The writer examines the relationship between God and humankind; he writes, characteristic of the Hebrew-Christian Bible, a morality story in which readers learn about every mortal's wrestling with destiny and place within it. One reads about seven churches which will come to represent churches generally. The Old Jerusalem to New Jerusalem tells the story of how human beings understand and accept all history as being contained in the creation, if they are pious individuals. As individuals await closure in their historical worlds, they wrestle with their own ambitions and pride, created after all in the image of an autonomous God. Like God, they can choose what they want to call good. What humans call good and what God pronounces good will often conflict. Human will seeks to exert itself apart from Divine will; in temporal time, cycles of obedience, disobedience, punishment, destruction, and new creations and beginnings spend themselves out in the face of an absolute beginning and end. An autonomous Creator judges creation justly, delaying absolute ends, acting steadfastly in mercy. This point is illustrated in *Revelation* by the half hour delay after the opening of the seventh seal. Such cosmic pauses, almost as if the Creator is thinking about action, occur from *Genesis* to *Revelation*. Could it be God made a mistake on the sixth day in creating male and female in His own image? These limited and finite beings wrestle to understand themselves and God but become frustrated by tensions between their experiences of change and transformation against the backdrop of the lasting and permanent, the eternal. Only metaphor can connect these two worlds.

Apocalypse, as a specific literary genre, shares the following literary features (Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, Oxford 1997): pseudonymity (written in the name of a famous person of the past), bizarre symbolic visions (grotesque beasts, bizarre images, strange faces, mysterious events), violent repetitions (spiral effect so that life and suffering go on even when climactic end seems to have been reached), triumphalist movement (provides hope for the suffering and despairing), and a motivational function (exhorts readers to remain faithful to their religious convictions).

D.S. Russell in the *Oxford Companion* describes the literary features of apocalypse:

**Literary Features.** The apocalypse is recognized by many scholars as a distinct literary genre expressing itself, as we have seen, in terms of divine disclosure, transcendent reality, and final redemption. As such, it shares with other related apocalyptic books certain literary features that are worthy of note:

***Revelation through visionary experience.*** This is a stock-in-trade of these writings, though visions may be replaced by dreams, trances,

auditions, and visual/physical transference to the ends of the earth or to heaven itself. The ancient seer (in whose name the author writes) is confronted with the heavenly mysteries, either directly or as mediated by an angel, and is bidden to record what he has seen and heard.

In so doing, the writer often makes use of two literary devices that, though not confined to the apocalyptic writings, are a common feature. The first is that of secret books, in which the seer is bidden to conceal these mysteries until the end time, when he will reveal them to the wise as a sign that the end is now at hand. The second is that of pseudonymity, whereby the author writes in the name of some honored person of antiquity, such as Adam, Enoch, Abraham, Moses, or Ezra. The intention is not to deceive but rather to strengthen the conviction that the apocalypticist is transmitting a long and authoritative tradition. The same device is followed in Christian apocalypses, such as those of Peter and Paul, but not in the book of Revelation, where it is enough that the writer should declare in his own name the revelations he himself has received directly from his risen Lord.

***Symbolic imagery.*** Symbolism, it has been said, is the language of the apocalyptic style of writing, a code language rich in imagery culled both from biblical and from Canaanite and Babylonian traditions. Generally speaking, the code is fairly easily recognizable: wild beasts represent the gentile nations, animal horns are gentile rulers, people are angels, and so on. Elsewhere it is less easily broken, particularly where vestiges of early myths have no obvious relation to the content of the book itself.

***Tracts for the times.*** The apocalyptic books, particularly those "historical" apocalypses of Palestinian origin, were in many cases the product of their age and its political and economic climate. As tracts for the times, they were written to encourage those who were oppressed and saw little or no hope in terms of either politics or armed might. Their message was that God himself would intervene and reverse the situation in which they found themselves, delivering the godly from the hands of the wicked and establishing his rule for all to see. Sometimes such encouragement is given in the form of discourse in which the revelation of God's sovereignty is disclosed; at other times, as in the book of Daniel, it takes the form of a story or legend concerning the ancient worthy in whose name the book is written.

Such features are not peculiar to the apocalyptic books, but their form of presentation, together with their recurring theme of revealed secrets and divine intervention, indicates an identifiable and distinct body of literature within Judaism that, though sharing the ideals of prophecy, is nevertheless markedly different from it.

Russell also says the following themes are common to apocalypse:

***History and "the end."*** The whole of history is a unity under the overarching purpose of God. It is divided, however, into great epochs that must run their predetermined course; only then will the end come, and with it the dawning of the messianic kingdom and the age to come when evil will be routed and righteousness established forever...

***Cosmic cataclysm.*** The coming end will be "a time of anguish, such as has never occurred since nations first came into existence" ([Daniel 12.1](#)). Sometimes this is described in terms of political action and military struggle; at other times the conflict assumes cosmic proportions involving mysterious happenings on earth and in the heavens—earthquakes, famine, fearful celestial portents, and destruction by fire. Such things find an echo in the New Testament, where it is said that in the last days there will be an eclipse of the sun, and the stars will fall from heaven ([Mark 13.24–25](#))...

***The consummation.*** The coming kingdom is, generally speaking, to be established here on this earth; in some instances it has a temporary duration, and is followed by the age to come for, as 2 Esdras puts it, "The Most High has made not one world but two" ([2 Esdras 7.50](#)). In this new divine order, the end will be as the beginning and paradise will be restored. "Dualism" is sometimes used to describe the discontinuity between this age and the age to come, but continuity remains: generally speaking, this earth (albeit renewed or restored) is the scene of God's deliverance...

He further distinguishes prophecy and apocalypse:

However closely related prophecy and apocalyptic may be, they are to be distinguished from each other in at least two respects: whereas the prophets for the most part declare God's word to his or her own generation, the apocalypticists record revelations said to have been made known by God to some great hero in earlier times and now to be revealed in a "secret" book at the end of the days; and whereas the prophets see the realization of God's purpose within the historical process, the apocalypticists see that purpose reaching its culmination not just within history but above and beyond history in that supramundane realm where God dwells.

With Russell's points in mind, one also should not read more into apocalypse than what is there; interpretations of *Revelation* tend to become fantastic. The careful reader will determine, though, that *Revelation* generally interprets itself; this includes simple explanation of symbols (for example, the angels and lamp stands (1.20). Themes progress to interpret each other: (4.8 "I have set before you an open door." 4.20 "I am standing at the door knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come into you and eat with you and you with me." 4.1 "I looked and there in heaven a door stood open." Numbers tend to represent completeness, fullness, and limitation (seven angels, seven lamp stands, four angels at the four corners of the earth, 144, 000 equals twelve (the number of disciples and apostles) times twelve plus zeroes; even colors suggest a natural use: red for war and violence (blood); white for righteous and pure; black for death; green for famine. Probably, the temptation to elaborate and fantastic interpretation result from apocalypticists seeing God's purpose reaching culmination not just within history "but above and beyond history in that supramundane realm where God dwells." The reader does well to return to the *Gospel of John* and rehearse the difficulties inherent within two realms: the earthly and heavenly, the temporal and eternal, the finite and infinite. In the biblical morality story, a cosmic irony is created as human beings understand and accept their fates or rebel against their Creator and time.



Professor Felix Just provides the following definitions of apocalypse:

Apocalypse: Definitions and Related Terms  
Prof. Felix Just, S.J. - Loyola Marymount University

Preliminary Description of "Apocalypse":

In popular terminology today, an "apocalypse" is a catastrophic event (e.g., nuclear holocaust). In biblical terminology, an "apocalypse" is not an event, but a "revelation" that is recorded in written form: it is a piece of crisis literature that "reveals" truths about the past, present, and/or future in highly symbolic terms; the revelation often comes in dreams or visions, and usually needs to be interpreted with the help of an angel; it is usually intended to provide hope and encouragement for people in the midst of severe trials and tribulations.

Caution: "The Apocalypse" is an alternate name (used esp. by Protestants) for "The Book of Revelation" in the New Testament. Also, "The Little Apocalypse" or "The Apocalyptic Discourse" are names sometimes given to Mark 13 (and the parallel passages in Matt 24 and Luke 21), containing the teachings of Jesus about the future of Jerusalem and the end of the world.

Scholarly Definition of "Apocalypse" (from SBL "Apocalypse Group"; published in J. J. Collins, *Semeia* 14 [1979] 9):

" 'Apocalypse' is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework,  
in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient,  
disclosing a transcendent reality with is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation,  
and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world."

Definition addition regarding the genre's purpose, incorporating suggestions of Hellholm (1982) & Aune (1986):

"...intended to interpret the present, earthly circumstances in light of the supernatural world and of the future,  
and to influence both the understanding and the behavior of the audience by means of divine authority."

### Subdivisions or Types of Apocalypses:

Apocalypses can be classified according to features in their **CONTENT**:

Some apocalypses contain "Otherworldly Journeys" (e.g., the seer is purportedly taken on a tour of heaven)

Others do not contain "Otherworldly Journeys" (e.g., while seeing heavenly things, the seer stays on earth)

Apocalypses can also be classified according to their primary **REFERENTS**:

Some apocalypses deal with Personal Eschatology (the death and after-life of individuals)

Others focus more on Ethnic or National Eschatology (the end of a nation or empire)

Many others contain Cosmic Eschatology (the ultimate end of the whole world)

### Related Terminology:

Apocalyptic (adj.) - originally referred to anything "revelatory"; now usually refers to catastrophic violence or disasters.

Apocalypticism - a world view with strong apocalyptic expectations; social movements that expect the end of the world.

Eschatology / Eschatological - any teaching about the “end” times and/or the future world beyond the end of normal time.

Prophecy / Prophetic - not “foretelling the future”; but speaking & acting on behalf of God about past, present or future truths.

Revelation - an “uncovering” of something which has always been true, but previously hidden or unknown to humans.

Day of the Lord / Judgment Day - a cosmic event expected in the future, but the specific expectations vary.

Parousia - the “coming” or “arrival” of any important figure, esp. of Jesus at the end of time, in early Christian expectations.

Rapture - a fairly new term for the expectation that faithful Christians will be taken off the earth to live with Jesus, while all other people are not; based on an overly literal misinterpretation of 1Thess 4:15-17.

Tribulation - in fundamentalist expectations, a 7-year period of great suffering and turmoil before the Second Coming of Christ; but exactly when the rapture is to occur in relation to the tribulation is disputed among such believers:

- Pre-Tribulation Rapture - non-believers have to endure the 7-year tribulation, but believers are raptured first;
- Mid-Tribulation Rapture - believers must endure 3½ years of tribulation before they are raptured;
- Post-Tribulation Rapture - believers must endure the entire 7-year tribulation before they are raptured.

Dispensationalism - the belief that world history is divided into a certain number of eras or "dispensations," which usually also implies the belief that one is living in the last (or next-to-last) dispensation before the end of the world and/or the beginning of God's Kingdom.

Armageddon / Harmagedon - the place (Megiddo) where the final battle is to occur, according to Rev 16:16.

Millennium - any one-thousand year period; or more specifically, the thousand year period of peace described in Rev 20:1-6.

Millennialist / -ism - religious groups that expect Rev 20 to occur literally, and often try to calculate exact times.

Millenarian / -ianism - religious or secular groups that look forward to or prepare for the end of the world

Premillennialism / Premilleniaism - belief that the 1000-year reign of peace will come only after the great tribulation and the return of Jesus, so one must be prepared to endure the worst; also called "Catastrophic Millennialism."

Postmillennialism / Postmilleniaism - belief that the 1000-year reign of peace must be established on earth by human beings and

societies, and that Jesus will return only at the end of that time; also called "Progressive Millennialism."

Cautions:

not every Apocalypse is purely eschatological (they may also interpret past or present events, not only the future)  
not all Eschatology is apocalyptic (some look forward to a future that is peaceful, not violent).

[http://clawww.lmu.edu/faculty/fjust/Handouts/Apoc\\_Def.htm](http://clawww.lmu.edu/faculty/fjust/Handouts/Apoc_Def.htm)

In *The Bible as Literature: An Introduction*, 4th edition (Oxford 2000) Gabel, Wheeler and York urge readers "to think of Revelation as a piece of literature in which religious and mythic materials are shaped in the form of a conventional apocalypse, for the conventional apocalyptic purpose of providing comfort to the suffering faithful" and suggest that in doing so, they will discover "much of the mysteriousness of the book" has been cut through but add "Not all of the mysteriousness, of course, for symbol and myth by their very nature cannot have firm walls set about them to confine their meaning" (157).

Setting firm walls, however, is exactly what human beings often decide to do, not realizing those walls can be only as expansive as limited, finite vision. This must be why in the *Old Testament* and in the *New*, apocalyptic vision cycles through layers of endings and new beginnings; for in history, one will continue to find the Present Age and the Age to Come; to make sense of the cycle, one must move outside history to find the eternally static. Within history, one can look back only to the last cycle and to enmeshment in the present one. That it will come to end is the faith expressed in both *Testaments*, for God is firmly in control of history and eternal purpose. It should also not be surprising to find the *New Testament* accomplishing what had been prophesied and discovered as a pattern in the *Old Testament*: God would do for Christians what God had accomplished for the Hebrew. Only as one embraces both the mythic beginning in Eden and the utopian New Jerusalem in *Revelation* can one step outside historical bounds and address the end of the Present Age and the beginning of the Age to Come, eternally. To get there, the Hebrew were guided by the Torah and Christians by the cross.

Another problem in approaching *Revelation* as apocalypse is that the reader should keep in mind that apocalypse led to bitter disappointment for Jews; "Judaism turned away from the apocalyptic fashion of thought and concentrated instead on

working out the contemporary significance of the ancient law" (Gabel, Wheeler, and York, 159); "But the same was not true of first-century Christians...[who found] its promises on the verge of fulfillment." To accomplish this, they admitted God's power had not yet been openly and fully displayed but that a *first coming* had occurred to be followed by a *second coming* which would end the Present Age and inaugurate the final one.

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## Study of Revelation

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# Outlines

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(I will follow the outline of the Oxford Companion to the Bible most closely.)

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Edwin D. Freed, *The New Testament: A Critical Introduction*

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### **Outline (Oxford Companion to the Bible, John Sweet)**

Oxford

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Seven letters warning against deception and lawlessness (cf. [Matthew 24.4](#); [Matthew 24.5](#); [Matthew 24.9–12](#))

#### **Revelation 4–7.**

Seven seals on a heavenly scroll, opened by the Lamb

#### **Revelation 6**

War, famine, plague ([Matthew 24.6–8](#); birthpangs of the new age)

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God's servants sealed: 144,000

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**Revelation 14**

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## [Revelation 16](#)

Disasters for the beast's worshipers and city ([Exodus 7–11 again](#))

## [Revelation 17–18](#)

Destruction of the whore, Babylon

## Revelation 19–20

Coming of Christ, the millennium, and the last judgment  
([Matthew 24.27–31](#))

## Revelation 21

Descent of the bride, New Jerusalem, in counterpoint with the fall of Babylon ([Revelation 17.1](#) and [Revelation 21.9](#))

In the three series of disasters there is both recapitulation—each covers the same ground—and development. The seals serve as overture, centering on the "beginning of the birthpangs" ([Matthew 24.8](#)). The trumpets lead up to the "desolating sacrilege" ([Matthew 24.15](#)), Rome and its emperor. The bowls set out their destruction and the "coming of the Son of Man" ([Matthew 24.27](#))—bridegroom and bride over against beast and harlot.

Two further structural points are important for interpreting the book. Enclosing the scenes of destruction are the visions of God, creator and redeemer ([Revelation 4](#) and [Revelation 5](#)), and of the new creation ([Revelation 21](#)): the destructions are not simply negative; the rebelliousness of earth is finally overcome. Enclosing all the visions is the epistolary opening and ending: the whole disclosure is a message to Christians of the day in their particular situations. Scattered among the visions are calls for discernment and fidelity ([Revelation 13.9](#); [Revelation 13.10](#); [Revelation 13.18](#); [Revelation 14.12](#); [Revelation 16.15](#); [Revelation 17.9](#)).

This analysis suggests that the aim of John's revelation was to warn the churches against compromise with the religious, social, and economic values of a world heading for self-destruction because of its idolatry, and to encourage them in the witness to

God and purity of life which alone could defeat the deceptions of Satan and his minions. The letters to the churches show that some were sliding into a worldly lifestyle ([Revelation 2.14](#); [Revelation 2.20](#)), while others were asleep ([Revelation 3.2](#)), complacent ([Revelation 3.17](#)), or lacking in love ([Revelation 2.4](#)). There is wholehearted praise only for Smyrna ([Revelation 2.8–11](#)) and Philadelphia ([Revelation 3.7–13](#)), where faithful Christians were suffering on behalf of Christ.

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John Sweet  
**A Suggested Practical Outline:**

**PROLOGUE (1:1-8)**

The Introduction of the Book (1:1-3)  
 An Epistolary Prescript (1:4-6)  
 Two Prophetic Sayings (1:7-8)

**VISIONARY REPORT (1:9 - 22:5)**

*John's Inaugural Vision & Commission (1:9 - 3:22)*

An Audition and Vision of the Risen Christ (1:9-20)  
 Seven Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia (2:1 - 3:22)  
     Ephesus (2:1-7); Smyrna (2:8-11);  
     Pergamum (2:12-17); Thyatira (2:18-29); Sardis (3:1-6);  
     Philadelphia (3:7-13); Laodicea (3:14-22)

*John's First Cycle of Visions in the Spirit (4:1 -*

*11:19)*

Worship in the Heavenly Court (4:1-11)  
 The Scroll, the Lion of Judah, and the Lamb (5:1-14)  
 The Seven Seals (6:1 - 8:5)  
     The first four seals (6:1-8)  
     The fifth and sixth seals (6:9-17)  
     Two interrupting visions:  
         144,000 Israelites sealed by God (7:1-8)  
             Countless Gentiles robed in white (7:9-17)  
         The seventh seal and the angel with a golden censer (8:1-5)  
 The Seven Angels with Seven Trumpets (8:2 - 11:19)  
     The first four trumpets (8:2-12)  
     The fifth and sixth trumpets (8:13; 9:1-21)  
     Two interrupting visions:  
         An angel with a small scroll (10:1-11)  
             The temple and two witnesses (11:1-14)  
         The seventh trumpet (11:15-19)

*John's Second Cycle of Visions in the Spirit (12:1 - 22:5)*

Seven Symbolic Visions of the Past, Present & Future (12:1-15:4)  
     The Woman, the Child, and the Dragon (12:1-17)  
         The First Beast, from the Sea (13:1-10)  
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- The Lamb and the 144,000 (14:1-5)
- The Three Angels with Messages (14:6-13)
- The Final Harvest and Vintage (14:14-20)
- The Victory Song of Moses and of the Lamb (15:1-4)
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  - The Seven Bowls (16:1-21)
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    - The whore on the scarlet beast: Rome (17:1-18)
    - The fall of Babylon: Rome's destruction (18:1-24)
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- Seven Visions of the Last Things (19:11 - 22:5)
  - The Coming of Christ, the Word of God (19:11-16)
  - The Invitation to a Great Banquet (19:17-18)
    - The Final Battle (19:19-21)
    - The Binding of Satan (20:1-3)
    - The Millennial Reign (20:4-10)
    - The Final Judgement (20:11-15)
    - The New Heaven, New Earth, New Jerusalem (21:1-8)
  - An Elaboration on the New Jerusalem (21:9 - 22:5)
- CONCLUSION (22:6-21)
  - A Collection of Short Prophetic Sayings (22:6-20)
  - An Epistolary Benediction (22:21)

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**Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza**, "Revelation," in *Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, Jude, Revelation* (Proclamation Commentaries; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977) 103-108.

1:1-8 - Introduction and Theme

1:9 - 3:22 - Seven Prophetic-Apocalyptic Letters of the Resurrected Lord

4:1 - 19:10 - Main Body: The Seven-Sealed Scroll; including:  
Seven Seals (6:1-8:1); Seven Trumpets (8:2-9:21; 11:15-19); Seven Bowls (15:1, 5-16:21)

Babylon Visions (17:1-19:10) as an extension of the bowl septet

Inserted: Small Scroll and miscellaneous visions (most of 10:1-15:4)

19:11 - 22:5 - Visions of Judgement and Salvation

22:6-21 - Concluding Admonitions, Announcements, and Prayers

**Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza**, *Invitation to the Book of Revelation* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981) 7.

A. Prologue and Epistolary Greeting (1:1-8)

B. The Prophetic Messages to the Churches (1:9 - 3:22)

C. Christ: The Eschatological Liberator and Regent (4:1 - 9:21)

D. The Prophetic Community and Its Oppressors (10:1 - 15:4)

C'. The Trial and Sentencing of Babylon/Rome (15:5 - 19:10)

B'. Eschatological Judgment and Salvation (19:11 - 22:9)

A'. Epilogue and Epistolary Frame (22:10-21)

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## Catholic Encyclopedia

### STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK AND ITS LITERARY COMPOSITION

The subject-matter of the Apocalypse required a threefold division.

The first part comprises the seven exhortatory letters. The leading idea in the second part is the wisdom of Christ. It is symbolized by the book with seven seals. In it are written the eternal decrees of God touching the end of the world, and the final victory of good over evil. No one except Jesus, the lamb slain for the sins of the world, is worthy to break the seals and read its contents. The third part describes the power of Christ over Satan and his kingdom. The lamb defeats the dragon and the beast. This idea is developed in a drama of five acts. In five successive scenes we see before us the struggle, the fall of Babylon the harlot, the victory, and final beatitude.

The third part is not only the most important, but also the most successful from a literary point of view. The drama of the lamb contains several beautiful thoughts of lasting value. The lamb, symbolizing gentleness and purity, conquers the beast, the personification of lust and cruelty. The harlot signifies idolatry. The fornication which the rulers and the nations of the earth commit with her signifies the worship they pay to the images of Caesar and the tokens of his power. The second part is inferior in literary beauty. It contains much that is taken from the Old Testament, and it is full of extravagant imagery. The Seer shows a fanciful taste for all that

is weird and grotesque. He delights in portraying locusts with hair like that of women and horses with tails like serpents. There are occasional passages revealing a sense of literary beauty. God removes the curtain of the firmament as a scribe rolls up his scrolls. The stars fall from the heavens like figs from the fig-tree shaken by the storm (vi, 12-14). On the whole, however the Seer shows more love for Oriental splendour than the appreciation of true beauty (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01594b.htm>)

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## Summary of the Book of Revelation

By H. A. (Buster) Dobbs

### I. Introduction (1:1-20).

A. Writer and communicators of this book (1:1-9).

1. The writer of the book is John the apostle (1:1,4,9).

2. It is the revelation of Jesus Christ (1:1,5,9).

a. Given to Jesus by Jehovah (1:1).

b. For the benefit of the servants of Jesus (1:1).

3. The message was expressed in signs by an angel (1:1).

4. Qualifications of the writer of the book (1:2).

a. Bore witness of the word of God (1:2,9; 1 John 1:1-2)

b. Witnessed the testimony of Jesus (1:2,9).

B. Blessing on readers and hearers of this book (1:3).

C. Book written to the seven churches in Asia (1:4-6).

1. Grace and peace to the seven churches (1:4).

2. The grace and peace comes from Jehovah, and the seven-fold

- Spirit, and from Jesus (1:4-5).
- D. Benefits coming to us from the Lord (1:5-6).
1. Jesus is the faithful witness, firstborn of the dead, ruler of the kings of earth (1:5).
  2. Jesus removes our sins by his blood, and makes us a kingdom of priests (1:5-6).
  3. Jesus comes with the clouds (a heavenly host) (1:7).
  4. The coming will be public (1:7).
  5. He is first and last and Almighty (1:8).
- E. Revelation made to John on Patmos (1:9-16).
1. John was in the spirit on the Lord's day (1:10-11).
    - a. Heard a voice like a trumpet (1:10).
    - b. The voice told him to write what he was about to see and give it to the seven churches (1:11).
  2. John saw Jesus walking in the midst of seven golden candlesticks (1:12-13).
    - a. John describes a spectacular vision of Jesus in his glory (1:13-16)
    - b. Jesus holds in his hand seven stars (1:16).
- F. John's reaction was to fall like a dead man at the feet of Jesus (1:17-20).
1. John is comforted and told to write what he is about to see (1:17-20).
    - a. Jesus is the first and the last (1:17).
    - b. He is the living one, though once dead he is alive for ever more (1:18).
    - c. Jesus has the keys of death and Hades (1:18).
    - d. John is told to write this revelation and prophecy (1:19).
  2. Mystery of the seven stars and candlesticks (1:20).
    - a. The stars represent angels (messengers) (1:20).
    - b. The candlesticks represent churches (1:20).
- II. Letters to the seven churches of Asia (2:1 to 3:22).
- A. To the church at Ephesus (2:1-7).
1. Addressed to the angel of the church (2:1).
    - a. Angel means messenger, or to deliver a message.
    - b. It is most often used of an order of created beings, superior to man and belonging to heaven (Heb. 2:7; Psa. 8:5; Matt. 24:36; Mark 12:25).

- c. The devil has angels (Matt. 25:41).
  - d. Any messenger of God is an angel. The priest who taught the law is called a messenger (Hebrew: angel) of Jehovah (Mal. 2:7).
  - e. The evangelist of the various churches is called an angel--messenger of Jehovah--because he taught the people by reading to them the word of God and explaining its meaning (2:1).
2. The message is from Jesus (1:5; 2:1).
  3. The Ephesian church praised (2:2).
    - a. They worked (2:2).
    - b. They rejected evil men--false teachers (2:2).
    - c. They tried men who called themselves apostles and found them false (2:2). The Ephesians were too well informed to be carried away with false apostles. Many in our day can not detect a false apostle because they do not know what the true apostles taught.
    - d. They were not weary in well doing (2:3).
  4. Complaint against the Ephesian church (2:4).
    - a. Left their first love (2:4).
    - b. Repent and do your first works (2:5).
    - c. Life needs changing toward God only to the degree it has changed from God.
    - d. The Ephesians were guilty of growing cold in the basic doctrines of the church. Having heard it often, they were tired of hearing it. They were to revive the old time zeal.
  5. Terrible threat against Ephesus (2:5).
    - a. The demand to repent (2:5).
    - b. The warning of removing the candlestick (2:5)--the candlestick represents the church (1:20).
    - c. A faithful church can be rejected because of indifference to truth and be removed (2:5).
  6. Continues praise (2:6).
    - a. They hated the works of the Nicolaitans (2:6).
    - b. Jesus hates the works of the heretics and so should we (2:6).
    - c. Jesus approves the first stand of the church at Ephesus against false teachers (2:6).
  7. The victorious servant would be given to eat of the tree of

- life in the paradise of God (2:7; Gen. 3:22; Rev. 22:2,14).
- B. To the church at Smyrna (2:8-11).
1. The authority of Jesus (2:8, Rom. 1:4).
  2. Jesus knew about their suffering (2:9).
  3. Though they had tribulation and poverty, they were rich in spiritual possessions (2:9).
  4. The synagogue of Satan in Smyrna (2:9).
    - a. Jews who would not accept Jesus were not really Jews.
    - b. They did not walk after the example of Abraham (John 8:39-40).
  5. Physical suffering is not to be feared (2:10).
    - a. They were to have tribulation 10 days (a full but brief period) (2:10).
    - b. Satan was about to throw them in prison--the devil is the source of all our misery (2:10).
  6. Jesus promised to them a crown of life (2:10).
  7. To overcome is to remain faithful and therefore not be hurt of the second death (2:11).
- C. To the church in Pergamum (2:12-17).
1. Jesus wielded a sharp sword with two edges (2:12). He is capable of punishing the wicked.
  2. Pergamum was the dwelling place of Satan (2:13).
    - a. A hotbed of sin and persecution. Antipas, a faithful servant, had been killed by forces of evil (2:13).
    - b. It is possible to be pure in a wicked environment (2:13).
    - c. The battle is the Lord's and the victory will be ours.
  3. Some in the church in Pergamum tolerated the teaching of Balaam and followed his example, and the rest did not condemn them (2:14).
    - a. Balaam taught Balak to put a stumbling block in the way of the children of Israel (2:14).
    - b. In Numbers 21, 22, 23 we are told of his crime. He wanted money. When he could get it for placing a curse on God's chosen people, he instructed Balak to entice Israel with lewd carousing. They sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play. They committed idolatry and fornication and fell in one day three and twenty thousand (2:14).
  4. The teaching of the Nicolaitans was like that of Balaam

- (2:15).
5. Repent or be destroyed (2:16).
  6. Jesus promises those who overcome the hidden manna a white stone and a new name (2:17).
- D. To the church in Thyatira (2:18-29).
1. Jesus has eyes like fire and feet like burnished brass (2:18).
  2. Thyatira had a mixture of good and bad (2:19-24).
    - a. Some did good things and displayed love, faith, service, and patience; they were more zealous now than when first converted (2:19).
    - b. Others allowed the woman Jezebel to tempt the servants of Christ to commit fornication and worship idols (2:20).
    - c. She had not repented, though she had time (2:21).
    - d. Jesus would bring upon this Jezebel and her followers terrible destruction (2:21-23).
    - e. Each person is rewarded according to his works (2:23).
    - f. To those not seduced into "tasting the deep things of Satan" Jesus added no burden to their already faithful service (2:24).
  3. Rewards promised to those who overcome (2:25-29).
    - a. Authority of the nations (2:26-27).
    - b. He shall receive the morning star (2:28).
  4. Pay attention to what is said (2:29).
- E. To the church at Sardis (3:1-6).
1. Jesus is the revealer of truth and the Lord of faithful ministers (3:1).
  2. Condition of the church at Sardis (3:2-3).
    - a. Had a name for living, but was dead (3:2).
    - b. They had no perfected works before God (3:3).
  3. A call to repentance (3:4). A warning of sudden destruction (3:4).
  4. A few in Sardis were undefiled and would walk with Christ in white because they were worthy (3:4).
  5. Rewards promised for the faithful few (3:5-6).
    - a. White garments (3:5).
    - b. Name not blotted out of the book of life (3:5).
    - c. To be confessed before the Father and the angels (3:5).
    - d. Listen to what is said (3:6).

- F. To the church at Philadelphia (3:7-13).
  - 1. Jesus is true and has the highest authority and power--the key of David (3:7).
  - 2. Jesus alone can open and shut the door of blessing and opportunity (3:7).
    - a. If he shuts the door, no one can open it (3:7).
    - b. Be sure he does not shut the door against you.
  - 3. The promise of the Lord to these saints (3:9).
    - a. I know your works (3:8).
    - b. I give you favorable circumstances (3:8).
    - c. You have a little power because you kept my word and did not deny my name (3:8).
  - 4. They would prevail over the Jewish accusers and scoffers (3:9).
    - a. At the judgment these false Jews would worship at the feet of the faithful in Sardis (3:9).
    - b. They would then know whom Christ loves (3:9).
  - 5. The reward (3:10-13).
    - a. You hold fast to me and I will keep you (3:10).
    - b. No man can take away your crown (3:11).
    - c. The victor will be a pillar in the temple (3:12).
    - d. He shall be stable and branded with the name of Christ Jesus (3:12).
    - e. Hear my words (3:13).
- G. To the church at Laodicea (3:14-22).
  - 1. Jesus is faithful and the true witness, the ruler of all creation (3:14).
  - 2. The lukewarm church was not acceptable (3:15-16).
  - 3. His plea to the tepid church (3:17-22).
    - a. They thought they were rich and had need of nothing, but were poor, blind, and naked (3:17).
    - b. Jesus advised them to "buy" from him gold, clothes, and eyesalve (3:18).
    - c. The rebuke of Christ is proof of his love (3:19).
    - d. Jesus begs admittance and promises blessings, including a royal crown and a place in his eternal throne (3:20-21).
    - e. He implores us to listen (3:22).
- III. Visions (4:1 to 19:21).

- A. The seals (4:1 to 8:1).
  - 1. Invitation to enter the throne room of God (4:1).
    - a. Saw a door opened in heaven (4:1).
    - b. A trumpet voice saying, Come up here (4:1).
    - c. John to see in prophetic vision the things which will come to pass in the future of the world (4:1).
  - 2. The vision of heaven (4:2 to 5:14).
    - a. John was in the spirit (4:2).
    - b. John saw Jehovah sitting on his throne--he was radiant and glorious and dazzling (4:2-3).
    - c. The 24 elders surrounding the throne (4:4).
    - d. The sevenfold Spirit (4:5).
    - e. The sea of glass and the four living creatures (4:6-8; see also Ezekiel 1:4-28).
    - f. The cherubim and elders worship the triune God (4:9-11).
    - g. Jehovah holds a book sealed with 7 seals (5:1).
    - h. No one in all the universe was worthy to break the seals and open the book (5:2-3).
    - i. John wept because the book was unopened (5:4).
    - j. The Lamb of God advances to open the book (5:5-8).
    - k. The heavenly host worships the triune God (5:9-14).
  - 3. First seal opened (6:1-2).
    - a. A white horse and its rider appear (6:2).
    - b. The rider had a bow and a crown--he came to conquer (6:2; see Rev. 19:11).
  - 4. Second seal opened (6:3).
    - a. A red fiery horse of war appears with his rider taking peace from the earth (6:4).
  - 5. Third seal opened (6:5).
    - a. A black horse, representing economic hardship, appears (6:5).
    - b. Its rider has a balance in his hand--food is scarce and expensive (6:6).
  - 6. Fourth seal opened (6:7-8).
    - a. A pale (livid or greenish) horse representing death followed by Hades appears (6:8).
    - b. People are killed by sword, famine and wild beasts--suggesting persecution--others died of pestilence (death)

(6:8).

7. Fifth seal opened (6:9-11).

a. The martyred saints under the altar are crying for vengeance (6:10).

b. They are given white robes (representing purity) and told to wait for a little time until their brethren had fulfilled their course (6:11).

8. Sixth seal opened (6:12-17).

a. This vision represents the final judgment. It shows the atmosphere around the earth removed, the earth shaken, stars falling to earth, and people of every class terrified (6:12-17).

9. Seventh seal opened (7:1-17).

a. The destruction is suspended until the saints are sealed on their foreheads (7:1-3).

b. The number of saved includes many Jews from every tribe, but a limited number--not all (7:4-8).

c. In addition there was a great, uncountable multitude and of every nation and tribe (7:9-10).

d. The angelic host, the 24 elders and the cherubim again worship the triune God (7:11-12).

e. The saved, composed of a limited number of Jews and a great mass of Gentiles, having washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, stand before the throne and are comforted (7:13-17).

f. There was a silence in heaven for about the space of half an hour (8:1).

B. The trumpets (8:2 to 11:19).

1. Preparation for the sounding of the trumpets (8:2-6).

a. The saints in tribulation and persecution pray. An angel added incense to the prayers of the suffering soldiers of Christ (8:3-4).

b. Fire from the golden altar is thrown upon the earth and there followed thunders, and voices, and lightning, and an earthquake (8:5).

c. "The seven angels that had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound" (8:6).

2. First trumpet (8:7)

- a. A storm of fire and hail mixed with blood (8:7).
  - b. A third part of the earth, trees, and green grass were burned up (8:7).
3. Second trumpet (8:8-9).
- a. A great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea (8:8).
  - b. A third part of the sea creatures and the ships were destroyed (8:9).
4. Third trumpet (8:10-11).
- a. A burning star falls into inland waterways (8:10).
  - b. The water is no longer drinkable but is bitter and fatal (8:11).
5. Fourth trumpet (8:12-13).
- a. Sun, moon and stars were smitten and darkened (8:12).
  - b. A flying eagle pronounces woe upon the inhabitants of earth because of the three trumpets that are yet to sound (8:13).
6. Fifth trumpet (9:1-12).
- a. A star falls from heaven to earth (9:1; Luke 10:18). The star represents a being who has the key to the pit of the abyss (9:1; Luke 8:30-31). The fallen being is called Abaddon and Apollyon in verse 11, which means "the destroyer."
  - b. The fallen being opened the pit of the Abyss and there went up smoke, and out of the smoke came locusts (9:2-3).
  - c. The locusts were not permitted to hurt the earth or anyone who had the seal of God on their foreheads--the saved (9:4).
  - d. The locusts tormented the lost of earth (9:5-6).
  - e. The locusts were fierce and terrible to look upon (9:7-10).
  - f. The locusts were ruled by Satan (9:11), indicating they represent evil spirits--the devil's angels.
  - g. Two denunciations are yet to come (9:12).
7. Sixth trumpet (9:13 to 11:14).
- a. A voice comes from the horns of the golden altar (9:13), commanding four angels bound at the river Euphrates (Babylon and Assyria--emblems of wickedness--were in

- this area. Also this was the site of Eden--the beginning place of sin) to be loosed (9:14). (These are the devil's angels.)
- b. The angels prepared for this purpose were turned loose to hurt a limited number of people (9:15).
  - c. They were many (9:16). (There are always more agents of evil than agents of good.)
  - d. They are frightful and hellish, and destructive--demons from the abyss (9:17-19).
  - e. Mankind did not repent, but continued to worship idols (self, animals, creeping things), nor did he repent of murders, sorceries, fornication and thefts (9:20-21).
  - f. John sees a mighty-rainbow-angel with one foot on earth and the other foot upon the sea, and in his hand he holds a little book open (10:1-2).
  - g. At the cry of the strong angel seven thunders uttered their voices (10:3). John forbidden to write the things which the seven thunders uttered (10:4).
  - h. Awesome oath that there should be no more delay (10:5-6). Judgment begins. Time ends. (10:7).
  - i. John ate the little book--it was sweet in his mouth but bitter in his belly (10:8-10).
  - j. The message must be preached (10:11).
  - k. Measuring of the temple of God, the altar, and the worshippers (11:1).
  - l. Outer court unmeasured; the holy city trodden under foot 42 months (11:2).
  - m. Two witnesses prophecy 1,260 days (11:3).
  - n. Two olive trees and two candlesticks (11:4; Compare Zech. 4:1-14).
  - o. Protection of the two witnesses (11:5-6).
  - p. The beast from the abyss shall kill them (11:7).
  - q. Their unburied bodies lie in the street (11:8-9).
  - r. Rejoicing over the dead bodies (11:10).
  - s. In three and a half days the two dead witness stand upon their feet (11:11).
  - t. Exaltation of the two witnesses (11:12).
  - u. Terror and punishment on earthlings (11:13-14).

8. The seventh trumpet (11:15-19).
  - a. Victory, rejoicing and worship in heaven (11:15-17).
  - b. The punishment of the wicked (11:18).
  - c. All things revealed and make known (11:19).
- C. The dragon (12:1 to 14:1).
  1. The woman, her son and the dragon (12:1-12).
    - a. A woman clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet, and twelve stars upon her head (12:1).
    - b. The woman gives birth to a child (12:2).
    - c. The great red dragon stands before the woman ready to devour her child (12:3-4). (The dragon is Satan, see 12:9).
    - d. The child, who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron, is delivered (12:5). (The child is Jesus, see Matt. 28:18; Rev. 1:12-16; Psa. 2:1-9; Rev. 2:27).
    - e. The child was elevated to the throne of God (12:5).
    - f. The woman flees to the wilderness (the world) where she is under divine providential protection for the entire Christian period (12:6).
    - g. A war in heaven that resulted in the dragon being cast down to earth (12:7-9).
  2. A struggle between the woman and the dragon (12:10-17).
    - a. Ejection of the dragon from heaven anticipates salvation in the Christ (12:10).
    - b. The blood of the lamb, the word of their testimony, and their self-sacrificing love can overcome the dragon (12:11).
    - c. Heaven rejoices, but the earth grieves because of the woe the dragon brings down to earth (12:12).
    - d. Satan persecutes the woman (12:13).
    - e. The woman is supported by "two wings of the great eagle" for a time, times, and a half time, which amounts to 3 1/2 years, which is 42 months, which equals 1,260 days (the entire Christian period) (12:14).
    - f. Serpent's mouth produces a destructive river (of lies) to destroy the woman (12:15).
    - g. The earth helped the woman by swallowing the lies from the devil's mouth (12:16).
    - h. Satan's anger is intensified as he tries to destroy the true

church (12:17).

3. A beast out of the sea (13:1-9).

a. John sees a beast coming out of the sea having seven heads and ten horns (13:1-2). The beasts of prophecy often represent world governments (See Dan. 7:2-12). The ten horns and seven heads suggest completeness - John is picturing all corrupt government of all time.

b. The beast is wounded but revives (13:3). Corrupt government is often cast down, but rises again.

c. The dragon (Satan) gives his authority to the beast (corrupt government), and the people of earth wonder at it (13:4).

d. The beast continues 42 months--the entire Christian period (13:5).

e. The beast blasphemes God and his people (13:6).

f. The beast wars with the saints (church)--this identifies the woman as the church--and gained much power (13:7).

g. Earthlings adore the beast, the saints excepted (13:8-9).

4. A beast out of the earth (13:10-18).

a. The church accepts captivity or death - this is the patience and faith of the saints (13:10).

b. A harmless looking beast (like a lamb) comes out of the earth, but he speaks the devil's lies (13:11). This beast is later called the false prophet.

c. The beast out of the land cooperates with the beast out of the sea (13:12).

d. The beast does great deceptive signs and fools the people of earth (13:13-14).

e. False religion supports corrupt government (13:15).

f. Economic hardship comes to those who refuse to worship the beasts (13:16-17).

g. The number of the beast is 666, which is the number of a man (13:18).

5. A vision of Jesus and the redeemed standing on mount Zion (14:1-5).

a. Jesus and the 144,000 (earlier John saw, in addition to the 144,000, an uncountable multitude - Rev. 7:2-10) stand victorious on the mountain (14:1).

- b. The voice of God is heard (14:2).
- c. The saved from earth, along with the inhabitants of heaven, praise God (14:3).
- d. John sees the followers of the Lamb (called virgins because they had not committed spiritual fornication) presented to God and the Lamb. The unblemished saved tell no lie (14:4-5).
- 6. An angel flying in heaven and proclaiming salvation to all who fear God and give him glory (14:6-7).
- 7. A second angel proclaims final judgment (14:8).
  - a. Babylon the great (representing all corrupt nations of all time) falls (14:8).
- 8. A third angel announces the punishment of all who volunteered to worship the beast (14:9-11).
- 9. A vision of eternal reward for the blood-washed throng (14:12-14).
  - a. The saints are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus (14:12).
  - b. The dead who die in the Lord are blessed (14:13).
  - c. John saw Jesus wearing a golden crown sitting on a white cloud with a sharp sickle in his hand--judgment is about to begin (14:14).
- 10. The judgment scene (14:15-19).
  - a. An angel announces that the harvest of the earth is ripe and calls for Jesus to begin reaping (14:15-16).
  - b. Angels come from the temple and from the altar to reap the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe (14:17-20)
- D. The seven plagues--bowls of wrath (15:1 to 16:21).
  - 1. Vision of seven angels having seven plagues (15:1).
  - 2. The redeemed in heaven worshipping God (15:2-4).
  - 3. The seven angels having the seven plagues were given seven bowls full of the wrath of God (15:5-7).
  - 4. Preparing to pour out the bowls of wrath (15:8-16:1).
  - 5. First bowl (16:2).
    - a. Affected only those who had the mark of the beast (16:2).
    - b. It became a noisome (evil or bad) and grievous (painful)

sore (16:2).

#### 6. Second bowl (16:3).

a. Affected the sea (16:3).

b. The sea became like coagulated blood (16:3).

