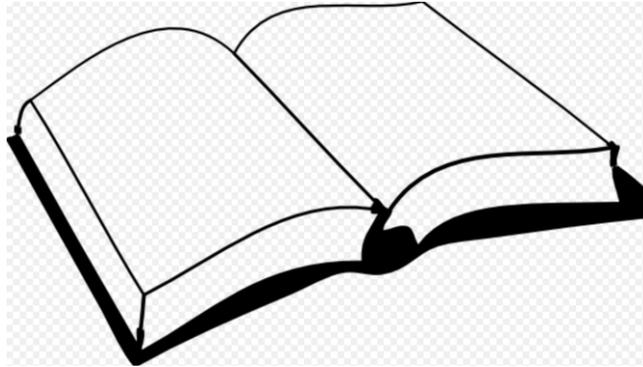


# Study Notes



## The Book of Revelation

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## Introduction

The book of Revelation contains 22 chapters, 404 verses, and 11,995 words. This is not a detailed commentary all 404 verses, but rather a collection of my personal study notes on this great prophetic book. Due to a busy schedule, time has not been spent on editing for grammatical and spelling mistakes, so thank you in advance for overlooking them. I do not claim complete originality for everything written in these notes. I appreciate the help that I have gleaned from others.

It is my goal in these notes to help you gain a basic understanding of what each passage says and teaches as you study the book for yourself. Of course, this will not be possible unless you personally:

- ✓ Believe the word of God (1 Thess. 2:13)
- ✓ Submit to and rely upon its Author (2 Tim. 3:16)
- ✓ Consistently follow His rule of study (2 Tim. 2:15)

There is much interest and talk these days about the end of the world. People know that things just can't keep going on like they are. But while there is much interest in this subject there is also much ignorance about it. We can know about the end of the world for God has revealed it in His word. Revelation teaches us how God will bring this present evil world system to an end and bring in the prophesied "world to come" (Heb. 2:5).

Revelation is one of the most feared, hated, and misunderstood books of the Bible. Many claim that it is impossible to understand. That is ironic in light of its title. It is the Apocalypse (unveiling) not the Apocrypha (hidden)! The purpose the book is to reveal, not conceal. The problem is not that men can't understand it, but that they won't believe it! Like the rest of the Bible, we are to take what Revelation says LITERALLY. When symbols and figures are used we will rely only on the word of God to interpret them because, "no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation" (2 Pet. 1:20).

There are 3 main schools of thought about Revelation:

- 1) **Preterist** - This false view teaches that the events recorded in Revelation describe the problems and persecutions of the church during the times the book was written.
- 2) **Historic** - This false view teaches that the events recorded in Revelation describe the history of the church.
- 3) **Futurist** - This is the correct view of the book. It teaches that book is what it claims to be, a "prophecy" (1:3). The whole book (including chapters 2-3) concerns the future.

Most commentaries claim that John wrote this book in about 95 A.D. There is no way to prove that from scripture. I personally believe that the books of Hebrews through Revelation were all written during the Acts period. It doesn't really matter when it was written because John wrote it from a future standpoint.

John writes concerning three things in this book (1:19):

- 1) The things which thou hast seen (chapter 1) – The Vision of Christ
- 2) The things which are (chapters 2-20) – The Lord's Day
- 3) The things which shall be hereafter (chapters 21-22) – The Eternal State

# Chapter 1

## The Introduction (vs.1-3)

Most commentators and teachers make a big fuss out of the title in the King James Bible being, "The Revelation of St. John the Divine." What a needless waste of time! The book is the "Revelation of Jesus Christ," but John is the human instrument that He used to "bear record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw."

Notice that this book was given to show God's servants "things which must SHORTLY come to pass." For those to whom John is writing, its fulfillment was "at hand" (v.3; 22:6-10, 20). Therefore, John could not have written this book to the body of Christ which is NOT the subject of prophecy, but the mystery revealed through Paul (Eph. 3:1-13). It's been 1,900 years since he wrote it, and it has not been fulfilled. We are living in a parenthesis dispensation in which prophecy concerning Israel is not being fulfilled.