## 7. Third bowl (16:4-7)

a. Affected inland waterways and springs (16:4).

b. It, too, became blood (16:4).

c. The angel proclaimed the righteousness of the judgments of God (16:5-7)

#### 8. Fourth bowl (16:8-9)

### a. Poured out upon the sun (16:8)

b Men were scorched by the sun (16:9)

c. They blasphemed God and repented not (16:9)

## 9 Fifth bowl (16·10)

a Poured out upon the throne of the beast (16:10)

b. They gnawed their tongues for pain (16:10)

c. They repented not of their works (16:11)

### 10 Sixth bowl (16:13-16)

a. Poured out on the river Euphrates (16:12)

b. The water dried up (16:12)

c. John saw coming out of the mouths of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet, three unclean spirits (16:13)

d. They work signs to gather the spiritual armies of

wickedness unto the war of the great day of God (16:14).  
e. Jesus comes as a thief (no forewarning). Blessed are they  
that watch for him (16:15).

f. They are gathered to a place called Har-Magedon (16:16).

## 11. The seventh bowl (16:17-21).

a. Poured out upon the air--final judgment of God (16:17).

b. Terrible destruction (16:18-21).

#### E. The fall of Babylon (17:1 to 19:21).

#### 1. The great harlot (17:1-5).

a. Vision given by one of the seven angels that had the seven bowls (17:1)

b. Judgment of the great harlot that is sitting upon many waters to be shown (17:1)

c. The kings of the earth committed fornication with this

great harlot (17:2).

d. The angel transported John in a vision to the wilderness where he saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet-colored beast, having seven heads and ten horns (17:3; compare Rev. 13:1-9). (Representing the apostate church in alliance with corrupt earthly governments.)

e. The woman on the beast with seven heads and ten horns is adorned with finery and jewels (17:4).

f. She is Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and of the Abominations of the Earth (17:5). (Renegade churches in contrast with the true church.)

g. She is drunk with the blood of saints and John wondered with a great wonder (17:6).

2. The great harlot and the beast (17:7-11).

a. John is told the mystery of the woman and the beast (17:7).

b. The beast comes and goes--world empires wax and wane (17:8).

c. The seven heads are seven mountains and they are seven kings (17:9-11).

3. The ten horns (17:12-18).

a. The ten horns are ten kings who receive authority, with the beast, for a short time (17:12).

b. The ten kings give power to the beast (17:13).

c. They war against Jesus and his church--a war between false religion and true religion (17:14).

d. The waters from which the harlot came are "peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues" (17:15).

e. The alliance between false religions and corrupt government will not last because the beast shall hate the harlot and punish her (17:16).

f. God providentially controls the outcome (17:17).

g. The woman is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth (17:18).

4. Another judgment scene (18:1-24).

a. A glorious angel announces the fall of Babylon (18:1-2).

b. She falls because she corrupted the earth (18:3).

c. The redeemed are called out of her--her sins and

- iniquities are heaped high (18:4-5).
  - d. She is rendered evil for evil (18:6).
  - e. Her arrogance will not prevent her sudden destruction (18:7-8).
  - f. The kings of the earth shall mourn over her destruction (18:9-10).
  - g. The merchants of earth shall weep and mourn (18:11-16).
  - h. Sailors laments her downfall (18:17-19).
  - i. Saints, apostles, and prophets, from their heavenly vantage point, rejoice over the destruction (18:20).
  - j. Her destruction is total, like a great millstone sunk in the depths of the sea (18:21-23).
  - k. In her was found the blood of prophets and saints (18:24).
5. Rejoicing in heaven (19:1-12).
- a. God is praised and the 24 elders and the heavenly host worship God (19:1-6).
  - b. The marriage of the Lamb (19:7-9).
  - c. John forbidden to worship the angel, who is a fellow-servant (19:10).
6. The glorious victor (19:12-16).
- a. The white horse and his kingly rider coming forth in victory (19:11-13).
  - b. He is followed by a heavenly army on white horses (19:14).
  - c. The King and Lord of all comes forth in majesty to claim a final victory (19:15-16).
7. The great supper of God (19:17-21).
- a. The birds of prey feast on the flesh of kings, captains, and mighty men (19:18).
  - b. The beasts and the kings of the earth attempt to resist (19:19).
  - c. The beast and the false prophet cast alive into the lake burning with fire and brimstone (19:20).
  - d. The rest were killed and the birds were filled with their flesh (19:21).
- F. The last vision--the thousand years (20:1-15).
1. The binding of Satan (20:1-6).

- a. An angel comes from heaven with the key to the abyss (20:1).
  - b. The angel binds Satan for 1,000 years (20:2-3).
  - c. Satan is sealed in the Abyss for 1,000 years (20:3).
  - d. Satan is to be loosed for a little while at the end of the 1,000 years (20:3).
- 2. The sainted dead lived and reigned with Christ 1,000 years (20:4).
    - a. The 1,000 years is a symbol of the entire Christian period. It connotes a long but undetermined period.
    - b. The first resurrection is the burial and resurrection of baptism (John 5:25-27). The second resurrection is bringing souls out of the tombs (hades) at the 2nd coming of Christ (John 5:28-29).
    - c. The saved are living and reigning with Christ now (5:9-10).
  - 3. The rest of the dead (dead in sin--unsaved people) lived not until the 1,000 years are finished. (20:5).
  - 4. The victorious reign of the saints (20:6).
    - a. The first resurrection makes one immune to the power of the second death (20:6).
    - b. They are priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him 1,000 years (20:6).
  - 5. The loosing of Satan (20:7-8).
    - a. At the end of the 1,000 years (Christian dispensation), Satan will be loosed (20:7-8).
    - b. He shall deceive the nations (20:8).
    - c. Gog and Magog are the nations in the four corners of the earth (20:8). They represent all of the enemies of God (See Ezek. 38:1-7).
    - d. The enemies of God are many (20:8).
  - 6. The destruction of Satan and his worshippers (20:9-10).
    - a. Gog and Magog (all the enemies of God) are destroyed by fire from heaven (20:9).
    - b. Satan, the beast, and the false prophet, cast into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone (20:10).
  - 7. The final judgment--God on his throne (20:11-15).
    - a. All the dead assembled before God (20:12).
    - b. Books were opened, and the book of life was opened, and

- the dead were judged according to their works (20:12).
- c. Sea, death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and the dead were judged according to their works (20:13).
  - d. Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death (20:14).
  - e. Those not written in the book of life were cast into the lake of fire (20:15).
- IV. Conclusion--last things (21:1 to 22:21).
- A. The new heaven, new earth, and new Jerusalem (21:1-8).
    - 1. New heaven and earth (21:1).
      - a. The first heaven and earth are passed away (21:1; 2 Peter 3:8-13).
      - b. The sea is no more (21:1).
    - 2. The holy city (20:2).
      - a. New Jerusalem descending from heaven of God (21:2).
      - b. The New Jerusalem is like a bride adorned for her husband (21:2).
    - 3. Eternal salvation--peace and happiness--granted to the faithful (21:3-7).
    - 4. The wicked cast into the lake of fire (21:8).
  - B. The Lamb's bride (21:9-27).
    - 1. One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls shows John the wife of the Lamb (21:9).
    - 2. The angel showed John the holy city, Jerusalem, coming from the heaven of God (21:10).
    - 3. The beauty of the Lamb's wife--the New Jerusalem (21:11-27).
      - a. The glory of the sun and the beauty of a diamond (21:11).
      - b. Twelve gates and twelve angels, having the names of the twelve tribes of Israel written on them (21:12-13).
      - c. Twelve foundations have the names of the twelve apostles written on them (21:14).
      - d. The city is immense and lies foursquare (21:15-16).
      - e. The wall of the city was splendid and beautiful, adorned with precious jewels (21:17-20).
      - f. The gates were pearls, the street was pure gold (21:21).
      - g. There is no temple--God and the Lamb are its temple

(21:22).

h. The city has no blemish, and the glory of all nations are brought into it. No night is there. The evil are excluded (21:23-27).

4. The heavenly city further described (22:1-5).

a. The river of life, the street of gold, the tree of life on either side of the river (22:1-2).

b. The saved shall see God face to face and serve him (22:3-4).

c. No lamp and no night is there, for God is its light (22:5).

C. The prophecy is confirmed (22:6)

1. The words are faithful and true (22:6).

2. Jesus comes quickly (22:7).

3. John and all who keep the words of the New Covenant are fellow servants with the angels in heaven (22:8-9).

4. The book is not to be sealed because the time for the fulfillment is at hand (22:10-12).

5. Jesus' invitation (22:13-17).

a. Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega (22:13).

b. The purified may enter the city of heaven (22:14).

c. The wicked are excluded from the city (22:15).

d. Jesus sent his angel to testify these things (22:16).

e. Jesus is the bright and morning star (22:16).

f. The great invitation (22:17).

D. The importance of the book (22:18-19).

1. The words of this book are to be neither added to or taken from (11:18-19).

E. Last words: "He who testifieth these things saith, Yea: I come quickly. Amen: come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with the saints.

Amen.

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## Charles R. Williams

### A Brief Outline of Revelation

#### I. INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK (1:1-20)

- A. Purpose of book and blessing announced to those who hear (1:1-3)
- B. Address to the seven churches (1:4-8)
- C. John's commission to write (1:9-11)
- D. The first vision (1:12-20)
  - 1. Christ among the candlesticks (1:12-18)
  - 2. John's commission repeated (1: 19)
  - 3. Explanation of symbols (1:20)

#### II. LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES (2: 1-3:22)

- A. Ephesus: left her first love (2: 1-7)
- B. Smyrna: the rich poor church (2:8-11)
- C. Pergamum: where Satan's throne was (2:12-17)
- D. Thyatira: home of Jezebel (2: 18-29)
- E. Sardis: a dead church (3: 1 -6)
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#### III. GOD ON HIS THRONE (4:1-11)

- A. Door opened for John (4 :1)
- B. Appearance of the throne (4:2-3)
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  - 1. The book with seven seals (5:1-5)
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  - 3. The worship of the Lamb (5:8-14)
- B. The opening of six seals (6:1-17)
  - 1. First seal: white horse - conquest (6: 1-2)
  - 2. Second seal: red horse - war (6:34)
  - 3. Third seal: black horse - famine (6:5-6)

4. Fourth seal: pale horse - death (6:74)
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- C. Interlude for the sealing of God's saints (7:1-17)
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  - D. The first beast (13:1-10)
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J. Vernon McGee

## REVELATION

WRITER: John the Apostle

DATE: About a.d. 95

### THEORIES OF INTERPRETATION:

There have been many approaches to this book, but these can be divided into four major systems (Broadus lists seven theories of interpretation; Tragelles lists three):

1. Preterist theory: All of Revelation has been fulfilled in the past. It had to do with local references in John's day. It had to do with the days of either Nero or Domitian. The view was held by Renan and most German scholars, also by Elliott.
2. Historical theory: Fulfillment of Revelation is going on in history, and Revelation is the prophetic history of the church, according to this theory.
3. Historical-spiritual theory: This theory is a refinement of the historical theory and was advanced by Sir William Ramsay. It states that the two beasts are Imperial and Provincial Rome. The point of the book is to encourage Christians. According to this theory, Revelation has been largely fulfilled and there are spiritual

lessons for the church today. Amillennialism, for the most part, has adopted this view. It dissipates and defeats the purpose of the book.

4. Futurist theory: This theory holds that the Book of Revelation is primarily prophetic and yet future, especially from Revelation 4 on to the end of the book. This is the view of all premillennialists and is the view which we accept and present.

## STRIKING FEATURES:

- It is the only prophetic book in the New Testament (in contrast to 17 prophetic books in the Old Testament).
- John, the writer, reaches farther back into eternity past than any other writer in Scripture (John 1:1-3). He reaches farther on into eternity future in the Book of Revelation.
- Special blessing is promised the readers of this book (Revelation 1:3). Likewise, a warning is issued to those who tamper with its contents (Revelation 22:18, 19).
- Revelation is not a sealed book (Revelation 22:10). Contrast Daniel 12:9. It is a revelation (apocalypse), which is an unveiling.
- It is a series of visions, expressed in symbols.
- This book is like a great Union Station where the great trunk lines of prophecy come in from other portions of Scripture. Revelation does not originate but consummates. It is imperative to a right understanding of the book to be able to trace each great subject of prophecy from the first reference to the terminal. There are at least 10 great subjects of prophecy which find their consummation here:

1. The Lord Jesus Christ (Genesis 3:15)
2. The church (Matthew 16:18)
3. The resurrection and translation of saints  
(1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52)
4. The Great Tribulation (Deuteronomy 4:30, 31)
5. Satan and evil (Ezekiel 28:11-18)
6. The “man of sin” (Ezekiel 28:1-10)
7. The course and end of apostate Christendom (Daniel 2:31-45; Matthew 13)
8. The beginning, course, and end of the “times of the Gentiles”  
(Daniel 2:37; Luke 21:24)
9. The second coming of Christ (Jude 14, 15)
10. Israel’s covenants (Genesis 12:1-3), five things promised Israel

#### KEY VERSES: Revelation 1:18, 19

I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell [hades] and of death. Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter.

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- B. Method of revelation, v. 2
- C. Beatitude of Bible study, v. 3
- D. Greetings from John the writer, and from Jesus Christ in heaven, vv. 4-8
- E. The post-incarnate Christ in a glorified body, judging His church (the great High Priest in the Holy of Holies), vv. 9-18
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## II. The POSSESSION of Jesus Christ—the church in the world, Chapters 2, 3

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- C. Letter of Christ to the church in Pergamum, 2:12-17
- D. Letter of Christ to the church in Thyatira, 2:18-29
- E. Letter of Christ to the church in Sardis, 3:1-6
- F. Letter of Christ to the church in Philadelphia, 3:7-13

## G. Letter of Christ to the church in Laodicea, 3:14-22

### III. The PROGRAM of Jesus Christ—the scene in heaven, Chapters 4—22

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...I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. (John 14:3)

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2. Twenty-four elders, 4:4, 5
3. Four living creatures, 4:6-11
4. Book with seven seals, 5:1-4
5. Christ: the Lion of the Tribe of Judah and the Lamb which has been slain, 5:5-10
6. A myriad of angels of heaven joins the song of praise and redemption, 5:11, 12
7. Universal worship of the Savior and Sovereign of the universe, 5:13, 14

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8. Final invitation and warning, 22:17-19

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Barnhouse, Donald Grey. Revelation, An Expository Commentary. Grand Rapids, Michigan:

Zondervan Publishing House, 1971.

Gaebelein, Arno C. The Revelation. Neptune, New Jersey:  
Loizeaux Brothers, 1915.

Hoyt, Herman A. The Revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ.  
Winona Lake, Indiana: Brethren

Missionary Herald, 1966.

Ironside, H. A. Lectures on the Book of Revelation. Neptune,  
New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers,

1960. (Especially good for young converts)

Larkin, Clarence. The Book of Revelation. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Published by the author, 1919. (Includes fine charts)

Lindsey, Hal. There's a New World Coming. Santa Ana, California: Vision House Publishers, 1973.

McGee, J. Vernon. Reveling Through Revelation, Vols. 1 and 2. Pasadena, California: Thru the Bible Radio Network, 1979.

Newell, William R. The Book of Revelation. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1935.

Ryrie, Charles C. Revelation. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1968. (A fine, inexpensive survey)

Seiss, J. A. The Apocalypse, Lectures on the Book of Revelation. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1957.

Strauss, Lehman. The Book of Revelation. Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, 1964.

Walvoord, John F. *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1966.

(Excellent comprehensive treatment)

These notes, prepared by J. Vernon McGee, are for the purpose of giving assistance to the listeners of the THRU THE BIBLE RADIO program. They are to be used with the Bible and will be more meaningful as you look up all the Scripture references. Due to the necessary brevity of both notes and broadcasts, a list of recommended books is included for those wanting a more detailed study. These books may be obtained from a Christian library or bookstore or ordered from the publishers.

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# Authorship

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From the *Oxford Companion to the Bible*:

**Author and Sources.** Irenaeus and most later writers assumed that the author was the John who wrote the Gospel and letters, and that he was the son of Zebedee. But some, like Dionysius of Alexandria (third century), anticipated the majority of modern scholars by questioning this identification because of differences of thought, style, and language. Dionysius relied on hints that there had been two writers named John in Ephesus; and Papias (ca. 140 ce) mentions a John who was an elder, as well as the apostle.

Another possibility is that Revelation is pseudonymous, claiming a great figure of the past as author, like much other apocalyptic literature. There is a later tradition that the apostle John was martyred as his brother James had been ([Acts 12.2](#); cf. [Mark 10.39](#); [Matthew 20.23](#), which may be the source of the tradition); as one of the inner circle, associated as he was with Jesus at the Transfiguration and on the Mount of Olives ([Mark 13.3](#)), he would have been a good figurehead for an apocalypse calling Christians to face martyrdom. If it was published ca. 95 ce, its later acceptance as genuine could have given rise to the widely held belief that John lived to a great age in Ephesus.

But the evidence for John's martyrdom is flimsy, and if "John" is a fiction, it is odd that no capital is made out of it; the author is simply "your brother," and mentions the twelve apostles of the Lamb ([Revelation 21.14](#)) without hint that he

is one of them. The only status he claims is, by implication, that of prophet ([Revelation 1.3; Revelation 22.9](#)). This tells also against genuinely apostolic authorship, but not decisively; and Dionysius's comment concerning differences in thought and style may be due to differences in situation and genre; there are also many marks of Johannine theology and expression. John's language is indeed extraordinary, breaking all sorts of grammatical rules—but not out of incompetence; he can write correct and powerful Greek. He seems to be echoing Hebrew constructions, perhaps to give a biblical feel to the book.

The whole book purports to be what John has seen and heard, but it is clear that his visionary experience has been shaped both by canonical and apocalyptic writings like Enoch and by the Gospels (or the traditions on which they depend)—so much so that some see the book as a scriptural meditation, based perhaps on the Sabbath readings from the Law and the Prophets (See [Lectionaries](#), *article on Jewish Tradition*), which has been cast in visionary form. Probably it is a mixture of genuine experience and literary elaboration. Biblical metaphors and images—dragon, lamb, harlot, bride—come to new life in his imagination. There are allusions to or echoes of practically every book in the Hebrew Bible. Daniel and Ezekiel are particularly formative; Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zechariah, and the Psalms are pervasive influences; so too are the stories of creation and Exodus, and of the return from Babylon and rebuilding of Jerusalem, which Isaiah depicted as a new Exodus and act of creation. Revelation is a rereading of biblical tradition in the light of the death of Jesus, and though no doubt Jewish, the author is also a citizen of the Greco-Roman world and knows its myths and astrology (see, for example, commentaries on [Revelation 12.1–6](#)).

John Sweet

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  - [A Basic Guide to the “Bible Windows” Program](#)
  - Bible Tutor <http://www.bibletutor.com/>
  - King James Bible <http://www.dtm.org/dtmweb1/KINGJAM/KINGJAM^.HTM>
  - [Bible Study Tools](#)
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  - [Overview of History \(Word file\)](#)
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  -
- TEXTS & COMMENTARIES:**
- [Revelation \(New Revised Standard Version\)](#): full text of the 1989 NRSV translation, with extensive notes and cross-references
  - [Revelation \(New International Version\)](#): full text of the NIV translation, from [The Bible Gateway \(Gospel Communications Network\)](#); this site also has the NASB, RSV,

KJV, and several other English and foreign language translations available.

- [The Revelation of Saint John the Divine](#): full text with introductions, notes, map, and glossary, by Mike Campbell
- [The NET Bible](#): full text in the "New English Translation"; with extensive footnotes often commenting on the Greek text; from the "Biblical Studies Foundation"
- [Commentary on Revelation](#): with good additional study materials; available in English and Spanish; by Ross Taylor
- [The Apocalypse of St. John the Apostle](#): text only, no notes; from the old [Douay-Rheims Bible](#) translation; website by Dan Connolly
- [Synopsis: The Revelation](#): classic commentary by John Nelson Darby (1800-1881); on the "Christian Classics Ethereal Library" website
- [The Revelation of John](#): another old interpretation, from the "People's New Testament" by B. W. Johnson (1891)

### **Historical and Theological Information:**

- [Studies in Revelation](#)
- <http://www.siscom.net/~direct/revelation>
- [Studies in Revelation](#)
- [Charles R. Williams Studies in Revelation](#)
- [Outline and Verse by Verse Commentary](#)
- [Detailed Commentary](#)
- [Christological Titles in the NT](#)
- [Descendants of Abraham; Twelve Tribes of Israel](#)
- [The Book of Daniel - Historical Study Materials](#)
- [Revelation, a Study](#)
- [Bible Symbolism](#)
- [Tabernacle Pictures](#)
  
- A Hebraic Kabbalistic view of the book of Revelation may be found at  
<http://www.yashanet.com/studies/revstudy>

## Book of Revelation Materials:

- [Revelation \(outline and commentary, Church of Christ\)](#)
- [Catholic Encyclopedia](#)
- Outlines [http://clawww.lmu.edu/faculty/fjust/Handouts/Revelation\\_Outlines.htm](http://clawww.lmu.edu/faculty/fjust/Handouts/Revelation_Outlines.htm)
- [Bible Info Outline Revelation](#)
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  - [Links to Revelation, Apocalyptic and Millennial Websites and Materials,](#) copiled by Felix Just.
  - [The Book of Revelation and Apocalyptic Literature](#)
  - [Revelation resources; Resources for the study of the Book of Revelation.](#)
  - [Revelation and the Old Testament](#) (August 5th, 1999)
  - [Revelation and the New Testament](#) (August 5th, 1999)
  - [Revelation and the other Johannine writings](#) (28 Dec 1998)
  - Edited by John W. Marshall, [Images of the Apocalypse A Database](#) of pictures related to the Book of Revelation.
  - David L. Barr, [Using Plot to Discern Structure in John's Apocalypse](#)
  - David L. Barr, [Towards an Ethical Reading of The Apocalypse: Reflections on John's Use of Power, Violence, and Misogyny](#)  
David L. Barr,
  - [Transforming the Imagination. John's Apocalypse as Story](#) David L. Barr,
  - [Who Says? Who Hears? The Narrative Rhetoric of John's Apocalypse](#)
  - James F. McGrath, [Going Up and Coming Down in Johannine Apologetic](#)

- K.C. Hanson, Blood and Purity in Leviticus and Revelation. Published in Listening: Journal of Religion and Culture 28 (1993):215-30 (© 1993 Reprinted here by permission of the publisher).
- Steve Mosher The Revelation to John and the Spirit of Prophecy

## Scholarly Web Sites

- John W. Marshall's Database of images concerning Revelation (29 Mar 1997)
- The Book of Revelation and Apocalyptic literature, by Professor Felix Just, S.J.. Note his impressive collection of relevant links at [http://clawww.lmu.edu/faculty/fjust/Apocalyptic\\_Links.htm](http://clawww.lmu.edu/faculty/fjust/Apocalyptic_Links.htm) (August 4th, 1999)
- Professor Torrey Seland's famous and extremely useful Resource Pages for Biblical Studies s.v. Revelation (August 4th, 1999)
- Professor David L. Barr's site which includes links to some of his articles and other material (August 4th, 1999)

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<p><b>IV.12, 13 Portent in Heaven:</b>  <b>woman (clothed with sun, moon under her feet, crown of twelve stars), child (male, rule all nations with rod of iron, snatched away and taken to God; woman nourished for 1,260 days), dragon ( red, seven heads, ten horns, seven diadems). War in heaven (dragon and his angels thrown down; dragon pursues woman who is given wings of eagle. Two beasts (sea: Roman empire, ten horns, seven heads, ten diadems; healed mortal wound); (earth: two horns, emperor worship, 666)</b></p>	<p><b>Vision of Lamb and 144.000 sealed, redeemed, first fruits 14; angel flying in mid-heaven proclaiming fall of Babylon; another angel proclaiming wrath of God for those marked with mark of the beast; Son of Man sitting on white cloud; angel proclaiming time to reap the harvest; angel with sickle; angel with authority over fire; vintage of earth thrown into the wine press of God.</b></p>
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	<p><b>6. Euphrates dried up; frogs (demonic spirits) 16.12</b></p>
	<p><b>7. It is done--earthquake, destruction, and huge hailstones Babylon is given the full fury of righteous wrath.</b>   <b>16.18</b></p>
	<p><b>Fifth of seven sections ends 16.21 (NRSV) <i>7 Plagues</i></b></p>

**VI. Fall of Babylon, Great whore**  
**17: seven heads interpreted as kings, ten horns as kings; Nero "was, is not, and is to come"); note inverse of Christ: is, was, is to come 1.8: could this be temporal versus eternal?**

**19 Praises in heaven; announcement of marriage of the Lamb 19.7; John falls down to worship but is told by the angel, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you."**

**19.11 Rider on white horse:** victorious Christ (Faithful and True, judges righteously and makes war, eyes like fire, head with diadems, inscribed name unknown, robe dipped in blood, Word of God, followed by armies in white, sharp sword from mouth strikes down enemies, rules with rod of iron, treads the wine press with the fury of God Almighty Angel stands in the sun 19.17 and calls to birds in midheaven to come the the great supper of God, to eat the flesh of kings, captains, mighty, and their riders. Beast and deceiver with mark thrown into the lake of fire; followers are killed by sword.

**Sixth of seven sections ends 19.21  
(NRSV)Final Battle**

	<p><b>VII. Binding of Dragon for a thousand years 20; souls of martyrs raised (first resurrection) to reign with Christ-6; second death has no power over priests of God. Dragon is released (Gog and Magog 8), fire consumes the army of the Dragon and the Dragon is thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur.</b></p>	<p><b>Vision of Great White Throne</b> 20.11-15, New Heaven, New Earth, New Jerusalem (out of heaven, bride); God dwell among mortals 21.3. All things are made new (21.5); measuring of New Jerusalem (21.15-27): no temple in the city (22), for God is the temple; gates are never shut (21.25), for God has opened and no one can shut (4.8); only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life can enter (27).</p>
		<p>22 River of water of life flowing from the throne of God; on either side of river is tree of life with twelve kinds of fruit. Servants of God will see Lamb's face and have His name written on their foreheads. God is light (5)</p>
	<p><b>Conclusion: The angel tells John the words given to him are trustworthy and true, for the angel has been sent by God to tell what must soon take place: "See, I am coming soon."</b></p> <p><b>John again falls down to worship but is told he should not do that: "Worship God!" 22.8</b></p> <p><b>John is told not to seal up the words.</b></p> <p><b>Promise is repeated: "See, I am coming soon; my reward is with me, to repay according to everyone's work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the</b></p>	<p><b>Seventh of seven sections ends</b> <b>22.6-21 (NRSV) Vision of Throne</b></p>

**last, the beginning and the end.**  
**"22.12 [Is it logical that from eternity, coming is always soon in the limited, temporal, and finite?]'**

**22.16 Jesus, root and descendant of David, morning star (2.8) or resurrected Christ has sent the angel to John with the invitation "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.'" 17 Anyone who wishes can take the water of life as a gift.**

**22.18 All who hear the words of the prophecy of *Revelation* are solemnly warned not to add to or to take away from the words on penalty of losing the tree of life and the holy city.**

**"Surely, I am coming soon."**

**"Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!"**

John Gabel, Charles Wheeler and Anthony York in *The Bible as Literature: An Introduction*, 6th edition (Oxford 2000)

The show itself--what John sees--is in two parts: the first depicts the cosmic and earthly events at the end of the Present Age; the second depicts the eternally static situation of the Age to Come. The events that conclude the Present Age are introduced by sets of sevens that are associated with the communication of messages: seals on a scroll and heralds' trumpets. The events themselves are divided into three phrases: the defeat of Satan in the heavenly sphere (by the birth of Christ), in the earthly sphere (by the destruction of Rome), and in the underworld (by the final elimination of the Devil, Death, Hades, and the sea at the very end of the age.) Poised between the two ages is the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth, which shares something of both future and past: It provides a foretaste of the bliss of eternity future, but the evil of the past lies there waiting to exert itself yet once again. When this final resurgence of evil has been suppressed

and ultimate judgment passed, the New Age can begin in all its perfection. The only thing the author had to add was a warning that the last days were at hand and that no one should tamper with the words of his book. (157)

...In Revelation we so often find an instance of the destruction of evil followed by rejoicing in heaven, only to be followed in short order by the return of what seems to be the same evil in different guise. Layer is placed upon similar layer, and it is not always evident just where we are in the continuing story at any given moment. But there will come an end to that story, the author of the book assures his readers, when the great instigator of evil and his entire domain will be flung into the fiery lake; and then the warfare of the saints will cease forever. (157)

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12-13 The pregnant woman, the dragon's defeat, the two beasts

14 Visions of assurance and warning

15-16 The seven bowls of wrath

17-18 The whore of Babylon and the beast

19-20 The defeat of the dragon's forces, final judgment

21-22 The new Jerusalem, conclusion

## **Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996)**

*Though the book includes portions which follow the epistolary form (1:4-3:22), much of Revelation is written in the form of apocalyptic literature (cf. Daniel and Zechariah) and it refers to itself as a prophetic book (1:3, 22:7, 10, 18, 19). The three major movements in this profound unveiling are captured in 1:19: "the things which you have seen" (ch. 1); "the things which are" (chs. 2 and 3); and "the things which will take place after this" (chs. 4-22).*

### **Outline of Revelation**

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II. Revelation of Christ (1:9-20)

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David L. Barr <http://www.wright.edu/~dbarr/plotrev.htm>

## 2 Structuring a Plot: The Stories as Distinct Actions

After some preliminaries, the writer begins to tell an autobiographical tale:

**I, John, your brother who share with you in Jesus the persecution and the kingdom and the patient endurance, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet saying, "Write in a book what you see ...." (1:8ff)**

This first story segment details what happened to him on Patmos. (A majestic human being appears to him and dictates seven messages to the angels of seven churches.) Having finished this task, John is called up to heaven, where he observes a scene at the divine court. This second story

concerns the process by which a slaughtered-standing lamb opens a divine scroll and reveals its contents. John next looks into the heavenly temple and sees strange new signs. In this third story a cosmic dragon pursues a cosmic woman but is eventually defeated by a cosmic warrior, resulting in the establishment of a wholly new cosmic order.

I make three preliminary observations about these stories. First, they are ever more fantastic. The audience is led into ever stranger territory and witnesses ever more bizarre actions. The story progresses from John standing on Patmos (a real world event), to the vision experience, to a trip to heaven, to a cosmic battle. Then we are taken quickly back to earth again in the closing address to the reader. It is a fantastic journey--rather like a shaman's journey.<sup>(9)</sup> In literary terms, we find three different literary types sandwiched between realistic narratives of John on Patmos: the revelation theophany, the throne vision (*Merkavah*), and the cosmic war story.

Second, while these three stories are themselves sequences of causally connected action, there is very little connection between the incidents in the separate stories. Each sequence has its own logic, its own set of characters, its own base locale, and John plays a somewhat different role in each. These stories may be set forth schematically as follows:

	Story One	Story Two	Story Three
Place	Patmos	Heaven	Earth
Characters	Jesus as Majestic Human	Jesus as Lamb-Slain	Jesus as Heavenly Warrior
	John	Elders and	Dragon and Beasts
	Churches	Heavenly Beings	Woman and her children
Action	Letter Writing	Worship	War
	John Presented as Secretary	Heavenly Traveler	Seer/Prophet
Mythic Paradigm	Theophany	Throne Vision	Holy War
Chapters	1-3	4-11	12-22( <u>10</u> )

If I briefly sketch the action of each segment, two points will become clear: they each can be viewed as a unified action, but they do not form a causal sequence between them. I would characterize the kernel incidents of these stories as follows. One: A majestic human being appears to John on Patmos and commands him to write a scroll and send it to the seven churches of Asia. After a detailed description of this divine figure, the figure comforts John, explains particular symbols to him, and then dictates seven messages to the angels of the seven churches. Two: John ascends to heaven at divine initiative, sees God on the throne surrounded by the heavenly court, and hears the heavenly liturgy. A scroll is presented that is sealed and that no one can open, causing John to weep. Then a character, announced as a lion but revealed as a slain-standing lamb, proceeds to open the scroll in seven stages. In the silence of the seventh seal, seven trumpets sound, followed by the announcement: God's kingdom has come. Three: A majestic heavenly woman about to give birth is pursued by a heavenly dragon who seeks to consume her child. The woman is saved and the child preserved, but the dragon turns to make war on her other children. Two great beasts are conjured from the sea and the earth; the lamb gathers 144,000 on Mt Zion. Scenes of heavenly harvest predict earthly judgment, then enacted in seven plague events, leading to the great announcement: it is done (16:17). Just what is done is now related in two sets of scenes, one grouped around the great prostitute (war against heaven, heavenly warrior, destruction, a thousand years of peace, final battle, final judgment, new creation) and the bride/wife of the lamb (restoration of the city).

Third, each of these three actions is built on a distinct model. The first story is clearly a theophany; and the third is just as surely a holy war. I am not so clear how to characterize the second, except to say it is neither theophany nor holy war. While our knowledge of *Merkavah* mysticism is limited, there does seem to have been a throne vision genre, perhaps built on Isaiah's famous vision (Isa. 6). Some would also connect the throne scene with the rituals of the imperial court.(11)

Thus each of these three units can be viewed as a unified action, but what becomes obvious is that there is no real connection between the three actions. While one can point to strong thematic continuity between these sections, there is not a continuity of action. The action of the first movement does not lead to that of the second or the third. They do not form a causal sequence, yet within each movement there is a reasonably clear causal sequence. How should we understand their relationship? Is Revelation one story or three?

There is an O. Henry short story called "Roads of Destiny" that offers some analogy to John's narrative strategy. In O. Henry's story a young man leaves his native village to explore the world and write poetry. But when he comes to a fork in the road, he cannot decide which way to proceed. So the story is told showing him take all three options: first he takes one branch; then the second; and finally he returns to his village. For each path taken a different series of events ensues, but each leads inexorably to the same end: the young man is shot and killed--each time with the very same pistol. Now clearly all three events belong in the same narrative, for the narrative could not make its point without all them. Yet just as clearly the actions within each event can have no causal connection with actions in the other two; for the initial act of choosing one road excludes the acts that lie down another path. It would be to miss the point were we to ask whether our young man went down path two before or after going down path one. The connection is not one of before and after. What then are the connections between the three?

These connections have to do with theme (destiny) and characters rather than with continuous sequential actions. Yet they gain their meaning only by being seen in comparison within the same narrative. (12) When one finishes O. Henry's story one understands the seductive/destructive allure of poetry in a new way, a way that takes destiny beyond accidental encounters. One also understands that action within a story is not necessarily sequential.

In a similar way, John's three dramatic actions do not constitute a sequential, unified action. One does not happen before or after the other. They represent alternative tellings of the story of Jesus with a common theme and overlapping characters. The Dragon does not attack the Woman's children (chapter 12) after Jesus dictates the letters (chapters 2-3) or after the triumphant consummation of heavenly worship (chapter 11); that attack is contemporaneous with the life of the church and is as old as Eve. The third action is a retelling of the story of the coming of God's rule with a new focus. It is as if the narrator finished the triumphant heavenly announcement that the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdom of God and of the Christ (11:15) and then turned to the audience and said, "Do you wonder how that came about? Well, let me tell you . . ." The focus now is on the attack of the Dragon and the ensuing cosmic war, with Jesus being presented (rather ironically) in the guise of the Divine Warrior.

This lack of causal sequence can be seen in the ending of each of these story segments, for each ends with a partial closure, a sense of an end

**that is no end.** At the end of the Letter Scroll Jesus promises to come to any who will open the door (3:20); at the end of the Worship Scroll, the voice announces that Messiah's kingdom has come (11:15); at the end of the War Scroll evil appears to be destroyed and the new Jerusalem descends (21:1). Yet even in this last instance we are told that nothing unclean can enter the city (21:27); and as life in the city is described in glowing terms we are also told "Outside are the dogs" (22:15). This is a story that appears to end, repeatedly, but never finally does.

**Rather than one unfolding event, Revelation presents three interrelated tellings of the story of Jesus. One does not lead to the other, yet they gain their meaning by appearing together. Let us now consider more carefully just how they are put together.**

.....

**The aural experience of the Apocalypse would have a definite beginning and ending, and John has so arranged these to emphasize a sense of completion. Many have observed the strong correlation between the beginning and the ending. There are at least eleven points of correspondence, in addition to the epistolary framework (1:4; 22:21).**

<b>1:1, 4, 9</b>	<b>John names himself</b>	<b>22:8</b>
<b>1:1</b>	<b>An Angel sent</b>	<b>22:6</b>
<b>1:1</b>	<b>Will soon take place</b>	<b>22:6</b>
<b>1:1</b>	<b>The servants</b>	<b>22:6</b>
<b>1:3</b>	<b>Reader blessed</b>	<b>22:7</b>
<b>1:3</b>	<b>The Time is near</b>	<b>22:10</b>
<b>1:4</b>	<b>Grace to you</b>	<b>22:21</b>
<b>1:8</b>	<b>The Alpha and Omega</b>	<b>22:13</b>
<b>1:10</b>	<b>The Spirit</b>	<b>22:17</b>
<b>1:16, 20</b>	<b>Stars and Angels</b>	<b>22:16</b>
<b>1:17</b>	<b>John falls at feet</b>	<b>22:8</b>

**But the parallels are more than just verbal and thematic, there is also a parallel of action. Set within the context of a letter that begins "John to the seven churches" (1:4) and ends with the letter formula so familiar from Paul's letters, "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with**

all" (22:21), the action starts with John directly addressing the audience and describing his sojourn on Patmos where he has a vision (1:9-10). It ends with John directly addressing the reader, saying this is what he heard and saw (22:8). It is the classic technique of the storyteller: I was off alone one day and I saw something very interesting. . . . The actual story is one further stage removed from the audience by the additional frame of the letter. This double envelope of letter and vision-report frames all the action of the story and helps the audience experience it as a unity.

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# History

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Up

Concerning the period in which *Revelation* was written, most agree it was penned near the end of the first century C.E; however, some make the case for an earlier writing, and still others compromise with part of the book being written under Nero and finished under Domitian. The following is a sample of these arguments.

(OCB):

Although parts of the book (e.g. [Revelation 11](#)) may have been reduced to writing before the fall of Jerusalem in a.d. 70, it is probable that the author, whose name is John ([Revelation 1.1](#); [Revelation 1.4](#); [Revelation 1.9](#); [Revelation 22.8](#)), put the book in its present form toward the close of the reign of the Emperor Domitian (a.d. 81 - 96). It was then that Domitian began to demand that his subjects address him as "Lord and God" and worship his image. For refusing to do so, many Christians were put to death ([Revelation 6.9](#); [Revelation 13.15](#)); others, like John ([Revelation 1.9](#)), were exiled, and all were threatened. One reason for the author's couching his teaching in mysterious figures and extraordinary metaphors was to prevent the imperial police from recognizing that this book is a trumpet call to the persecuted, assuring them that, despite the worst that the Roman Empire could do, God reigns supreme, and Christ, who died and is alive forevermore ([Revelation 1.18](#)), has the power to overcome all evil. And therefore John closes his book with the prayer, "Come, Lord Jesus!" ([Revelation 22.20](#)).

Bart D. Ehrman in *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writers* (Oxford 1997) tends to agree with OCB:

On the basis of a detailed study of all such clues in the text, most investigators think that parts of the book were written in the 60s of the Common Era, soon after the persecution of the Christians under Nero. If we begin counting with Julius Caesar, Nero happens to have been the sixth ruler of Rome. He was also one of the author's chief enemies. The book was evidently not completed, however, until some thirty years or so later, probably around 95 C.E., during the reign of Domitian.

*The Catholic Encyclopedia* provides an interpretation of the book which corresponds with Roman history<sup>9</sup> (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05114b.htm>):

Domitian

(TITUS FLAVIUS DOMITIANUS).

Roman emperor and persecutor of the Church, son of Vespasian and younger brother and successor of the Emperor Titus; b. 24 Oct., A.D. 51, and reigned from 81 to 96. In spite of his private vices he set himself up as a reformer of morals and religion. He was the first of the emperors to deify himself during his lifetime by assuming the title of "Lord and God". After the revolt of Saturninus (93) he organized a series of bloodthirsty proscriptions against all the wealthy and noble families. A conspiracy, in which his wife joined, was formed against him, and he was murdered, 18 Sept., 96.

When the Acts of Nero's reign were reversed after his death, an exception was made as to the persecution of the Christians (Tertullian, *Ad Nat.*, i, 7). The Jewish revolt brought upon them fresh unpopularity, and the subsequent destruction of the Holy City deprived them of the last shreds of protection afforded them by being confounded with the Jews. Hence Domitian in his attack upon the aristocratic party found little difficulty in condemning such as were

Christians. To observe Jewish practices was no longer lawful; to reject the national religion, without being able to plead the excuse of being a Jew, was atheism. On one count or the other, as Jews or as atheists, the Christians were liable to punishment. Among the more famous martyrs in this Second Persecution were Domitian's cousin, Flavius Clemens, the consul, and M' Acilius Glabrio who had also been consul. Flavia Domitilla, the wife of Flavius, was banished to Pandataria. But the persecution was not confined to such noble victims. We read of many others who suffered death or the loss of their goods (Dio Cassius, LXVII, iv). The book of the Apocalypse was written in the midst of this storm, when many of the Christians had already perished and more were to follow them (St. Irenæus, Adv. Hæres., V, xxx). Rome, "the great Babylon", "was drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus" (Apoc., xvii, 5, 6; ii, 10, 13; vi, 11; xiii, 15; xx, 4). It would seem that participation in the feasts held in honour of the divinity of the tyrant was made the test for the Christians of the East. Those who did not adore the "image of the beast" were slain. The writer joins to his sharp denunciation of the persecutors' words of encouragement for the faithful by foretelling the downfall of the great harlot "who made drunk the earth with the wine of her whoredom", and steeped her robe in their blood. St. Clement's Epistle to the Corinthians was also written about this time; here, while the terrible trials of the Christians are spoken of, we do not find the same denunciations of the persecutors. The Roman Church continued loyal to the empire, and sent up its prayers to God that He would direct the rulers and magistrates in the exercise of the power committed to their hands (Clem., Ep. ad Cor., c. lxi; cf. St. Paul, Rom., xiii, 1; I Pet., ii, 13).

Before the end of his reign Domitian ceased to persecute. (See PERSECUTIONS.)

EUSEBIUS, H. E.., III, xvii sqq. in P.G., XX; IRENÆUS, Adv. Hæreses, V in P.G., VII; ALLARD, Hist. des

Persécutions pendant les deux premiers siècles (Paris, 1892); Ten Lectures on the Martyrs (tr. London, 1907);  
Le Christianisme et l'Empire Romain k(Paris, 1898).

T.B. SCANNELL

Transcribed by WGKofron

With thanks to St. Mary's Church, Akron, Ohio

Don K. Preston argues against this late date for *Revelation*:

by Don K. Preston

The condition of the 7 churches of Asia is often posited as evidence for the late date, i.e. 95-98 A.D., of the book of Revelation. Stanley Paher, for instance, in an unpublished paper says "the existence of heretical sects such as the Nicolaitans, the Balaamites and Jezebel's group [Rev. 2:6; 14, 15, 20] is not confirmed by anyone in A.D. 64." He then takes note of Ignatius, early 2nd century, and Iranaeus, later in the 2nd century, both of whom referred to the Nicolaitans. Paher then says "It takes time for heresies to arise from within, for in the first place a church must have had developed a more or less orthodox faith as a standard to compare a departure from it."

The purpose of this little article is to demonstrate that the Nicolaitans, instead of being evidence for a late date, serve as extremely strong evidence for the early date of the Apocalypse.