What does it mean that the Lord "signified" this book? He made it known by signs. The Jews require a sign (1 Cor. 1:22). That is how their nation began (Ex. 4:1-17). The historical Exodus was a dress rehearsal for a greater one to come.

Is the body of Christ blessed by keeping (i.e. obeying) the things written in this book? Compare 1:3; 22:14 with Eph. 1:3.

It is essential to understand that the body of Christ is not the subject of the book of Revelation. Here is some evidence to support that fact:

- ✓ Its placement in the six-fold division of the Bible:
  - 1) **The OT** - The King and His coming Kingdom in promise and prophecy
  - 2) **The 4 Gospels** - The King and His Kingdom offered and rejected
  - 3) **The Acts** - The King and His Kingdom re-offered, rejected, transition to the body of Christ
  - 4) **The Pauline Epistles** - The Kingdom postponed, the King made Head of the Church
  - 5) **The Hebrew Epistles** - The King and His Kingdom once again at hand
  - 6) **The Revelation** - The King comes to establish His kingdom on the earth
  
- ✓ The Jewish character of the book: it is full of Hebrew idioms, expressions, words and phrases, and imagery.
  
- ✓ The body of Christ is not the subject of prophecy (Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:5, 9; Col. 1:26).

- ✓ The vantage point from which John writes the book (1:10)
- ✓ The promises given to the seven churches are clearly for tribulation saints (e.g. 2:7, 11)
- ✓ Jesus Christ is presented according to prophecy, not the revelation of the mystery (Rom. 16:25)
- ✓ The book opens with a promise of blessing on he that reads (individual), they that hear (it was to be read in the assembly), and all those that keep (as to obey) the book (1:3). It closes with a warning of a curse on those that would add or take away from the words written in this book (22:18-19). In a general sense, it has always been true that there are promises associated with keeping the word of God and warnings against altering it. But these two passages could not have been written to us today. How could God add the plagues written in this book to anyone before the tribulation period in which they will be poured out? The promise and warning is given to the same people: those that hear the words of this prophecy, i.e. those to whom the book was written. Those that hear it, but fail to keep it by not overcoming the tribulation they must endure, will lose their part in the book of life, the holy city, and all the blessings written in this book (Rev. 3:5, 12).
- ✓ What is “the Revelation of Jesus Christ”? It is His revelation to the earth as the King of kings and Lord of lords. The risen and glorified Christ has been hidden as it were in the third heaven at the right hand of the Father (Ps. 110:1), but He will be revealed to the world in the Day of the LORD (v.7, 10). The things written in this book concern the things that lead up to His revelation and that take place as a result of it. The revelation of Jesus Christ concerns His second advent to the earth, not the rapture of the church! It is connected with the Gospel records, not the Pauline epistles. The Gospels record the events connected with the first advent of Christ. Revelation records the events connected with His second advent. The Gospels close with the great prophecy of the “the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” followed by the account of His suffering, death, and resurrection. Revelation takes up this theme and opens by declaring the fulfillment of this prophecy (1:7). The Gospels contain the prophecy of the Great Tribulation period: the Revelation contains a detailed description of it. Revelation is the consummation of prophecy (especially connected with Daniel).
- ✓ The body of Christ is not the subject of prophecy for it was a great mystery that was hid in God until He revealed it to and through the apostle Paul (Eph. 3:1-13). This present age will end with the rapture of the body of Christ up to heaven. The rapture was also a

mystery that was revealed through Paul (1 Cor. 15:51). We will not be here for any part of the prophesied day of the Lord.

Why then should we study Revelation?

- ❖ We should study the whole Bible (2 Tim. 3:16).
- ❖ It will make us even more thankful that we will not be here for these events.
- ❖ It will give us a sense of urgency about fulfilling our responsibility as ambassadors for Christ in this age of grace, knowing that this wrath will come after this age ends suddenly with the rapture.

### **The Salutation (vs.4-6)**

This brief salutation is full of doctrinal truth. Here we see the Trinity (three in one). The word “Trinity” is not in the Bible, but the doctrine certainly is (1 Jn. 5:7).