### THE DOCTRINE OF THE NICOLAITANS

The doctrinal identity of the Nicolaitans helps us place them within a definite framework: the Nicolaitans taught that it was alright to "eat meat sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication" Rev. 2:14-15. Why was it wrong to eat meat sacrificed to idols? Why was it wrong to commit fornication? Caution is needed before answering too hastily.

The doctrine of the Nicolaitans was in direct conflict with the Jerusalem Conference, Acts 15:29, the purpose of which was to enhance Jew and Gentile oneness in Christ! This conference is generally dated around A.D. 51.

It is clear from Paul that the eating of meat sacrificed to idols was in and of itself not wrong, Romans 14; I Corinthians 8; but clearly it was offensive to the Jewish segment of the church. Thus for the

sake of unity in the body, the Gentiles were told to abstain in those circumstances in which the eating would bring offense to brethren, I Corinthians 10:23ff. The question of fornication should also be seen in light of its association with the idolatrous background so offensive to the Jewish Christians.

The doctrine of eating of meats sacrificed to idols and fornication was then a matter of grave importance and an issue that arose very early in the life of the first century church. It was an issue of body unity; of Jew and Gentile fellowship. If the Gentiles could be convinced that they had the liberty to continue, because of the abounding grace of Christ, to eat meats and participate in the sensual practices of idolatry then the unity of the body of Christ would be threatened if not sundered. The significance of this issue is revealed when one examines Romans 14, I Corinthians 8, and 10 in great detail and see how much time and energy Paul devoted to it. This was not just an issue of setting forth a doctrine of expediency; it impinged upon "unity of the Faith," Eph. 4:13f; the "the fullness of the Gentiles," Rom. 11:25; and the consummation of the mystery of God in Christ, Ephesians 3:3ff.

2 Peter 2 sheds light on the issue before us. If 2 Peter was addressed to the same audience as 1 Peter then it was addressed to "the pilgrims of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia" 1 Peter 1:1. Thus, 2 Peter was written to the very churches addressed in Revelation. 2 Peter is, we believe, to be dated circa, 64-66. [See The New Open Study Bible, Nelson, NASV, introduction to 2 Peter]. What issues did Peter address?

Peter says that the false teachers he is addressing "walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness" 2:2:10; they "have eyes full of adultery" and they were constantly "beguiling unstable souls" vs. 14. Further, Peter says what they were doing was "following the way of Balaam the son of Beor" vs. 15. This is precisely the charge against the Nicolaitans, Rev. 2:14! Compare also the epistle of Jude, vss. 7-12. What we find then is that the very things that were troubling the seven churches of Asia were the issues at stake in books generally dated earlier than the Apocalypse!

Revelation deals with those from within the body teaching false doctrine, 2 Peter and Jude do the same, 2 Peter 2:13. Revelation deals with those teaching sexual immorality, as does 2 Peter and

Jude. Revelation calls the false teachers Nicolaitans; but they are also called teachers of the way of Balaam; just as in 2 Peter and Jude. Revelation is addressed to the churches in Asia; 2 Peter is also. With these points of parallelism how can one discount the association? And if the early date of 2 Peter is admitted then the early date for the Apocalypse can hardly be denied.

Further, when one considers how early the issue of eating meats and fornication, [cf. I Cor. 6], became an issue, circa A.D. 51, Acts 15; Romans 14, circa A.D. 57; I Corinthians 8, 10, circa A.D. 56, it can hardly be argued that these doctrines were not major issues as early as the 60s. On the contrary, it is seen in the light of Acts, Romans, and Corinthians that the issues of Revelation 2-3 were issues of long standing trouble in the early church. Revelation does not stand isolated therefore from the religious milieu of the rest of the New Testament. Instead, we have the testimony of Acts, Romans, Corinthians, 2 Peter and Jude that the very issues addressed by Jesus in Revelation were part of a widespread endemic problem within the early church.

Instead of the doctrinal problems of the Asian churches being distinctive from the issues in the other epistles we find that they are the identical issues. Instead of Revelation demanding a later period of time allowing for a time of evolutionary doctrinal development and then apostasy we find the standard established very early, Acts 15 and within 5-6 years problems arising in direct relationship to that standard. Instead of the doctrinal aberrations of the Nicolaitans being indicative of the late date for Revelation therefore we find that it provides evidence that the possibility for the early date for Revelation certainly cannot be ignored; the probability becomes apparent; the certainty becomes increasingly likely.

There is a great deal more that could be written in regard to the Nicolaitan controversy as it related to the Jew-Gentile one-ness and the attempts to destroy or prevent that unity from becoming reality. We believe however that this little article has refuted the basic argument of Paher and others that attempt to remove the historical and doctrinal situation of Revelation from the context of the rest of the New Testament. We shall have cause to say more about Paher's article later.

March 21, 1994

From web site *The Crazy Emperors of Rome* comes the following graphic account of Domitian's reign:

### Domitian of Rome (51-96)

Domitian was born the second son of the emperor Vespasian (9-79) and his wife, Flavia Domitilla the elder. In 66 AD Vespasian had fallen into disfavour for falling asleep while the emperor Nero (37-68) was singing. After Nero's death four emperors rapidly succeeded each other, among them the emperor Vitellius the Glutton (15-69). Vitellius had spent his youth as one of the emperor Tiberius' male prostitutes on the isle of Capri. His thigh was deformed as a result of being run over by a chariot driven by the emperor Caligula. By the time he became emperor Vitellius was a notorious glutton. He lived for food<sup>1</sup>; banqueting three or four times a day, routinely vomiting up his meals, using a long feather to induce the process, and starting over. Vitellius was especially fond of the rarest delicacies, like pike livers, pheasant brains and flamingo tongues, and the Imperial Navy was given the task of searching the seas for rare ingredients. One of his banquets involved no fewer than 2000 fish and 7000 birds. Soon Vitellius horrified the Romans with his overly extravagant lifestyle and stupid appointments.

In July 69 the legions of the East declared for Vespasian and the emperor Vitellius ordered 18-year-old Domitian's arrest. Domitian fled and made his way to the advancing units of his father's army, while Vitellius' supporters murdered his uncle. During Vespasian's reign, Domitian stayed in the shadow of his famous brother Titus (39-81). Titus suppressed the Jewish revolt, made love to the beautiful Jewish princess Berenice, and succeeded Vespasian in 79, but Domitian was never allowed to pursue any military glory. When Titus lay dying in 81, Domitian had himself proclaimed emperor.

Historians have described Domitian as "crazy and unbalanced". He suffered from social inadequacy and preferred solitude to the company of people. He had a

distrustful nature and was constant in fear of conspiracies; the pillars of his palace were made of white reflective marble so that he could see what was going on behind him. Like Caligula, Domitian was very sensitive of his baldness and his official portraits continued to show him with flowing locks of hair. Domitian was also notorious for his cruelty. He is supposed to have invented a new method of torture: burning the sexual organs of his victims. Domitian was capable of inviting an erring official to supper, dismissing him in such a way that the man retired happy and carefree. Nevertheless, the next day he was executed. Domitian also enjoyed asking senators to dinner-parties at which all the equipment was black, so that the guests were numb with fright. Like Vespasian, Domitian persecuted Stoic philosophers and Jews. He had all Jews, who claimed descent from King David, tracked down and killed. Very peculiar was Domitian's pleasure in catching flies, stabbing them with the point of a pen and tearing their wings out.

Despite his cruelty Domitian was an energetic emperor who paid careful attention to every department of administration and he was an enthusiastic patron of the arts. He finished the Colosseum, constructed several temples and built the imperial palace. Under Domitian detailed records were kept on army personnel and the lot of soldiers improved. In 83 his armies defeated the Chatti and extended the frontier to the rivers Lahn and Main. Domitian forbade the castration of boys and attempted to revive an unpopular law against homosexual intercourse with boys of free birth. He had three Vestal Virgins executed in 83 on grounds of immorality and in 90 he had the Chief Vestal buried alive, although she protested her innocence to the end. Her presumed lovers were beaten to death with rods.

Domitian himself was a great lover of women. In 70 he carried off his wife, Domitia Longina, from her husband. She was a daughter of the great general Corbulo. They had a little son, who died in infancy.

Beside his wife Domitian kept several women for his pleasure and it was said that he depilated them with his own hand. When his wife had an affair with the actor Paris<sup>2</sup> in 83, Domitian divorced her and had Paris killed. The next year Domitian became interested in his niece Julia Flavia (64-91), and thus executed her husband. She moved into the palace and it was said that she became Domitian's mistress. Nevertheless, Domitian took Domitia Longina back shortly afterwards, because he could not bear to be separated from her. Julia Flavia became pregnant and died in 91, allegedly as a result of an abortion that Domitian had forced upon her. He had her deified.

Domitian attempted to outdo his father and brother in splendour. He built an arena for thirty thousand spectators and staged costly public shows. He took special pleasure in gladiator fights between women and dwarfs. The aristocracy hated him for Domitian was not only cruel, but also autocratic and pretentious, wearing the dress of a triumphant general in the Senate<sup>3</sup> and insisting on being addressed as "quotmaster and god". After an army revolt in Upper Germany in 89, Domitian became even more autocratic and in 93 he instituted a reign of terror. Seeing conspiracies everywhere, he cracked down on all perceived threats. Domitian's niece, Flavia Domitilla the younger, had married Domitian's cousin, Flavius Clemens, a consul. Their sons were Domitian's heirs. In 95 Domitian accused them of sympathising with the Christians and the Jews. He had his cousin killed and his niece banished. Domitian executed senators and imperial officials who opposed his policy and had their property confiscated. Suetonius estimated the causalities among former consuls alone at no less than twelve.

Domitian advanced his own death by replacing his joint Praetorian Prefects. Worried that their career would be brief too, these new Prefects recruited a former slave of Flavia Domitilla the younger to kill the emperor. Domitian's wife, Domitia Longina, was involved in the plot. The first blow was not fatal and a hand-to-hand struggle followed until the other conspirators burst into the

room and hacked the emperor to death.

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# Models Interpretation

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Up

## Interpretive Models for the Book of Revelation as a Whole

by  
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For your convenience, I had placed a copy of Greg Herrick's article on this page; he prefers you use the following link to read this article. I will, however, leave in place a couple of definitions and summaries.

<http://www.bible.org/docs/nt/books/rev/modelrev.htm>

### Introduction

This article focuses on just one interpretive problem, namely, the overall interpretive framework for the book.

### Methods of Interpretation

There have traditionally been four or five schools of thought on the interpretive framework of the book of Revelation as a whole.

- *historicism* method of interpretation refers to actual events from the beginning of the church until the time of the interpreter.
- *idealism* method events only symbolize the ongoing struggle between good and evil.
- *preterist* method the symbols and content relate only to events and happenings at the time of the author. T
- *futuristic* method.<sup>11</sup> In chapter 3:10 the Lord says to the church at Philadelphia that they "will kept from" (thrhvsw ejk) the *hour of*

*trial* to come upon the earth. This is a literary, programmatic statement.

- *moderate futurist view*, the one espoused by Ladd, is referred to as a *moderate futurist* view. According to Ladd, an answer to the problem of the relationship of the seal, trumpet and bowl judgments to one another, could provide the solution to the view of history affirmed in the book. With that in mind, he proposes that the seal judgments represent "the forces in history, however long it lasts, by which God works out his redemptive and judicial purposes leading up to the end." an answer to the problem of the relationship of the seal, trumpet and bowl judgments to one another, could provide the solution to the view of history affirmed in the book. With that in mind, he proposes that the seal judgments represent "the forces in history, however long it lasts, by which God works out his redemptive and judicial purposes leading up to the end."

## Conclusion

"For reasons outlined above, the historicist and idealist views seem untenable. The preterist method of interpreting the book cannot adequately deal with the text as a prophetic piece whose many prophecies simply cannot be matched with any known fulfillment in the author's lifetime. The association of the book with Jewish apocalyptic materials is not completely adequate and therefore remains an unreasonable ground for rejecting the futuristic aspects of the book. The moderately futuristic view has much to commend it, in that it sees both the historical setting and the future as playing a role in John's work. The identification of the seal judgments with the church age, however, is dubious for the reasons mentioned, and therefore the method as a whole remains spurious. Perhaps the best model is that which takes into account the historical setting of the book and yet sees the seals, trumpets and bowls as relating to a future time near the consummation. Such a model makes the best sense of 3:10 and realizes that the calamities to come on the earth are greater than anything seen to date. The mostly futuristic method is such a model."

### Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996)

#### Summary of Four Views on Revelation

**Preterist** All events of Revelation were fulfilled during the period of the Roman Empire.

**Historical** Revelation is a panorama of church history from the apostolic era until consummation.

**Idealist** Revelation is not a representation of actual events but is rather a symbolic depiction of the spiritual warfare between good and evil.

**Futurist** Beginning with ch. 4, Revelation describes future events accompanying the end of the age.

#### Postmillennial View

**Death/Resurrection/  
Ascension of Christ**

Ministry of Church culminates in lengthy period of peace and righteous before Christ's return`

**Second Coming  
Final Judgment**

**Eternal Reign of  
Christ**

### Premillennial View

**Ascension/Death/ Church Age Rapture Great Tribulation Second Coming Millennium Final Eternal Reign  
|Resurrection (7years) (1,000 yrs) Judgment**

### Premillennial/Posttribulational View

**Death/Resurrection Great Tribulation Second Coming Millenium Final Judgment Eternal Reign of Christ  
Ascension (7 years) (1,000 yrs)**

### Amillennial

**Death/Resurrection/Ascension Second Coming/Final Judgment Eternal Reign**

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# Revelation 1

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[Interpretation 1](#)

[Seven Churches](#)

[Elements in Revelation](#)

- 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:
- 2: Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.
- 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.
- 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;
- 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,
- 6: And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 10: I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,
- 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.
- 12: And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I

saw seven golden candlesticks;  
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.  
14: His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;  
15: And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.  
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.  
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:  
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.  
19: Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;  
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.

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# Revelation 2

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[Interpretation 2](#)

[Paul](#)

- 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;
- 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:
- 3: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.
- 4: Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.
- 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.
- 6: But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.
- 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.
- 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;
- 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.
- 10: 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: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.
- 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.
- 12: And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he

- which hath the sharp sword with two edges;
- 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.
- 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.
- 15: So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.
- 16: Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.
- 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.
- 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;
- 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.
- 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.
- 21: And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 25: But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.
- 26: And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:
- 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.
- 28: And I will give him the morning star.
- 29: He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

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# Revelation 3

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- 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.
- 2: Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 6: He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.
- 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;
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 11: Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.
- 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.

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

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;

15: I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

16: So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

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:

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.

19: As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

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.

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.

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

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# Revelation 4

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- 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.
- 2: And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 9: And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,
- 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,
- 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.

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# Interpretation 4

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Seven seals on a heavenly scroll, opened by the Lamb

The writer returns to the visionary, this time, a vision of heaven: God sits on His throne. According to Edwin D. Reed in *The New Testament: A Critical Introduction* (Wadsworth, 1991), "The point of chap. 4 seems to be that as creator of all things, God is worthy 'to receive glory and honor and power' (4:11)." The writer, again, strains language in his attempt to render his vision communicable. The reader encounters torches, elders, trumpets, singing, and incense. God is sovereign. One recalls Ezekiel's vision: "the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake." Note: Ezekiel is no stranger to the complexities of representation and describes only "the appearance" of "the likeness" of a something--in this case, "the glory of God." The vision continues into chapter five as an introduction to the seven seals.

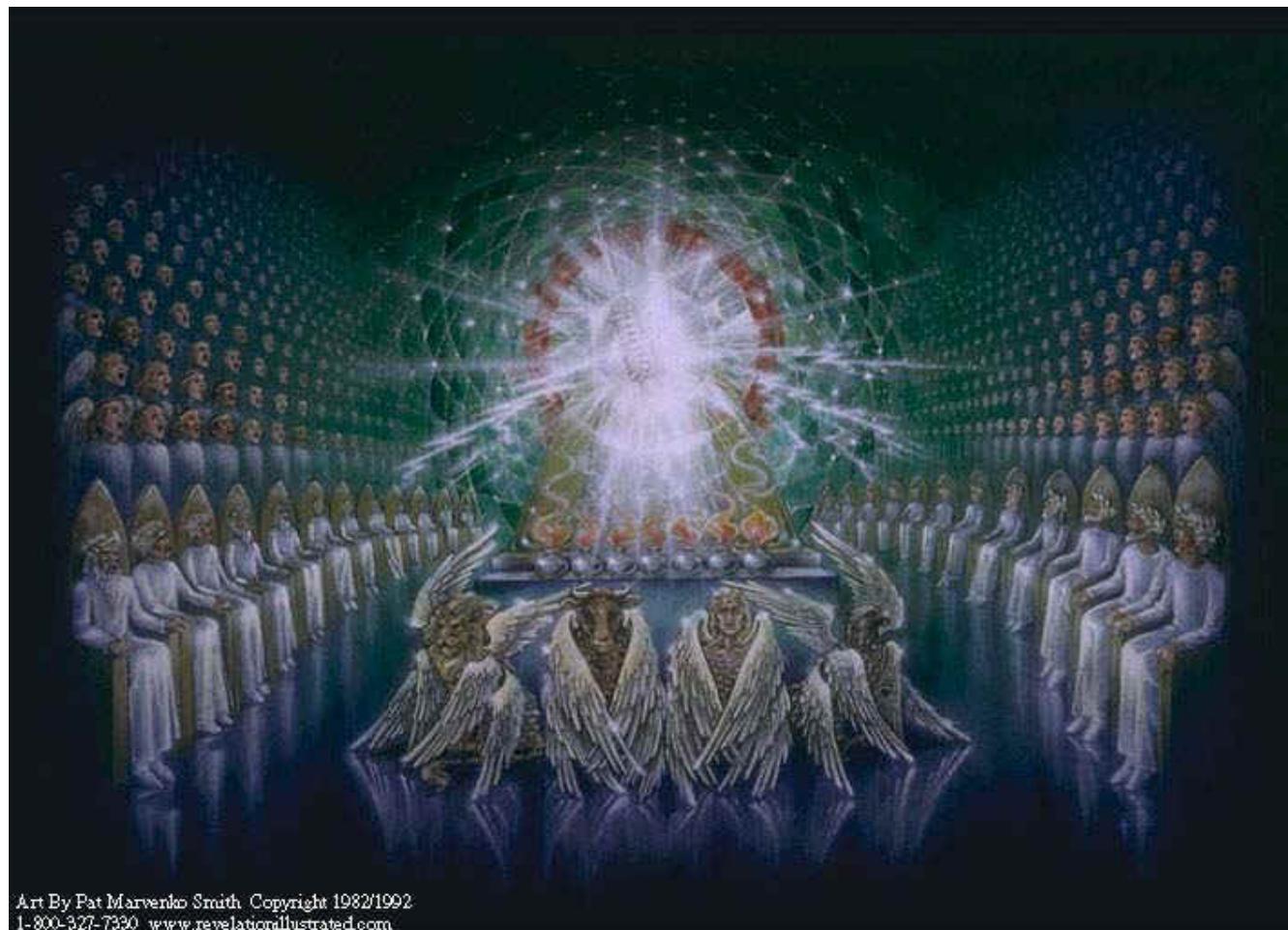
H.A. Buster Dobbs Outline [http://www.bible-infonet.org/bin/outline/bible/outline\\_index.htm](http://www.bible-infonet.org/bin/outline/bible/outline_index.htm)

Visions (4:1 to 19:21). A. The seals (4:1 to 8:1). 1. Invitation to enter the throne room of God (4:1). a. Saw a door opened in heaven (4:1). b. A trumpet voice saying, Come up here (4:1). c. John to see in prophetic vision the things which will come to pass in the future of the world (4:1). 2. The vision of heaven (4:2 to 5:14). a. John was in the spirit (4:2). b. John saw Jehovah sitting on his throne--he was radiant and glorious and dazzling (4:2-3). c. The 24 elders surrounding the throne (4:4). d. The sevenfold Spirit (4:5). e. The sea of glass and the four living creatures (4:6-8; see also Ezekiel 1:4-28). f. The cherubim and elders worship the triune God (4:9-11). g. Jehovah holds a book sealed with 7 seals (5:1). h. No one in all the universe was worthy to break the seals and open the book (5:2-3). i. John wept because the book was unopened (5:4). j. The Lamb of God advances to open the book (5:5-8). k. The heavenly host worships the triune God (5:9-14). 3. First seal opened (6:1-2). a. A white horse and its rider appear (6:2). b. The rider had a bow and a crown--he came to conquer (6:2; see Rev. 19:11). 4. Second seal opened (6:3). a. A red fiery horse of war appears with his rider taking peace from the earth (6:4). 5. Third seal opened (6:5). a. A black horse, representing economic hardship, appears (6:5). b. Its rider has a balance in his hand--food is scarce and expensive (6:6). 6. Fourth seal opened (6:7-8). a. A pale (livid or greenish) horse representing death followed by Hades appears (6:8). b. People are killed by sword, famine and wild beasts-- suggesting persecution--others died of pestilence (death) (6:8). 7. Fifth seal opened (6:9-11). a. The martyred saints under the altar are crying for vengeance (6:10). b. They are given white robes (representing purity) and told to wait for a little time until their brethren had fulfilled their course (6:11). 8. Sixth seal opened (6:12-17). a. This vision represents the final judgment. It shows the atmosphere around the earth removed, the earth shaken, stars falling to earth, and people of every class terrified (6:12-17). 9. Seventh seal opened (7:1-17). a. The destruction is suspended until the saints are sealed on their foreheads (7:1-3). b. The number of saved includes many Jews from every tribe, but a limited number--not all (7:4-8). c. In addition there was a great, uncountable multitude and of every nation and tribe (7:9-10). d. The angelic host, the 24 elders and the cherubim again worship the triune God (7:11-12). e. The saved, composed of a limited number of Jews and a great mass of Gentiles, having washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, stand before the throne and are comforted (7:13-17). f. There was a silence in heaven for about the space of half an hour (8:1).

What is it John sees? He sees heaven and a door opening into it (4:1). He is, however, to get a closer look! "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this" (4:1b). In the spirit, in heaven, John sees a throne with one sitting upon it who looks like jasper and carnelian, framed by a rainbow that looks like emerald. All these are precious gems. John farther sees twenty-four thrones surrounding the central throne, holding twenty-four elders dressed in white robes with golden crowns. How close is John? He is not so close as not to be separated from the throne by flashes of lightning,

rumblings and peals of thunder; in front of the throne, between lightning flashes, John sees seven flaming torches which are the seven spirits of God; between John and the throne, there is something like a sea of glass. This sea of distance between John and God is important; as *Revelation* unfolds, the sea disappears (21:1): " "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more." In the new heaven and earth, the home of God is among mortals. Distance, turbulence and unrest, have ceased to trouble the human spirit which in the New Jerusalem no longer dies (21:4). Around the throne, too, John sees four living creatures (cf Ezekiel 1:5, 10) full of eyes in front and behind, one like a lion, another like an ox, one with a face like a human face, and the fourth like a flying eagle. John's focus is again on the eyes, "all around and inside" (4:8). The creatures are giving glory, honor, and thanks to God while the twenty-four elders are casting their golden crowns before the throne and singing "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created" (11). John seems to acknowledge by "existed" and "were created" that creation has existed in the mind of God from eternity. The RSV suggests the many eyes of the creatures suggests unceasing watchfulness and the four living creatures are angelic beings representing humankind and all beasts. The twenty-four elders are the twelve patriarchs of the *Old Testament* and the apostles of the *New Testament*.

John's vision is, indeed, sublime, invoking majesty and awe. Chapter five continues the vision of God with a scroll in His right hand, a scroll containing the fixed purposes of God in the future but sealed, unalterable and unknown. We will learn no created being will be found worthy of understanding or carrying out God's plan. Only the Lamb of God (5:8) will be found worthy, this Lamb the "Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David," the Messianic King. This is once again a proclamation of Christianity and the role of Christ.



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Here is yet another outline and approach to this chapter: [http://ccel.wheaton.edu/contrib/exec\\_outlines/rev.htm](http://ccel.wheaton.edu/contrib/exec_outlines/rev.htm) Mark A. Copeland

## **I. THE THRONE SCENE (1-8)**

### **A. JOHN TAKEN TO HEAVEN (1)**

1. After seeing the Lord and hearing the letters addressed to the seven churches
2. Upon seeing a door standing open in heaven, and hearing a trumpet-like voice
  - a. Being told "Come up here"
  - b. In which he will see "things which must take place after this"

### **B. HE DESCRIBES THE THRONE SCENE (2-8)**

1. The One on the throne
  - a. Like a jasper (sparkling white)
  - b. And a sardius stone (fiery red) in appearance
  - c. With an emerald rainbow (various shades of green) around the throne
2. The twenty-four elders
  - a. Sitting on twenty-four thrones around the throne
  - b. Clothed in white robes
  - c. With crowns of gold on their heads
3. Other elements around the throne
  - a. Lightnings, thunderings, and voices proceeding from the throne
  - b. Seven lamps (the Seven Spirits of God) burning before the throne
  - c. A sea of glass, like crystal, before the throne
  - d. Four living creatures in the midst and around the throne
4. The four living creatures
  - a. Unique characteristics
    - 1) The first was like a lion
    - 2) The second was like a calf
    - 3) The third had a face like a man
    - 4) The fourth was like a flying eagle
  - b. Similar characteristics
    - 1) Each had six wings
    - 2) Full of eyes in front and back, around and within
    - 3) Do not rest day or night, praising the holiness of the Eternal God

## **II. GOD PRAISED AS THE CREATOR (9-11)**

### **A. PROMPTED BY THE LIVING CREATURES (9)**

1. Whenever they give glory, honor, and thanks
2. To Him who sits on the throne, the Eternal One

### **B. OFFERED BY THE TWENTY-FOUR ELDERS (10-11)**

1. Who fall down before Him who sits on the throne
2. Who worship Him who lives forever
3. Who cast their crowns before the throne
4. Who proclaim God worthy to receive glory, honor, and power
  - 1) For He created all things
  - 2) And by His will they exist and were created

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# Related Passages

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## Ezekiel 1.4-28

- 4: And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire.
- 5: Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man.
- 6: And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings.
- 7: And their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot: and they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass.
- 8: And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings.
- 9: Their wings were joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward.
- 10: As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle.
- 11: Thus were their faces: and their wings were stretched upward; two wings of every one were joined one to another, and two covered their bodies.
- 12: And they went every one straight forward: whither the spirit was to go, they went; and they turned not when they went.
- 13: As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps: it went up and down among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning.
- 14: And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning.
- 15: Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces.
- 16: The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the colour of

- a beryl: and they four had one likeness: and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel.
- 17: When they went, they went upon their four sides: and they turned not when they went.
- 18: As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rings were full of eyes round about them four.
- 19: And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them: and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up.
- 20: Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went, thither was their spirit to go; and the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels.
- 21: When those went, these went; and when those stood, these stood; and when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels.
- 22: And the likeness of the firmament upon the heads of the living creature was as the colour of the terrible crystal, stretched forth over their heads above.
- 23: And under the firmament were their wings straight, the one toward the other: every one had two, which covered on this side, and every one had two, which covered on that side, their bodies.
- 24: And when they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, as the noise of an host: when they stood, they let down their wings.
- 25: And there was a voice from the firmament that was over their heads, when they stood, and had let down their wings.
- 26: And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it.
- 27: And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about.
- 28: As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake.

### Ezekiel 2.9-10

- 9: And when I looked, behold, an hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein;
- 10: And he spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe.

## Isaiah 6. 1-8

- 1: In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.
- 2: Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.
- 3: And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.
- 4: And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.
- 5: Then said I, 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: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.
- 6: Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:
- 7: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.
- 8: Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.

## Psalms 47.2-9

- 2: For the LORD most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth.
- 3: He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet.
- 4: He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved. Selah.
- 5: God is gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet.
- 6: Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises.
- 7: For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding.
- 8: God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness.
- 9: The princes of the people are gathered together, even the people of the God of Abraham: for the shields of the earth belong unto God: he is greatly exalted.

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# Revelation 5

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- 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.
- 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?
- 3: And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.
- 4: And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.
- 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.
- 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.
- 7: And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.
- 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.
- 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;
- 10: And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.
- 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;
- 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.

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.

14: And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

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# Interpretation 5

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## Revelation 4–7.

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Seven seals on a heavenly scroll, opened by the Lamb

Chapter five continues the vision begun in four of the glory of God and the Lamb. The reader recalls that four ended with the sea of glass distancing God and His creatures; He is being given glory and honor by four living creatures having the likeness of a lion, an ox, a human face, and an eagle. These symbols are said sometimes to represent the Lion of Judah, beast of burden, the human being, and the Divine; the symbols have, also, been linked to the Gospels: *Matthew* (Lion of Judah), *Mark* (Jesus as Servant), *Luke* (Jesus as human being), and *John* (Jesus as Divine or heavenly). J. Sidlowe Baxter in *Explore the Book* sees the creatures as symbolizing strength, service, intelligence, and heavenliness. They live nearest the throne of God and most accurately express His life. The symbols have also been tied to the standards carried by the Twelve Tribes into battle.

Probably what is most intriguing about chapter five is the sealed scroll containing the fixed purposes of God for the future. The future is always upon the horizon and distant so that human beings see into blindly or only with premonition. In the Old Testament, prophets or spokespeople for God spoke concerning the historical future. Ezekiel's vision, in fact, is the prototype for John's: 2. 9-10 "I looked, and a hand was stretched out to me, and a written scroll was in it. He spread it before me; it had writing on the front and on the back, and written on it were words of lamentation and mourning and woe." Ezekiel is instructed to eat the scroll; he found it sweet as honey, then he says, "the spirit lifted me up, and as the glory of the Lord

rose from its place, I heard behind me the sound of loud rumbling; it was the sound of the wings of the living creatures brushing against one another..." The future containing God's fixed purposes transcends time and thus human understanding. Apocalypse can envision only a day of darkness ablessing and calamity as history ends and eternity begins. It is no exaggeration to point out that the Scroll, the Living Word of God, contains a vision of all of time and eternity in symbol.

The theme of chapter five is really a question and answer. :Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" 2. Of course, "no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it" 3. John begins to weep but is told, "Do not weep. See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals" (5). This is clearly the message of Christianity: Jesus as Messiah. John now sees a vision of the sacrificial Lamb and hears the twenty-four elders praying and singing a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation; you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth" 9-10. The outreach is universal, and the message is the Church of Christ reigns on earth. John looks again and sees myriad angels, the living creatures, the elders, and myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands surrounding the throne and singing. The song is again that the slaughtered Lamb is worthy to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing (a seven-fold fullness) 12. Every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, join in the singing to the one seated on the throne that He receive blessing and honor and glory and might. The creatures say "Amen," and the elders fall down and worship God.

The vision of the Lamb is vivid: it stands between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders. It stands as though slaughtered and has seven horns and seven eyes, John explaining that these are the seven spirits of God sent out into the world (6). The Lamb takes the scroll from the one seated on the throne. At this point the twenty-four elders fall before the Lamb, each holding a harp and golden bowls of incense, which John tells us "are the prayers of the saints" (8). They begin singing a new song: the song is new because in Christianity, Christ has initiated a new era (14.3). The 144,000 thousand redeemed sing the new song, which no one else could learn, for they are blameless (3-4).

## Outline of H.A. Dobbs

- e. The sea of glass and the four living creatures (4:6-8; see also Ezekiel 1:4-28).
- f. The cherubim and elders worship the triune God (4:9-11).
- g. Jehovah holds a book sealed with 7 seals (5:1).
- h. No one in all the universe was worthy to break the seals and open the book (5:2-3).
- i. John wept because the book was unopened (5:4).
- j. The Lamb of God advances to open the book (5:5-8).
- k. The heavenly host worships the triune God (5:9-14).

### [Chapter 5 D. Nelson Darby](http://ccel.wheaton.edu/d.darby/synopsis/Revelation.html)

In the next chapter we find the Lamb. A book was in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. It was counsels, wielded by His power. Who could open them and bring them forth to execution? Who had the title to do so? None in heaven or earth but One. The elders explained to the prophet who mourned that the ways of God should be shut up, that the mighty One of Judah, the true source of all promises to David, had prevailed to open it and loose the seals. This was the Lamb, the rejected Messiah. He was more than this, as the chapter goes on to shew; but He is this. The rejected Messiah was in the midst of the divine throne; and within all the displays of providence and grace-the living creatures and elders-stood a Lamb as it had been slain. He had the fullness of power over the earth-seven horns-as of God, and the seven Spirits of God for government, according to God's perfection, of all the earth. When He has taken the book, the living creatures and elders fall down before Him with golden censers full of the prayers of the saints. They are priests here.

Now a new song is sung to celebrate the Lamb. What seemed His dishonour and rejection on earth was the ground of His worthiness to take the book. He who at all suffering and cost to Himself had glorified all that God was, was able and worthy to unfold what made it good in the way of government. It was not the government of Israel, but of all the earth; not merely earthly chastisements according to God's revelation of Himself in Israel, but the display in power of all God was in the whole earth. He who had glorified all He was, and redeemed, by the gospel of what He was through His death, out of all the earth, was the fit One to bring it forth in power. He does not yet come forth; but His work is the worthy instrument, for the

display of it all. He can unlock the seals of God's ways and mysteries. I read the passage thus:- "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed to God, by thy blood, out of every kindred, &c., and hast made them unto our God kings and priests, and they shall reign over the earth." Thus it is not any particular class, but the value of the act which is the motive of praise, and all being confided to Him.

Here the angels come in to praise, not in the fourth chapter. I can hardly doubt that a change in administrative order takes place here. Until the Lamb took the book, they were the administrative power; they were the instruments through which what the four living creatures symbolized was exercised in the earth. "But unto the angels hath he not put into subjection the world to come, whereof we speak." Hence, as soon as the Lamb appears and takes the book, as soon as the idea of redemption is brought in, the living creatures and elders are brought together, and the angels take their own place apart. Like the living creatures before, they give no reason for their praise. As the heads of creation as to their nature, they celebrate with all creatures the title to glory of the Lamb and His own worthiness, ascribing praise to Him that sits on the throne and to the Lamb for ever and ever. The four living creatures, that is, all the exercise of God's power in creation and providence, join their Amen, and the elders worship God in the excellency of His being. But the living creatures and elders are joined (verse 8) in falling down before the Lamb. I do not think they are meant to be distinguished in the latter part of the verse, [11] but merge in the elders, symbolizing different service but not now two classes. Verse 9 is the general fact; not "they sung," but "they sing." This takes place in heaven; but those named are in the mind in a general way. Thus the source of what follows, the throne, and the persons engaged in heaven before God in all that passes, are displayed: whence the judgment flows, who surround the throne of God above, and who is in it, have been brought before us; the heavenly scene, and choir, and assistants.

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# Interpretation 1

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Approaching each chapter, I will follow a general pattern of providing a general structure, following the *Oxford Companion*; building upon this foundation, I will then look more closely at the individual verses within the chapter. In this case, *OCB* shows us chapters 1-3 must be seen as a unit: put another way, *Revelation* opens with a general introduction and seven letters. The letter has by the end of the first century C.E. been established as literary form, Paul's letters by now being collected for distribution.

What must be very clear to the reader of *Revelation* is that this book must be read in knowledge of both the Old Testament and its own century. This point is made very early in the first chapter. The first point made is that this revelation comes to John from God through Jesus Christ and is communicated by an angel; the message is about "things which must shortly come to pass." In short, the message is itself divine: signified by an angel. John, of course, is the human agent who bears "record of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all the things he saw."

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

"Which must shortly come to pass" raises the issue of time: God's time and human time.

[Revelation 1–3.](#)

Seven letters warning against deception and lawlessness (cf. [Matthew 24.4](#); [Matthew 24.5](#); [Matthew 24.9–12](#))

Other structures suggest the following division:

Edwin D. Freed, *The New Testament: A Critical Introduction*

I. Prologue

II. Letters to the seven churches (2-3)

Charles Williams, the following:

PROLOGUE (1:1-8)

The Introduction of the Book (1:1-3)

An Epistolary Prescript (1:4-6)

Two Prophetic Sayings (1:7-8)

VISIONARY REPORT (1:9 - 22:5)

*John's Inaugural Vision & Commission (1:9 - 3:22)*

An Audition and Vision of the Risen Christ (1:9-20)

Seven Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia (2:1 - 3:22)

Ephesus (2:1-7); Smyrna (2:8-11);

Pergamum (2:12-17); Thyatira (2:18-29); Sardis (3:1-6);

Philadelphia (3:7-13); Laodicea (3:14-22)

Charles Williams

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK (1:1-20)

A. Purpose of book and blessing announced to those who hear (1:1-3)

B. Address to the seven churches (1:4-8)

C. John's commission to write (1:9-11)

D. The first vision (1:12-20)

1. Christ among the candlesticks (1:12-18)

2. John's commission repeated (1: 19)

3. Explanation of symbols (1:20)

II. LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES (2: 1-3:22)

- A. Ephesus: left her first love (2: 1-7)
- B. Smyrna: the rich poor church (2:8-11)
- C. Pergamum: where Satan's throne was (2:12-17)
- D. Thyatira: home of Jezebel (2: 18-29)
- E. Sardis: a dead church (3: 1 -6)
- F. Philadelphia: church with an open door (3:7-13)
- G. Laodicea: the lukewarm church (3: 14-22)

\*\*\*\*\*

Structurally, the book of *Revelation* is really quite amazing. Generally, I prefer beginning with the *NRSV Oxford Annotated* introduction: "The plan of the whole is, then, the following: Prologue, 1. 1-8; seven parallel sections divided at 3.22; 8.1; 11.19; 14.20; 16.21, and 19.21; Epilogue 22.6-21."

### **Prologue 1.1-8**

The source of the message and the message itself are made quite explicitly in the prologue. The revelation originates with God through Jesus Christ and is communicated to John by an angel. *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* traces the complex roles played by angels, and the following is appropriate to the role played in *Revelation* as messenger:

As time passed, however, an increasing emphasis on God's transcendence correlated with an increasing need for divine mediators. These beings who brought God's messages to humans are typically portrayed as anthropomorphic in form, and such a being may often be called a "man" ([Genesis 18.2](#); [Joshua 5.13](#); [Ezekiel 9.2](#); [Ezekiel 9.11](#); [Daniel 9.21](#); [Daniel 12.6–7](#); [Zechariah 1.8](#); [Luke 24.4](#)). The members of God's council are the envoys who relay God's messages and perform tasks appropriate to their status as messengers ([1 Kings 22.19–22](#); [Job 1.6–12](#)). In some narratives of encounters with supernatural beings, there is reluctance to identify them by name ([Genesis 32.29](#); [Judges 13.17–18](#)).

Actually, the entire discussion is good reading. The point of this introduction is that what John is about to write has a divine origin. John is merely the vehicle of transmission. The writer, whether John of the Gospel, another elder and writer from Ephesus, or a pseudonymous writer, testifies to 1)the word of God, 2)the testimony of Jesus Christ, and 3)to what he saw. In short, John's message is to God's servants, those submissive to God, and the message is the one delivered through Jesus Christ. Clearly, *Revelation* is a Christian message.

The prologue ends with a blessing. The *NRSV* points out that *Revelation* contains seven beatitudes:

<i>Beautitudes in the New Testament</i>	<i>Revelation</i>
<b>Matthew 5.3-11</b>	14.13
<b>Luke 6. 20-22</b>	16.15
<b>John 20.29</b>	19.9
<b>Romans 4.7-8</b>	20.6
<b>Romans 14.22</b>	22.7
<b>Revelation 1.3</b>	22.14

According to *OCB*, " In most biblical texts, the associated verbs (to bless), adjectives (blessed), and nouns (blessing, blessedness) express a reciprocity pertaining between God and his chosen people. God blesses them as a mark of his grace and favor; their blessing of God is a recognition of his presence among them. His blessing conveys to his people a share in his own vitality and ageless purpose. Their blessing of him, often in song, dance, and instrumental music, celebrates their gratitude for his goodness and help. Each movement in this mutual activity elicits the other, so that the words point to the conjunction of two activities, especially in worship."

\*\*\*\*\*

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.

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.

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.

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.

22. 7: Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

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.

\*\*\*\*\*

### Introductory Salutation 1.4-8

John addresses the seven churches of Asia (seven suggesting completeness and totality) with grace and peace. What follows is Christian theology: one God is, was, is to come (eternal, omnipresent, Yahweh). Jesus Christ is the faithful witness (par excellence), the firstborn of the dead (most exalted, resurrected) and ruler of the kings of earth ( Ps. 89.27, Lord over Caesar); Christ through His love and sacrifice has freed individuals from sin and made the redeemed (collectively) a kingdom, priests, serving God and Father. This Jesus is coming again--in clouds, from above--and will be seen by every eye including those who pierced Him; all the tribes of the earth will wail, and so it will be. Amen; finally, reader's are reminded God is the beginning and the end, who is, was, and is to come.

### **Beginning of First Parallel Section (ending at 3.22)**

#### Preparatory Vision

The reader now learns John has been exiled to the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus; that is, he shares with other Christians the kingdom, persecution, and need to endure. On this Lord's day, John is in the spirit, a state of prophetic illumination. What exactly he sees, the reader can only imagine, for John is reduced to a series of similes: in the middle of seven candlesticks, one like the Son of Man, clothed in a white robe with a golden sash across his chest, head and hair white as white wool, as snow; his eyes like a flame of fire, his feet like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace, his voice like the sound of many waters, seven stars in his right hand, the word or two-edged sword coming from his mouth, and his face like the sun. John falls at his feet as though dead, following the pattern of others who have experienced the terrifying Majesty of God. Remember, Isaiah is reduced to utter "Woe is me! I am lost." Jeremiah sighs, "Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak." Ezekiel falls on his face and is told to stand up. Paul, in the New Testament, is blinded. In Hebrew tradition, the question is natural: "Can mortal see Yahweh and live?" Moses is told,<sup>20</sup> But," he said, "you cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live."<sup>21</sup> And the Lord continued, "See, there is a place by me where you

shall stand on the rock; Exodus 33. 22 and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; 23 then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen." F. F. Bruce in *The International Bible Commentary* says, "It is the man [person] who has fallen prostrate before God and been raised to his feet who can henceforth look the whole world in the face as the fearless spokesman of God." As in Daniel and in the transfiguration, John is comforted with God's right hand and told not to be afraid. So, what did John see? He saw through the temporal and into the eternal, a vision he could render only through figures of speech and symbols, the only instrument at hand for mere mortals. Remember Job: "I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me" (42. 3).

### Message to Seven Churches

The general structure of these letters is an address, a descriptive phrase referring to the Risen Lord, a condemnation or commendation of the church addressed, an admonition, a promise and exhortation. For the reader wishing to know more about these churches, read the following link.

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<i>Ephesus</i>	<i>Smyrna</i>	<i>Pergamum</i>	<i>Thyatira</i>	<i>Sardis</i>	<i>Philadelphia</i>	<i>Ladiocea</i>
Abandon - ed first love	Suffered Faithful	Balaam	Jezebel	Alive but dead	Hold Fast	Cold or hot
Conquer		Repent	Hold fast	Wake up		Conquer
Tree of Life	Crown of Life	White stone	Morning Star	Book of Life	Pillar in Temple	Place on the Throne



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# Seven Churches

[Home](#)[Up](#)Jeanie C. Crain <http://crain.english.mwsc.edu>[Up](#)[Catholic Encyclopedia Letters to the Seven Churches](#)**(1) THE SEVEN CHURCHES**

**1:1-3. Title and description of the book.** The revelation made by Jesus the Messias to John.

**1:4-9. Salutation.** Salutation prefatory to the seven Epistles, wishing the churches the grace and the peace of God and Jesus.

**1:9-20. The vision of Jesus as the Son of man.** The portrait is taken from Daniel 10 and Henoch 46. Cf. the phrases, "one like the son of man" (Apocalypse 1:13, Daniel 10:16 and 7:13); "girded with gold" (Apocalypse 1:13; Daniel 10:5); "eyes like flames of fire" (Apocalypse 1:14; Daniel 10:6); "a voice like that of a multitude" (Apocalypse 1:15; Daniel 10:6); "I fell down like one senseless" (Apocalypse 1:17; Daniel 10:9); "and he touched me" (Apocalypse 1:17, Daniel 10:18); "hair white like wool" (Apocalypse 1:14; Daniel 7:9; Henoch 46:1).

**2:1-3:22. The Epistles, to the seven Churches.** The Churches are Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. The Epistles are short exhortations to the Christians to remain steadfast in their faith, to beware of false apostles and to abstain from fornication and from meat offered to idols.

<http://www.apocalipsis.org/> (Please note: Ross A. Taylor's work is itself comprehensive; I am providing for you here his summation of the seven churches, along with his contents. He states in his foreword that he has become more of a futurist rather than idealist in his interpretation. Taylor does an extremely good job detailing differences between idealist, historicist, and preterist interpretations of the seven churches; with respect to whatever else I agree to, the following must be conceded: "The letters to the seven churches are integral to the book because they refer to the vision of Christ and the new Jerusalem at the end of the book." In my own approach to *Revelation*, I am always inclined to place the writing in its own setting or era, to see it as speaking to its own time, as containing universal truth at the symbolic and literary level, and to view it as speaking to the end of historical time. I am also committed to letting readers interpret for themselves under careful consideration of multiple perspectives. Thus, I encourage readers to sample, not only Taylor, but as many other writers as their study constraints permit.)

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**2. The letters to the seven churches (2:1)****Introduction to the letters to the seven churches:**

The letters to the seven churches are a distinct unit of seven within the book of Revelation. Other sevenfold units are the seven seals, the seven trumpets and the seven bowls of God's wrath. Because the number seven denotes divine completeness as a whole the seven letters form a whole unit which has a message to the church universal; there are more than seven churches in Asia, for example Colossi has been omitted. In 1:11 John is commanded to 'write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea'. In verse 13 we see Christ among the lampstands, that is the seven churches, and in the letters we find out what he observed as he walks among the seven churches (2:1). Our Lord is one who walks among the churches and sees their deeds both good and bad. The

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seven churches represent the different imperfections that are likely to be found in individual churches in different localities and at different times. The churches give us a template against which we can measure our church in order to see our weaknesses and strengths, he also gives us the remedy for our deficiencies.

In this preliminary section God is judging His church in order to purify it from sin within so that it will be able to stand up to the coming persecution and also so that it will not be condemned along with the world (1 Cor 11:32), see the warning in Rev 18:4 to come out of Babylon lest we share in her sins and her judgement. This judgement is depicted later in the sections of the seven trumpets, the seven bowls, the judgement of the harlot and the day of judgement. Pergamum is warned about the Balaamite teaching concerning idolatry and immorality, Thyatira is warned about the false prophet Jezebel who misleads the church into idolatry and immorality. Laodicea thinks it is rich but actually it is poor, but we find that those whom the Lord loves he rebukes and disciplines. Here God warns the church because the world is infiltrating the church, but later the seven trumpets are warnings to the world to repent of its idolatry and its results which include sexual immorality. The harlot Babylon which seduces the people of the world is herself destroyed by fire.

Smyrna and Philadelphia are both troubled by false Jews who slander her, later we find the 144,000 who are sealed by God to protect them from the seven trumpets, these are the true Jews, the Israel of God, who we later see as a great multitude. Smyrna is warned that a period of Satanic testing is coming and they must be faithful unto death and in 12:17 we find Satan making war against the saints and in chapter 13 we find that the beast from the sea making war against the saints and conquering them. We find that those who would not worship the beast are killed and yet in 15:2 there are those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and his name.

Ephesus was sound in doctrine and persevered under hardship, neither the world or persecution was the problem. However they had lost their first love, for Christ and each other and had therefore almost become sub-Christian. John, as his first epistle makes clear, considers love to be the essential response to God's love; 'We love because God first loved us' (1 John 4:19); 'Whoever loves God must also love his brother' (1 John 4:21). One of the features of the churches witness was that her members love each other (John 13:34-35), it is not an option it is a commandment. God's counterpart to the hatred of the world is to be the love of Christians for each other. The church in Sardis was on the verge of death and was hardly in a position to withstand attack from the world and its values. Similarly the church in Laodicea was in danger of receiving the world's values.

In verse 1:19 he commands John to 'Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later'. The letters to the seven churches form a unit as to 'what is now' and the rest of Revelation concerns 'what will take place later'.

The letters follow a general sevenfold pattern:

1. A greeting. To the angel of the church.
2. A reference to Christ's self designation from Rev 1:12-19, this has some application to the letter to the church.
3. A commendation. I know your deeds... (except in case of Laodicea and Pergamum).
4. A rebuke if applicable (except in case of Smyrna and Philadelphia).
5. A charge to repent or a warning.
6. A call to hear. The phrase '*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches*'.
7. A promise. The phrase '*To him who overcomes*' followed by a reference to a reward mentioned later in Revelation.

Dr A T Pierson (quoted by Lang) pointed out that these promises at the end of each letter follow an historical order. The tree of life refers back to Eden; the second death to the fall; the hidden manna to the manna in the desert; the white stone to the engraved stones on the high priest's shoulder and breastplate; the rod of iron to Moses holding the rod of God for the defeat of Amalek (Ex 17:8); the white raiment to the garments of the priests; the pillar in the temple to those in the temple of Solomon; and the sitting on the throne to Solomon's reign in glory and peace.

Lang points out that there are three aspects under which these letters may be considered.

1. As a description by the Lord of the state of the seven churches of believers then existing (preterist).
2. As a prophetic foreview of the Christian age then commenced and to conclude at the coming of the Lord (historicism).

3. As a revelation of the moral characteristics of churches found always throughout the age (idealistic).

The first (i) is obvious but these were chosen out of all the churches then existing because these reveal the states of every church in all ages, the number seven, the number of completeness suggests this.

The second (ii) is a widely held belief that these seven church in the order used, foreshadow a progressive development of the church throughout church history.

a. the first letter reveals the beginning of declension in the waning of first love, and the last (Laodicea) shows the final outcome of this in rejection by the Lord.

b. The meaning of the name of each church corresponds to the historic feature of the stage assigned to each.

c. The history of the Christian age has in fact followed the stages thus obscurely outlined in advance.

Trench has given a summary of the history of this interpretation and offers these reasons against it.

i. The Letters themselves contain no hint of a prophetic period sense.

ii. The scheme is not known to the apostolic, the post apostolic or even the following sub apostolic age.

iii. The advocates of this interpretation vary greatly among themselves in their distribution of the periods, examples of which of which divergence are given.

iv. There is no truly accurate correspondence of Letters with periods.

One of the themes that runs through the letters are the promises of rewards to those who overcome. Clearly Jesus is the model of one who overcame (3:21). In Johns first epistle we read of those young men within whom the word of God lives who overcome the evil one (1 John 2:14); those who overcome the antichrist because Jesus within them is greater than Satan (1 John 4:4); those who overcome the world by faith (1 John 5:4). Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God (1 John 5:5). In John 16:33 Jesus tells his disciples that in the world they will have trouble but not to fear because he has overcome the world.

The rewards for those who overcome involve a share in Christ himself:

1. Will eat of the tree of life watered by the river of life whose source is Christ (2:7).
2. Will receive the hidden manna which is Christ the true bread which comes down from heaven (2:17).
3. Will share in Christ's authority over the nations (2:26).
4. Will walk with Christ dressed in white (3:4).
5. Will write on him my new name (3:12).
6. Will sit with Christ on his throne (3:21).

The letters to the seven churches are integral to the book because they refer to the vision of Christ and the new Jerusalem at the end of the book. In the letters he prepares and purifies the church so that it can withstand the coming assaults on it by its enemies: Satan, the beast, the false prophet, the world and its seduction which are described in the rest of the book.

Summary of the condition of the churches:

- i. Commended with nothing against:

Smyrna: Materially poor but spiritually rich, enduring affliction, slandered and persecuted.

Philadelphia: Open door, little strength, kept his word, had not denied his name, endured patiently.

ii. Commended but with things against.

Ephesus: Hard work, perseverance, have not grown weary, cannot tolerate wicked men but had lost their love.

Pergamum: Live where Satan has his throne, Antipas was martyred, remain true to his name did not renounce their faith, but some hold to teaching of Balaam.

Thyatira: Have growing love and faith but tolerate the false teaching of Jezebel.

iii. Nothing to commend.

Sardis: Reputation of being alive but spiritually dead. Wake-up

Laodicea: Lukewarm, materially rich but spiritually poor, blind and naked. About to be spewed out.

Ramsey notes that the descriptions of the churches in all their imperfection serves to define the limits within which the church may exist, yet all of them are part of the church of Christ despite their imperfections

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# Elements in Revelation

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## Elements in Revelation

Michael Campbell

### **the abyss**

The origin of the locusts and the first beast, and the prison of the dragon. (9:1,11; 20:3)

### **Abaddon**

(Hebrew "destruction") The Hebrew name of the angel of the abyss and the leader of the locusts. His name in Greek was Apollyon. This name is used in the Old Testament to mean Hell. (9:11)

### **Apollyon**

(Greek "destroyer") The Greek name of Abaddon. John may be using this name to attack the Greek god Apollo. (9:11)

### **Armageddon**

(Hebrew "Mount Megiddo") The place where the kings of the earth were gathered to do battle with the forces of good. (16:16)

### **Asia**

This term refers to Asia Minor. The seven churches addressed by John were there. (1:4) [[Map](#)]

## Balaam

(Hebrew "he has consumed the people") A diviner of the Old Testament (Numbers 22-24) paid by Balak to curse the Israelites. Instead he blessed them. Later he is accused (Numbers 31:16) of causing the Israelites to worship Baal. The Nicolaitans are accused by John of following the teachings of Balaam. (2:14)

## Balak

A king of Moab in the Old Testament (Numbers 22-24). He hired Balaam to curse the Israelites, but instead Balaam blessed them, angering Balak. (2:14)

## The Beast

- (1) The first beast that came out of the sea or the abyss (11:7 and 13:1) is described as having seven heads and ten horns like the dragon. (13:1-10; 17:3-18) See Daniel 7:3-25.
- (2) The second beast that came out of the earth (13:11) is also called the false prophet. A lesser companion of the first beast. It was said to resemble a lamb, but it spoke like a dragon. (13:11-17)

## The Devil

(Greek "deceiver") Another name of Satan.

## The Dragon

The great red dragon appears in heaven (12:3). He is called Satan and the Devil. The archangel Michael defeats the dragon in heaven and casts him out. (12:3-17; 20:1-10)

## Ephesus

A city in Asia Minor containing one of the seven churches. It was an important seaport in Roman times. (2:1-6) [[Map](#)]

## The False Prophet

Another name for the second beast because he caused miracles.

## The Four Creatures

The four creatures, or the four living creatures, are presented in Revelation as beings who are in the presence of God (5:6-8). The first creature was like a lion, the second was like a calf, the third was like a man, and the fourth was like an eagle. Each of them had six wings and many eyes. Their main task seems to be to give praise to God.

See Ezekiel 1:5-20.

### The Four Horsemen

Four riders let loose one by one as the first four seals of the scroll are broken. The first was a conquerer on a white horse. The second was on a red horse and caused slaughter. The third was on a black horse and was associated with commerce. The fourth was called Death and rode on a pale horse. (6:1-8)

### Jezebel

The evil wife of Ahab, king of Israel. The church at Thyatira is accused of tolerating her. (2:20) See 1 Kings 16-19.

### John

The author of Revelation. Traditionally he has been equated with John the apostle but this is quite unlikely.

### The Lake of Fire

A burning pool of brimstone. Being thrown into this resulted in eternal torment and was called the second death. (19:20; 20:10,14)

### The Lamb

The Lamb is one of the creatures John sees in heaven (5:6). It represents Jesus. It is described as having seven horns, representing power, and seven eyes, representing wisdom. The number seven represents completeness.

### Laodicea

A city in Asia Minor containing one of the seven churches. The church is harshly criticized. (3:14-19) [[Map](#)]

### Michael

An archangel who defeated the dragon and cast him from heaven (12:7). Michael also appears in the Old Testament (Daniel 10:13, 10:21, 12:1), the New Testament (Jude 9) and in various apocrypha.

### The Morning Star

Represents Jesus (2:28 and 22:16). The prophecy of Balaam stating that a star would advance from Jacob (Numbers 24:17) was often interpreted as a prediction of the arrival of Jesus.

### The Nicolaitans

An early Christian sect criticized in Revelation. They are accused of worshipping Balaam. (2:6,15)

### **Patmos**

An island off the west coast of Asia Minor. It was used by the Romans as a penal colony. It was here that John claimed to have received his revelation (1:9). [[Map](#)]

### **Pergamum**

A city in Asia Minor containing one of the seven churches. Called Pergamos in some texts. (2:12-16) [[Map](#)]

### **Philadelphia**

A city in Asia Minor containing one of the seven churches. The church is praised. (3:7-11) [[Map](#)]

### **Revelation**

The final book of the New Testament. Also known as the Apocalypse. Its fuller titles include the book of Revelation, the Revelation of Saint John, the Revelation to John, etc.

### **Sardis**

A city in Asia Minor containing one of the seven churches. The church is cautioned to "strengthen that which remains". (3:1-4) [[Map](#)]

### **Satan**

(Hebrew "adversary") Originally he was the heavenly prosecutor. Later he came to embody all evilness. In Revelation he is represented by the dragon. (2:13; 12:3-17; 20:1-10)

### **The Scroll**

(1) Held in the right hand of God (5:1), it was described as having writing on the inside and on the back. The only one who could open the scroll was the Lamb, and to do so he had to break the the seven seals (6:1-8:1). It is not mentioned what the scroll contains. Its major significance seems to be the events that occur when its seals are broken.

(2) Carried by the mighty angel (10:2) and eaten by John (10:9-10). John said it tasted sweet but it made his stomach feel bitter.

### **The Second Death**

The lake of fire. Being cast into the lake of fire. Punishment for the

unworthy. (2:11; 20:6,14; 21:8)

### The Seven Angels

- (1) The angels who blew the seven trumpets. (8:2,6-12; 9; 11:15-19)
- (2) The angels who emptied the seven bowls onto mankind. (15:1,6-8; 16:1-21)

### The Seven Bowls

Containers filled with plagues that were emptied on mankind by the seven angels. (15:7; 16:1-21)

### The Seven Lamps

Seven gold lamps surround Jesus when he appears to John on Patmos (1:12). Later the lamps are explained to represent the seven churches (1:20). See Zechariah 4:2

### The Seven Seals

Seals that held the scroll closed. They could be broken only by the Lamb. As each seal was broken a (usually destructive) event occurred. (5:1; 6:1-17; 8:1)

### The Seven Stars

Jesus appears to John on Patmos holding seven stars in his right hand (1:16). The stars are explained to represent the angels of the seven churches (1:20). The angels are the heavenly representatives of the earthly churches.

### The Seven Trumpets

After the breaking of the seventh seal, seven angels are given seven trumpets. Instruments blown by seven angels after the breaking of the seventh seal. The trumpets bring disaster. (8:2,6-12; 9; 11:15-19)

### Smyrna

A city in Asia Minor containing one of the seven churches. The church is praised and warned of impending suffering. (2:8-10) [[Map](#)]

### Sodom

A city of ancient Israel destroyed by God (Genesis 19:24) because of its wickedness. In Revelation the name is explicitly said to symbolize the great city. (11:8)

### The Throne

The central object in heaven (4:2). This represents God and the power of God. The figure seated on the throne is described as having an appearance like jasper or carnelian. See Ezekiel 1:26-28.

### **Thyatira**

A city in Asia Minor containing one of the seven churches. (2:18-25)  
[[Map](#)]

### **The Twenty-four Elders**

Beings, robed in white and wearing crowns, sitting in the presence of God. (4:4,10-11)

### **The Two Witnesses**

The two witnesses are given power to prophecy for 42 months (11:3). They were prophets. The beast from the abyss kills them, but they are resurrected and they ascend to heaven. (11:1-13)

### **The Whore**

A woman called Babylon. She represents Rome. (17:3-6)

### **The Winepress**

Called the winepress of the wrath of God. The wicked are punished in it. (14:19-20)

### **Wormwood**

The name of the star that fell onto the fresh water of the world (8:11). It caused a third of that fresh water to become wormwood. Wormwood is the name of a bitter plant.

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# Interpretation 2

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Chapter two addresses the angels of the churches of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, and Thyatira.. *Revelation* 1.20 has already explained the angels to the reader: ""As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the lampstands are the seven churches." The important point here is that Christ stands exalted in eternity, wisdom, and immutability within the church.

## Ephesus

Ephesus is one of the four major cities in proconsular Asia: Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch, being the others. This is the place of Paul's labors in the 60s for two years and three months. A western coast city of over 250, 000 at the time early Christianity, Ephesus is (home for philosophers, poets, historians, and rhetoricians); it is also a city of first "manuscript burnings": Acts 19.18,19: "Also many of those who became believers confessed and disclosed their practices. A number of those who practiced magic collected their books and burned them publicly; when the value of these books was calculated, it was found to come to fifty thousand silver coins." The practices alluded to here, according to the *Oxford Companion* include exorcism:

According to Josephus there was a significant Jewish community there, although few Jewish material remains have been discovered. The city was famous as a site for magic and thaumaturgy. The Greek phrase *Ephesia grammata* (Ephesian letters) became a generic label for all types of magical words and apotropaic incantations. The city attracted Jewish exorcists ([Acts 19.11–20](#)) as well as their gentile counterparts,

such as Apollonius of Tyana.

Although the Greek and Egyptian pantheons were well represented in imperial Ephesus, the religious focal point of the city was the goddess Artemis of Ephesus. From Ephesus her worship had spread throughout the Mediterranean basin, and her Ephesian sanctuary was widely recognized as one of the seven wonders of antiquity. The site of Ephesus is exceptionally well excavated and reconstructed. Most of the excavated areas shed light on the Roman and Byzantine city rather than the Hellenistic one. Noteworthy monuments include the foundations of the Artemis temple and its altar (see [Acts 19.27](#)), the 25,000-seat theater ([Acts 19.29](#)), temples for the imperial cult, the library of Celsus, numerous baths and gymnasiums, the "slope houses" dating from the early empire to the Byzantine era, and the temple of the Egyptian deities.

Acts 19.13 also talks about these Jewish exorcists and contrasts Paul's healing by the name of Jesus.

Apollos, Paul's counterpart, was himself a Jew from Alexandria (18.24) who had been instructed in the "Way of the Lord" and spoke accurately with enthusiasm about concerning Jesus; we learn, too, he is part of the Johanne followers of Christ, knowing only baptism of repentance (18.25). Aquila and Priscilla educate him on being baptized in the Lord and receiving the Holy Spirit. It is at the time when Apollos is in Corinth that Paul comes to Ephesus. In Ephesus, Paul first teaches from the synagogue for three months, but meeting resistance, he left, taking disciples with him, and preached from the lecture hall of Tyrannus.

In addition to Jewish resistance, Paul also had to contend with the worshippers of Artemis, chief fertility deity: Paul has been teaching that "gods made with hands are not gods," and is winning followers. The people of Ephesus believe both commerce (they made and sold statues of Artemis") and worship at the temple of Artemis are endangered, so they cause an uproar (Acts 19). After the uproar ceases, Paul decides to leave for Macedonia (Acts 20). In this uproar, an indication of the Roman tolerance for religions is illustrated, the town clerk tells the people they must settle their differences in the regular assembly rather than risk being charged with rioting(19.36ff). The Romans generally were quick to squelch rioting and uprisings, any commotion that threatened orderly rule.

Ephesus played a historic role in the development of Christianity:

Ephesus played a historic part in the movement of Christianity from Palestine to Rome. Acts depicts Ephesus as the zenith of Paul's missionary activity ([Acts 19.1–41](#); [Acts 20.17–35](#)), and it was from Ephesus that Paul wrote the Corinthian letters ([1 Corinthians 16.8](#)). The Pastoral letters ([1 Timothy 1.3](#)) and the book of Revelation ([Revelation 2.1–7](#)) associate the city with Timothy and John, respectively. Later traditions held that Mary, the mother of Jesus, lived and died there... John reportedly wrote the Fourth Gospel at Ephesus, and that this was the site of the conversion of Justin Martyr, the first Christian philosopher (*OCB*).

Of the other churches in chapter two, the *Oxford Companion* describes them as follows:

**Seven Churches, The.** The Revelation to John was addressed to seven churches in the Roman province of Asia. There were other churches in the province (Colossae and Troas), but seven were chosen to represent the entire church (See [Number Symbolism](#)). The letters to these churches ([Revelation 2–3](#)) present a picture of diversity in Christianity. The church of Ephesus, which had been founded by Paul, and remained for many centuries one of the chief centers of the eastern church, was zealous in guarding against heresy (that of the Nicolaitans), but lacking in Christian love. The church of Smyrna appears to have stood up well under harassment and, sometimes, the imprisonment of its members. Pergamum was an important religious center, with a famous shrine of Zeus, a temple of Asklepios with a renowned medical school, and a temple of Augustus; "Satan's throne" may mean any of these, but probably refers to emperor worship. The church had suffered some persecution but it had remained faithful, though there was some laxity with regard to the Nicolaitans. The church of Thyatira abounded in love and faith, service and patient endurance, but allowed the evil teachings of a prophetess Jezebel.

Each letter is specific and contains praise and criticism, warning and encouragement as appropriate. But the plural "churches" at the end of each letter shows that they were meant to be read by every church. They are part of the opening vision of Revelation, where John saw the heavenly Son of man surrounded by seven lampstands, which were the

seven churches. The letters show that this was not meant as a picture of an ideal church, but as a means of showing the churches as they really are, with their heresies, quarrels, and weak faith, but also with their faith and hope and love. This introduction to the Revelation plays an essential part in the book's purpose of warning and comfort.--David H. van Daalen

Another important note for the church of Pergamum is that the idolatry includes the teaching of "Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the people of Israel, so that they would eat food sacrificed to idols and practice fornication" (2.14) The controversy seems to be that people have become lax relative to a decision of the Jerusalem council in Acts 15.6-21. That council addressed three issues: the need for circumcision, the practice of eating meat left over from sacrifice to idols, and fornication. The agreement reached was to abstain from the last two. One needs to remember that the most abundant and ready source for meat was the commerce going on in and around the temple sacrifices. One does well to recall INumbers 25.1-2: 1: "And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.2: And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods." 31.16 is also appropriate: 16: "Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD."

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# Paul

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- 1: And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples,
- 2: He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.
- 3: And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.
- 4: Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.
- 5: When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.
- 6: And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.
- 7: And all the men were about twelve.
- 8: And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.
- 9: But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.
- 10: And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.
- 11: And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul:
- 12: So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.
- 13: Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth.
- 14: And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests,

which did so.

15: And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?

16: And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

17: And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

18: And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds.

19: Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.

20: So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

21: After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome.

22: So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus; but he himself stayed in Asia for a season.

23: And the same time there arose no small stir about that way.

24: For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen;

25: Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth.

26: Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands:

27: So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.

28: And when they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.

29: And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre.

30: And when Paul would have entered in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not.

31: And certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him, desiring him that he would not adventure himself into the theatre.

32: Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together.

33: And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made his defence unto the people.

- 34: But when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.
- 35: And when the townclerk had appeased the people, he said, Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter?
- 36: Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly.
- 37: For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess.
- 38: Wherefore if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies: let them implead one another.
- 39: But if ye enquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly.
- 40: For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse.
- 41: And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly.

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# Interpretation 3

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<http://www.pacificcoast.net/~muck/rev/revmap.html>

Chapter three of *Revelation* completes the letters to the seven churches and picks up an important theological point concerning an open door of opportunity. The NRSV ends the first of seven parallel divisions at 3: 22, the end of the seven letters.

The church of Sardis was outwardly flourishing, but not without serious damage to its spiritual life. Philadelphia, on the other hand, was a city where Christians were isolated in the community; but the church had remained

faithful. At Laodicea the church seemed to be flourishing, but was spiritually poor. (See Map 14:E3.)

### The Open Door

3.8 reads of Philadelphia, "I know your works. Look, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut." The very important theological point made by the image is that the door of the Holy One is not shut by human beings; no one "is able to shut" it. That human beings are capable of closing another door, that to their own inner selves, is farther made clear in 3.20: "Listen! I am standing at the door knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you and you with me." When John resumes his message and vision, he begins in chapter four with "After this, I looked and there in heaven a door stood open!" John is invited to come up and be told what must take place.

### Results of Bible search on "door." (pdf file 4.5 Acrobat)

Before leaving chapter three and the seven churches, the reader may want to review the descriptive phrases used for the risen Lord:

Ephesus	"him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lamp stands"
Smyrna	"the words of the first and the last, who was dead and came to life"
Pergamum	"him who has the sharp two-edged sword"
Thyatira	"words of the Son of God"
Sardis	"him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars"
Philadelphia	"the words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens"
Laodicea	"the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the origin of God's creation"

One needs to remember the seven stars are the seven angels of the seven churches (seven lamp stands). Jesus is then holding the angels in His preferred right hand while walking among the churches; His words are the first and the last of the resurrected Christ; He has the Word, the two-edged sword, the words of the Son of God, His words. He has the fullness of God and the churches; He is holy, true King, who opens and no one shuts, who shuts and no one opens; so be the words of Jesus, Amen, who is the faithful and true witness, the origin of God's creation. This is Christian theology in a nutshell.

### The Christian Church

The *Oxford Companion* in discussing symbols points out that "In Judaism and Christianity certain symbols are drawn from their historical and cultural backgrounds. Thus, circumcision is the sign of entrance into the community for Jews, as baptism is for Christians. The seven-branched lamp stand or menorah used in the Temple can symbolize the Jewish community, while the cross can stand for the Christian community." I find it interesting that the writer of *Revelation* keeps the lamp stands and the same number as symbol of the Christian community.

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# Revelation 6

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- 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.
- 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.
- 3: And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see.
- 4: 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 7: And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see.
- 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.
- 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:
- 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?
- 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.  
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;  
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.  
14: And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.  
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;  
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:  
17: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

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# Interpretation 6

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*Revelation 6* is the chapter containing the opening of six of the seven seals containing the mystery of God's fixed purposes in human history. The reader does well to recall that the final verse of this chapter warns prophetically, "the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand before it?" (17) The "their" refers to all classes of society--the rulers, great men, generals, the rich and strong, and everyone, and slave and free: all are running to hide from calamity into the caves and into the mountains (16). They call out to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb" (16). Being represented are the upheavals and divine judgment recognized as patterning themselves after the Day of the Lord found in the Old Testament. One should recall that this chapter begins with the four living creatures nearest the throne of God calling, "Come." The NRSV points out that "come" can be translated, also, as "Go!" and that it is addressed successively to each of the four horsemen. Following the four horsemen, the souls of the martyred are seen under the altar and heard asking, "How long before thou wilt judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on earth?" This question leads dramatically into the beginning of calamity and the great day of wrath that is to come.

Edwin D. Freed in *The New Testament: A Critical Introduction* summarizes the chapter in the following way:

By opening the seven seals, the Lamb displays his power as the eschatological figure who rules the world and brings on the sufferings that are signs of the End and the judgment. Again, the composition is based on passages from the OT. The four horsemen, for example, which symbolize war, rebellion or civil strife, famine, and death, may come from Zech. 1:8-11, where they are symbolic of the four winds. Based on many

sources, which are obviously woven into the apocalypse, Revelation stresses the consequences of yielding to false teaching or to the emperor cult. John would rather that his readers died than yielded.

In chap. 6 we may have examples of a primary characteristic of apocalypse: past history written into the future tense. The Parthians, famous bowmen (6.2a), were Rome's enemy in the East and defeated a Roman army in A.D. 62. The rider may be alluding to that incident. Or, since the Roman army was conquering the world, and since its officers rode white horses after victories, he may be alluding to Roman conquests (6.26). The red horse, symbolic of rebellion or civil strife, may allude to the civil wars that took place in Rome for a century before Augustus became the first emperor. The black horse, symbolic of famine, may allude to the shortage of grain in the time of Domitian, when, as usual, barley was the poor person's food.

In 6:9-17 are some of the most vengeful and uncharacteristic verses in the Bible (see, for example Ps 79:5). The writer sees those in heaven rejoicing at the suffering of sinners on earth. Basing his words on the prophet's bitter exhortation (for example, Joel 2:10-11; Amos 5:18-20; Hosea 10:8) and using their images of terror, the writer wants to warn those still alive.

This particular interpretive approach seems to combine *preterist* ("the book the symbols and content therein relate only to events and happenings at the time of the author) and idealist (the contents of the book are not seen to relate to any historical events at all, but only to symbolize the ongoing struggle) approaches in an interesting way: a resolution of tension between the approaches might urge the reader to see the symbols and content in the book as relating both to events and happenings at the time of the author as well as symbolically suggesting a struggle of forces. Certainly, the martyrs under the altar (10) are clear that the earth is to be judged and their blood avenged. The reader should recall that in Hebrew tradition, Yahweh is both steadfast in love and righteous in vengeance. God is both merciful and just; these both have short-term and long-term applications; in the long-term, the scales will balance while in the short-term, they may be quite unequal and seemingly unjust or non-compassionate. The workings of God, it must be remembered, remain inscrutable in totality (except as it can be revealed in the Word as it has come to us, including apocalyptic visions such as that of

John); what is being done historically in the lives of human beings is, however, observable. Gabel, Wheeler, and York in *The Bible as Literature*, 4th edition (Oxford 2000) simply conclude of *Revelation* 6 the following:

In the vision a scroll with seven seals is produced, and a lamblike being offers to open the seals so that what is in the scroll can be revealed; for making that offer, the lamb is praised in the same terms as God himself has been. As each seal is opened, potential destroyers of the earth appear and natural disasters begin to occur on the earth (6).

The word "lamblike" [underlining mine] serves to remind the reader that all of *Revelation* is heavily veiled in image, symbol, and figurative language. What is being represented will never be completely clearly visible in the image of "likeness."

#### Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse



Horse One: "I looked and there was a white horse! Its rider had a bow; a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering and to conquer" (2). *Revelation* is quite clear: this horseman conquers: "The white horse symbolizes a conquering power that none can resist" (NRSV). F.F. Bruce, in his *Bible Commentary* says "the analogy of other horsemen and the fact that this horseman is equipped with a bow (like the mounted archers of the Parthian army) suggests rather invasion from beyond the eastern frontier of the Roman Empire." The crown Bruce finds suitable as a token for one who rode out bent on conquest. One possible reason why this passage may be misinterpreted is that *Revelation* 19.11 clearly identifies its rider of the white horse with Christ: "Then I saw heaven opened, and there was a white horse!

Its rider is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name inscribed that no one knows but himself." That the name is not fully known suggests that the greatness of Christ surpasses human knowledge. Matthew 11.27 says "No one knows the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." That this figure is Christ-God is clear in the following verse which says, "He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is called The Word of God."

Horse Two: If one follows a rule of first electing the most natural representation for the color of the horse, then when the second horse comes in red and the reader is told "its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that the people would slaughter one another; and he was given a great sword," a conclusion that this horse and rider represent bloodshed and violence in war can not be wrong.. F.F. Bruce concludes, "The blood-red colour of the horse is in keeping with the mission of its rider, which is to sow strife and slaughter on earth--civil war this time rather than foreign invasion: such civil war as had recently been experienced during the 'year of the four emperors' (A.D. 68-69). Bruce tends, thus, to prefer an interpretation which relates events to the time of the author.

It should be fully possible to agree that *Revelation* does, in fact, allude to events of the day, just as the context sweeps it out of its historical moment into at least the general repetition of patterns and to an inevitable sense that at some point the cycle ends. That is, it should be possible to argue for a metaphysical/spiritual conqueror to the extent one admits to stepping outside the confining box of space-time. How one can accomplish that remains a matter of philosophy and theology--at the speculative extreme--and simple trust at yet another pole.

Horse Three: The third horse is black and its rider holds a pair of scales in his hand. From the midst of the four living presences issues a voice saying, "A quart of wheat for a day's pay, and three quarts of barley for a day's pay, but do not damage the olive oil and the wine" (6). Following the horse of war, it should not be surprising to see this one as famine to be followed by pestilence and death in the next horse and rider. F.F. Bruce again relates interpretation to the history of the author and says the following:

In the fifth century B.C. a quart of grain was a fair daily ration for a Persian soldier or a Greek slave; for a Greek soldier twice as much was thought suitable.... according to the parable of Mt. 20:2 this [the denarius] was a labourer's daily wage in Palestine in A.D. 30. The announcement is thus to the effect

that a man's daily wage would buy just enough wheat for one, or just enough barley for three--appreciably more than the siege-rations of Ezekiel 4:10.

The olive oil and wine are spared at this stage but will suffer with "other trees when the winds of wrath are unleashed against them (7:1; 8.3), according to Bruce.

Horse Four: The pale green horse is the color of death. Its rider's name is Death, and he is followed by Hades (8). How much clearer can a writer be about a possible meaning of the image? Worth mentioning is the alliance here of two personifications: Death and Hades. These two are given authority to kill with sword, famine, and pestilence and by wild animals over a fourth of the earth (8). No wonder then that individuals at all societal levels run to the mountains, the rocks, and caves to hide, particularly after the sixth seal is opened.

### Fifth and Sixth Seals

The fifth seal offers a brief respite before plunging the reader into earthly crisis and destruction. "When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slaughtered for the word of God and for the testimony they had given; they cried out with a loud voice, 'Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long will it be before you judge and avenge our blood on the inhabitants of the earth?' (9). This is the jarring call for vengeance on the part of martyred souls; at their place under the altar in heaven; the altar is the one on which incense (prayers) ascend to the throne. Matthew nine has Jesus sitting on the Mount of Olives telling his disciples, when they question the coming desolation, that the end will not come before many are tortured:

Then they will hand you over to be tortured and will put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of my name. Then many will fall away, and they will betray one another and hate one another... But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world as a testimony to all the nations; and then the end will come (9-14)

There follows in Matthew descriptions of the desolating sacrilege spoken of by Daniel (15). The prayer of vindication is addressed to God. However one takes this vision--long-term or short-term--it has much in it of exacting justice, but the delay here must be interpreted as compassion for the masses and the giving of time as an opportunity to repent before the awful Day of

the Lord. Matthew is clear about the demands of justice: "for the sake of the elect, those days [of suffering] will be cut short" (19.22).

Chapter six ends cataclysmically: the opening of the sixth seal is followed by a great earthquake, the sun becomes black, the full moon becomes like blood, the stars fall to the earth, the sky vanishes, and every mountain and island is removed from its place; then everyone runs for shelter, recognizing that the great day of wrath has come. John even in this terror is still author of the majestic and sublime, as evidenced in his similes: the sun became "black as sack-cloth"; the stars of the sky drop to the earth like the fig tree drops its winter fruit when shaken by a gale; and the sky vanishes as a scroll rolling itself up.

The reader might wish to read Darby's account of *Revelation 6*. At the end of that account, it seems possible only to counter that vengeance is, after all, a human concept! That concept may miss very much the true outcome of God's kingdom and any introductory events into it.

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# Related Passages

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## Isaiah 34

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- 1: Come near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people: let the earth hear, and all that is therein; the world, and all things that come forth of it.
- 2: For the indignation of the LORD is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter.
- 3: Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcases, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood.
- 4: And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree.
- 5: For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment.
- 6: The sword of the LORD is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatness, and with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams: for the LORD hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea.
- 7: And the unicorns shall come down with them, and the bullocks with the bulls; and their land shall be soaked with blood, and their dust made fat with fatness.
- 8: For it is the day of the LORD's vengeance, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion.
- 9: And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch.
- 10: It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever: from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever.
- 11: But the cormorant and the bittern shall possess it; the owl also and the raven shall dwell in it: and he shall stretch out upon it the line of confusion,

- and the stones of emptiness.
- 12: They shall call the nobles thereof to the kingdom, but none shall be there, and all her princes shall be nothing.
- 13: And thorns shall come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof: and it shall be an habitation of dragons, and a court for owls.
- 14: The wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the wild beasts of the island, and the satyr shall cry to his fellow; the screech owl also shall rest there, and find for herself a place of rest.
- 15: There shall the great owl make her nest, and lay, and hatch, and gather under her shadow: there shall the vultures also be gathered, every one with her mate.
- 16: Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read: no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate: for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them.
- 17: And he hath cast the lot for them, and his hand hath divided it unto them by line: they shall possess it for ever, from generation to generation shall they dwell therein.

## Joel 2.

- 1: Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand;
- 2: A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations.
- 3: A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them.
- 4: The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses; and as horsemen, so shall they run.
- 5: Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array.
- 6: Before their face the people shall be much pained: all faces shall gather blackness.
- 7: They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks:
- 8: Neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path: and when they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded.
- 9: They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon the wall, they

shall climb up upon the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief.

10: The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining:

11: And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?

12: Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning:

13: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

14: Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him; even a meat offering and a drink offering unto the LORD your God?

15: Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly:

16: Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet.

17: Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?

18: Then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people.

19: Yea, the LORD will answer and say unto his people, Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith: and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen:

20: But I will remove far off from you the northern army, and will drive him into a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east sea, and his hinder part toward the utmost sea, and his stink shall come up, and his ill savour shall come up, because he hath done great things.

21: Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the LORD will do great things.

22: Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field: for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength.

23: Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month.

24: And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil.

25: And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you.

26: And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed.

27: And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed.

28: And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

29: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.

30: And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke.

31: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.

32: And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.

## Amos 8

1: Thus hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me: and behold a basket of summer fruit.

2: And he said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of summer fruit. Then said the LORD unto me, The end is come upon my people of Israel; I will not again pass by them any more.

3: And the songs of the temple shall be howlings in that day, saith the Lord GOD: there shall be many dead bodies in every place; they shall cast them forth with silence.

4: Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail,

5: Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit?

6: That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat?

7: The LORD hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works.

8: Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein? and it shall rise up wholly as a flood; and it shall be cast out and drowned, as by the flood of Egypt.

9: And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord GOD, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day:

10: And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning of an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day.

- 11: Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD:
- 12: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it.
- 13: In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst.
- 14: They that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, Thy god, O Dan, liveth; and, The manner of Beer-sheba liveth; even they shall fall, and never rise up again.

## Zechariah 1

- 1: In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying,
- 2: The LORD hath been sore displeased with your fathers.
- 3: Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the LORD of hosts.
- 4: Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings: but they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the LORD.
- 5: Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?
- 6: But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers? and they returned and said, Like as the LORD of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us.
- 7: Upon the four and twentieth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Sebat, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying,
- 8: I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom; and behind him were there red horses, speckled, and white.
- 9: Then said I, O my lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will shew thee what these be.
- 10: And the man that stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, These are they whom the LORD hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth.
- 11: And they answered the angel of the LORD that stood among the myrtle trees, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest.
- 12: Then the angel of the LORD answered and said, O LORD of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah,

- against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years?
- 13: And the LORD answered the angel that talked with me with good words and comfortable words.
- 14: So the angel that communed with me said unto me, Cry thou, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy.
- 15: And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease: for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction.
- 16: Therefore thus saith the LORD; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith the LORD of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem.
- 17: Cry yet, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad; and the LORD shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem.
- 18: Then lifted I up mine eyes, and saw, and behold four horns.
- 19: And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What be these? And he answered me, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem.
- 20: And the LORD shewed me four carpenters.
- 21: Then said I, What come these to do? And he spake, saying, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head: but these are come to fray them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles, which lifted up their horn over the land of Judah to scatter it.

## Zechariah 8

- 1: Again the word of the LORD of hosts came to me, saying,
- 2: Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury.
- 3: Thus saith the LORD; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the LORD of hosts the holy mountain.
- 4: Thus saith the LORD of hosts; There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age.
- 5: And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.
- 6: Thus saith the LORD of hosts; If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? saith the LORD of hosts.
- 7: Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country;

- 8: And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness.
- 9: Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Let your hands be strong, ye that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets, which were in the day that the foundation of the house of the LORD of hosts was laid, that the temple might be built.
- 10: For before these days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast; neither was there any peace to him that went out or came in because of the affliction: for I set all men every one against his neighbour.
- 11: But now I will not be unto the residue of this people as in the former days, saith the LORD of hosts.
- 12: For the seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things.
- 13: And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong.
- 14: For thus saith the LORD of hosts; As I thought to punish you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath, saith the LORD of hosts, and I repented not:
- 15: So again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear ye not.
- 16: These are the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates:
- 17: And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the LORD.
- 18: And the word of the LORD of hosts came unto me, saying,
- 19: Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace.
- 20: Thus saith the LORD of hosts; It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities:
- 21: And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts: I will go also.
- 22: Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD.
- 23: Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.

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# John Darby

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## Chapter 6

What is to follow on earth now begins, when the seals are opened. It will be remarked here, that John, standing in the ruin of the assembly, gives prophetically all that passes from that failure till Christ comes in chapter 19. There is no ascension no rapture, save as far as chapter 12 gives both together.

The first seals are simple; nor have I anything to offer very new upon them: first, imperial conquests then wars, then famine, then pestilence, carrying with it what Ezekiel calls God's four sore plagues (sword, famine, pestilence, and the beasts of the earth). They speak of the providential course of God's dealings, and hence the four beasts call attention to it; but they have God's voice in them, the voice of the Almighty: that, the ear of him who has the Spirit hears. These complete providential plagues, as spoken of in scripture. Then direct judgments follow; but these are what we may call preparatory measures.

I have to notice that in the full plagues of verse 8 the whole Roman earth is not included. It is a fourth, not a third. The plagues too, note, are limited in extent of sphere, not universal.

The saints are those whom God is really thinking of, and they come in

remembrance before other scenes are brought out. Those who had been martyred for the word of God and their testimony demand how long before they were avenged; for we have ever to do here with a God of judgment. Their being under the altar means simply that they had offered their bodies, as sacrifices for the truth, to God. The white robes are the witness of their righteousness - God's declared approval of them; but the time for their being avenged was not yet. I do not think giving white robes is resurrection. The first resurrection is sovereign grace, giving us the same place with Christ ("for ever with the Lord "), consequent on His work and His being our righteousness, which is alike to all of us. White robes thus conferred are the recognition of the righteousness ('dikaioomata') [12] of the saints-hence are seen in chapter 19 at His appearing. "They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy." I am not denying that we are made clean, and our robes white in the blood of the Lamb. But, even where this is said in chapter 7, I think it refers especially to the way they have been associated by faith with the suffering position of Christ. Here white robes are given them-their service owned; but, for avenging, they must wait till a new scene of persecution had brought them companions who had to be honoured and avenged like them. Still this marks progress, and finds its cause in the dealing of God to bring about this new state of things, which issues in final judgment and setting aside of evil. Here the judgments are providential.

The next thing to the claim for avenging is the breaking up of the whole system of earthly government, and the terror of all on earth. How clearly we see here that we are in a scene of judgment, and that God is a God of judgment! The desires of the saints are like the desires of the Psalms. We are not with children before the Father, with grace, with the gospel, and the assembly; but with Jehovah, where God is a God of judgment, and by Him actions are weighed. We are on Old Testament ground, that is, prophecy, not grace to the wicked, though judgment brings in blessing.

The opening of the sixth seal brings an earthquake, that is, a violent convulsion of the whole structure of society. All the governing powers are therein visited; and, seeing all subverted, small and great think (with bad consciences as they have) that the day of the Lamb's wrath is come. But it is not, though preparatory judgments with a view to His kingdom are there. But God thinks too of His saints on earth (where we must remember, the assembly is never now seen) before the scenes which follow, whether judgments on the Roman earth or the special workings of evil, to secure and seal them for that day.

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# Revelation 7

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- 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.
- 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,
- 3: Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.
- 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.
- 5: 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.
- 6: Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Neptahlim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand.
- 7: 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.
- 8: 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.
- 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;
- 10: And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.
- 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,

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.

13: And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?

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.

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.

16: They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

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.

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# Interpretation 7

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Seven seals on a heavenly scroll, opened by the Lamb

Chapter seven of *Revelation* provides needed respite from the ensuing cosmic catastrophes of chapter six; unbroken, however, is the seventh seal for which fearful expectation has developed during the opening of the first six. If this chapter is misunderstood, and it often is, then much of the rest of John's vision will also be misunderstood. The pivotal point in the chapter is a paradox: "for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd" (17). The reader must recall that the Lamb introduced in *Revelation* 5.6 is the sacrificial Lamb "standing as if it had been slaughtered, having the seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth." Just as John uses seven consistently to represent completion, one must expect to find in chapter seven a similar use. The paradox makes it quite clear that Sacrificial Lamb is now Shepherd.

Is it coincidental that chapter seven announces the seventh seal as preceded by an interlude of silence, dramatic pause for the finale? How long is half an hour of silence in heaven? (8.1) Readers must remember where it is that John has taken them in the structure of his vision into heaven: from the initial vision into the heaven and the throne, John has already seen conquering powers, war, famine, pestilence and death, martyred souls under the altar, and an earthquake; he next sees two additional encompassed visions: four angels at the corners of the earth, an angel with the seventh seal.

	<a href="#">Vision of Throne4-5</a>
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<b>II. Seven Seals 6-8.1</b>	<b>1.White horse 6.2--conquers, Christ</b>
	<b>2.Red horse 6.3--takes peace from earth, war</b>
	<b>3.Black horse 6.6--scales, famine</b>
	<b>4.Green horse6.8--pestilence and death</b>
	<b>5.Souls of martyrs 6.9</b>
	<b>6.Earthquake 6.12-17</b>
	<b>Two Vision s 7.1-8 Four angels at the four corners of the earth and "the seven angels who stand before God"</b>
	<b>7.9-17 Multitude of the Redeemed</b>
	<b>7. Unsealed scroll</b>
<b>III. Seven Trumpets blown by Seven Angels</b>	<b>1. hail, fire, blood 8.7</b>
	<b>2. mountain into sea; 1/3 sea, blood 8.8; 1/3 creatures, ships destroyed</b>
	<b>3star (Wormwood) from heaven; 1/3 waters bitter; 8.10</b>
	<b>4.1/3 sun, moon, stars, day kept from shining 8.12</b>
	<b>5.bottomless pit, demonic locusts torment people without seal of God on their foreheads 9</b>
	<b>6.demonic cavalry 9.13-20; 1/3 humankind killed</b>
	<b>Vision of the Little Scroll 10</b>
	<b>Measuring of the Temple of God 11; 2 witnesses; beast</b>
	<b>7. Consummation of God's Kingdom; temple in heaven opened 11</b>

How long has all this taken before we get to this half hour interlude of silence? Seven does introduce a crescendo: the seven angels in chapter eight have seven trumpets, and the devastation on earth will begin in full force.

What John has accomplished in chapter seven is to insert micro visions within his larger vision into heaven itself. "How long will it be before you judge and avenge our blood" the martyred have asked (16.11). What number? They are told to wait for "their fellow servants, and their brothers and sisters, who were soon to be killed as they themselves had been killed" (6.11). This is certainly not a comforting answer; the suffering and persecution on earth are, apparently, ongoing. Furthermore, John makes clear (7.4-9) that the servants of God, not the martyred, are being clearly marked as belonging to Christ and that the number (144,000, a multiple of twelve representing organized religion; one thousand is ten cubed, representing human completeness) will be complete when it is complete: "salvation belongs to the our God" (10). That John distinguishes servants from martyred is also important: martyrs still alive are yet to be killed; and servants are yet to be marked. What is going on in John's era, the great multitude martyred under Nero, is going on still: the complete number will include a full complement of martyrs from all times and all places. 144,000 will be sealed out of every tribe of the people of Israel" (4). In addition to these, there will be "a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and people and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands" (9). It's clear not one of the Redeemed will be left out of this gathering just as it is clear that God's outreach is universal and that the martyrs are to rest until the time is complete.

It should be noted that in the listing of the tribes, Judah is listed first, probably because Christ belonged to it; also, the tribe of Joseph included Benjamin and Manasseh, whereas Manasseh is listed separately in verse six. Dan does not appear at all:

It was held by many early expositors from Irenaeus onwards that Dan is omitted because Antichrist is to come from that tribe--a belief based by Irenaeus on the LXX version of Jer. 8: 16. But this roll-call of the tribes is schematic; we are not dealing with a census tribe by tribe as in Num. 1:20 ff; 26:5 ff, and need not be over-concerned about the inclusion of Manasseh or the exclusion of Dan. (F.F. Bruce, *The International Bible Commentary*)

The omission allows some to argue that not all Jews (the tribes) were present

before the throne. In its notes on the tribe of Dan, the *Oxford Companion* offers another possibility:

**Dan.** The fifth son of Jacob and one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Dan's mother is Rachel's maid Bilhah ([Genesis 30.1–6](#)). The name Dan seems to be derived from the Hebrew verb meaning "to judge or vindicate." The tribe of Dan's first settlement is depicted as lying between the territories of Ephraim to the north, Benjamin to the east, and Judah to the south ([Joshua 19.40–48](#)). Dan was renowned for its verve ([Genesis 49.16–17](#); [Deuteronomy 33.22](#)).

Already at an early time, a majority of the tribe migrated northward to a site near the source of the Jordan river ([Joshua 19.47–48](#); [Judges 1.34](#)). Hence, Dan often marks the northern border of Israel ([1 Samuel 3.20](#); [2 Samuel 24.15](#)). If the stories of the Danite hero Samson ([Judges 13–16](#)) and the song of Deborah ([Judges 5.17](#)) have a historical core, however, some members of the tribe must have remained in the south. With the rise of the monarchy, these southern clans were apparently assimilated into the kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

If Dan has been assimilated, it may not have been recognized in the first century C.E. formally as a tribe; a similar natural answer exists within information about Benjamin and Manasseh: although the tribe of Joseph embraces both Manasseh and Ephraim, Manasseh is weaker but important politically, and there seems to be a blurring between the tribes genealogically so that the two tribes can be identified as two or one.

**Manasseh.** Eldest son of Joseph, brother of Ephraim, and ancestor of the tribe of Manasseh. According to various territorial lists, the tribe of Manasseh was settled on both sides of the Jordan River, on the east, north of the Jabbok (e.g., [Numbers 32.39–42](#); [Joshua 13.29–31](#)), and on the west, in the central hill

country ([Joshua 17](#); See [Map 3:4XY](#)). It was in its later history weaker than Ephraim; this political fact is reflected in the story of Jacob's blessing, in which he reverses the birth order ([Genesis 48](#)). Manasseh is also described as the father of Machir, a genealogical explanation of a more complicated history between two apparently separate tribal entities; note that in [Judges 5.14](#), Machir is mentioned along with Ephraim, but Manasseh is not named.

The *Oxford Companion* further points out the inconsistent listing of the tribes throughout the Bible:

The Bible is, however, not consistent with regard to either the number or the names of the tribes. In the numerous tribal lists found in the various books of the Bible, the number varies from eleven to thirteen. These variations are mainly due to the appearance in some lists of the two sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh ([Genesis 48.8–20](#)) as separate tribes, and to the omission of Simeon or Levi from others. In the Song of Deborah ([Judges 5](#)), which is not necessarily a complete roll call of the tribes, Judah and Gad are missing, while Machir, the son of Manasseh ([Joshua 17.1](#)) appears to take the place of his "father." The variations are presumed to reflect fluctuations in the constitution and history of the tribes and their relative size and importance.

It should come as no surprise to the reader that the seventh seal introduces a "long" interlude of silence followed by the prayers of the saints (8.3)-- fervent prayer I would suspect for both the future martyred and the future Redeemed--and a return to ongoing devastation on earth. Six trumpets, seven again delayed, introduce new convulsions of nature in judgment upon the wicked (*NRSV Oxford Annotated*).

One must keep in mind at all times that John's vision is into the eternal at the same time his feet are grounded in the earthly and temporal; only in the finite world is time marked, and of the interlude in heaven, it is John's

subjective report that it seemed to be half an hour. Remember, though, the half hour marks an interlude in the vision itself. How long was the vision? All the reader knows is that the twenty-two chapters of *Revelation* were written as the result of the vision; the vision obviously could have taken a shorter or longer time than it took the author to record it.

Concerning the total number of the martyred and Redeemed, both robed in white (6.11, 7. 13), one of the twenty-four elders (5.8) introduced in the initial vision of the throne asks John, "Who are these robed in white, and where have they come from?" John replies respectfully, "Sir, you are the one that knows" (14). John has been humbled by his vision and recognizes that no mere mortal is capable of answering this question of number sealed and end of time. The elder (in heaven) then reveals to John who they are and why they are there: "These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (14). Is it any wonder that the angels, elders and four living creatures fall on their face and worship God, singing, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen!" Note the Amen sealing both ends of the worship service. Note, too, that the worshippers numbered myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands of thousands" (5.11).

The final verses of chapter seven of *Revelation* shows activity in eternity, "within God's temple" (15): "They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor scorching heat; for the Lamb at the center of the throne [in the temple] will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes" (15-17).

Structurally, John Sweet (*OCB*) also sees recapitulation and overture:

In the three series of disasters there is both recapitulation—each covers the same ground—and development. The seals serve as overture, centering on the "beginning of the birthpangs" ([Matthew 24.8](#)). The trumpets lead up to the "desolating sacrilege" ([Matthew 24.15](#)), Rome and its emperor. The bowls set out their destruction and the "coming of the Son of Man" ([Matthew 24.27](#))—bridegroom and bride over against beast and harlot.

Two further structural points are important for interpreting the book. Enclosing the scenes of destruction are the visions of God, creator and redeemer ([Revelation 4](#) and [Revelation 5](#)), and of the new creation ([Revelation 21](#)): the destructions are not simply negative; the rebelliousness of earth is finally overcome. Enclosing all the visions is the epistolary opening and ending: the whole disclosure is a message to

Christians of the day in their particular situations. Scattered among the visions are calls for discernment and fidelity ([Revelation 13.9](#); [Revelation 13.10](#); [Revelation 13.18](#); [Revelation 14.12](#); [Revelation 16.15](#); [Revelation 17.9](#)).

John's recorded vision serves as a doorway into the eternal, a door opening from the ongoing rebelliousness on earth into "the grace and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come" (1.4). What is revealed beyond that doorway is a throne and coming from it "flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunders, and in front of the throne there is something like a sea of glass like crystal" 4.5).

John enables his readers to become like himself and like Ezekiel (1.26-28) exalted in spirit; what will be seen is the glory of God and the distance between God and his creatures, even in heaven itself (*Oxford Annotated*).

Like John, those exalted will fall down and worship God (8, 9). At the end of *Revelation*, the end is not yet, only near (10). Evil continues: "Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right and the holy still be holy. See I am coming soon; my reward is with me to repay according to everyone's work" 22.12).

As the martyred in heaven rest a while longer, as the Redeemed are being sealed, the testimony from "the root and the descendent of David, the bright morning star" (22.16) includes an invitation: "'Come'. And let everyone who hears, say, 'Come.' And let everyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift" 22.17).

"See, I am coming soon; my reward is with me..." (22.12)

If, in fact, *Revelation* 7 is pivotal with the paradox of Sacrificial Lamb transformed into Shepherd, and if seven is the number of God's perfection, the reader would conclude quite naturally that the pattern should continue with chapters fourteen and twenty-one; this is exactly what happens! Chapter fourteen reveals the Lamb standing on Mount Zion! ("and with him were one hundred forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads" 1). Chapter twenty-one unveils a new heaven and earth:

1. for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea [of glass, separation between Creator and creation, was no more. 2. And I saw the holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3. And I heard a loud voice from the

throne saying, 'See, the home of God is among mortals.

*Revelation* then is ultimately a love story: wayward human beings, cast out of the Garden of Eden, now are reunited with God, servants resplendent in robes of white. *Hosea* is fulfilled: Gomer is redeemed through love as a metaphor of Israel now enlarged to include the Gentile nations. The *Song of Solomon* is now realized: "My beloved is mine and I am his; he pastors his flock among the lilies..." The church, beginning with the seven churches, has "sought him whom my soul loves; I sought him but found him not..." 3.1. The bride is met with praise and invitation, and in 8. 5-14, the reader learns of the lovers' vows and their final exchange. In the *Song of Solomon*, the lovers are found dwelling in the garden, much like the Adam and Eve of *Genesis* restored. The primordial end lies within the primordial beginning.

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- 1: He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand.
- 2: And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side: and they went in, and stood beside the brasen altar.
- 3: And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side;
- 4: And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.
- 5: And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity:
- 6: Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house.
- 7: And he said unto them, Defile the house, and fill the courts with the slain: go ye forth. And they went forth, and slew in the city.
- 8: And it came to pass, while they were slaying them, and I was left, that I fell upon my face, and cried, and said, Ah Lord GOD! wilt thou destroy all the residue of Israel in thy pouring out of thy fury upon Jerusalem?
- 9: Then said he unto me, The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great, and the land is full of blood, and the city full of perverseness: for they say, The LORD hath forsaken the earth, and the LORD seeth not.
- 10: And as for me also, mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity, but I will recompense their way upon their head.
- 11: And, behold, the man clothed with linen, which had the inkhorn by his

side, reported the matter, saying, I have done as thou hast commanded me.

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# Revelation 8

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- 1: And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.
- 2: And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 6: And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.
- 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.
- 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;
- 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.
- 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;
- 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.
- 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.

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!

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# Interpretaion 8

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## Revelation 8–9

Disasters modeled on the plagues of Egypt ([Exodus 7–11](#))

The Seven Angels with Seven Trumpets (8:2 - 11:19)

The first four trumpets (8:2-12)

The fifth and sixth trumpets (8:13; 9:1-21)

Two interrupting visions:

An angel with a small scroll (10:1-11)

The temple and two witnesses (11:1-14)

The seventh trumpet (11:15-19)

*John's Second Cycle of Visions in the Spirit (12:1 - 22:5)*

Seven Symbolic Visions of the Past, Present & Future  
(12:1-15:4)

*(Oxford Companion, John Sweet)*

Upon completing chapter seven's climactic transformation of the Sacrificial Lamb into Shepherd and the exaltation of standing as one of the myriads of ransomed before the throne, only with reluctance can the reader be plunged again into the convulsions of nature that signal the ending of earthly time. Before the plunge, however, it is helpful to realize that an angel also stands at the altar of God with a golden censer offering incense at the same time all the saints offer prayers (8:1-5). Only at the end of the "great quantity" of incense and prayers does the angel take the censer and fill it with fire from

the altar and throw it to earth; dramatically, the act is accompanied by "peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake," the same devices, except for the earthquake, that greet John's initial vision of the throne in chapter four. The "How long?" of the saints is being answered. The second of seven parallel sections (*NRSV*) ends with 8.1 or after John's vision of the glory of God (4), the vision of the scroll and seven seals (5), the opening of the first six seals (6), and finally, the account of four angels standing at the four corners of the earth and sealing the tribes and multitudes of the Redeemed (6).

### Four Trumpets

Chapter eight will introduce the outcomes of the blowing of the first four trumpets; for perspective, however, the following structure guides the reader:

- a. Angel at the altar with censer of incense, 8:2-6
- b. First trumpet—trees burnt, 8:7
- c. Second trumpet—seas become blood, 8:8, 9
- d. Third trumpet—fresh water becomes bitter, 8:10, 11
- e. Fourth trumpet—sun, moon and stars smitten, 8:12, 13
- f. Fifth trumpet—fallen star and plague of locusts, 9:1-12
- g. Sixth trumpet—angels loosed at river Euphrates, 9:13-21
- h. Interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpets, 10:1—11:14
  - (1) The strong angel with the little book, 10:1-7
  - (2) John eats the little book, 10:8-11
  - (3) Date for the ending of “the times of the Gentiles,” 11:1, 2
  - (4) Duration of the prophesying of the two witnesses, 11:3-12
  - (5) Doom of the second woe—great earthquake, 11:13, 14
- i. Seventh trumpet—end of Great Tribulation and opening of

## temple in heaven, 11:15-19

The pattern of the interlude between six and seven will be continued with the trumpets as it was with the seals. With the blowing of the first four trumpets, conditions on earth worsen dramatically: by thirds, forests and vegetation are burned, seas become blood, fresh water becomes bitter, and the sun, moon, and star are darkened.

These seven trumpets are introduced by a strange and disconcerting interlude of silence in heaven, a half an hour's lull in action according to John's subjective estimate. John sees seven angels "who stand before God" (1) being given the trumpets. I Enoch 20.2-8 lists the seven angels before God as Uriel, Raphael, Raguel, Michael, Sariel, Gabriel, and Remiel. F.F. Bruce in *The International Bible Commentary*, reminds readers that Gabriel has been identified in Luke as standing before the throne (1.19). Gabriel's history of interaction is revealed as being in the service of mercy.

**Gabriel.** Gabriel is one of the most prominent angels in postexilic Jewish literature and in Christian texts, especially extracanonical literature. He is portrayed as one of the seven archangels in 1 Enoch 20.7; elsewhere he is one of the four angels close to God's throne (1 Enoch 10.9; 40.3, 9; cf. [Luke 1.19](#)). This proximity to God results in his distinctive functions. Gabriel intercedes with God for those oppressed by evil (1 Enoch 9.1–11), he brings Enoch into God's very presence (2 Enoch 21.3–6), he explains mysteries about future political events ([Daniel 8.16–26](#); [Daniel 9.20–27](#)), and he delivers special revelations from God to individuals ([Luke 1.8–20](#); [Luke 1.26–38](#)). Jewish and Christian interpreters have sometimes concluded that biblical texts with unnamed divine messengers (e.g., [Genesis 19.1](#)) refer to the archangels Gabriel and Michael. In general, Michael is described as a warrior, while Gabriel more often functions as an intermediary or an interpreter of dreams. (Steven Friesen, (Oxford Companion)).

The plagues which accompany the trumpets compare to the Egyptian experience. After the fourth is blown, John sees an angel in midheaven (between the earthly and heavenly) crying, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, at the blasts of other trumpets that the three angels are about to blow." What a dismal ending and down-turn in events.

How one has interpreted *Revelation* 7 is crucial to one's beliefs about past, current, and future events:

1. Preterist theory: All of Revelation has been fulfilled in the past. It had to do with local references in John's day. It had to do with the days of either Nero or Domitian. The view was held by Renan and most German scholars, also by Elliott.
2. Historical theory: Fulfillment of Revelation is going on in history, and Revelation is the prophetic history of the church, according to this theory.
3. Historical-spiritual theory: This theory is a refinement of the historical theory and was advanced by Sir William Ramsay. It states that the two beasts are Imperial and Provincial Rome. The point of the book is to encourage Christians. According to this theory, Revelation has been largely fulfilled and there are spiritual lessons for the church today. Amillennialism, for the most part, has adopted this view. It dissipates and defeats the purpose of the book.
4. Futurist theory: This theory holds that the Book of Revelation is primarily prophetic and yet future, especially from Revelation 4 on to the end of the book. This is the view of all premillennialists and is the view which we accept and present.

It should be clear to the reader by now that I argue for a combination of approaches: John was certainly influenced by his own world and experiences therein; clearly, *Revelation* is both prophecy and history. Just as firmly, I have argued, also, that *Revelation* is written in mythological and symbolic language and imagery; it must be interpreted as containing revealed insights about primordial beginnings, history, and destiny; and finally, as I have elsewhere argued, *Revelation* sees God's kingdom fully established as a yet future occurrence--a time to be preceded by tribulation, the at once awe-ful

Day of the Lord. The reader may want to look at several millenial passages in making a decision about interpretive stance. What is clearly revealed is a belief in the Second Coming of Christ after a time of tribulation, suffering and persecution. The common error of confusing the eternal and the temporal results in much confusion and disagreement about historical events.

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- 7.1: And the LORD said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet.  
2: Thou shalt speak all that I command thee: and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh, that he send the children of Israel out of his land.  
3: And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt.  
4: But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth mine armies, and my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments.  
5: And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch forth mine hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them.  
6: And Moses and Aaron did as the LORD commanded them, so did they.  
7: And Moses was fourscore years old, and Aaron fourscore and three years old, when they spake unto Pharaoh.  
8: And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying,  
9: When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Shew a miracle for you: then thou shalt say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent.  
10: And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the LORD had commanded: and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent.  
11: Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments.  
12: For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods.  
13: And he hardened Pharaoh's heart, that he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said.  
14: And the LORD said unto Moses, Pharaoh's heart is hardened, he refuseth to let the people go.  
15: Get thee unto Pharaoh in the morning; lo, he goeth out unto the water;

and thou shalt stand by the river's brink against he come; and the rod which was turned to a serpent shalt thou take in thine hand.

16: And thou shalt say unto him, The LORD God of the Hebrews hath sent me unto thee, saying, Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness: and, behold, hitherto thou wouldest not hear.

17: Thus saith the LORD, In this thou shalt know that I am the LORD: behold, I will smite with the rod that is in mine hand upon the waters which are in the river, and they shall be turned to blood.

18: And the fish that is in the river shall die, and the river shall stink; and the Egyptians shall lothe to drink of the water of the river.

19: And the LORD spake unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and stretch out thine hand upon the waters of Egypt, upon their streams, upon their rivers, and upon their ponds, and upon all their pools of water, that they may become blood; and that there may be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood, and in vessels of stone.

20: And Moses and Aaron did so, as the LORD commanded; and he lifted up the rod, and smote the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants; and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood.

21: And the fish that was in the river died; and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river; and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.

22: And the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments: and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, neither did he hearken unto them; as the LORD had said.

23: And Pharaoh turned and went into his house, neither did he set his heart to this also.

24: And all the Egyptians digged round about the river for water to drink; for they could not drink of the water of the river.

25: And seven days were fulfilled, after that the LORD had smitten the river.

8.1: And the LORD spake unto Moses, Go unto Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Let my people go, that they may serve me.

2: And if thou refuse to let them go, behold, I will smite all thy borders with frogs:

3: And the river shall bring forth frogs abundantly, which shall go up and come into thine house, and into thy bedchamber, and upon thy bed, and into the house of thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thine ovens, and into thy kneadingtroughs:

4: And the frogs shall come up both on thee, and upon thy people, and upon all thy servants.

5: And the LORD spake unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch forth thine hand with thy rod over the streams, over the rivers, and over the ponds, and cause frogs to come up upon the land of Egypt.

- 6: And Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt; and the frogs came up, and covered the land of Egypt.
- 7: And the magicians did so with their enchantments, and brought up frogs upon the land of Egypt.
- 8: Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, Intreat the LORD, that he may take away the frogs from me, and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the LORD.
- 9: And Moses said unto Pharaoh, Glory over me: when shall I intreat for thee, and for thy servants, and for thy people, to destroy the frogs from thee and thy houses, that they may remain in the river only?
- 10: And he said, To morrow. And he said, Be it according to thy word: that thou mayest know that there is none like unto the LORD our God.
- 11: And the frogs shall depart from thee, and from thy houses, and from thy servants, and from thy people; they shall remain in the river only.
- 12: And Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh: and Moses cried unto the LORD because of the frogs which he had brought against Pharaoh.
- 13: And the LORD did according to the word of Moses; and the frogs died out of the houses, out of the villages, and out of the fields.
- 14: And they gathered them together upon heaps: and the land stank.
- 15: But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said.
- 16: And the LORD said unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch out thy rod, and smite the dust of the land, that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt.
- 17: And they did so; for Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod, and smote the dust of the earth, and it became lice in man, and in beast; all the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt.
- 18: And the magicians did so with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not: so there were lice upon man, and upon beast.
- 19: Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh, This is the finger of God: and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said.
- 20: And the LORD said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh; lo, he cometh forth to the water; and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Let my people go, that they may serve me.
- 21: Else, if thou wilt not let my people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies upon thee, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thy houses: and the houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms of flies, and also the ground whereon they are.
- 22: And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there; to the end thou mayest know that I am the LORD in the midst of the earth.
- 23: And I will put a division between my people and thy people: to morrow shall this sign be.

- 24: And the LORD did so; and there came a grievous swarm of flies into the house of Pharaoh, and into his servants' houses, and into all the land of Egypt: the land was corrupted by reason of the swarm of flies.
- 25: And Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron, and said, Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land.
- 26: And Moses said, It is not meet so to do; for we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to the LORD our God: lo, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us?
- 27: We will go three days' journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to the LORD our God, as he shall command us.
- 28: And Pharaoh said, I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to the LORD your God in the wilderness; only ye shall not go very far away: intreat for me.
- 29: And Moses said, Behold, I go out from thee, and I will intreat the LORD that the swarms of flies may depart from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people, to morrow: but let not Pharaoh deal deceitfully any more in not letting the people go to sacrifice to the LORD.
- 30: And Moses went out from Pharaoh, and intreated the LORD.
- 31: And the LORD did according to the word of Moses; and he removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people; there remained not one.
- 32: And Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go.

- 9.1: Then the LORD said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh, and tell him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me.
- 2: For if thou refuse to let them go, and wilt hold them still,
- 3: Behold, the hand of the LORD is upon thy cattle which is in the field, upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the oxen, and upon the sheep: there shall be a very grievous murrain.
- 4: And the LORD shall sever between the cattle of Israel and the cattle of Egypt: and there shall nothing die of all that is the children's of Israel.
- 5: And the LORD appointed a set time, saying, To morrow the LORD shall do this thing in the land.
- 6: And the LORD did that thing on the morrow, and all the cattle of Egypt died: but of the cattle of the children of Israel died not one.
- 7: And Pharaoh sent, and, behold, there was not one of the cattle of the Israelites dead. And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go.
- 8: And the LORD said unto Moses and unto Aaron, Take to you handfuls of ashes of the furnace, and let Moses sprinkle it toward the heaven in the sight of Pharaoh.

- 9: And it shall become small dust in all the land of Egypt, and shall be a boil breaking forth with blains upon man, and upon beast, throughout all the land of Egypt.
- 10: And they took ashes of the furnace, and stood before Pharaoh; and Moses sprinkled it up toward heaven; and it became a boil breaking forth with blains upon man, and upon beast.
- 11: And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils; for the boil was upon the magicians, and upon all the Egyptians.
- 12: And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had spoken unto Moses.
- 13: And the LORD said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me.
- 14: For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth.
- 15: For now I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth.
- 16: And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.
- 17: As yet exaltest thou thyself against my people, that thou wilt not let them go?
- 18: Behold, to morrow about this time I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail, such as hath not been in Egypt since the foundation thereof even until now.
- 19: Send therefore now, and gather thy cattle, and all that thou hast in the field; for upon every man and beast which shall be found in the field, and shall not be brought home, the hail shall come down upon them, and they shall die.
- 20: He that feared the word of the LORD among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses:
- 21: And he that regarded not the word of the LORD left his servants and his cattle in the field.
- 22: And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch forth thine hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, upon man, and upon beast, and upon every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt.
- 23: And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven: and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the LORD rained hail upon the land of Egypt.
- 24: So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation.
- 25: And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and beast; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field.

- 26: Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail.
- 27: And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time: the LORD is righteous, and I and my people are wicked.
- 28: Intreat the LORD (for it is enough) that there be no more mighty thunderings and hail; and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer.
- 29: And Moses said unto him, As soon as I am gone out of the city, I will spread abroad my hands unto the LORD; and the thunder shall cease, neither shall there be any more hail; that thou mayest know how that the earth is the LORD's.
- 30: But as for thee and thy servants, I know that ye will not yet fear the LORD God.
- 31: And the flax and the barley was smitten: for the barley was in the ear, and the flax was bolled.
- 32: But the wheat and the rie were not smitten: for they were not grown up.
- 33: And Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh, and spread abroad his hands unto the LORD: and the thunders and hail ceased, and the rain was not poured upon the earth.
- 34: And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants.
- 35: And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, neither would he let the children of Israel go; as the LORD had spoken by Moses.

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# Christ's Return

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Mt. 24.9-22

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- 1: And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple.
- 2: And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.
- 3: And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?
- 4: And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.
- 5: For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.
- 6: And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.
- 7: For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.
- 8: All these are the beginning of sorrows.
- 9: 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.
- 10: And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.
- 11: And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.
- 12: And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.
- 13: But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.
- 14: 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.
- 15: 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:)

- 16: Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:
- 17: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:
- 18: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.
- 19: And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!
- 20: But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:
- 21: For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.
- 22: And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.
- 23: Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.
- 24: For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.
- 25: Behold, I have told you before.
- 26: Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.
- 27: For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.
- 28: For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.
- 29: Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:
- 30: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and 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.
- 31: And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.
- 32: Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh:
- 33: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.
- 34: Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.
- 35: Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.
- 36: But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.
- 37: But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

- 38: For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark,
- 39: And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.
- 40: Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.
- 41: Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.
- 42: Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.
- 43: But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.
- 44: Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.
- 45: Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?
- 46: Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.
- 47: Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.
- 48: But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming;
- 49: And shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken;
- 50: The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of,
- 51: And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

## Daniel 9

- 1: In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans;
- 2: In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.
- 3: And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplication, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes:
- 4: And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments;
- 5: We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments:
- 6: Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in

thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.

7: O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee.

8: O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee.

9: To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him;

10: Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets.

11: Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him.

12: And he hath confirmed his words, which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem.

13: As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth.

14: Therefore hath the LORD watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the LORD our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice.

15: And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly.

16: O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us.

17: Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake.

18: O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies.

19: O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name.

20: And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the

sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God;

21: Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation.

22: And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding.

23: At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision.

24: Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.

25: Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

26: And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.

27: And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

### I Thessalonians 1.10

and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead--Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming.

### I Thessalonians 5.9, 10

For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him.

### John 14.1-7

1: Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.  
2: In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

3: And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.  
4: And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.  
5: Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?  
6: Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.  
7: If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.

### I Cor. 15.51-53

51: Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,  
52: In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.  
53: For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

### I Thessalonians 4. 15-17

15: For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.  
16: For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:  
17: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

### Romans 14.10-12

10: But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.  
11: For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.  
12: So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

### I Cor. 3.11-15

11: For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus

Christ.

12: Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

13: Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

14: If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

15: If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

## 2. Cor. 5.10

10: For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

## Colossians 3.4

4: When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

## Zechariah 14

1: Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee.

2: For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city.

3: Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.

4: And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.

5: And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.

6: And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark:

- 7: But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light.
- 8: And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be.
- 9: And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one.
- 10: All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's winepresses.
- 11: And men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited.
- 12: And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth.
- 13: And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great tumult from the LORD shall be among them; and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour.
- 14: And Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem; and the wealth of all the heathen round about shall be gathered together, gold, and silver, and apparel, in great abundance.
- 15: And so shall be the plague of the horse, of the mule, of the camel, and of the ass, and of all the beasts that shall be in these tents, as this plague.
- 16: And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.
- 17: And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain.
- 18: And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.
- 19: This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.
- 20: In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the LORD's house shall be like the bowl's before the altar.
- 21: Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the LORD of hosts: and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and seethe therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts.

## Matthew 25.31

31: When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:  
32: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:  
33: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.  
34: Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

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# Revelation 9

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- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 8: And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions.
- 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.
- 10: And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months.
- 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.
- 12: One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter.
- 13: And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,

- 14: Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.
- 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.
- 16: And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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:
- 21: Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

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The conclusion of chapter eight of *Revelation* has introduced three woes to come in chapter nine; this next chapter ends with a judgment: "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:21: Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts." That the masses repented not heralds yet the third woe, more apocalyptic visions and spiritual warfare following the opening of the seventh seal. A new heaven and earth will be delayed until almost the end of the book, chapter twenty.

## Three Woes

I.

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

John sees a star fallen from heaven onto the earth. Luke 10.17 and 18, following the appointment of the seventy sent to labor in the harvest, reports Jesus as saying, "I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning" in response to their report, "Lord, in your name, even the demons submit to us."

He, the star, "was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit" (1). From this pit, demonic locusts swarm out upon the earth, allowed to torture and kill those who have not been sealed against apostasy (4). People will begin to seek death, to long for it, but death will be denied to them (6).

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.

8: And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions.

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.

10: And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months.

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..

Following the demonic locusts, John reports that they have "as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit" (11); his name is Destruction itself, Abaddon in Hebrew Apollyon in Greek. This plague of scorpion-like locusts will last for five months. "The first woe is passed. There are still two woes to come" (12).

## II.

Structurally, John is clear: "The first woe has passed. There are still two woes to come" serves to announce the sounding of the sixth trumpet(12). This is an event which is similar to what happened in the breaking of the sixth seal in 6:12-14 but is interrupted by the two visions of assurance that God's people are secure (martyrs and those sealed against apostasy).: "When he opened the sixth seal, I looked and there came a great earthquake; the sun became black...; the full moon became like blood...and the stars of heaven fell... The sky vanished..." When the sixth trumpet sound, the reader meets a demonic cavalry, worse than the locusts before them who only tormented

and hurt; fully "a third of human kind was killed" by these three plagues (the locusts, cavalry, and the final woe, not occurring until 11.14. Once again, John is clear: "The second woe has passed. The third woe is coming very soon." In the third woe, the four angels introduced in chapter seven as "standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth so that no wind could blow on earth or sea or against any tree" are released (15). We learn these angels have "been held ready for the hour, the day, the month, and the year, to kill a third of humankind" (15).

John is also repeating a pattern of delay between the sixth and seventh trumpet, the seventh announcing the consummation of God's kingdom. This announcement takes up again the proclamation of "There will be no more delay" in 10.17. Ironically, *Revelation* delays the inevitable with cycles and interludes taking on more the nature of time suspended than time becoming. Remember, chapter eleven will announce triumphantly that "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord" (15). The twenty-four elders "who sit on their thrones before God" will fall down and their faces and worship God, singing thanks that end resoundingly on the note of disaster on earth: "The nations raged, but your wrath has come and the time for judging the dead, for rewarding your servants, the prophets, and all who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying those who destroy the earth" (16-18). Only afterwards in eternity's timelessness will God's temple in heaven be opened" and "the ark of the covenant be seen within, " marked by the now familiar but dramatically self-enhancing "flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail" (19). The third woe, then, is the heralding of seventh trumpet broken off in 9.21. It may be easier for readers to see rather than hear the structure:

<b>II. Seven Seals 6-8.1</b>	<b>1.White horse 6.2--conquers, Christ</b>
	<b>2.Red horse 6.3--takes peace from earth, war</b>
	<b>3.Black horse 6.6--scales, famine</b>
	<b>4.Green horse 6.8--pestilence and death</b>
	<b>5.Souls of martyrs 6.9</b>
	<b>6.Earthquake 6.12-17</b>
	<b>Two Vision s 7.1-8 Four angels at the four corners of the earth and "the seven angels who stand before God with trumpets"</b>

	<b>7.9-17 Multitude of the Redeemed</b>
	<b>7. Unsealed scroll and silence</b>
<b>III. Seven Trumpets blown by Seven Angels</b>	<b>1. hail, fire, blood 8.7</b>
	<b>2. mountain into sea; 1/3 sea, blood 8.8; 1/3 creatures, ships destroyed</b>
	<b>3star (Wormwood) from heaven; 1/3 waters bitter; 8.10</b>
	<b>4.1/3 sun, moon, stars, day kept from shining 8.12</b>
	<b>5.bottomless pit, demonic locusts torment people without seal of God on their foreheads 9</b>
	<b>6.demonic calvary 9.13-20; 1/3 humankind killed</b>
	<b>Vision of the Little Scroll 10</b>
	<b>Measuring of the Temple of God 11; 2 witnesses; beast</b>
	<b>7. Consummation of God's Kingdom; temple in heaven opened 11</b>

The consummation of God's kingdom is both triumph of the eternal and destruction of the temporal. But even yet, the end has not come: there must be a measuring "of the temple of God and those, who worship there" (11.1); there must also be forty-two months of the temple's outer court, the place of Gentiles, being trampled over, "for it is given to the nations"; the same amount of time must be given over to two witnesses to prophesy for 1260 days. These witnesses will be killed (11.7) but become resurrected in a very definite three and a half days (11. 11). They will be commanded, "Come up here!" (12). They will be taken into heaven, and the second woe is marked as passing by an earthquake.

Before the consummation of the kingdom of God, there will occur the vision of the woman, the child, and dragon in chapter twelve and conflict between Christ and Satan will take place. Two beasts, from the sea and

earth, will join in the battle; an interlude of three visions intended to reassure those amid trials and persecutions begins in chapter fourteen; still the end is not yet. In sixteen, the seven angels pour out bowls of wrath and plagues upon the earth. Babylon falls, is lamented (18), and a multitude in heaven rejoices (19). The supreme victory of Christ is delayed until chapter 19, where acknowledged as Word of God, He and angelic hosts begin the final battle in which the three beasts, including Satan, are defeated. Only in chapter twenty will earth and heaven flee from God's presence and no place be found for evil. In chapter twenty-one, the reader will discover a new heaven and earth.

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# Revelation 10

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- 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:
- 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,
- 3: And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices.
- 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.
- 5: And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven,
- 6: And sware 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:
- 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.
- 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.
- 9: 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.
- 10: 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.
- 11: And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.

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The sounding of the sixth trumpet of chapter nine is interrupted by a vision in chapter ten. John sees "a mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire" (1). The angel holds "a little scroll open in his hands" (2). This angel is astride the earth, one foot on the sea and his left foot on the land" (2). One must give John full credit for creating one of the largest angel ever humanly imagined. Readers should not be surprised to hear a "great shout" from this intermediary or to have the shout followed by seven thunders (3). John reveals that he has been about to write but is instructed to "Seal up what the seven thunders have said" (4). This angel then proclaims, "There will be no more delay" (10.6). John is told that when the seventh angel blows his trumpet, "the mystery of God will be fulfilled" (7). John is next instructed to take the little scroll from the angel and to eat it: he finds it "sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach was bitter." He then is commanded to prophesy again "about many peoples and nations and languages and kings" (11).

One must remark that it is no wonder *Revelation* is so much written about and argued over vehemently: John is God's prophetic messenger for "what must soon take place" (1.1). He is accorded extreme honor: "Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear and keep what is written in it; for the time is near" (1.3). In historical time, humans have moved quite far indeed, two thousand years, forward; in eternity, time is still "only near" for John's hearers and followers centuries apart.

The mighty angel in *John* has features similar to those given Christ in 1.13 ff--his face like the sun (1), little scroll in his hand (2), a voice like the roar of a lion awakening the seven thunders (3), another heptad similar to the seals, trumpets, and bowls, "but the revelation which they convey (unlike

that contained in the little scroll) is not ready to be revealed yet, so John is commanded to seal up their utterance and not write it down" (F.F. Bruce, *The International Bible Commentary*). In *Revelation* 22.10, John is again instructed not to seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. Let the evil doer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy." At the sixth trumpet, the reader should remember that people have chosen not to repent of the works of their hands, idolatry, murder, sorcery, fornication, and theft (9. 20, 21).

The reader must remember that chapter five, verse one has reported John as seeing a scroll written on the inside and the back, sealed with seven seals. Here, the scroll is little in contrast to the mighty angel, and it is a scroll given specifically to John. John like Ezekiel is being commanded to prophesy. Ezekiel 2.8 "8: "But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee; Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee." Ezekiel 3. 1-3 "1: Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel.2: So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll.  
3: And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness."

That "There will be no more delay" in 10.6 suggests that the purpose of God will now advance swiftly into fulfillment:

The secret purpose, 'hidden for long ages past' (cf. Romans 16:25) had been announced to his servants the prophets (cf. Amos 3.7) but even so knowledge of the time when it would be accomplished had been withheld from them (cf. Mark 13.32 [in his "Little Apocalypse."]). F.F. Bruce, *The International Bible Commentary*

What John's revelation becomes apparent in chapter eleven, where he measures the temple of God; "the sanctuary and those who worship there are measured with a view to their perservation (as in Zechariah 2. 1-5 and Ezekiel 40.3-42.20).

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# Revelation 11

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- 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.
- 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.
- 3: And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.
- 4: These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

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.

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.

14: The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.

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.

16: And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God,

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.

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.

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.

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## Zechariah 2. 1-5

- 1: I lifted up mine eyes again, and looked, and behold a man with a measuring line in his hand.
- 2: Then said I, Whither goest thou? And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof.
- 3: And, behold, the angel that talked with me went forth, and another angel went out to meet him,
- 4: And said unto him, Run, speak to this young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein:
- 5: For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her.

## Ezekiel 40.-42.20

- 1: In the five and twentieth year of our captivity, in the beginning of the year, in the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after that the city was smitten, in the selfsame day the hand of the LORD was upon me, and brought me thither.
- 2: In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain, by which was as the frame of a city on the south.
- 3: And he brought me thither, and, behold, there was a man, whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed; and he stood in the gate.
- 4: And the man said unto me, Son of man, behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, and set thine heart upon all that I shall shew thee; for to the intent that I might shew them unto thee art thou brought hither: declare all that thou seest to the house of Israel.

- 5: And behold a wall on the outside of the house round about, and in the man's hand a measuring reed of six cubits long by the cubit and an hand breadth: so he measured the breadth of the building, one reed; and the height, one reed.
- 6: Then came he unto the gate which looketh toward the east, and went up the stairs thereof, and measured the threshold of the gate, which was one reed broad; and the other threshold of the gate, which was one reed broad.
- 7: And every little chamber was one reed long, and one reed broad; and between the little chambers were five cubits; and the threshold of the gate by the porch of the gate within was one reed.
- 8: He measured also the porch of the gate within, one reed.
- 9: Then measured he the porch of the gate, eight cubits; and the posts thereof, two cubits; and the porch of the gate was inward.
- 10: And the little chambers of the gate eastward were three on this side, and three on that side; they three were of one measure: and the posts had one measure on this side and on that side.
- 11: And he measured the breadth of the entry of the gate, ten cubits; and the length of the gate, thirteen cubits.
- 12: The space also before the little chambers was one cubit on this side, and the space was one cubit on that side: and the little chambers were six cubits on this side, and six cubits on that side.
- 13: He measured then the gate from the roof of one little chamber to the roof of another: the breadth was five and twenty cubits, door against door.
- 14: He made also posts of threescore cubits, even unto the post of the court round about the gate.
- 15: And from the face of the gate of the entrance unto the face of the porch of the inner gate were fifty cubits.
- 16: And there were narrow windows to the little chambers, and to their posts within the gate round about, and likewise to the arches: and windows were round about inward: and upon each post were palm trees.
- 17: Then brought he me into the outward court, and, lo, there were chambers, and a pavement made for the court round about: thirty chambers were upon the pavement.
- 18: And the pavement by the side of the gates over against the length of the gates was the lower pavement.
- 19: Then he measured the breadth from the forefront of the lower gate unto the forefront of the inner court without, an hundred cubits eastward and northward.
- 20: And the gate of the outward court that looked toward the north, he measured the length thereof, and the breadth thereof.
- 21: And the little chambers thereof were three on this side and three on that side; and the posts thereof and the arches thereof were after the measure of the first gate: the length thereof was fifty cubits, and the breadth five and twenty cubits.

- 22: And their windows, and their arches, and their palm trees, were after the measure of the gate that looketh toward the east; and they went up unto it by seven steps; and the arches thereof were before them.
- 23: And the gate of the inner court was over against the gate toward the north, and toward the east; and he measured from gate to gate an hundred cubits.
- 24: After that he brought me toward the south, and behold a gate toward the south: and he measured the posts thereof and the arches thereof according to these measures.
- 25: And there were windows in it and in the arches thereof round about, like those windows: the length was fifty cubits, and the breadth five and twenty cubits.
- 26: And there were seven steps to go up to it, and the arches thereof were before them: and it had palm trees, one on this side, and another on that side, upon the posts thereof.
- 27: And there was a gate in the inner court toward the south: and he measured from gate to gate toward the south an hundred cubits.
- 28: And he brought me to the inner court by the south gate: and he measured the south gate according to these measures;
- 29: And the little chambers thereof, and the posts thereof, and the arches thereof, according to these measures: and there were windows in it and in the arches thereof round about: it was fifty cubits long, and five and twenty cubits broad.
- 30: And the arches round about were five and twenty cubits long, and five cubits broad.
- 31: And the arches thereof were toward the utter court; and palm trees were upon the posts thereof: and the going up to it had eight steps.
- 32: And he brought me into the inner court toward the east: and he measured the gate according to these measures.
- 33: And the little chambers thereof, and the posts thereof, and the arches thereof, were according to these measures: and there were windows therein and in the arches thereof round about: it was fifty cubits long, and five and twenty cubits broad.
- 34: And the arches thereof were toward the outward court; and palm trees were upon the posts thereof, on this side, and on that side: and the going up to it had eight steps.
- 35: And he brought me to the north gate, and measured it according to these measures;
- 36: The little chambers thereof, the posts thereof, and the arches thereof, and the windows to it round about: the length was fifty cubits, and the breadth five and twenty cubits.
- 37: And the posts thereof were toward the utter court; and palm trees were upon the posts thereof, on this side, and on that side: and the going up to it had eight steps.

- 38: And the chambers and the entries thereof were by the posts of the gates, where they washed the burnt offering.
- 39: And in the porch of the gate were two tables on this side, and two tables on that side, to slay thereon the burnt offering and the sin offering and the trespass offering.
- 40: And at the side without, as one goeth up to the entry of the north gate, were two tables; and on the other side, which was at the porch of the gate, were two tables.
- 41: Four tables were on this side, and four tables on that side, by the side of the gate; eight tables, whereupon they slew their sacrifices.
- 42: And the four tables were of hewn stone for the burnt offering, of a cubit and an half long, and a cubit and an half broad, and one cubit high: whereupon also they laid the instruments wherewith they slew the burnt offering and the sacrifice.
- 43: And within were hooks, an hand broad, fastened round about: and upon the tables was the flesh of the offering.
- 44: And without the inner gate were the chambers of the singers in the inner court, which was at the side of the north gate; and their prospect was toward the south: one at the side of the east gate having the prospect toward the north.
- 45: And he said unto me, This chamber, whose prospect is toward the south, is for the priests, the keepers of the charge of the house.
- 46: And the chamber whose prospect is toward the north is for the priests, the keepers of the charge of the altar: these are the sons of Zadok among the sons of Levi, which come near to the LORD to minister unto him.
- 47: So he measured the court, an hundred cubits long, and an hundred cubits broad, foursquare; and the altar that was before the house.
- 48: And he brought me to the porch of the house, and measured each post of the porch, five cubits on this side, and five cubits on that side: and the breadth of the gate was three cubits on this side, and three cubits on that side.
- 49: The length of the porch was twenty cubits, and the breadth eleven cubits; and he brought me by the steps whereby they went up to it: and there were pillars by the posts, one on this side, and another on that side.

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- 1: Afterward he brought me to the temple, and measured the posts, six cubits broad on the one side, and six cubits broad on the other side, which was the breadth of the tabernacle.
- 2: And the breadth of the door was ten cubits; and the sides of the door were five cubits on the one side, and five cubits on the other side: and he measured the length thereof, forty cubits: and the breadth, twenty cubits.
- 3: Then went he inward, and measured the post of the door, two cubits; and

the door, six cubits; and the breadth of the door, seven cubits.

4: So he measured the length thereof, twenty cubits; and the breadth, twenty cubits, before the temple: and he said unto me, This is the most holy place.

5: After he measured the wall of the house, six cubits; and the breadth of every side chamber, four cubits, round about the house on every side.

6: And the side chambers were three, one over another, and thirty in order; and they entered into the wall which was of the house for the side chambers round about, that they might have hold, but they had not hold in the wall of the house.

7: And there was an enlarging, and a winding about still upward to the side chambers: for the winding about of the house went still upward round about the house: therefore the breadth of the house was still upward, and so increased from the lowest chamber to the highest by the midst.

8: I saw also the height of the house round about: the foundations of the side chambers were a full reed of six great cubits.

9: The thickness of the wall, which was for the side chamber without, was five cubits: and that which was left was the place of the side chambers that were within.

10: And between the chambers was the wideness of twenty cubits round about the house on every side.

11: And the doors of the side chambers were toward the place that was left, one door toward the north, and another door toward the south: and the breadth of the place that was left was five cubits round about.

12: Now the building that was before the separate place at the end toward the west was seventy cubits broad; and the wall of the building was five cubits thick round about, and the length thereof ninety cubits.

13: So he measured the house, an hundred cubits long; and the separate place, and the building, with the walls thereof, an hundred cubits long;

14: Also the breadth of the face of the house, and of the separate place toward the east, an hundred cubits.

15: And he measured the length of the building over against the separate place which was behind it, and the galleries thereof on the one side and on the other side, an hundred cubits, with the inner temple, and the porches of the court;

16: The door posts, and the narrow windows, and the galleries round about on their three stories, over against the door, cieled with wood round about, and from the ground up to the windows, and the windows were covered;

17: To that above the door, even unto the inner house, and without, and by all the wall round about within and without, by measure.

18: And it was made with cherubims and palm trees, so that a palm tree was between a cherub and a cherub; and every cherub had two faces;

19: So that the face of a man was toward the palm tree on the one side, and the face of a young lion toward the palm tree on the other side: it was made through all the house round about.

- 20: From the ground unto above the door were cherubims and palm trees made, and on the wall of the temple.
- 21: The posts of the temple were squared, and the face of the sanctuary; the appearance of the one as the appearance of the other.
- 22: The altar of wood was three cubits high, and the length thereof two cubits; and the corners thereof, and the length thereof, and the walls thereof, were of wood: and he said unto me, This is the table that is before the LORD.
- 23: And the temple and the sanctuary had two doors.
- 24: And the doors had two leaves apiece, two turning leaves; two leaves for the one door, and two leaves for the other door.
- 25: And there were made on them, on the doors of the temple, cherubims and palm trees, like as were made upon the walls; and there were thick planks upon the face of the porch without.
- 26: And there were narrow windows and palm trees on the one side and on the other side, on the sides of the porch, and upon the side chambers of the house, and thick planks.

#### 42. 1-20

- 1: Then he brought me forth into the utter court, the way toward the north: and he brought me into the chamber that was over against the separate place, and which was before the building toward the north.
- 2: Before the length of an hundred cubits was the north door, and the breadth was fifty cubits.
- 3: Over against the twenty cubits which were for the inner court, and over against the pavement which was for the utter court, was gallery against gallery in three stories.
- 4: And before the chambers was a walk of ten cubits breadth inward, a way of one cubit; and their doors toward the north.
- 5: Now the upper chambers were shorter: for the galleries were higher than these, than the lower, and than the middlemost of the building.
- 6: For they were in three stories, but had not pillars as the pillars of the courts: therefore the building was straitened more than the lowest and the middlemost from the ground.
- 7: And the wall that was without over against the chambers, toward the utter court on the forepart of the chambers, the length thereof was fifty cubits.
- 8: For the length of the chambers that were in the utter court was fifty cubits: and, lo, before the temple were an hundred cubits.
- 9: And from under these chambers was the entry on the east side, as one goeth into them from the utter court.
- 10: The chambers were in the thickness of the wall of the court toward the east, over against the separate place, and over against the building.
- 11: And the way before them was like the appearance of the chambers which were toward the north, as long as they, and as broad as they: and all their

goings out were both according to their fashions, and according to their doors.

12: And according to the doors of the chambers that were toward the south was a door in the head of the way, even the way directly before the wall toward the east, as one entereth into them.

13: Then said he unto me, The north chambers and the south chambers, which are before the separate place, they be holy chambers, where the priests that approach unto the LORD shall eat the most holy things: there shall they lay the most holy things, and the meat offering, and the sin offering, and the trespass offering; for the place is holy.

14: When the priests enter therein, then shall they not go out of the holy place into the utter court, but there they shall lay their garments wherein they minister; for they are holy; and shall put on other garments, and shall approach to those things which are for the people.

15: Now when he had made an end of measuring the inner house, he brought me forth toward the gate whose prospect is toward the east, and measured it round about.

16: He measured the east side with the measuring reed, five hundred reeds, with the measuring reed round about.

17: He measured the north side, five hundred reeds, with the measuring reed round about.

18: He measured the south side, five hundred reeds, with the measuring reed.

19: He turned about to the west side, and measured five hundred reeds with the measuring reed.

20: He measured it by the four sides: it had a wall round about, five hundred reeds long, and five hundred broad, to make a separation between the sanctuary and the profane place.

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# Interpretation 11

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## Revelation 8–14.

### Seven trumpets of warning

Before the opening of the seventh trumpet--and after the first six seals opening into conquering power, war, famine, death, martyrs giving their lives for their commitment, an earthquake, and a seventh seal opening into trumpets announcing new convulsions in nature leading into the plague of demonic locusts and a demonic cavalry--and following John's being told to take the little scroll and eat it (chapter 10), John is instructed to measure the temple of God and its altar (11.1). This is followed by the seventh trumpet and the announcement that "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah and he will reign forever and ever" (15). The twenty-four elders worship God (16-18), and God's temple in heaven is opened (19). The *NRSV* ends the third of seven parallel sections with 11.19 (section one ends with seven churches, two with seven seals).

The reader should remember that the last three trumpets contain woes: "Then I looked and heard an eagle crying with a loud voice as it flew in mid-heaven, 'Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, at the blasts of the other trumpets that the three angels are about to blow'" (8.13). The first woe has passed (9.12) with the appearance of a demonic swarm of locusts the second ends with the beast coming up from the bottomless pit and making war on two witnesses (11.14). The seventh angel now blows the seventh trumpet announcing the kingdom of God (11.15). But even this consummation of the kingdom of God is not without conflict: war breaks out in heaven (chapter 12), and a beast rises out of the sea (chapter 13). A respite

in final events is given is in chapter fourteen's vision of the Lamb standing on Mountain Zion before seven angels and seven plagues are introduced in chapter fifteen. These bowls of wrath are poured out in sixteen, quickly in succession with no delay between the sixth and seventh; Babylon is conquered in seventeen and eighteen, followed by rejoicing in heaven in nineteen. Heaven is opened (19.11), the beast is captured and with it the false prophet and thrown into the lake of fire (19.20). Only in chapter twenty is the dragon , "that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan... bound for a thousand years, and threw him into a pit, and locked and sealed it over him so that he would deceive nations more until the thousand years were ended" (20.3). John next sees the martyrs ("those who had been beheaded for their testimony for Jesus and for the word of God. They had not worshipped the beast or its image and had not received its mark... They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years" (20.4-6). For the sufficient earthly time of a thousand years in God's control, the martyrs reign with Christ; after this, Satan is released and comes out again to deceive; only in 20.10 is he thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur. Judgment follows (20. 11-15), and chapter twenty inaugurates a new heaven and earth.

Charles R. Williams outlines the seven trumpets in the following way:

#### V. THE SEVEN TRUMPETS (8:3-11:19)

A. Preparation for sounding the trumpets (8:34)

1. Angel with the prayers of the saints (8:3-5)

2. The seven angels prepare to sound (8:6)

B. The first four trumpets (8:7-12)

1. Woe on land (8: 7)

2. Woe on sea (8:8-9)

3. Woe on land waters (8:10-11)

4. Woe on heavenly bodies (8:12)

C. The flying eagle (8:13)

D. The fifth trumpet: locusts (9:1-12)

E. The sixth trumpet: horsemen (9:13-21)

F. The episode of the little book (10:1-11:2)

1. The strong angel (10: 1 -7)

2. The little book (10:8-11)

3. Measuring of Temple, altar and worship (11: 1-2)

G. The two witnesses (11:3-14)

H. The seventh trumpet: conflict and triumph (11:15-19)

#### VI. THE GREAT CONFLICT BETWEEN CHRIST AND SATAN(12:1-13:18)

What I find interesting here is that the seventh trumpet culminates in a grand finale in which the conflict is between metaphysical forces--Christ and Satan--and that all of history has spun itself out into the paradox of cosmic catastrophe equals cosmic resolution. This surely is the element of a projected mythology--seeing beyond history into ultimate destiny--on the part of John, who tells the story in terms of Christianity. Thus *Revelation* rounds out what *Genesis* 1-12 began with its narration of primordial beginnings.

In reading John's account of the measuring of the temple, one should recall its similarity to the measuring which Ezekiel recorded:

40. 1in the selfsame day the hand of the LORD was upon me, and brought me thither.
- 2: In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain, by which was as the frame of a city on the south.
- 3: And he brought me thither, and, behold, there was a man, whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed; and he stood in the gate.
- 4: And the man said unto me, Son of man, behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, and set thine heart upon all that I shall shew thee; for to the intent that I might shew them unto thee art thou brought hither: declare all that thou seest to the house of Israel.

One might note that in *Ezekiel*, the measuring occurs in a vision brought to Ezekiel by God; the purpose of the measurement is preservation. The outside court of the Gentiles is not to be measured, "for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months" (2). During that time, two witnesses, wearing sackcloth, will prophesy for 1,260 days. This 1,260 days is a literary repetition of forty-two months or three and one half years. Some readers will recognize the same formula which appears in *Daniel* 7.25 and 12.7:

- 25: And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.
- 7: And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the

waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.

One might wish to think about how the Hebrew mind thought about time in interpreting time:

The universal division of time into past, present, and future is expressed in Hebrew (as in other Semitic languages) by a spatial metaphor. Contrary to Western usage, the past is what lies ahead (Hebr. *qedem*) and is therefore known; the future is unknown and is behind (Hebr. <*Qeúôr*, <*aú‡rôn*).

No absolute system of chronology is used in the Bible, most systems referring either to the regnal years of various rulers or to key events (e.g., [1 Kings 6.1](#)), although the figures given in various sources are frequently inconsistent. Contrary to modern practice, in totaling units both the first and the last were usually counted. ( Michael Coogan, *Oxford Companion*)

An understanding of the way time is regarded in the Bible should certainly arouse caution in the reader relative to the way exact numbers are interpreted. F.F. Bruce in *The International Commentary* points out two interesting historical facts: 1. that the Romans occupied the outer courts in actuality before they took the holy house itself in 70 C.E. and 2. forty-two weeks "is the traditional apocalyptic term of Gentile domination." He refers to Luke 21.24: "they will fall by the edge of the sword and be taken away as captives among all nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." The little apocalypse in Mark 13 refers to "the desolating sacrilege set up where it ought not to be" (14) and predicts that those in Judea will flee to the mountains. Mark also predicts false messiahs (22), the darkening of the sun, the moon not giving light, and stars falling from heaven (24). After this, he says "They will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and great glory" (26).

What should one make of the measuring of the temple? First, recall that *Revelation 5* contains a scroll which is the Word of God closed with seven seals; these are opened one by one by the Lamb. By chapter seven, the sacrificial Lamb has become the Shepherd (7. 17). The seventh seal is opened, and convulsions of nature begin. In chapter ten, a mighty angel has come down from heaven holding a little scroll open; it is this scroll the

prophet is told to eat. This scroll, apparently not the same one, as the one in chapter five whose seals are opened by the Lamb, must contain a message to John. The *Oxford Annotated* marks this as a second part of the book, chapters 12-22 containing these prophesies. F.F. Bruce makes essentially the same two divisions: *Vision of Conflict and Triumph* (1:9-11:19) and *Tableaux of Conflict and Triumph* (12.1-22.5). F.F. Bruce suggests John had in his use an existing apocalypse which he interpreted and incorporated into his own. Section two carries the reader back to the beginning of the events outlined in chapters 5-11. The important point, though, should be that before the full onslaught of the apocalypse, the temple is measured for preservation, in the tradition of Ezekiel and Zechariah.

For a period of time, then, one is to experience sacrilege; during this time, two witnesses are to appear; these two remain nameless, but again, they resemble the tradition established by Zechariah as well as that Elijah and Moses. The two are explicitly connected with Zechariah 4 with the description "These are two olive trees and two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth" (11.4). In Zechariah 4, the two olive trees are identified with Joshua and Zerubbabel, holding important positions in the restoration of the Jewish community:

- 1: And the angel that talked with me came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep,
- 2: And said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof:
- 3: And two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof.
- 4: So I answered and spake to the angel that talked with me, saying, What are these, my lord?
- 5: Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord.
- 6: Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.

The testimony of the two witnesses is followed by a time of war made upon them and the result being their death for their testimony (9, 10). After three and a half days ( a sufficient earthly time), God restores breath to the two witnesses, and they are commanded to "Come up here" (12). John reports they went up to heaven in a cloud while their enemies watched them. There follows an earthquake by which a tenth of the city falls and the rest are terrified and give glory to the God of heaven (13).

Not coincidentally, at exactly this point, the seventh angel blows the seventh trumpet. Recall, when the seventh seal had been opened, silence followed before the beginning of the blowing of trumpets and convulsions of nature leading to the demonic plagues and cavalry. The seventh trumpet announces triumph: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and his Messiah, and he will reign forever and ever" (15). This announcement is then greeted by worship on the part of the twenty-four elders who proclaim, "you have taken your great power and begun to reign... your wrath has come, and the time for judging the dead... for rewarding... and for destroying" (17-18). That the Day of the Lord is darkness and not light, or at least a day in which darkness precedes light, is clearly in the tradition of *Joel*: 2.1-12: "for the day of the Lord is coming, it is near--a day of darkness and gloom... a great and power army comes... fire devours n front and behind them a flame burns. Before them the land is like the garden of Eden, but after them, a desolate wilderness.. people are in anguish... the earth quakes... the heavens tremble.. The sun and moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their light..."

With this vision of the terrible wrath of God, John ends his chapter by exclaiming, "Then god's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple, and there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail" (19). This is the climatic follow-up to what began with the opening of the seventh seal, after a half hour of silence in heaven, when the angel with a golden censer from which have arisen the prayers of the saints throws it to the earth and "there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake" (8.5). Surely, as predicted with the release of four angels in chapter ten, "who had been ready for the hour, the day, the month, and the year to kill a third of humankind" and with the announcement of chapter 10, "There will be no more delay" (6), judgment has come in chapter eleven.

Finally, chapter eleven should end some of the controversy about where the ark of the covenant resides: "Then God's temple in heaven was opened and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple" (19). Consider:

So the ark represented for Israel the localized presence of God in judgment, mercy, forgiveness, and love; and because it contained the Ten Commandments, it was a visible reminder that their life was to be lived in obedience to the expressed will of God. Since the Ten Commandments were incised on stone so as to last for all time, Israel carried in her midst God's demands for total loyalty and obedience to himself and for social justice and love of neighbor.

The ark is thought to have been captured when Jerusalem fell in 587/586 bce, and nothing is known of its later history.

It should not be surprising to find the ark revealed within the holy temple of God. Since Jeremiah, God as presence has come to reside in the hearts of individuals; localized, however, judgment, mercy, forgiveness, and love reside with God within His temple.

31: Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:

32: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:

33: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

F.F. Bruce says of the mention of the ark in *Revelation*, "it is the archetype of the ark in the Mosaic tabernacle and Solomon's temple. Its exposure now is a token that God will fulfill to the last detail His covenant-promises to His people."

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# Revelation 12

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- 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:
- 2: And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 7: And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,
- 8: And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 12: Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabiters 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.
- 13: And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted

the woman which brought forth the man child.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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## Revelation 12–13

Victory in heaven, disaster for earth—Antichrist and false prophet  
[\(Matthew 24.15–24\)](#)

If chapter eleven marks a significant first half of *Revelation*, ending vision and beginning the tableaux of conflict and triumph, the awful Day of God's judgment, then it is not surprising to begin chapter twelve with a great portent appearing in heaven: "a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars" (1). This is followed by yet another portent: "a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads" (3). Structurally, the chapter can be divided into two main parts: first, we have the birth of a child "to rule all the nations...snatched away and taken to God" (5) followed by a battle between celestial powers--those of Michael and his angels against the dragon and the downfall of the dragon (12.7-12); in the second main division, the dragon pursues the woman and her other earthly children (12.13-17).

Who is the woman? That she is clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars suggests she is the heavenly representative for something--what? Twelve connotes a connection to the twelve tribes of Israel. Is this woman then the heavenly Israel? Note, she is pregnant and about to bear a child (4) and that the dragon stands before her ready to devour the child. The woman gives birth to the child, "a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron... is snatched away and taken to God and his throne" (5). The woman flees into the wilderness and, like the Hebrew in Egypt, is rescued when she is given the two wings of an eagle and the river spewed from the mouth of the dragon is dried up by the earth: Exodus 19.4 "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I

bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself." That the child is to rule nations with a rod of iron suggests the Davidic Messiah. For John, Christianity was born out of the Hebrew tradition and its culmination in Christ, who is to be "snatched up into heaven," or resurrected. The dragon (17) then goes on to make war on the woman's other children:

Siblings of Jesus are referred to collectively twice in the Gospels. In the account of the "true kindred" ([Matthew 12.46–50](#) par.), Jesus' mother and brothers come to speak to him while he is teaching. Jesus refuses to see them, however, saying that his true sister, brother, and mother are those who do the will of God.

When Jesus teaches at the synagogue in his hometown of Nazareth, the listeners react angrily to his wisdom and mighty works ([Matthew 13.53–58](#); [Mark 6.1–6](#)). The crowd doubts that a local person could be endowed with such power, and they cite the presence of his parents, brothers, and sisters as proof. The brothers are listed by name (James, Joseph [Mark reads Joses], Simon, and Judas) but the sisters only as a group. In [Luke 4.22](#), the crowd asks simply, "Is not this Joseph's son?"

References to brothers and sisters of Jesus conflict with some understandings of the virgin birth. For those who feel that Jesus' mother Mary remained a virgin for life, brothers and sisters must be read as cousins or as stepbrothers and stepsisters fathered by Joseph in another, unmentioned, marriage.

Daniel N. Schowalter (*Oxford Companion*)

*Another possible interpretation:*

v1 - *A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head* - This sign in heaven announces a new section. This should be connected to the opening of God's temple in heaven in the previous verse, Rev 11:19. The 'woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head' is a clear reference to Joseph's dream (Gen 37:9) and therefore the woman represents the twelve tribes of Israel. Joseph's dream depicts the sun and moon and eleven stars bowing down to him, this is realised when he became the second to Pharaoh and his brothers bowed down to him (Gen 43:26-29). The

woman is the elect and in particular here she is the OT elect, who gives birth to the Christ (v5) and later she gives birth to the NT elect (v17). John sees a continuum between the OT and NT elect (see 21:12-14). Wilson says 'In scripture no sharp dividing line is drawn between the true Israel and the new Israel, because the people of the promise are one people, whether they lived before or after the coming of Christ'. But here she represents the OT elect, one of the few references in Revelation to the OT elect alone. Compare the heavenly glory of this woman, who represents the elect (the Bride Eph 5:22), with the earthly glitter of the whore who represents the world, Rev 17:4. This woman stands in contrast to the whore and also to the Queen of heaven. <http://www.apocalipsis.org/>

During 1,260 days while the woman is nourished in the wilderness, war breaks out in heaven (7): "Michael and his angels fought against the dragon." It's interesting that this angel is Michael, angel of judgment:

**Michael.** One of the archangels, whose name is a rhetorical question meaning "Who is like God?" (or, "Who is like El?"). In apocalyptic literature he is Israel's patron angel ([Daniel 12.1](#)), who fights for Israel against the angels of other nations ([Daniel 10.13](#); [Daniel 10.21](#)). As such later tradition identifies him as the nameless divine messenger called "the prince of the army of Yahweh" in [Joshua 5.13–15](#) (cf. [Exodus 23.23](#); note also the spiritual "Michael, Row the Boat Ashore"). Michael also becomes the surrogate of a now transcendent storm god, leading the heavenly armies in the fight against the forces of chaos, and thus is the adversary of Satan ([Revelation 12.7](#); [Jude 9](#)). The battle between them becomes a favorite artistic theme and may occur in variant form in the legend of George and the dragon (see [Revelation 12.9](#)).

Michael D. Coogan (*Oxford Companion*)

Having just encountered this same three and a half years, forty-two months, 1,260 days in chapter eleven with respect to God's witnesses, more reason than ever now is accorded to letting the 1,260 days of the woman's being nourished in the wilderness equate to sufficient earthly time.

After Satan is thrown down to the earth, a loud voice in heaven proclaims, "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Messiah... the accuser of our comrades has been thrown down...conquered by the blood of the lamb... Rejoice..." (10-12).

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# Dragon

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**Leviathan.** A mythological sea monster who is one of the primeval adversaries of the storm god. In the Ugaritic texts, Baal defeats Lothan (*ltn*, a linguistic variant of Leviathan), described as a seven-headed serpent, apparently identified with Baal's adversary Prince Sea. In the Bible Leviathan is also identified with the Sea ([Job 3.8](#)) and has many heads ([Psalm 74.14](#)), and his defeat by God is a prelude to creation ([Psalm 74.15–17](#)). According to apocalyptic literature, that battle will be rejoined in the end time when the evil Leviathan will be finally defeated ([Isaiah 27.1](#); [Revelation 12.3](#); [Revelation 17.1–14](#); [Revelation 19.20](#); [Revelation 21.1](#)), and, according to later tradition, given along with Behemoth as food to the elect ([2 Esdras 6.49–52](#)), another recalling of creation ([Psalm 74.14](#)). In [Job 41](#), Leviathan is described as fully under God's control, a divine pet ([Job 41.4–5](#); cf. [Psalm 104.26](#)). Many commentators have equated the Leviathan of [Job 41](#) with the crocodile, and some elements of the description seem to fit this identification. But others, like his breathing fire ([Job 41.19–21](#)), do not; in light of the other biblical references as well as the Canaanite antecedents it is better to understand Leviathan as a mythological creature.

In Thomas Hobbes's work by this title (1651), Leviathan is the symbolic name for the absolute power of the political commonwealth, to whose sovereign people must be subordinate but which is ultimately subject to divine control.

Michael D. Coogan (*Oxford Companion*)

**Satan.** The name of the archenemy of God and the personification of evil, particularly in Christian tradition. The name may derive from a Semitic root °*n*, but the primitive

meaning is still debated, the most popular suggestions being "to be remote" and "to obstruct." Some alternative roots include <sup>וְ</sup>*wē* (cf. Hebr. "to rove") and <sup>שׁ</sup>*šyē* (cf. Arabic "to burn," especially of food).

In the Hebrew Bible <sup>וְ</sup>*CE<sub>n</sub>* could refer to any human being who played the role of an accuser or enemy ([1 Samuel 29.4](#); [2 Samuel 19.22](#); [1 Kings 5.4](#); [1 Kings 11.14](#)). In [Numbers 22.32](#) <sup>וְ</sup>*CE<sub>n</sub>* refers to a divine messenger who was sent to obstruct Balaam's rash journey.

[Job 1–2](#), [Zechariah 3](#), and [1 Chronicles 21.1](#) have been central in past efforts to chart an evolution of the concept of <sup>וְ</sup>*CE<sub>n</sub>* that culminates in a single archenemy of God. However, such evolutionary views have not gained general acceptance because <sup>וְ</sup>*CE<sub>n</sub>* in these passages does not necessarily refer to a single archenemy of God and because the relative dating of the texts remains problematic. In [Job 1–2](#), the <sup>וְ</sup>*CE<sub>n</sub>* seems to be a legitimate member of God's council. In [Zechariah 3.1–7](#) <sup>וְ</sup>*CE<sub>n</sub>* may refer to a member of God's council who objected to the appointment of Joshua as chief priest. The mention of <sup>וְ</sup>*CE<sub>n</sub>* without the definite article in [1 Chronicles 21.1](#) has led some scholars to interpret it as a proper name, but one could also interpret it as "an adversary" or "an accuser" acting on God's behalf.

Most scholars agree that in the writings of the third/second centuries BCE are the first examples of a character who is the archenemy of Yahweh and humankind. Nonetheless, the flexibility of the tradition is still apparent in the variety of figures who, although not necessarily identical with each other, are each apparently regarded as the principal archenemy of God and humankind in Second Temple literature. Such figures include Mastemah (Jubilees 10.8), Semyaz (1 Enoch 6.3), and Belial at Qumran (Zadokite Document 4.13). Still undetermined is the extent to which the concept of the Hebrew <sup>וְ</sup>*CE<sub>n</sub>* was influenced by Persian dualism, which posited the existence of two primal and independent personifications of good and evil.

Although it shares with contemporaneous Jewish literature many of its ideas about demonology, the New Testament is probably more responsible for standardizing "Satan" (Greek *satanas*) as the name for the archenemy of God in Western culture. However, the devil (the usual translation of "Satan" in the Septuagint), Beelzebul ("the prince of demons," [Matthew 12.24](#); See [Baal-zebub](#)), "the tempter" ([Matthew 4.3](#)), Beliar

([2 Corinthians 6.15](#)), "the evil one" ([1 John 5.18](#)), and Apollyon ([Revelation 9.11](#)) are other names for Satan in the New Testament. Lucifer, a name for Satan popularized in the Middle Ages, derives ultimately from the merging of the New Testament tradition of the fall of Satan from heaven ([Luke 10.18](#)) with an originally separate biblical tradition concerning the Morning Star (cf. [Isaiah 14.12](#)).

According to the New Testament, Satan and his demons may enter human beings in order to incite evil deeds ([Luke 22.3](#)) and to cause illness ([Matthew 15.22](#); [Luke 11.14](#)). Satan can imitate "an angel of light" ([2 Corinthians 11.14](#)), has command of the air ([Ephesians 2.2](#)), and accuses the faithful day and night before God ([Revelation 12.10](#)). [Jude 9](#) mentions the struggle between Satan and the archangel Michael for the body of Moses. [Revelation 20.2](#), among other texts, equates "the Devil and Satan" with "the dragon," thus reflecting the merging of ancient myths concerning gigantic primordial beasts that wreak havoc on God's creation with the traditions concerning Satan. Satan's destiny is to be cast into a lake of fire ([Revelation 20.10–15](#)).

In 563 ce the Council of Braga helped to define the official Christian view of Satan that, in contrast to dualism, denied his independent origin and his creation of the material universe. As J. B. Russell (*Lucifer: The Devil in the Middle Ages*, 1984) notes, writers and theologians of the medieval period popularized many of the characteristics of Satan that remain standard today and that have roots in, among other sources, Greek, Roman, and Teutonic mythology. Although the Enlightenment produced explanations of evil that do not refer to a mythological being, the imagery and concept of Satan continues to thrive within many religious traditions.

Hector Ignacio Avalos (*Oxford Companion*)

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# Revelation 13

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- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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?
- 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.
- 6: And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.
- 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.
- 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.
- 9: If any man have an ear, let him hear.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

- 13: And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men,
- 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.
- 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.
- 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:
- 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.
- 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.

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## Revelation 12–13

Victory in heaven, disaster for earth—Antichrist and false prophet  
[\(Matthew 24.15–24\)](#)

To remember chapter thirteen, all the reader needs to do is recall it's the number of the beast--666: "This calls for wisdom: let anyone with understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a person. Its number is six hundred sixty-six" (18). The *Oxford Annotated Bible* says, "Since Hebrew and Greek letters have numerical equivalents, the number of the beast (666) is the sum of the separate letters of his name. Of countless explanations, the most probable is Neron Caesar (in Hebrew letters) which if spelled without the final n, also accounts for the variant reading of 616." Chapter thirteen is really the account of two beasts: one from the sea (13.1) and one from the earth (13.11).

Concerning the number 666, two notes from the *Oxford Companion* and from F. F. Bruce may be helpful to the reader:

**Six** is seven minus one. It is the number of incompleteness. The six days of the creation were not complete until the seventh day of rest had come. In the book of Revelation six seals, trumpets, etc. represent the course of the world before God's final seventh act brings about the eternal Sabbath. And in spite of its seven heads, the number of the beast is only six hundred sixty-six.

David H. van Daalen

...the total numerical value of the letters in some person's name, when spelt in Greek, or possibly in the Hebrew alphabet. This reckoning of the numerical value of words and names was a riddle-game among the Greeks and Romans (as in the frequently quoted Greek graffito from Pompeii, 'I love the girl whose number is 545'); among the Jews (who called it gematria) and some early Christians, it was treated as a matter of mystical significance--as in the Sibylline Oracles (i.328) where the appropriateness of 888 as the numerical value of the name of Jesus in Greek is pointed out... the seer's use of gematria could be a precaution against a charge of sedition if the name of the individual were spelt out in full.

The beast of the sea is allowed to exercise sovereignty over the earth for forty-two months (note the recurrence of forty-two equating to 3 and a half years or 1,260 days). This particular beast is given authority, and people who have not been sealed against it worship it (8). From the foundation of the world, an omniscient God knows who is written into the book of life of the Lamb (8). This beast utters blasphemy and persecutes the saints (7).

From Patmos, John may have had the mainland of Asia Minor in view, "where the cult of Rome and Augustus flourished" (F.F. Bruce, *International Commentary*).

The beast of the earth serves the beast of the sea, enforcing its worship: "by the signs it is allowed to perform on behalf of the beast, it deceives the inhabitants of the earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that had been wounded by the sword and yet lived, and it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast so that the image of the beast could even speak (15):

He has authority for the same time that the Gentiles trample on the outer court, the same time as the two witnesses prophecy and the same time that the church is cared for in the desert. The beasts exerts authority over all the world and represents political power, the second beast represents religious and economic power. Hendriksen comments that the first beast is Satan's *hand* and the second beast is Satan's *mind*. 'The first represents the persecuting power of Satan operating in and through the nations of this world and their governments. The second symbolises the false religions and philosophies of this world'. He sums up the beast, false prophet and Babylon as the three agents of Satan's attack upon the earth namely 'antichristian persecution, antichristian

religion, and antichristian seduction'.

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The first beast, the reader learns through the description of the second, has "been wounded by the sword and yet lived, and it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast [the inhabitants of the earth have made the image] so that the image of the beast could even speak and cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be killed" (14,15). Nero, it was rumored, died and became again alive. The image "is marked on the right hand or the forehead," the right hand, as F.F. Bruce points out, being the place where the Jew wore the phylactery. Bruce also suggests that the Dragon and the two beasts form an unholy trinity. It should further be noted that this marking is an imitation of the sealing of God's people (*Oxford Annotated Bible*).

The marks of the figure of Thessalonians [2 Thessalonians 2.1-12). recur in the two beasts of [Revelation 13](#): the beast from the sea, which in its death and resurrection is a parody of Christ, and claims divine honors; and the beast from the earth, which deceives people into worshiping the first beast, and with its lamblike voice and signs and wonders is a parody of the Holy Spirit. But there is also here an element of political coercion, and the sea beast's healed wound and his number identify him as Nero, returned from the dead, the persecuting emperor who was worshiped as a god.

The antecedents of this figure lie in [Daniel 7](#), which was immensely important for New Testament writers. This vision relates that before the coming of God's kingdom there would be a time of disasters, persecution, and apostasy, and that opposition to God and his people would be summed up in a nation or person, human or superhuman, whom God or his agent would destroy. The vision is related to the Near Eastern myth of God's conflict with the dragon of the chaos waters, out of which this world was created. The myth celebrated the victory of order over chaos in nature; in some biblical passages the powers of chaos were historicized as nations opposed to God and his people—Egypt ([Ezekiel 29.3](#)) and Babylon ([Jeremiah 51.34](#))—and in [Daniel 7](#) the four beasts arising out of the sea (on which the sea beast of [Revelation 13](#) is modeled) represent persecuting empires. They culminate in the "little horn" on the fourth beast, which represents the Greek king Antiochus Epiphanes, who tried to hellenize Judaism, and set up his statue in the Temple (the desolating sacrilege referred to at [Mark 13.14](#) and [Matthew](#)

[24.15](#)). The book of Revelation updates this picture in terms of the Roman empire, the emperor cult, and collaborating Christians ([Revelation 2.14–29](#); [Revelation 13.1–18](#)). (*Oxford Companion*)

Probably no chapter in *Revelation* has received more attention or more interpretation. F.F. Bruce says that the solution of John's riddle had been forgotten by the A.D. 180 and remains uncertain to this day. "This calls for wisdom: let anyone with understanding calculate the number of the beast..." (18). When will all this come to pass? What one is sure of is John's vision of future events from a privilege perspective (he has been taken up in 4.1). What a wrench Michael Coogan throws into most interpretations if he is right about the way time is viewed: "The universal division of time into past, present, and future is expressed in Hebrew (as in other Semitic languages) by a spatial metaphor. Contrary to Western usage, the past is what lies ahead (Hebr. *qedem*) and is therefore known; the future is unknown and is behind (Hebr. <*qēdem*>; <*aūf rōn*>)." (*Oxford Companion*).

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# Related Passages

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## Daniel 7

1: In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream, and told the sum of the matters.

2: Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea.

3: And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another.

4: The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it.

5: And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh.

6: After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it.

7: After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns.

8: I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things.

9: I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire.

10: A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood

- before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.
- 11: I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame.
- 12: As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time.
- 13: I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.
- 14: And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.
- 15: I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me.
- 16: I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things.
- 17: These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth.
- 18: But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.
- 19: Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet;
- 20: And of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows.
- 21: I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them;
- 22: Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.
- 23: Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces.
- 24: And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings.
- 25: And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.
- 26: But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end.
- 27: And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High,

whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.

28: Hitherto is the end of the matter. As for me Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me: but I kept the matter in my heart.

## I John 2

18: Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.

19: 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.

20: But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.

21: I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.

22: Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.

## I John 4

1: Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

2: Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:

3: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

## 2 Thessalonians 2.1-12

1: Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him,

2: That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

3: Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

4: Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

5: Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?

6: And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.  
7: For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.  
8: And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:  
9: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,  
10: And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.  
11: And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:  
12: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

### Matthew 15

15: 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:)  
16: Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:  
17: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:  
18: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.  
19: And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!  
20: But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:  
21: For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.  
22: And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.  
23: Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.  
24: For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

### Mark 13

1: And as he went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!  
2: And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings?

there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

3: And as he sat upon the mount of Olives over against the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately,

4: Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?

5: And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you:

6: For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

7: And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet.

8: For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows.

9: But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them.

10: And the gospel must first be published among all nations.

11: But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.

12: Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death.

13: And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

14: But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains:

15: And let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house:

16: And let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment.

17: But woe to them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!

18: And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter.

19: For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be.

20: And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.

21: And then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; or, lo, he is there; believe him not:

- 22: For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect.
- 23: But take ye heed: behold, I have foretold you all things.
- 24: But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light,
- 25: And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken.
- 26: And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.
- 27: And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.
- 28: Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When her branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is near:
- 29: So ye in like manner, when ye shall see these things come to pass, know that it is nigh, even at the doors.
- 30: Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done.
- 31: Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.
- 32: But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.
- 33: Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.
- 34: For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.
- 35: Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning:
- 36: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.
- 37: And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.

## Luke 21

- 6: As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.
- 7: And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass?
- 8: And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them.
- 9: But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by.
- 10: Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom:
- 11: And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and

- pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.
- 12: But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake.
- 13: And it shall turn to you for a testimony.
- 14: Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer:
- 15: For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.
- 16: And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death.
- 17: And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.
- 18: But there shall not an hair of your head perish.
- 19: In your patience possess ye your souls.
- 20: And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.
- 21: Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto.
- 22: For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.
- 23: But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people.
- 24: 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.
- 25: 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;
- 26: Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.
- 27: And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.
- 28: And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.
- 29: And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees;
- 30: When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand.
- 31: So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.
- 32: Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled.
- 33: Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.

- 34: And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.
- 35: For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.
- 36: Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.
- 37: And in the day time he was teaching in the temple; and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives.
- 38: And all the people came early in the morning to him in the temple, for to hear him.

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# Revelation 14

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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.

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:

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.

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.

5: And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.

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,

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.

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.

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,

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:

- 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.
- 12: Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 16: And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.
- 17: And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

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# Interpretation

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## Revelation 14

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The 144,000 over against worshipers of the beast. Judgment

*Revelation* fourteen, as one might predict since it is a multiple of seven, begins wonderfully: "Then I looked and there was the Lamb standing on Mount Zion! And with him were one hundred forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads" (1). This is followed by song before the throne, its four living creatures, and the elders (3), a song to which no one could learn the words other than the one hundred and forty-four thousand redeemed (3). Flying in mid-heaven, however, John sees flying in mid-heaven, however, an angel proclaiming the not so glad tidings to the inhabitants of the earth: "the hour of judgment has come" (7). This is followed by another angel and a pronouncement: "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!" (8). Yet a third angel proclaims, "Those who worship the beast and its image, and receive a mark on their foreheads or on their hands, they will also drink the wine of Wrath, poured unmixed into the cup of his anger, and they will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb" (9-11). At this point, the author reminds his readers, "Here is a call for endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and hold fast to the faith of Jesus" (12). Well may the voice from heaven instruct John to "Write this: Blessed are the dead who from now die in the Lord" (13). Remember, it is the Day of Judgment. John sees a white cloud and "seated on the cloud was one like the Son of Man, with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand" (14). Another angel urges, "Use your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is fully ripe" (15).

Yet another angel comes from the throne carrying a sickle. This angel is urged on by yet still another angel having authority over fire, "Use your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for its grapes are ripe" (18). The vintage of the earth is gathered and thrown into the "great wine press of the wrath of God" (19). The final image is awash in blood: "blood flowed from the wine press , as high as a horse's bridle, for a distance of about two hundred miles" (20).

## VII. THE ULTIMATE TRIUMPH OF THE SAINTS DEPICTED (14:1-20)

- A. The Lamb and the 144,000 (14:1-5)
- B. The first angel: good tidings (14:6-7)
- C. The second angel: fall of Babylon (14:8)
- D. The third angel: fate of those who worship the beast (14:9-11)
- E. The state of the righteous dead (14:12-13)
- F. The fourth angel: harvest of earth (14: 14-16)
- G. The last angels: fire and vintage (14:17-20) (Charles Williams)

### one hundred and forty-four

One recalls that in chapter seven one hundred and forty-four from the tribes of Israel have been sealed:

4 And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred forty-four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the people of Israel

14 Then I looked, and there was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion! And with him were one hundred forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads.

3 and they sing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the one hundred forty-four thousand who have been redeemed from the earth

This same number is used of the measurement of the New Jerusalem in chapter 21:

10 And in the spirit † he carried me away to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. 11 It has the glory of God and a radiance like a very rare jewel, like jasper, clear as crystal.

12 It has a great, high wall with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates are inscribed the names of the twelve tribes of the Israelites; 13 on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. 14 And the wall of the city has twelve foundations, and on them are the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

15 The angel † who talked to me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. 16 The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width; and he measured the city with his rod, fifteen hundred miles; † its length and width and height are equal. 17 He also measured its wall, one hundred forty-four cubits † by human measurement, which the angel was using. 18

It would seem to follow that the number is being used to symbolize completeness: not one is missing, and the wall is complete. The reader should recall that *Revelation* seven includes a "great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, form all tribes and people and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white" (9).

John appears to see both the future in heaven and the future on earth; that is, the call is still for the "endurance of the saints" (12), the same message called for from the seven churches, at the same time judgment is occurring; yet, not all on earth who will serve the Lord are yet dead, for John is instructed to write, "Blessed are the dead who from now on die in the Lord" (13). As John sweeps back and forth from heavenly vision and consummation to earthly end, the reader can be forgiven for finding time confused. Both chapters seven and fourteen make quite clear that the "complete number of the redeemed" is present first in heaven praising God and then on Mount Zion. Yet, still others are to survive the catastrophic destruction on earth.

### Son of Man

John sees "one like the Son of Man" (14). This is the vision of *Daniel*:

7.13: I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

14: And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an

everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

This is the Son of Man that *John* gives the authority of God:

- 26: For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;
- 27: And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.

To this Son of Man is given the final judgment (*Matthew 13*):

- 39: The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.
- 40: As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.
- 41: The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;
- 42: And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.
- 43: Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

## Mount Zion

That symbolism centered on Zion as the dwelling place of Yahweh as king. Since it was viewed as the site of Yahweh's throne, Zion was portrayed as a lofty peak extending into heaven, the point at which heaven and earth meet. Thus, [Psalm 48.1–2](#) depicts Zion as Yahweh's holy mountain "on the heights of Siphon" (NRSV: "in the far north"). Zaphon was the mountain home of the Canaanite god Baal, and imagery from Canaanite religion is applied to Zion in [Psalm 48](#) and elsewhere. True to its original designation of "stronghold," but especially because Yahweh reigned there as king, Zion was also a symbol of security. Yahweh was Zion's defender against the threats of kings and nations (e.g., [Psalm 46](#); [Psalm 48](#); [Psalm 76](#)). For that reason Zion was also portrayed as the place of refuge, especially for the poor ([Isa 14.32](#); cf. [Psalm 9](#)).

All of this seems to have given rise to a notion of Zion's

inviolability, as reflected in [Micah 3.9–12](#) and [Jeremiah 7.1–15](#). According to these prophets, the people of Jerusalem believed the city's security against Assyrian and Babylonian threats to be guaranteed. The book of Isaiah accepts the notion of Zion's inviolability ([Isaiah 8.9–10](#); [Isaiah 8.16](#); [Isaiah 17.12–14](#)) but distinguishes between the security promised to Zion and the destruction with which Yahweh threatens Jerusalem ([Isaiah 1.21–26](#); [Isaiah 29.1–8](#)). Zion will endure even beyond Jerusalem's destruction.

After Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed in 587/586 bce, hopes for the future were often expressed in terms of the restoration of Zion ([Isaiah 51.1–6](#)); because of this hope, the modern Zionist movement took the ancient designation as its own. In some texts from the exilic and postexilic periods, Zion/Jerusalem is addressed in royal language common to the Near East ([Isaiah 45.14–17](#); [Isaiah 49.22–23](#); [Isaiah 60.4–7](#)); in others, Zion is portrayed as a mother ([Isaiah 66.7–11](#)). Occasionally, Zion is identified with the community itself: "saying to Zion, 'You are my people'" ([Isaiah 51.16](#)).<sup>2</sup> Esdras speaks of Zion in referring to the heavenly Jerusalem that would ultimately replace the earthly one ([2 Esdras 13.36](#); cf. [Revelation 21.1–17](#)). In [Hebrews 12.22](#), Zion refers to the "new covenant" of Jesus. In all of these diverse ways, Zion is the "city of God" ([Psalm 87.3](#)). (*Oxford Handbook*)

Whatever else one concludes about chapter fourteen of *Revelation*, it must be seen as a time of gathering of the first fruits, of harvest, and vintage. The seven churches early in the book have been instructed to get themselves right with God and to endure, even amidst persecution. In chapter six, the one who is worthy begins to open the seven seals of the scroll (containing the fixed purposes of God's future), and it is in this chapter the martyred souls call for justice: "Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long will it be before you judge and avenge our blood on the inhabitants of earth?" (10). They are told to "rest a little longer" (11). Yet, that judgment has already begun in the opening of the first six seals, opening onto visions of conquering powers, war and bloodshed, famine, and pestilence and death. The sixth seal brings a great earthquake, the sun becoming black, the moon becoming like blood, and the sky vanishing (6.12-14). The next action occurs with four angels standing at the four corners of the earth. The seventh seal is opened and is followed by the first six trumpets bringing convulsions of nature. One must note, though, that the saints, by chapter eight, prior to the trumpets, have begun praying. I have always suspected this is a fervent prayer for those who are to endure this ordeal--the number in heaven being complete but

remaining very incomplete on earth and in earthly time. Remember, they have been told to rest. By chapter ten, the end is certain: "There will be no more delay" (6). Still, the temple of earth must be measured with a view to preservation (11). It is announced that "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord" (11.15) in the middle of the beast's coming up from the bottomless pit and making war on the two faithful witnesses (11.7). At the end of chapter eleven, attention is focused upon heaven and God's temple and the ark of His covenant (19). Now, war breaks out in heaven and the ancient serpent, dragon, Devil, and Satan, is thrown to earth; with this done, action occurs on earth with the coming of the beasts from the sea and from the earth (13) with power to seal its own onto itself (evil trinity). Finally, after all this, attention centers on Mount Zion and the Lamb, the redeemed, and a new song (chapter 14). Now, it is announced, "The hour of judgment has come" even as the call still goes out for endurance of the saints (12). Surely, as the saints have early proclaimed, "Salvation belongs to our God" (7.10). In human time, the hour is delayed with incalculable interludes and vision and faith amidst destruction. Habakkuk knew fully well that there can only be "a vision for the appointed time," that this vision "speaks of the end, and does not lie... If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay..." (2.3-4). But delay in human time it seems to do so that the human being like Habakkuk must "stand at my watchpost, and station myself on the rampart; I will keep watch to see what he will say to me, and what he will answer concerning my complaint" (2.1).

Even in sight of Zion, chapter fourteen of *Revelation* concludes with a bloodbath and introduces a pouring out of seven bowls of wrath upon earth. These bowls contain the full wrath of God (15.7). How near the end is, however, now John marks by permitting no delay between the sixth and seventh bowl; rather, following the seventh bowl, Babylon or evil itself is defeated. Once again, a great multitude in heaven takes up singing, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power to our God, for his judgments are true and just" (19). This praise continues, increasing in vibrancy, sounding like many waters and the sound of mighty thunder peals. Only at this point does heaven open and the Word of God, the King of Kings and Lord of lords seize the dragon for the grand finale and throw him into a pit. During this time, the martyrs we have already found in heaven are being raised from the dead, the first resurrection (20). Still, nations are being deceived (20.7) until the Devil this time is condemned to eternal fire and sulfur (20.10). Next follows the fleeing of both earth and heaven from the presence of the One sitting on the "great white throne." All of the dead stand before Christ and are judged for their deeds (20.13). Following this, a New Jerusalem comes down out of heaven and a creation free from imperfection results: "See, I am making all things new" (5). In this new creation will be

found again the water of life and the tree of life itself (22.1-2). At this point, God will reveal Himself fully: "they will see his face" (22.4) and find there is no more darkness.

Even when *Revelation* ends finally, the promise made at the beginning seems no closer in John's earthly time, for apart from the New Jerusalem and the revealed face of God, the promise is still, "Surely I am coming soon" (20.20), a position not remarkably farther on than "the time is near" at the beginning of chapter one.

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# Revelation 15

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- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 5: And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened:
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

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# Interpretation

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## Revelation 15–22.

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### Seven bowls of God's final wrath

With only eight verses, chapter fifteen is clearly an introduction to the pouring out of seven plagues upon the earth. John sees another vision of things to come: "The I saw another portent in heaven, great and amazing: seven angels with seven plagues which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is ended" (1). The reader should note John's structure: these are the "last." The victorious martyrs in heaven are now seen "standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands" (2). Notably, they are singing both "the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb" (2). The song they sing emphasizes God's universal outreach to humankind: "Great and amazing are your deeds, Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, King of the nations! Lord, who will not fear and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your judgments have been revealed" (3, 4). After this, the tend of witness in heaven is opened out of which come the seven angels with their seven bowls full of the wrath of God (7). Chapter fifteen ends with everyone being prevented from entering the temple of God until the seven plagues have ended (8).

Chapter fifteen is certainly brief; nonetheless, like every verse and chapter in the apocalypse, it is rich in meaning, especially through allusion. Of course, one notes that the pattern for completeness continues in the use of seven angels, seven bowls, seven plagues. Careful attention to the separation between God and humankind is revealed in the redeemed, who have overcome the beast and its image, now depicted as standing beside the sea of glass (2). The sea appears to be mixed with fire. The reader will recall that

in John's first vision into heaven through an open door, he has seen "something like a sea of glass like crystal" in front of the throne; John, of course, only seeing into heaven, is separated from God, creature from Creator. The reader recalls, too, that the twenty-four elders surround the throne, from which emanate rumblings and peals of thunder. On each side of the throne are the four living creatures (chapter four). In chapter five, the reader learns the throne is also surrounded by angels, myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands singing (11). Farther, joining in the singing is every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all of them (13). This certainly has to be a vision of final victory. In chapter six, the souls of the martyred are revealed as being under the altar (9); they are given white robes and told to rest a little longer in response to their question concerning how long it would be before justice reigned (10, 11). In seven, an angel arises from the sun and ascends into heaven with a plea not to damage the earth until the servants have been marked (3). The sealing is completed and John sees "a great multitude no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white" (9). This is certainly a fast forward through events on earth into the end of time. The reader notes this multitude stands before the throne, thus joining the four living creatures, elders, and angels. Chapter eight returns to earthly scenes and devastating judgment upon the inhabitants of the earth. This continues, and it affects particularly those who have not been sealed (9.4). In chapter eleven, the temple is measured to determine who is to be preserved. After this, the kingdom of heaven is opened (11.19), an event yet future to the portents or visions of the woman, child, and dragon, and of the two beasts. Chapter fourteen places the Lamb, who has been in heaven, upon Mount Zion, the meeting place of earth and heaven. An angel "flies in midheaven, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth--to every nation and tribe and language and people" (6). The gospel is "Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come; and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water" (7). The battle for the souls of humankind rages on, with the fall of Babylon only being announced (8). The call for endurance, just as to the seven churches, resounds (14.12). Interestingly, the Lamb of 14.1 on Zion is pictured as one like Son of Man "with a golden crown on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand" (14). Just as in 7.7 the sacrificial Lamb has become the Shepherd, here the Sacrificial Lamb and Son of Man come together. Harvesting begins. That which has separated God's throne from humankind now reflects the fire of judgment. That movement is both from heaven (the Son of Man harvesting) and to heaven (judgment of the great and small-20) only after earth and heaven have fled, leaving only the great white throne and the one who sat on it, is attested by John's seeing a new heaven and earth, "and no more sea" (21.1). At this point, in the New Jerusalem, one finds the throne of God and of the

Lab, "nothing accursed" (3) and God's servants with His name upon their foreheads (4); now, God's servants see His face and live eternally.

Of particular note is verse three of this chapter, where John makes it quite clear that those who have overcome will sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb. While this could simply mean victory, the emphasis upon multitudes and universal outreach suggests John means what he says here: that what began with Moses is completed with Christ, that faithful Hebrews (Jews) and Christians are one people.

F.F. Bruce in *The International Bible Commentary* notes that "the song of verses 3f. is a cento of passages from various places in OT" and lists these:

"Great and Marvelous are your deeds" (Pss. 104.24; 111:2; 139.14)

"Lord God Almighty" (4.8, Isa. 6.3)

"Just and true are your ways" (Ps. 145.17)

"King of the ages" (Jer. 10.10)

"You alone are holy" (Ps. 86.10; 99.3, 5, 9)

"All nations will come and worship (Ps. 86.9)

In verse five, John says he sees "the temple of witness in heaven" opened. Throughout *Revelation*, the reader has become accustomed to interventions and resumptions in the unfolding and fulfilling of God's purpose.

Other allusions also occur: the seven bowls of wrath evoke memory of the golden bowls containing the prayers of saints (5.8). The smoke filling the temple of God recalls the divine *shekinah* in Exodus 40.34 following (Bruce).

Chapter fifteen concludes the beginning of reaping with the reminder that judgment has arrived and that no one can now enter into the temple until the seven plagues have run their course. Throughout, *Revelation* has been consistent with the Old Testament experience that God's judgment can be long deferred yet be swift and terrible in its moment. With emphasis upon swift and terrible then, the reader moves into the execution of the seven wraths.

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# Relevant Passages

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## Deuteronomy 32 The Song of Moses

- 1: Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.
- 2: My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass:
- 3: Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God.
- 4: He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.
- 5: They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of his children: they are a perverse and crooked generation.
- 6: Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise? is not he thy father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?
- 7: Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee.
- 8: When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.
- 9: For the LORD's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.
- 10: He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.
- 11: As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings:
- 12: So the LORD alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him.
- 13: He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock;
- 14: Butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat; and thou didst

- drink the pure blood of the grape.
- 15: But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.
- 16: They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger.
- 17: They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not.
- 18: Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee.
- 19: And when the LORD saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons, and of his daughters.
- 20: And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith.
- 21: They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.
- 22: For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains.
- 23: I will heap mischiefs upon them; I will spend mine arrows upon them.
- 24: They shall be burnt with hunger, and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction: I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents of the dust.
- 25: The sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the sucking also with the man of gray hairs.
- 26: I said, I would scatter them into corners, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men:
- 27: Were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy, lest their adversaries should behave themselves strangely, and lest they should say, Our hand is high, and the LORD hath not done all this.
- 28: For they are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them.
- 29: O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!
- 30: How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold them, and the LORD had shut them up?
- 31: For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.
- 32: For their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah: their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter:
- 33: Their wine is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps.
- 34: Is not this laid up in store with me, and sealed up among my treasures?

- 35: To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste.
- 36: For the LORD shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left.
- 37: And he shall say, Where are their gods, their rock in whom they trusted,
- 38: Which did eat the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink offerings? let them rise up and help you, and be your protection.
- 39: See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand.
- 40: For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever.
- 41: If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me.
- 42: I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh; and that with the blood of the slain and of the captives, from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy.
- 43: Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people.
- 44: And Moses came and spake all the words of this song in the ears of the people, he, and Hoshea the son of Nun.
- 45: And Moses made an end of speaking all these words to all Israel:
- 46: And he said unto them, Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law.
- 47: For it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life: and through this thing ye shall prolong your days in the land, whither ye go over Jordan to possess it.
- 48: And the LORD spake unto Moses that selfsame day, saying
- 49: Get thee up into this mountain Abarim, unto mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, that is over against Jericho; and behold the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession:
- 50: And die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people; as Aaron thy brother died in mount Hor, and was gathered unto his people:
- 51: Because ye trespassed against me among the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah-Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin; because ye sanctified me not in the midst of the children of Israel.
- 52: Yet thou shalt see the land before thee; but thou shalt not go thither unto the land which I give the children of Israel.

## Exodus 15. 1-18

- 1: Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.
- 2: The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him.
- 3: The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name.
- 4: Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red sea.
- 5: The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone.
- 6: Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy.
- 7: And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee: thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble.
- 8: And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea.
- 9: The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.
- 10: Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters.
- 11: Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?
- 12: Thou stretchedst out thy right hand, the earth swallowed them.
- 13: Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation.
- 14: The people shall hear, and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina.
- 15: Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away.
- 16: Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone; till thy people pass over, O LORD, till the people pass over, which thou hast purchased.
- 17: Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O LORD, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established.
- 18: The LORD shall reign for ever and ever.

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# Revelation 16

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- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 4: And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.
- 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.
- 6: For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.
- 7: And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.
- 8: And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire.
- 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.
- 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,
- 11: And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.
- 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.
- 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.

- 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.
- 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.
- 16: And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 20: And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.
- 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.

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# Interpretation

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## Revelation 15–22.

Seven bowls of God's final wrath

	<b>Fourth of seven sections ends 14.20 (NRSV) <i>Visions</i></b>
<b>V. Seven angels, seven plagues, seven bowls 15-17</b>	<b>1. foul and painful sore 16.2</b>
	<b>2 sea into blood 16. 3</b>
	<b>3. rivers and water into blood 16. 4</b>
	<b>4. scorching of sun 16.8</b>
	<b>5. darkness 16.10</b>
	<b>6. Euphrates dried up; frogs (demonic spirits) 16.12</b>
	<b>7. It is done--earthquake, destruction, and huge hailstones Babylon is given the full fury of righteous wrath.</b>
	<b>16.18</b>
	<b>Fifth of seven sections ends 16.21 (NRSV) <i>7 Plagues</i></b>

Chapter sixteen moves quickly and unmercifully; seven plagues are poured out upon the earth in succession:

1. "a foul and painful sore came on those who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped its image" (2).
2. the sea "became like the blood of a corpse, and every living thing in it died" (3).
3. "the rivers and the springs of water...became blood" (4).
4. the sun "was allowed to scorch people with fire; they were scorched by the fierce heat" (9).
5. the kingdom of the beast "was plunged into darkness; people gnawed their tongues in agony" (10).
6. the Euphrates dries up (12-16); three foul spirits come from the mouths of the dragon and the two beasts; these demonic spirits battle the kings of the earth in Harmagedon (Armagedon).
7. Babylon is given the wine-cup of the fury of God's wrath (19); there is an earthquake and hail.

Of the seven plagues, readers will see a similarity to the plagues inflicted upon Egypt (Exodus chs. 7-12). In addition to that similarity, F.F. Bruce points out a parallelism between the seven plagues and the seven trumpets:

There is a remarkable parallelism between most of the seven trumpet judgments of chapters 8-11 and the last plagues of chapter 16. In the first form of each series the earth, sea, fresh water, and sun are respectively affected; but the present judgments are more severe than their 'trumpet' counterparts; where the former judgments affected one-third of the area in question, these affect the whole. The sixth plague in the present series, like the sixth trumpet-judgment, affects the Euphrates; and the emptying of the seventh bowl, like the blowing of the last trumpet, is followed by a proclamation from heaven. We may also be struck by the resemblances between these 'last plagues' and the plagues of Egypt.

*(International Commentary)*

Those afflicted with these plagues, much like Pharaoh, demonstrate a hardening of heart: after the fourth plague of heat, earthly inhabitants continue to curse the name of God and will not repent or give Him glory; and plunged into darkness, even amidst gnawing their own tongues, people curse God and do not repent. After the third plague, a theological question has been asked: the people have been given blood to drink; "It is what they deserve?" is answered definitively: "Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, your judgments are true and just" (7). One recalls Paul's argument in Romans three: 5: But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man)  
6: God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?

After much delay, the merciful God acts quickly: "The seventh angel poured his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, "It is done!" (17). This pouring of the seventh bowl, with the interval between six and seven remarkably absent, is immediately followed by the climactic "And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunders, and a violent earthquake, such as had not occurred since people were upon the earth" (18). Even still, with the destruction of Babylon evident, people still curse God (21).

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# Revelation 17

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- 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:
- 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.
- 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.
- 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:
- 5: And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 9: And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.
- 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.

- 11: And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.
- 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.
- 13: These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.
- 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.
- 15: And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.
- 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.
- 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.
- 18: And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

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## Revelation 17–18

### Destruction of the whore, Babylon

#### Relevant Passages

According to the *NRSV Oxford Annotated*, chapters 17-19 signal the last major division before the Epilogue and contain the judgment and fall of Babylon and the aftermath of rejoicing in heaven. Certainly, these chapters have been much talked and written about, complete with speculations about both John's world and the world as it will exist at the terrible day of God's judgment. The following outline will suffice as an introduction:

### IX. THE FALL OF BABYLON THE GREAT (17: 1-19:21)

- A. Vision of the "Mother of Harlots" (17:1-6)
- B. Mystery of the beast explained (17:7-14)
- C. Mystery of the harlot explained (17:15-18)
- D. Fall of Babylon described (18: 1-24)
- E. Thanksgiving over the fall of Babylon (19: 1-10)
- F. Vision of the victorious army (19:11-16)
- G. Doom of the beast and false prophet (19:17-21)

I would caution the reader who wants to understand these chapters to be firmly anchored in the *Old Testament*. Throughout the thirty-nine books of the *Old Testament*, the themes of marriage and adultery have intertwined. A wayward people of God, whether Israel or Judah, is depicted as a whore, unfaithful to commitment. In that tradition, Babylon becomes the Great Whore, the metaphor of all that is wicked. She is preceded by Sodom and Gomorrah.

First, what actually happens in chapter seventeen? Recall that the pouring of the seven plagues has resulted in the world's greatest earthquake in which Babylon receives the wine-cup of God's fury (16.19). One of the seven angels who had the seven bowl approaches John with a stern, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great whore who is seated on many waters, with whom the kings of earth have committed fornication, and with the wine of whose fornication the inhabitants have become drunk." Please note the metaphor used is fornication, not adultery; there apparently has never been a commitment here--these are those who curse God. To see this event, John is spirited away into a wilderness where he sees a woman sitting on a scarlet beast full of blasphemous names (3). The beast has seven heads and ten horns; the woman is clothed in purple and scarlet and adorned with gold, jewels, and pearls (4). She is named only mystery (5): "Babylon the great, mother of whores of earth's abomination," and she is drunk with the blood of witnesses to Jesus (6). The context of John's day, Roman domination, and persecution is clear in the "blood of witnesses to Jesus" (especially with respect to Nero), but as has often been pointed out, the persecution and call for endurance both continue literally.

John is amazed by the mystery but immediately reassured by the interpreting angel: "I will tell you the mystery of the woman, and of the beast with the seven heads and ten horns... The beast you saw was, and is not, and is about to ascend from the bottomless pit and go to destruction. And the inhabitants of the earth, whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will be amazed when they see the beast, because it was, and is not, and is to come" (7-9). The angel continues interpreting: "the seven heads are seven mountains... also, they are seven kings of whom five have fallen, one is living, and the other has not yet come, and when he comes he must remain only a little while" 9, 10). John's amazement in the beginning and the people's amazement here stem from different reactions: John is amazed as mystery unfurls; the people are amazed by what they are seeing immediately in front of them--the "was.. is not.. and is to come." As Rome is associated with the seven hills and thus the whore, so is Nero, who was expected to return to life, associated with the perplexity occasioned in the people. Interpretation usually associates the seven kings with Roman emperors, depending on how one counts, Augustus, Tiberius, Gaius, Claudius, and Nero, the five who have fallen. One is, Vespasian? The other had not come--Titus? That the beast who was, is not, and is to come is more than just an earthly king connotatively derives from a similarity in language to God who is, was, and is to come. I find the inversion of language interesting here: "was" seems to suggest historical reality while "is" describes God's continuing presence in history. Remember that for the Hebrew, the future is past--simply because it is not known; the past is future because it can be known. God here is present, future-past, and past-is to

come. The beast is future-was, not present now, and past-is to come. Actually, I'm not sure I understand time in *Revelation* except to note that when the eternal exists in time, the existential recognizes paradox.

In *Revelation*, the writer anticipates a difficulty on the part of his listeners and readers; he knows that he can be understood only in the *spirit* with which he has written the book. He tells his listeners, "Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the spirit is saying to the churches" (3.6). He repeats exactly the same admonition in 3.22. After the appearance of the second beast, the reader is told, "This calls for wisdom: let anyone with understanding calculate the number of the beast..." (13.18). Much the same call for spiritual discernment is found in the middle of John's vision of the great whore: "This calls for a mind that has wisdom..." (9). Such wisdom is not to be equated with human logic which pales in comparison with what can be understood rather than known.

Even as was the case with Pharaoh, the anti-God forces serve the purposes of God in God's over-ruling: one recalls that Pharaoh hardened his heart (Exodus 8.14, 32), but tellingly, with time, "the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh" (9.12). This is repeated in 10.20 and 11.10. The angel tells John that the beast and the kings (as well as the multitudes and nations) will devour the whore's flesh, "For God has put it into their hearts to carry out his purpose by agreeing to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God will be fulfilled" 15-18). The point to be made is simply that God controls divine purposes and outcomes and uses both the forces of commitment and resistance. The kings in *Revelation* 17 unite to make war on the Lamb, but the John and his readers are assured, "the Lamb will conquer them, for he is the Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful" (14). The "are called" here parallels the names "not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world" (17.8). God's omniscience overrules the boundaries of human space and time, rendering determinism and indeterminism the boundaries of human logic.

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# Revelation 18

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- 1: And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 5: For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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,
- 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.
- 11: And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more:
- 12: 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,

13: 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.

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.

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,

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!

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,

18: And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city!

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.

20: Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.

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.

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;

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.

24: And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.

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## Revelation 17–18

### Destruction of the whore, Babylon

H.A. Buster Dobbs

4. Another judgment scene (18:1-24).
  - a. A glorious angel announces the fall of Babylon (18:1-2).
  - b. She falls because she corrupted the earth (18:3).
  - c. The redeemed are called out of her--her sins and iniquities are heaped high (18:4-5).
  - d. She is rendered evil for evil (18:6).
  - e. Her arrogance will not prevent her sudden destruction (18:7-8).
  - f. The kings of the earth shall mourn over her destruction (18:9-10).
  - g. The merchants of earth shall weep and mourn (18:11-16).
  - h. Sailors laments her downfall (18:17-19).
  - i. Saints, apostles, and prophets, from their heavenly vantage point, rejoice over the destruction (18:20).
  - j. Her destruction is total, like a great millstone sunk in the depths of the sea (18:21-23).
  - k. In her was found the blood of prophets and saints (18:24).

[Babylon](#)[New Jerusalem](#)

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 holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband
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.	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,
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. 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.	11: Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;
12: 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, 13: 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	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: 13: On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. 14: And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. 15: And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. 16: And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city

<p>souls of men.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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,</p> <p>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!</p> <p>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,</p>	<p>with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>18: And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.</p> <p>19: 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;</p> <p>20: 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.</p> <p>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.</p>
<p>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.</p> <p>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;</p> <p>23: And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the</p>	<p>22: And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>25: And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.</p> <p>26: And they shall bring the glory</p>

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.

24: And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.

and honour of the nations into it.

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.

## Babylon

The Bible also reflects a negative view of Babylon. Already in the primeval history, the tower of Babel ([Genesis 11.1–9](#)) uses the traditional ziggurat present in each city of Sumer as a metaphor for the excesses of human ambition that led to, and accounted for, the confusion of tongues and dispersion of peoples. The Psalmists emphasized the negative aspects of exile ([Psalm 137](#)), and the fall of the "arrogant" city ([Jeremiah 50.31](#)) and "its sinners" ([Isaiah 13.9](#)) was predicted confidently, even gleefully, by the prophets. In the New Testament, Babylon became the epitome of wickedness ([Revelation 17.5](#)) and a symbolic name for Rome ([Revelation 17–18](#); cf. [1 Peter 5.13](#)).

William W. Hallo

*Revelation 18* is a dirge, a song about the fall of the city Babylon, Babylon the Great. Reading the scripture carefully, one understands Babylon has been morally condemned from the beginning: oppression and godless rebellion bring on its nemesis. This chapter is about God's judgment:

...where godlessness is conjoined with the unconscionable exploitation of the underprivileged and the persecution of the righteous, nothing but timely and whole-hearted repentance can avert the death sentence. Where, however, the sins of civilization reach their utmost limit and there is no further room for repentance, the judgment falls with the decisiveness of the large millstone... (F.F. Bruce, *The International Bible Commentary*)

One must recall Isaiah 26: 9: But when your judgments come upon the earth, the people of the world learn righteousness.

One of the reasons both the *Old* and *New Testaments* are needed is that interpretatively, all too often readers of the *Old Testament* emphasize God's judgment and righteousness just as *New Testament* readers often focus too exclusively upon God's mercy. The Lord, your God, however, is one! (Deuteronomy 6.4). Anyone who has read Deuteronomy carefully knows "the Lord your God is a merciful God; for he will not fail you or destroy you or forget the covenant with your fathers" (4.31). Even as the law is set before Israel, it learns "what great nation is there that has statutes and ordinances so righteous as all this law which I set before you this day?" (4.9). Israel is reminded that it has been chosen out of love, that its God is faithful and keeps covenant and steadfast love "with those who love him and keep his commandments...and requites to their face those who hate him, by destroying them; he will not be slack with him who hates him, he will requite him to his face" (7.9-10).

But the more profound paradox of a God believed to be merciful and forgiving on the one hand and ultimately just on the other remains unresolved. The Bible is of course not an abstract theological treatise, and so it is not surprising that there is no detailed exposition of the problem. But it is one to which biblical writers frequently return, in narratives (Jonah; Luke 15), dialogue (Job; cf. Ecclesiastes; Romans 9), and especially in prayers (Psalm 130.3–4; Daniel 9.7–9; cf. Habakkuk 3.2), where the hope of the worshipper is that God's mercy will prevail over his justice (see Hosea 11.8–9; James 2.13). This hope is based on the realization of the essential unworthiness of those chosen by God; the election of Israel, and the salvation of the Christian, were motivated by gratuitous divine love (Deuteronomy 7.7–8; Psalm 103.6–18; Titus 3.5). *Oxford Companion to the Bible* Michael D. Coogan

That the paradox of a "merciful and just God" remains unresolved is not true only if one does not begin building an understanding of God in the *Old Testament* with *Genesis* and end it with *Revelation*. That the paradox exists at all is the result of a fallen and limited finite nature incapable of seeing beyond paradox. If I am not mistaken, God has resolved the paradox. In *Revelation*, the reader is told "Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne and to the Lamb" (7.10). When the martyrs call for vindication, they are told to

rest a little longer (6.10, 11). Again and again in *Revelation*, the final end or consummation is delayed. Why? The answer I propose will not be acceptable for those who read *Revelation* and usurp God's control over history by proposing the end will be at this time or that and will be preceded by this event or that. John gives us his vision of the end veiled only by time itself. Only the sacrificial Lamb seated on the throne is worthy to break the seals containing the fixed purposes of God. But through that worthiness, John sees a time in which "saints from every tribe and language and people and nation... [will be made] a kingdom and priests serving our God" (5.9). We live, thus, in the interlude of God's mercy and outreach to universal humankind; no one is excluded, for the door to the eternal stands open ((4.1), and the invitation is non-exclusive: "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' And let everyone who hears say, 'Come.' And let everyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift" (22.17). John was instructed not to seal up the words of the prophecy: "'Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. Let the evil doer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy'" (22.10-11). Life provides the chronology for moral choice. The call throughout *Revelation* has been for endurance--of the seven churches of Asia (early Christianity) but also for those living into the moment of judgment: "Fear God and give him glory for the hour of his judgment has come..." (14.7). Even with the fall of Babylon, the call remains: "Here is a call for endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and hold fast to the faith of Jesus" (14.12). As Habakkuk knew, and as John saw, "there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end and does not lie... the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him!" (2.3, 20).

Just as the saints retreat from their early cry for vindication into fervent prayer for those left to endure, so should the non-purely vindictive retreat from glorying in an end temporally experienced as darkness and not light. "It is too easy and agreeable for human beings to apply the denunciations of Scriptures to others and claim the blessings for oneself" (F.F. Bruce). The only delight taken should not be in the discomfiture of the enemy but rejoicing only in the judgments of God. That judgment begins with one's own household.

Remarkable in *Revelation* 18 is the description of Babylon, suggesting Babylon symbolically represents a place where sin has reached its utmost limit, leaving no room for repentance.

[Babylon has become]...a dwelling place of demons, a haunt of every foul spirit, a haunt of every foul bird, a haunt of every foul and hateful beast (2)

...nations have drunk of the wine of wrath of her fornication, and the kings of earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxury...(3)

...her sins are heaped as high as heaven... (5)

...she has glorified herself and lived luxuriously..(7)

...her plague will come in a single day---pestilence and mourning and famine--and she will be burned with fire... (8)

That Babylon is a city of material wealth and luxury illustrates the much too common coexistence of material well being and social injustice; perhaps for exactly this reason, the gospel of the *New Testament* has its source in a Galilean peasant. No extensive knowledge of Rome is needed to realize that slaves under the empire fared better than did the poor of rural areas. Nor is it surprising that a radical egalitarian is a Galilean carpenter walking among simple fishermen, women, beggars, lepers, the blind and crippled. Jesus certainly knew what was required: justice, kindness, and walking humbly with God (Micah 6.8).

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# Righeousness and Grace

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**Righteousness.** The Hebrew word translated "righteous" (*š̄edîq*) and its related nominal and verbal forms has the basic meaning of someone or something proven true, especially in a legal context. It therefore has the meaning "innocent" and is applied in the Bible especially to moral conduct and character. But the scope of righteousness is much wider than judicial procedures and embraces the whole covenanted life of the people under God. The specific meaning depends on circumstances: for a ruler, it means good government and the deliverance of true judgment ([Isaiah 32.1](#); [Jeremiah 23.5](#)); for ordinary people, it means treating one's neighbor as a covenant partner, neither oppressing nor being oppressed ([Amos 5.6–7](#); [Amos 5.21–24](#)); and for everyone it means keeping God's will as conveyed in the Torah ([Deuteronomy 6.25](#)). Sometimes human righteousness is seen as a response to or reflection of the divine righteousness or graciousness ([Isaiah 56.1](#); [Isaiah 58.8](#)), and essentially it is the acknowledgment of God in worship of him alone and in living as he wants ([Ezekiel 18.5](#); [Ezekiel 18.9](#)).

God's righteousness means that he is a just and reliable judge ([Psalm 9.4](#)) who keeps his side of the covenant and who thus delivers Israel from her enemies, so that they experience that righteousness as punishment, while Israel experiences it as salvation and vindication ([Judges 5.11](#)). Indeed in some places God's righteousness and salvation are virtually synonymous ([Isaiah 51.1–3](#)), and from the exile onward we find God's righteousness as an object of hope ([Jeremiah 23.5](#); [Daniel 9.24](#)).

In rabbinic literature of the Tannaitic period, righteousness is

often specified to mean generosity in general and almsgiving in particular. There is also development of the biblical tendency for righteous to refer to Israel, or a group within Israel, everyone else being at least relatively unrighteous; this may reflect experience of oppression. In the Dead Sea Scrolls we find the Qumran sect regarding themselves as the only truly righteous. Righteousness is still, however, essentially conformity to the divine ordinances, that is, covenantal obedience. In the Septuagint there is very high consistency in rendering the derivatives of the Hebrew root §dq by the Greek *dikaiosunÙ* and its cognates, whose semantic field overlaps considerably with that of the Hebrew words.

In the New Testament, righteousness occurs with greatest frequency in the gospel of Matthew and in Paul's letters. In the case of Matthew, there is discussion about whether he uses the word for life under God in the Christian community or reserves it for life under God before Christ came and outside the Christian community, and whether righteousness is not only a divine requirement but also a divine gift, especially in [Matthew 3.15](#); [Matthew 6](#); [Matthew 6.33](#).

For Paul, the issues are even more widely debated. It is usually agreed that sometimes he uses righteousness in a broadly biblical fashion but in a Christian context for the life of the people of God ([Philippians 4.8](#); [2 Corinthians 5.14](#); [2 Corinthians 9.10](#)). It is also usually agreed that "the righteousness of God," whether or not we can speak of a fixed formula, means God's saving activity ([Romans 1.18](#)), characteristically seen in justification by his grace through faith ([Romans 3.21–26](#)). Indeed one of the reasons why the apostle is often held to be quoting a pre-Pauline formula in the last passage is that in [Romans 3.25](#) God's righteousness can be held to mean God's justice in a strictly judicial sense and not his saving activity. Under the influence particularly of [Galatians 3](#) and [Romans 4](#) and the terminology of reckoning, there has traditionally been a view that in justification Christ's righteousness is placed to the account of sinners (is "imputed" to them).

The question remains whether in some places righteousness and justification are synonymous in Paul or at least that righteousness can sometimes be a purely forensic or relational word. The best evidence for this is [Galatians 2.21](#), but it is widely held for other passages as well. Nevertheless, it has also been maintained that Paul consistently uses

"justify" (*dikaio*;) for the restoration and maintenance of the relationship with God and "righteousness" (*dikaiosun*ū) for the consequent life as his people, with both justification and righteousness being by faith. But there is disagreement about the exact meaning of most of the relevant passages. Some scholars find the key to the whole matter in the idea of God's righteousness as a power, with the gift of righteousness being inseparable from God, the giver, so that the believer is drawn into the sphere of his power.

In the New Testament apart from Paul and Matthew, righteousness normally means life as God wants it and in relation to him. It is not surprising that righteousness is sometimes found as a particular predicate of Jesus Christ (e.g., [1 John 2.1](#); [1 John 2.29](#); [1 Peter 3.18](#)).

(*Oxford Companion to the Bible* John Ziesler)

**Mercy of God.** The concept of a loving and merciful god is ancient, found in hymns to Egyptian, Sumerian, and Babylonian deities. In the Ugaritic texts, the high god El is formulaically described as merciful and compassionate, with a cognate of the same word used two millennia later in Muslim characterization of God. Several Hebrew words have traditionally been translated by the English word "mercy," including *āenān*, *āesed*, and especially *rē'āmîm*. The last is derived from the word for uterus (*re'ēm*), and is remarkable both for its maternal nuance and for its persistence in biblical and nonbiblical descriptions of male deities. The nuance is made explicit in [Isaiah 49.14–15](#), a rare instance of maternal metaphor to describe the God of Israel.

One of the oldest characterizations of Yahweh is found in [Exodus 34.6–7](#), quoted or alluded to frequently (e.g., [Numbers 14.18](#); [Joel 2.13](#); [Psalm 86.15](#); [Psalm 103.8](#); [Psalm 111.4](#); [Psalm 145.8](#); [Nehemiah 9.17](#); [Jonah 4.2](#);

Ephesians 2.4; cf. Psalm 77.7–9). This ancient liturgical fragment describes Yahweh as "merciful (*raúûm*) and gracious (*úannûn*), slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love ... forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin ... yet by no means clearing the guilty, but visiting the iniquity of the parents upon the children and the children's children," and thus raises one of the most profound dilemmas of monotheism, the tension between divine mercy and justice. Biblical tradition itself offers a partial corrective to the theory of inherited, and thus implicitly collective, guilt, notably in Ezekiel 18. But the more profound paradox of a God believed to be merciful and forgiving on the one hand and ultimately just on the other remains unresolved. The Bible is of course not an abstract theological treatise, and so it is not surprising that there is no detailed exposition of the problem. But it is one to which biblical writers frequently return, in narratives (Jonah; Luke 15), dialogue (Job; cf. Ecclesiastes; Romans 9), and especially in prayers (Psalm 130.3–4; Daniel 9.7–9; cf. Habakkuk 3.2), where the hope of the worshipper is that God's mercy will prevail over his justice (see Hosea 11.8–9; James 2.13). This hope is based on the realization of the essential unworthiness of those chosen by God; the election of Israel, and the salvation of the Christian, were motivated by gratuitous divine love (Deuteronomy 7.7–8; Psalm 103.6–18; Titus 3.5).

God's mercy is also a model for human conduct. "Those who fear the Lord" are characterized as "gracious (*úannûn*), merciful (*raúûm*), and righteous" in Psalm 112.4, phrasing that echoes the immediately preceding description of Yahweh in the similarly acrostic Psalm 111.4. Resuming this theme, Jesus commands his followers to imitate divine mercy according to Luke 6.36 (cf. Matthew 5.43–48). See Also Covenant; Evil; Grace; Suffering.

(*Oxford Companion to the Bible* Michael D. Coogan)

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# Revelation 20

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- 1: And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.
- 2: And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,
- 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.
- 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.
- 5: But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.
- 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.
- 7: And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

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.

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.

14: And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

15: And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

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# Interpretation

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	<b>Sixth of seven sections ends 19.21 (NRSV) <i>Final Battle</i></b>
<p><b>VII. Binding of Dragon for a thousand years 20; souls of martyrs raised (first resurrection) to reign with Christ-6; second death has no power over priests of God. Dragon is released (Gog and Magog 8), fire consumes the army of the Dragon and the Dragon is thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur.</b></p>	<p>Vision of Great White Throne 20.11-15, New Heaven, New Earth, New Jerusalem (out of heaven, bride); God dwell among mortals 21.3. All things are made new (21.5); measuring of New Jerusalem (21.15-27): no temple in the city (22), for God is the temple; gates are never shut (21.25), for God has opened and no one can shut (4.8); only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life can enter (27).</p> <p>22 River of water of life flowing from the throne of God; on either side of river is tree of life with twelve kinds of fruit. Servants of God will see Lamb's face and have His name written on their foreheads. God is light (5)</p>
	<b>Seventh of seven sections ends 22.6-21 (NRSV) <i>Vision of Throne</i></b>

John's vision in chapter 20 turns heavenward: "Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit and locked and sealed it over him, so that he would deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be let out for a little while" (1-3). The chapter has three parts: the binding of Satan and the reign of the martyrs, the loosing of Satan and the final conflict, and the final judgment.

### The binding of Satan

The *Oxford Annotated NRSV* cautions the reader of *Revelation* 20 not to read into the chapter what is not there: "nothing is said here about a reign on earth." Farther, the thousand years is to be understood symbolically, "so this period represents the perfection and completion of the martyrs' reign with Christ, untroubled by Satan's wiles." I have repeatedly cautioned readers to understand that mythologies of past and future cannot be delimited by historical time markers. I use mythology here in its literary sense of talking about primordial beginnings and endings, human destinies, and what it means to be human:

Ostensibly historical events that serve to unfold part of the world view of a people or nation; myth organizes, shapes, or provides patterns and principles as opposed to strict fact. As myth, the Bible is concerned with explaining universal truths, and providing an explanation of origins and destinies. Even early history, if we believe Herodotus, contains myth. Another definition or approach--anonymous; supernatural accounting for natural events; makes concrete and particular a perception of human beings or a cosmic view; a projection of social patterns onto a supernatural level; explains divinity, creation and religion; demonstrates human perception of deepest truths; gives order and frame of meaning to human experience; reveals archetypal imagination embodying and suggests universality; a narrative stirring us with the strange and familiar, contains primordial ritual and ceremony; a repository of racial memories; a structure of unconsciously held value systems; an expression of the general beliefs of a race, social class or nation; a unique embodiment of ideology (306). Genesis 1-11 (White 22) introduces two creation stories (1:1-2:4 and 2:5-25), the fall (3:1-24), first brothers Cain and Abel (4:1-24), and Seth (4:25-26), the first man's descendants (5:1-32), the Nephilim (6:1-4), the flood (6:5-9:17), Noah's

descendants (9:18-32), the tower of Babel (11:1-9), and the genealogy of Abraham (11:10-32).

Other examples of myth include Yahweh's fight with the dragon (Isa. 27. 1, 51. 9), Sheol, that fearful monster which, with open jaws, swallows up men, and from which Yahweh alone can rescue (Psalms 49.15, 86.13) , the morning star which tried to set its throne above that of God and was hurled into the depths (Isa. 14. 12ff.), a primitive man who listened at a meeting held by God (Job).

Much smacks on fairy tale: foundling who lay naked and bare, but finally rose, through marriage, to a high position (Ez. 26.4 ff), the unlucky man who escapes the danger of a lion only to meet a bear, or who is bitten by a serpent in the safety of his own house (Amos 5.19), a dreadful sword from which there is no escape and from which only God can bring rest (Ez. 21), of the wonderful tree with no equal (Ez. 31.4 ff), all kinds of animals with the power of speech (Gen. 3.1, Num. 22.30), the giving of a choice of wishes (1 Kings 3.5, 2 Kings 2.9, 4.2) or the granting of a child, long desired, to a couple. Crain *The Bible as Literature*

The reader is very close, in *Revelation* 20, to the end of historical time. But what is the historical time covered? Satan has been, for example, expelled from heaven (12.9). But when did this happen? Certainly not in earthly time. He is now consigned to the abyss, this coming after the rise of the beast and false prophet; he is to be imprisoned for a thousand years, then loosed. Remember, a thousand years is deemed a humanly sufficient time.

In some phases of Jewish eschatology 'the days of the Messiah', introduced by the appearance of Messiah on earth, were expected to precede the age to come. The duration of these days was variously estimated (cf. 400 years of 2 Esd. 7.28 f.); the estimate of a thousand years was related to Psalms 90:4 (cf. 2 Pet. 3:8). But for Christians the Messiah had already come, and with His exaltation to God's right hand, His reign had already begun (5.6 ff.; cf I C. 15: 24-28). The millennial period of vv. 4-6, however, does not begin with the enthronement of Christ, but at a later point, with the resurrection of the martyrs to share His throne (cf. 3.21).

The reader, by the end of *Revelation*, should be accustomed to the jerky movement of time from the eternal to the temporal as well as the spatial back and forth from vision into heaven to action on earth. While one normally thinks of vision as future, in reading *John*, one has to stay aware that the vision is one of an end he sees as already happening, but as it happens, he must work it back into the past or relate it to what has already happened and is happening in his own day. In John's day (81-96 C.E.), he sees a door into heaven opened; the inscrutable scroll of future events is unsealed by One who is worthy. That future begins with widespread natural, social, and religious upheavals. The souls of those who have been slaughtered over time for their testimony cry out for vindication from under the altar but are told to rest. In chapter 20.4, John sees again "the souls of those who have been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God" (4).

Although first seen protected under the altar, they are now envisioned as part of the throne room: "Then I saw thrones, and those seated on them were given authority to judge. I also saw the souls of those beheaded... They had not worshipped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands" (4). Between chapter six and twenty, the martyrs, or some of them, have apparently been on earth. In this chapter, they share in the first resurrection, and the second death has no power over them" (5); they have become priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him a thousand years. The narrative then leaps ahead of this thousand years to see Satan released for another period of deceiving the universal earth, the four corners, Gog and Magog. Then the devil is thrown into the lake of fire where the beast and the false prophet are; this victory over godlessness ends with a general resurrection and judgment. Yet, by *Revelation* 22.10 this vision is yet only near: "the time is near."

As *Genesis* (especially 1-11) describes a time when creation is new and unmarred by sin or separation from God, so *Revelation* addresses the renewal of creation--a new heaven and a new earth. This new creation is to be freed from imperfections and transformed by the glory of God. This vision is not uncommon to the *Old Testament* prophets; consider Isaiah 65.17-25

17: For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.

18: But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.

19: 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.

20: There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old

man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed.

21: And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them.

22: They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

23: They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them.

24: And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.

25: The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD.

### Or 66:

1: Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?

2: For all those things hath mine hand made, and those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.

3: He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations.

4: I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not.

5: Hear the word of the LORD, ye that tremble at his word; your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the LORD be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed.

6: A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the LORD that rendereth recompence to his enemies.

7: Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain

- came, she was delivered of a man child.
- 8: Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.
- 9: Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith the LORD: shall I cause to bring forth, and shut the womb? saith thy God.
- 10: Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her:
- 11: That ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations; that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory.
- 12: For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees.
- 13: As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.
- 14: And when ye see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb: and the hand of the LORD shall be known toward his servants, and his indignation toward his enemies.
- 15: For, behold, the LORD will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire.
- 16: For by fire and by his sword will the LORD plead with all flesh: and the slain of the LORD shall be many.
- 17: They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens behind one tree in the midst, eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith the LORD.
- 18: For I know their works and their thoughts: it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory.
- 19: And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal, and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles.
- 20: And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the LORD out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the LORD, as the children of Israel

bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD.

21: And I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the LORD.

22: For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain.

23: And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD.

24: And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.

Equally challenging, the reader must keep in mind the recurring cycles of rebellion and restoration within the encompassing framework of an absolute beginning and an absolute end.

By verse eleven in chapter twenty, "the earth and the heaven [have]fled from his presence, and no place was found for them." The reader is now in the timelessness-place-less-ness of eternity. The dead, great and small, stand before the throne, and books were opened (12). "Also, another book was opened, the book of life" (12). The dead are judged according to their deeds or works; these are recorded in the "books." This crowd must be great: "And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and all were judged according to what they had done" (13). At the end of this final and complete judgment, "Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire; and anyone who was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire" (15). How vast must be the lake of fire, the non-spatial counterpart for heaven, both eternal and therefore without time or dimension! One is reminded again in chapter twenty-one that the one who is making things new is "the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end" (21.6)

While the author paints his apocalypse upon a cosmic canvas, the contemporary mind looks at today's events and translates the universal into the particular; thus, books continue to be written about *Revelation* relating its prophecy to this current event or another, and predicting signs of the end. All human beings will find in the Word of God is the promise "He is coming" and the admonition to remain faithful and endure with testimony: "I will stand at my watchpost, and station myself on the rampart; I will keep watch" (*Habakkuk* 2.1).

One final consideration: *Revelation* 20 reports "the rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended" (5). In eternity, is one to envision martyrs as reigning for a thousand years followed by a general resurrection of the dead; or is it not more logical that in eternity these distinctions must be erased? Isn't this why we define God as omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent? Why then should one try to limit God to the human space-time box way of thinking? Asked another way, is this not an attempt to create an image of God, to reduce God to icon? Remember, the rider of the white horse "has a name inscribed that no knows but himself" (19.12).

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# Resurrection

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**The Resurrection of Believers.** With all the concentration of the later Easter narratives upon the personal fate of Jesus, it must never be forgotten that resurrection is a corporate event. Jesus was raised as the firstfruits. Believers share in his resurrection initially through baptism. Paul is very cautious about this: believers share his death but their resurrection is conditional upon their present obedience and will not be complete until the parousia or second coming ([Romans 6.3–11](#); [1 Thessalonians 4.15–17](#); See Also [Biblical Theology](#), article on New Testament).

The deutero-Pauline Colossians and Ephesians are less cautious. Colossians asserts that we are already risen with Christ through baptism, though this risen state carries with it present moral responsibilities and its full consummation is not realized until the end ([Colossians 3.1–4](#)), while in Ephesians believers are already raised to life and made to sit at Christ's right hand in heavenly places ([Ephesians 2.5–6](#)). Ethical obedience is still required in Ephesians, as the exhortation in [Ephesians 4–6](#) shows, and there is still a final consummation ([Ephesians 4.13](#)). Similarly, the Fourth Gospel teaches that resurrection and eternal life are already realized for believers ([John 5.24](#); etc.), though here again there is a future consummation to be awaited ([John 6.39](#); etc.). The corporate and cosmic dimensions of resurrection are thus never completely lost in the New Testament. Reginald Fuller *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*

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# Revelation 21

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- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 7: He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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,
- 11: Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;
- 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:

13: On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.

14: And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

15: And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof.

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.

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.

18: And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.

19: 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;

20: 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.

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.

22: And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.

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.

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.

25: And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.

26: And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.

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.

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# Interpretation

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## Revelation 19–20

Coming of Christ, the millennium, and the last judgment ([Matthew 24.27–31](#))

## Revelation 21

Descent of the bride, New Jerusalem, in counterpoint with the fall of Babylon ([Revelation 17.1](#) and [Revelation 21.9](#))

Vision of Great White Throne 20.11-15, New Heaven, New Earth, New Jerusalem (out of heaven, bride); God dwell among mortals 21.3. All things are made new (21.5); measuring of New Jerusalem (21.15-27): no temple in the city (22), for God is the temple; gates are never shut (21.25), for God has opened and no one can shut (4.8); only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life can enter (27).

22 River of water of life flowing from the throne of God; on either side of river is tree of life with twelve kinds of fruit. Servants of God will see Lamb's face and have His name written on their foreheads. God is light (5)

Finally, in *Revelation 21*, the reader hears, "It is done!" Just prior to this utterance, a loud voice from the throne in heaven has proclaimed, "See, the home of God is among mortals...See, I am making all things new" (3, 6). This is the consummation, the renewal of creation. John sees "a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away" (1). Where exactly is John when he sees "the holy city, the new Jerusalem" (2). He seems to be somewhere between the old and new creation; he still observes as a human, for he describes new Jerusalem as

"coming down out of heaven, adorned for her husband" (2). That is, he is still thinking in similes and spatial orientation. The One who speaks with the loud voice from the throne reveals Himself to be "the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end" (6). The primary motif of *Revelation* is restated: "Those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their God and they will be my children" (7). The godless, however, face the second death: "But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, the murderers, the fornicators, the sorcerers, the idolaters, and all liars, their place will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death" (8). This opening introduces one of the seven angels which had the seven bowls full of the last seven plagues, but the invitation this time is "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb" (9). John in the spirit is carried away to a great, high mountain where he sees the holy Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God (10). Of course, he had already begun to see in the second verse of the chapter. The rest of chapter twenty-one describes the city. In this celestial city, no temple is needed "for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb" (22). The glory of God provides its light (23). Nations and kings of the earth will bring in glory as will people bring in the glory and honor of nations (24, 26). The reader will note, too, that this new Jerusalem is measured by the angel who has talked to John (15-21), a measuring which corresponds with the measuring of the earthly temple in chapter eleven (1-13). One recalls that the temple and those who worshipped there were measured with the intent to preserve.

Barbara Nathanson in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* summarizes the importance of the New Jerusalem in light of the Old Jerusalem:

But after the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple in 587/586 bce, the exilic prophets envisioned a new Jerusalem, which was simultaneously a rebuilding and restoration of the old and also an idealized city, both grander and more enduring than its predecessor, offering its inhabitants a relationship with God and concomitant peace and prosperity. For Jeremiah, the rebuilt Jerusalem was well grounded in the old, even in its physical contours ([Jeremiah 30.18](#); [Jeremiah 31.38–40](#)). Ezekiel, who understood Jerusalem as "in the center of the nations, with countries all around her" ([Ezekiel 5.5](#)), celebrates a new city and a new Temple, areas of radiating holiness, fruitfulness, and well-being ([Ezekiel 40–48](#)), where God's glory will again reside:

"And the name of the city from that time on shall be, The Lord is There" ([Ezekiel 48.35](#)). Second Isaiah is consoling in its assertion that Jerusalem "has served her term, that her penalty is paid" ([Isaiah 40.2](#)). The gates of the new city will always be open ([Isaiah 60.11](#)), and the Lord will be its everlasting light ([Isaiah 60.19–20](#)). "No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old person who does not live out a lifetime" ([Isaiah 65.20](#)).

The hopes and expectations of the exilic prophets were realized in part with the rebuilding of the city and Temple during the latter half of the sixth century bce, the first generation of Persian rule. Both, however, would be destroyed by the Roman army in 70 ce. The Temple was never rebuilt. In the generation before its destruction, the Alexandrian Jewish philosopher and statesman Philo wrote that the Jews "hold the Holy City where stands the sacred Temple of the most high God to be their mother city" (*Flaccum* 46). The destruction of the Temple and "mother city" was both a great blow and a great challenge to Jews, inside and outside of Israel. Some Jewish apocalyptic texts from this period envisioned that at the end time, the heavenly Jerusalem, fashioned by God, would descend to earth; others envisioned a heavenly Jerusalem that awaited the righteous above. In either case, the renewal of Jerusalem was integral to the vision of the end time, a role already suggested in the eschatological visions of the exilic and postexilic prophets.

When John tries to describe heaven, he "ransacks the resources of language and metaphor" (F.F. Bruce, *The International Bible Commentary*) for very good reasons. *Genesis* assumes the existence of God: "In the beginning, God" (*Genesis* 1.1). This is an appeal to faith, not reason; the Hebrew mind did not think in terms of dualism: in Hebrew thought, "God's breath animates the dust and it becomes a *living being* or psychological-physical self" (NRSV Oxford Annotation). "The Bible assumes the existence of the

one and only Lord God, and chronicles the covenant of faith between God and the Jewish People.. through God's direct communication and revelation, the personal relationship between God and humankind is demonstrated" (Rabbi Wayne Dosick, *Living Judaism: The Complete Guide to Jewish Belief, Tradition, and Practice*, 11). Rabbi Dosick explains that ca. 200-6000 B.C.E., sages responded to the challenges of rationalism. As a result, arguments for God's existence included design: the earth needed a builder; God is mind (Philo 20 B.C.E.-50 C.E); cosmological reasoning: God is the unmoved mover (Maimonides 1135-1204 C.E.) ; God is limitless, infinite, and unknowable (Kabbalists, thirteenth century); and God, the universe, and nature are one (Spinoza 1632-1677). All such reasoning patterns affect what individuals can say about God, the infinite, and the eternal. Martin Buber called God the "Eternal Now," invoking a Presence that he believed could not be proved, defined, or described. I personally have been very much affected by Western rationalism, enough so to understand that any Tower of Babel built ambitiously to reach God will topple. Any rational structure will find itself confined to the limitations imposed by finite conditions. Language soars, as it does in John and other great poetry, but metaphor and simile relate what can be known to what ultimately is greater than its description. John can only tell us what the New Jerusalem is like: a radiance like a very rare jewel, like jasper, clear as crystal... the city is pure gold, clear as glass..." (10-21). It is not without irony that life becomes a wrestling with words to move beyond and escape their limitations. In fact, the yearning is itself an expression of messianic hope. Still, one needs to be careful in choosing words: to "escape" limitations, for example, commits one to a "caged soul" dualism rather than the Hebrew body animated by spirit. :The *Gospel of John* states, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (*John* 1.1). Effectively, John uses metaphor to express what might otherwise be inexpressible: God and Word are One.

John remains consistently universalist: "on the gates are inscribed the names of the twelve tribes of the Israelites" (12) while on the twelve foundations "are the twelve names of the twelve apostles" (14). In the city itself, "nations will walk by its light" (23). "The true Israel is the *new* Israel, as indeed Jesus implied when 'he appointed twelve, that they might be with him, and that he might send them out...' (Mark 3.14; cf. the implications of Mt. 19:28; Lk 22:30); it comprises all of the faithful of Old and New Testament times alike" (F.F. Bruce, *The International Bible Commentary*).

John quite clearly points out the limitations imposed upon the angel's measurement of the New Jerusalem: "The angel who talked to me had a measuring rod of gold... by human measurement which the angel was using" (15, 17). John's city would seem to be a cube: "foursquare, its length

the same as its width... its length, width, and height the same" (16). The Holy of Holies in Solomon's temple would, also, seem to be a cube: "The interior of the inner sanctuary was twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and twenty cubits high" (I Kings 6.20).

Humankind, not just the martyrs (7.1) are now consoled: "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning, and crying, and pain will be no more..." (4). The exception, of course, will be the godless: cowardly, faithless, polluted, murders, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and liars (8). These are to experience spiritual or "second death" (8). In *Revelation* 20. 6, those who share in the first resurrection will escape second death. Earlier (2.1) "Whoever conquers will not be harmed by the second death." By chapter twenty-one, "It is done" (6) concludes the need to endure. The Lamb's book of life is complete (27). Only by omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence is this closing of the book of life deterministic; in lieu of such absolute closure, choice remains *Revelation* does not close absolutely: "Surely I am coming soon" (22.20). John can only reply to grace: "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus" (22.20); that grace he extends: "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen" (22.21).

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# Messianic Expectation

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Yearning for a messianic age is universal: this messianic age is a goal and reward. The Hebrew-Judaic quest for this age is deeply rooted in its literature and on-going. Christians have accepted Jesus as the Messiah. What separates these two groups is, perhaps, simply a different way of viewing eternal time and time on earth. Yes, in the messianic expectation is a peaceful and perfected world; and yes, much of the unrest in past and current power struggles attests to an absolute and new creation as still being imminently or remotely future. Some expect the Kingdom of God to be established upon earth; Christians believe heaven and earth will have fled away before creation is renewed. Some behave passively while others work fervently to bring about the Kingdom of God. Jesus was a radical Jew because He announced that the Kingdom of God has come; it's here, in the heart of the committed individual. For this, He was ultimately crucified, perhaps because Romans viewed Him as rejecting imperial rule; or, perhaps, because His own established religion could not accept His ending the messianic expectation of His day, particularly the implication that the earthly imperfection and social injustice would continue even at the same time the Kingdom of God was itself being perfected.

John Sawyer offers the following overview of the messianic expectation (*Oxford Companion to the Bible*):

**Messiah.** The term denotes an expected or longed-for savior, especially in Jewish tradition, where some applied it to the revolutionary Simon Bar Kokhba (d. 135 ce), the mystic Shabbetai Zevi (1626–1676), and other "false messiahs," and in Christianity, where it is exclusively applied to Jesus Christ.

The word is derived from the common biblical Hebrew word *mEš̄iaú*, meaning "anointed." In Greek it is transcribed as *messias* and translated as *christos*. In the Hebrew Bible, the term is most often used of kings, whose investiture was marked especially by anointing with oil ([Judges 9.8–15](#); [2 Samuel 5.3](#); [1 Kings 1.39](#); [Psalm 89.20](#); [Sirach 46.13](#)), and who were given the title "the Lord's anointed" (e.g., [1 Samuel 2.10](#); [1 Samuel 12.3](#); [2 Sam 23.1](#); [Psalm 2.2](#); [Psalm 20.6](#); [Psalm 132.17](#); [Lamentations 4.20](#)). It is even used of Cyrus, king of the Medes and Persians ([Isaiah 45.1](#)). There is a possibility that some prophets may have been anointed (see [1 Kings 19.16](#); cf. [Isaiah 61.1](#)), and according to some texts the investiture of priests includes anointing too ([Exodus 29.7](#); [Leviticus 4.3](#); [Leviticus 4.5](#); [Leviticus 4.16](#); [Sirach 45.15](#)), though this probably reflects political developments after the fall of the monarchy; the title is not normally given to priests or prophets. In a passage from Zechariah dated 520 bce, where king and priest are described as "the two anointed ones," the term *mEš̄iaú* is avoided ([Zech 4.14](#); cf. [Zechariah 6.9–14](#)). By Maccabean times, however, it is used of the high priest ([Daniel 9.26](#)).

In its primary biblical usage, then, "anointed" is, virtually a synonym for "king," in particular David and his descendants, and it should be understood in the context of the royal ideology documented in the books of Samuel, Kings, and Psalms, even when it is applied secondarily to priests and others. The king was appointed by divine command ([1 Sam 10.1](#); [1 Samuel 16.1–13](#); [Psalm 45.7](#)), and he was adopted as son of God ([2 Sam 7.14](#); [Psalm 2.7](#); cf. [Psalm 89.26](#)). His own person was sacrosanct ([1 Sam 24.6](#)), the future of his dynasty was divinely protected ([2 Sam 7.12–16](#); [2 Samuel 22.51](#); [Psalm 89.4](#); [Psalm 89.36–37](#)), and he was the unique instrument of God's justice on earth ([2 Samuel 23.3](#); [1 Kings 3.28](#); [Psalm 45.4](#); [Psalm 72.1–4](#); cf. [2 Samuel 14.4](#)). As with the ideals and the realities of Zion, the Temple, the priesthood, and other institutions, the gap between the ideals of Davidic kingship and historical reality widened (e.g., [1 Kings 11.6](#); [2 Kings 16.1–4](#); [2 Kings 21.1–18](#); cf. [Deuteronomy 17.14–17](#)), and eventually royal language and imagery came to be applied primarily to a hoped-for future king, whose reign would be characterized by everlasting justice, security, and peace ([Isaiah 11.1–5](#); [Isaiah 32.1](#); [Jeremiah 33.14–26](#); [Ezekiel 37.24–28](#)). Such a figure is popularly known as "the messiah," and biblical texts that describe him are known as "messianic," though the term "messiah" itself does not occur with this sense in the Hebrew

Bible.

At the heart of biblical messianism is the idea that God intervenes in history by sending a savior to deliver his people from suffering and injustice. Influenced by the Exodus tradition (e.g., [Exodus 2.19](#); [Exodus 3.7–12](#)), the stories of Joshua and Judges (cf. [Judges 2.16](#); [Judges 2.18](#)), and established religious institutions, this messianic hope crystallized into several models. The first is that of a king like David who would conquer the powers of evil by force of arms ([Gen 49.10](#); [Numbers 24.17](#); [Psalm 2.9](#); [Psalm 18.31–42](#)) and establish a reign of justice and peace ([Isaiah 9.2–7](#); [Isaiah 11.1–5](#)). In some passages his wisdom is referred to ([Isaiah 9.6](#); [Isaiah 11.2](#); cf. [1 Kings 3.9](#); [Proverbs 8.15–16](#); [Proverbs 24.5–6](#)), in others his gentleness and humility ([Isaiah 42.2–3](#); [Zechariah 9.9–10](#)). Emphasis is on the divine initiative ([2 Samuel 7.8–16](#); [Jeremiah 33.14–16](#); [Haggai 2.21–23](#)) and on the result of the action, so that some visions of a "messianic" age make little or no mention of the messiah himself (e.g., [Isaiah 2.2–4](#); [Isaiah 11.6–9](#); [Isaiah 32.1](#); [Isaiah 32.16–20](#); [Isaiah 65.17–25](#); [Amos 9.11–15](#)).

Belief in a priestly messiah, son of Aaron, who would arise alongside the Davidic messiah to save Israel, appears in the Dead Sea Scrolls (e.g., [1QS 9.1](#)). The mysterious figure of Melchizedek ([Gen 14.18](#)) provides a title for one who is at the same time both king and priest ([Psalm 110.4](#); [Hebrews 7](#)). A third model is that of a prophet, anointed to "bring good news to the oppressed" ([Isaiah 61.1](#); [11Q Melch. 18](#); [Luke 4.18](#)). The belief that a prophet like Moses would arise ([Deuteronomy 18.18](#); [Acts 3.22](#)), known as Taheb ("he who brings back"), is central to Samaritan messianism (cf. [John 4.25](#)).

Finally, the tradition that the divinely appointed savior should suffer ([Luke 24.26](#); [Acts 3.18](#)) has its roots in numerous psalms attributed to David (e.g., [Psalm 22](#); [Psalm 55](#); [Psalm 88](#)), as well as in the traditional picture of Moses and the prophets as rejected and persecuted by their people ([Exodus 16.2](#); [Exodus 17.2–4](#); [Jeremiah 11.18–19](#); [Jeremiah 20.7–10](#); [Matthew 23.37](#)). The notion that his suffering or self-sacrifice is in itself saving (cf. [Exodus 32.32](#); [Isaiah 53.5](#); [Isaiah 53.10](#); [Isaiah 53.12](#)) is given a unique emphasis in Christian messianism (e.g., [Romans 5.6–8](#); [Galatians 3.13](#); cf. [Acts 8.32](#); [1 Peter 2.24–25](#)).

The messianic age is ultimately about ending suffering and injustice. If

Israel can be seen as representing every human being who has to struggle with suffering and injustice, then every individual has to wrestle with the eternal issues of facing the unknown, finding meaning and value in daily life, understanding pain and suffering, living life, and confronting death. How the individual chooses to do this will affect ultimate beliefs about the messianic age.

Understanding the Kingdom of God as presented by Jesus is crucial to understanding His commitment to messianic expectation; I have outlined an approach to thinking about the Kingdom of God in the work I have completed on *Mark*, and I include it here in entirety:

**Jesus' Radical Message: The Kingdom of God Is in the Midst of You (Lu.17:21 nor will they say, 'Lo, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.'")**

**1Co.15:50 I tell you this, brethren: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.**

Much like the orthodox of the first century, people today devoutly expect God's kingdom to come; the emphasis here is that the kingdom is not present and is to come at some future point. This leads to living in expectation rather than with the present. For many, the end of time (which heralds the kingdom of God) is to be preceded by tribulation. As the prophets understood, the end is darkness and not light, at least from the temporal perspective. Matthew calls this the 24:15 the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet. If Christ were present in human form, we might be startled to hear him say, **Mt. 22: 13: But woe unto you, churched, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.** The message Christ proclaimed while on earth, after all, was the

kingdom is here now, in our midst. How differently would we behave if we lived this truth in the present moment: the kingdom of God here now, in the moment: the eternal in the temporal! In some ways, this is the predictable message to come to the Hebrew-Judaic world which has been reshaped by Greek thinking, with an emphasis upon unity, harmony, and the ideal.

Mt.12:28 But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the **kingdom of God** has come upon you.

Mt.19:24 Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye **of** a needle than for a rich man to enter the **kingdom of God**."

Mt.21:31 Which **of** the two did the will **of** his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the harlots go into the **kingdom of God** before you.

Mt.21:43 Therefore I tell you, the **kingdom of God** will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruits **of** it."

Mk.1:15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the **kingdom of God** is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel."

Mk.4:11 And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret **of** the **kingdom of God**, but for those outside everything is in parables; [the secret is known.]

Mk.4:26 And he said, "The **kingdom of God** is as if a man should scatter seed upon the ground,

Mk.4:30 And he said, "With what can we compare the **kingdom of God**, or what parable shall we use for it?

Mk.9:1 And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see that the **kingdom of God** has come with power." [need not taste death to see that the kingdom of God has come.]

Mk.9:47 And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out; it is better for you to enter the **kingdom of God** with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell,

Mk.10:14 But when Jesus saw it he was indignant, and said to them, "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them; for to such belongs the **kingdom of God**.

Mk.10:15 Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the **kingdom of God** like a child shall not enter it."

Mk.10:23 And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it will be for those who have riches to enter the **kingdom of God!**"

Mk.10:24 And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the **kingdom of God!**"

Mk.10:25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye **of a needle** than for a rich man to enter the **kingdom of God.**"

Mk.12:34 And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the **kingdom of God.**" And after that no one dared to ask him any question. [not far from kingdom of God]

Mk.14:25 Truly, I say to you, I shall not drink again **of the fruit of** the vine until that day when I drink it new in the **kingdom of God.**"

Mk.15:43 Joseph **of Arimathe'a**, a respected member **of** the council, who was also himself looking for the **kingdom of God**, took courage and went to Pilate, and asked for the body **of Jesus.**

Lu.4:43 but he said to them, "I must preach the good news **of the kingdom of God** to the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose."

Lu.6:20 And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said: "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the **kingdom of God.**

Lu.7:28 I tell you, among those born **of women** none is greater than John; yet he who is least in the **kingdom of God** is greater than he."

Lu.8:1 Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the good news **of the kingdom of God.** And the twelve were with him, [brings the good news of the kingdom of God.]

Lu.8:10 he said, "To you it has been given to know the secrets **of**

the kingdom of God; but for others they are in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.

Lu.9:2 and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal.

Lu.9:11 When the crowds learned it, they followed him; and he welcomed them and spoke to them of the kingdom of God, and cured those who had need of healing.

Lu.9:27 But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God."

Lu.9:60 But he said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

Lu.9:62 Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

Lu.10:9 heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' [has come near.]

Lu.10:11 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off against you; nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near.'

Lu.11:20 But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. [kingdom of God has come.]

Lu.13:18 He said therefore, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it?

Lu.13:20 And again he said, "To what shall I compare the kingdom of God?

Lu.13:28 There you will weep and gnash your teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God and you yourselves thrust out.

Lu.13:29 And men will come from east and west, and from north and south, and sit at table in the kingdom of God.

Lu.14:15 When one of those who sat at table with him heard this, he said to him, "Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of

God!"

Lu.16:16 "The law and the prophets were until John; since then the good news **of the kingdom of God** is preached, and every one enters it violently.

Lu.17:20 Being asked by the Pharisees when the **kingdom of God** was coming, he answered them, "The **kingdom of God** is not coming with signs to be observed;

Lu.17:21 nor will they say, 'Lo, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the **kingdom of God** is in the midst **of you.**" [The kingdom of God is in the midst of you.]

Lu.18:16 But Jesus called them to him, saying, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the **kingdom of God.**

Lu.18:17 Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the **kingdom of God** like a child shall not enter it."

Lu.18:24 Jesus looking at him said, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the **kingdom of God!**

Lu.18:25 For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye **of a needle** than for a rich man to enter the **kingdom of God.**"

Lu.18:29 And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there is no man who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake **of the kingdom of God,**

Lu.19:11 As they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the **kingdom of God** was to appear immediately.

Lu.21:31 So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the **kingdom of God** is near.

Lu.22:16 for I tell you I shall not eat it until it is fulfilled in the **kingdom of God.**"

Lu.22:18 for I tell you that from now on I shall not drink **of the fruit of the vine** until the **kingdom of God** comes."

Lu.23:51 who had not consented to their purpose and deed, and he

was looking for the **kingdom of God**.

Jn3:1: In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,

2: And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Jn.3:3 Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the **kingdom of God**."

Jn.3:5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the **kingdom of God**.

Jn.3:5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the **kingdom of God**.

Mt 4:17: From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Mt 4:23: And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.

Mt 5:3: Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Mt 5:10: Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Mt. 9:35: And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

Mt. 22: 13: But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

Ac.1:3 To them he presented himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days, and speaking of the **kingdom of God**.

Ac.8:12 But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the **kingdom of God** and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

Ac.14:22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the **kingdom of God**.

Ac.19:8 And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, arguing and pleading about the **kingdom of God**;

Ac.28:23 When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in great numbers. And he expounded the matter to them from morning till evening, testifying to the **kingdom of God** and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the law of Moses and from the prophets.

Ac.28:31 preaching the **kingdom of God** and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ quite openly and unhindered.

Ro.14:17 For the **kingdom of God** is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit;

1Co.4:20 For the **kingdom of God** does not consist in talk but in power.

1Co.6:9 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor sexual perverts,

1Co.6:10 nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the **kingdom of God**.

1Co.15:50 I tell you this, brethren: flesh and blood cannot inherit the **kingdom of God**, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

Ga.5:21 envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the **kingdom of God**.

Col.4:11 and Jesus who is called Justus. These are the only men of the circumcision among my fellow workers for the **kingdom of God**, and they have been a comfort to me.

2Th.1:5 This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be made worthy of the **kingdom of God**, for which you are suffering --

Rabbi Wayne Dosick in his *Living Judaism: The Complete Guide to Jewish Belief, Tradition and Practice* outlines the following evolution in the messianic expectation;

The concept of *masheach* entered Judaism after the death of King Solomon (ca. 931 B.C.E.). A fellow named Jeroboam led a rebellion against Rechoboam, the son of Solomon, which resulted in a schism, a split in the Jewish people. Jeroboam became the king of ten of the twelve tribes (which came to be called the Kingdom of Israel), while Rechoboam ruled over the remaining two tribes (which came to be called the Kingdom of Judah). In 722 B.C.E., the Kingdom of Israel was defeated in war by the Assyrians, and disappeared from history.

It became the hope of every Jew that one day the kingdoms would be reunited under the leadership of a descendent of King Solomon (and his father, King David). This "anointed one" (that is how kings were designated in those days--by being anointed with oil), this *masheach* would restore the Jewish People to wholeness and reaffirm the tranquility and greatness of earlier days.

That hope was not realized; but the concept of an anointed one, a *masheach*, who would lead the Jewish People toward a time of peace and restoration, took hold in Jewish consciousness.

Later, when the Greeks and Romans began to dominate the land and the People of Israel politically and militarily, denying rights and freedoms to the Jews, the memory of the hope for an anointed one, a *masheach* who would lead a free Jewish People in time of peace came to the force once again.

Thus, at exactly the same time that the rabbis were creating and introducing the concept of reward and punishment in an afterlife in Judaism, the oppressive political climate led the people to revive the concept of *mashaech*, an anointed one who would herald national unity, tranquility, and peace, a world without pain and strife, a world healed of its ills and evils, a world transformed into perfection.

Many of the people began to believe that the days of the *mashaech* could not be far away, for how much worse could the lives of the Jews become than they already were under Greek-Roman oppression? (46)

Dosick argues further that a belief in physical resurrection promised reward for those who died immediately before the coming of the *Masheach* and missed out, therefore, on the perfected world. He contends it is no accident that Christians believed Jesus as Messiah had arisen from the dead.

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# Relevant Passages

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## Ezekiel 47

- 1: Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the forefront of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came down from under from the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar.
- 2: Then brought he me out of the way of the gate northward, and led me about the way without unto the utter gate by the way that looketh eastward; and, behold, there ran out waters on the right side.
- 3: And when the man that had the line in his hand went forth eastward, he measured a thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the waters were to the ancles.
- 4: Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through the waters; the waters were to the knees. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through; the waters were to the loins.
- 5: Afterward he measured a thousand; and it was a river that I could not pass over: for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over.
- 6: And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen this? Then he brought me, and caused me to return to the brink of the river.
- 7: Now when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other.
- 8: Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed.
- 9: And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh.
- 10: And it shall come to pass, that the fishers shall stand upon it from En-

gedi even unto En-eglaim; they shall be a place to spread forth nets; their fish shall be according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many.

11: But the miry places thereof and the marshes thereof shall not be healed; they shall be given to salt.

12: And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine.

13: Thus saith the Lord GOD; This shall be the border, whereby ye shall inherit the land according to the twelve tribes of Israel: Joseph shall have two portions.

14: And ye shall inherit it, one as well as another: concerning the which I lifted up mine hand to give it unto your fathers: and this land shall fall unto you for inheritance.

15: And this shall be the border of the land toward the north side, from the great sea, the way of Hethlon, as men go to Zedad;

16: Hamath, Berothah, Sibraim, which is between the border of Damascus and the border of Hamath; Hazar-hatticon, which is by the coast of Hauran.

17: And the border from the sea shall be Hazar-enan, the border of Damascus, and the north northward, and the border of Hamath. And this is the north side.

18: And the east side ye shall measure from Hauran, and from Damascus, and from Gilead, and from the land of Israel by Jordan, from the border unto the east sea. And this is the east side.

19: And the south side southward, from Tamar even to the waters of strife in Kadesh, the river to the great sea. And this is the south side southward.

20: The west side also shall be the great sea from the border, till a man come over against Hamath. This is the west side.

21: So shall ye divide this land unto you according to the tribes of Israel.

22: And it shall come to pass, that ye shall divide it by lot for an inheritance unto you, and to the strangers that sojourn among you, which shall beget children among you: and they shall be unto you as born in the country among the children of Israel; they shall have inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel.

23: And it shall come to pass, that in what tribe the stranger sojourneth, there shall ye give him his inheritance, saith the Lord GOD.

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# Revelation 22

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- 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.
- 2: In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.
- 3: And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:
- 4: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.
- 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.
- 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.
- 7: Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.
- 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.
- 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.
- 10: And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.
- 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.
- 12: And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.
- 13: I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

- 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.
- 15: For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderer, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.
- 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.
- 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.
- 18: For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:
- 19: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.
- 20: He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.
- 21: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

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# Interpretation

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## "Surely I am coming soon" (22.20)

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An end that is never quite *the End* confronts the reader in the conclusion of *Revelation*. Already in 21.20, the one seated on the throne has proclaimed, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end." Chapter 22 begins with John's seeing into the actual New Jerusalem; he looks directly to the throne itself: "Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb flowing through the middle of the street of the city" (1,2). He goes on to insist that on either side of the river in the middle of the street is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit (2). In chapter twenty-one, John has already described the street of city as being "pure gold, transparent as glass" (21). One logically pauses to ask what kind of street is constructed of gold yet is transparent as glass? Further, in the middle of this street flows a river bright as crystal. The street is transparent so as to be no street, and the river is crystal, solidly transparent. The tree of life produces fruit monthly, and its leaves "are for the healing of the nations" (2). Once again, John is clear: this city is pure--"nothing accursed will be found there any more" (4). One pauses to wonder about the "any more" here [since one expects eternal perfection, beauty, and magnificence] but then remembers John is after all moving rather freely through time, reporting what he's seen [a vision into the eternal], how things are [history, John's experiences and those of humankind], and what will be [future] (1.19). In John, one can almost say the future is known because the past is seen; and human life appears to be an interlude, an interruption. One recalls *Genesis*: "In the beginning... God created... and said, 'Let there be light, and there was...and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, on the first day" (1.1-5). In *Genesis* as one begins in primordial, primeval time (First in order) in

*Revelation*, one can be said to be in the End. One is not at an end, however, because heaven and earth are new (21.1). The "It is done" of chapter twenty-one becomes "the time is near" (22.10) and "Surely I am coming soon" (22.20). The "surely" connotes a sense of *after all this* [vision, persecution, death, endurance, rest and the Word], surely... John's final "Come, Lord Jesus!" is ominous though unless one sees through the tribulation of end times into immutable glory, light, love, and peace.

The "I am coming soon" carries both a blessing and a warning: "Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book" (7), a prophecy which has clearly seen through suffering, pain, and death, calling for endurance and faith in God's merciful, just, and sovereign control. "See! I am coming soon; my reward is with me, to repay according to everyone's work" (12). Here echoes both Isaiah and Jeremiah:

### Jeremiah 17.5

5: Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD.

6: For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited.

7: Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is.

8: For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.

9: The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

10: I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

11: As the partridge sitteth on eggs, and hatcheth them not; so he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool.

12: A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary.

13: O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of

living waters.

14: Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise.

15: Behold, they say unto me, Where is the word of the LORD? let it come now.

16: As for me, I have not hastened from being a pastor to follow thee: neither have I desired the woeful day; thou knowest: that which came out of my lips was right before thee.

17: Be not a terror unto me: thou art my hope in the day of evil.

...

19: Thus said the LORD unto me; Go and stand in the gate of the children of the people, whereby the kings of Judah come in, and by the which they go out, and in all the gates of Jerusalem;

20: And say unto them, Hear ye the word of the LORD, ye kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that enter in by these gates:

21: Thus saith the LORD; Take heed to yourselves, ..

25: Then shall there enter into the gates of this city kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their princes, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: and this city shall remain for ever.

26: And they shall come from the cities of Judah, and from the places about Jerusalem, and from the land of Benjamin, and from the plain, and from the mountains, and from the south, bringing burnt offerings, and sacrifices, and meat offerings, and incense, and bringing sacrifices of praise, unto the house of the LORD.

27: But if ye will not hearken unto me... then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched.

## Isaiah 40

1: Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.

2: Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD's hand double for all her sins.

3: The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

4: Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and

the rough places plain:

5: And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

6: The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field:

7: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass.

8: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

9: O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!

10: Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him.

11: He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.

12: Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?

13: Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him?

14: With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?

15: Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing.

....

21: Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth?

22: It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in:

23: That bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity.

24: Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown: yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and he shall

also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble.

25: To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.

26: Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth.

27: Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God?

28: Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.

29: He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.

30: Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall:

31: But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

The reader struggling in day-to-day requirements and searching for meaning might learn from Jeremiah: "16: As for me, I have not hastened from being a pastor to follow thee: neither have I desired the woeful day; thou knowest: that which came out of my lips was right before thee." Life demands a pastoring, and mercy cannot desire the woeful day of the End. Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, cried for his people, as should we. The prophetic call itself never came to any of the prophets easily: they understood the cost.

As John saw in the beginning one like the Son of Man commanding him to "Write in a book what you see and send it to the seven churches" (1.12), it is Jesus in the end who reveals Himself as having "sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the descendant [beginning and what has come] of David, the bright morning star" (16). In the beginning (2.28), a promise has been made to those who conquer that "even as I... received authority from my Father.. I will also give [you who conquer] the morning star. In the beginning, an invitation is extended: "Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches" (2.28). At the end, the invitation is still open for the churches: "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' And let everyone who hears say, 'Come.' And let everyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift" (17). As much as *Revelation* is a call to endure on the part of the faithful, it is also

a call to 'Come' extended in mercy to those who persevere in ungodliness or separation from the holy.

John in the end of his writing warns strongly against perverting the teachings of this *Revelation*: "I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this book; if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away that person's share in the tree of life and the holy city, which are described in this book" (18, 19).

In the ending of *Revelation*, the reader is still confronted with choice, Joshua's choice of old: "Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness... choose this day whom you will serve... but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (*Joshua* 24, 14, 15).

*Revelation* ends as it began: with a testimony for the churches, "It is I, Jesus" and a prayer, "The grace of our Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen"; remember, John began by saying to the churches, "Look! He is coming..." and includes himself in urging them to remember Jesus has called "us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father [Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth 91, 9, 10] .

"Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen."

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# Conclusions

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1. As *Genesis* describes beginnings, so does *Revelation* describe a consummation, an end.
2. The theme of *Revelation* is a two-pronged call to persevere for the godly and "Come" to the rebellious.
3. *Revelation*, like the entire canon of sixty-six books, describes God's continuing mercy in face of a relentless judgment.
4. Salvation is extended universally to humankind.
5. *Revelation* is an apocalyptic literature describing a vision insufficiently captured in myth, symbol, and image.
6. *Revelation* is a Christian book written for Christians, but its poetry is epic.
7. *Revelation* was never intended to be read as an almanac of historical events.
8. The entire sweep of history is under God's control, and God will in the End triumph over all ungodliness.
9. No power within history is capable of winning the final victory over evil
10. *Revelation* must be understood imaginatively rather than with wooden literalism.
11. No other literature contains the exalted praise and adoration of Christ that is found in *Revelation*. As apocalypse, Daniel is close to John's vision of

End times; the *Song of Solomon* provides a sensual picture of the Beloved realized only abstractly in the Bride of *Revelation*; Hosea's life reveals itself as an embodiment of God's redeeming love active in the Alpha and Omega of *Revelation*. The *Gospel of John* struggles with the paradoxes created by eternal and temporal worlds. *Isaiah* exalts God as the Creator of the entire universe, who is the source of all knowledge and wisdom, and before whom all nations must bow; like John, he calls for human beings to "Wait" for the omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent God who will redeem His people. *Jeremiah* is confident judgment must come but believes the ominous time will be replaced by a new and more enduring relationship with God. The writer of *Revelation* identifies his Jesus with the merciful and just God of the Hebrews. John adores a Christ in complete equality with God the Creator.

12. *Revelation* is a mosaic of the *Old Testament* and cannot be understood except through its illumination.
13. The best interpretation of *Revelation* is the one provided by *Revelation* itself.
15. Reading and understanding *Revelation* is essential for Christians.
16. A vision and faith in the heavenly provides meaning for earthly realities.
17. In light of the transience of human life, the End is always near.
18. Apocalyptic vision embodies the triumphal movement from the painful existence of life to a glorious and blissful vindication.
19. The disclosures of *Revelation* must be interpreted in parallel correspondence with the whole scheme of Biblical truth.
20. The End in *Revelation* is an ineffable, soul-thrilling consummation, utterly indescribable, supernal sublimity.
21. John's New Jerusalem is a new Eden in which humankind is restored to full health, free from all pain, sorrow, and death.
22. God's full beneficence to humankind can be expressed only in transcendence of the historical order and in mastery of the chaotic energy of a subversive disorder.
23. *Revelation* celebrates a spiritual connection between God and his

people's God-like holiness.

24. John reveals how God can be found in an intimate and deeply personal relationship in which the central questions of existence are asked and answered in the midst of a personal, spiritual journey.

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