- 1) **The Father** – “which is, and which was, and which is to come”. This describes the eternal nature of God (Ex. 3:13-14).
- 2) **The Spirit** – “the seven Spirits which are before his throne”. Most Bible teachers claim these are angels. Notice the capital S. If God is Three in One, what is the problem with the Spirit being Seven in One (Isa. 11:2)? It is interesting to note that Paul never writes, “from the Holy Spirit” (because He seals every member of the body of Christ).
- 3) **The Son** – “And from Jesus Christ”. In v.5 Christ is presented in His threefold office: “faithful witness” (Prophet, Jn. 6:14), “first begotten from the dead” (Priest, Heb. 4:14), and “prince of the kings of the earth” (King, Rev. 19:16). Notice that the threefold office of Christ corresponds with what is said of the Father (was, is, and is to come, v.8, 11). Compare these three titles with Ps. 89:27, 37.

The “us” in vs.5-6 refers to John and his Jewish brothers who are companions in TRIBULATION (v.9). Yes, Christ also loves us and washed us from our sins in His own blood. But, nowhere in Paul’s epistles (which were written to us) do we learn that we are to be kings and priests reigning on the earth. John is referring to what Christ will do for Israel, whom He has loved with an everlasting love (Jer. 31:3), upon His revelation (v.7, shortly come to pass, they aren’t kings and priests in the tribulation, he writes the introduction after he received the whole book).

- washed from sins *as nation* (Acts 3:19; Zech. 12:9-10; 13:1; 1 Pet. 1:1-21)
- made kings and priests (2:26-27; 3:21; 5:10; 20:4; Ex. 19:5-6; Isa. 61:6; 1 Pet. 2:5,9)

The word *seven* and *seventh* are used 59 times in Revelation and there are many sets of sevens presented: churches (1:4), Spirits (1:4), golden candlesticks (1:12), stars (1:16), lamps of fire (4:5), seals (5:1), angels (8:2), trumpets (8:2), thunders (10:3), plagues (15:1), vials (17:1), and kings

(17:10). Seven is God's number of perfection and completion. Revelation is the completion of the prophetic program. The book opens with 7 triplets:

- 1) bare record of the word of God, the testimony, of all the things which he saw (1:2)
- 2) Blessed is he that readeth, hear, keep (1:3)
- 3) The trinity (1:4-5)
- 4) Christ the faithful witness, first begotten of the dead, and prince of the kings of the earth
- 5) Him that loved us, washed us, made us kings and priests
- 6) every eye shall see him, they also that pierced him, all kindreds of the earth
- 7) Alpha and Omega, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty

### **The Declaration (vs.7-8)**

John declares the main theme of the book. This does not describe the rapture of the body of Christ. The one who is coming is the Lord Himself (v.8).

- **He cometh** - He is presently hidden away as it were in the third heaven at the right hand of the Father. He will be revealed with great power and glory from heaven and come back to earth.
- **with clouds** – I take this to be literal clouds. Clouds were associated with God's presence in OT (Ex. 40:33-34, man cannot look upon His glory, Job 36:32). He ascended in a cloud and is coming in like manner (Acts 1:9-12; Zech. 14:4).
- **and every eye shall see him** – This will be a public and visible return to earth (Matt. 24:29-30).
- **and they also which pierced him** – Israel (Zech. 12:10)
- **and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him** – Why (19:11)?

### **The Opening Vision (vs.9-20)**

How could John be a companion to the tribulation saints? He witnessed the whole tribulation and will be resurrected to enter the kingdom with those that endure. They must patiently endure the tribulation before the kingdom comes (Lk. 21:19; Jam. 5:7-11; 14:12).

Why was John in the isle of Patmos? Tradition says he was banished there in 95 A.D. for preaching the gospel and that while there God gave him the book of Revelation. Everything we need to understand the Bible is contained in the Bible. The Bible interprets itself. John plainly stated why he was there (v.2, 9). God sent him there to receive this revelation just like He sent Paul into Arabia to receive revelations for body of Christ.

If we don't understand v.10 it will greatly hinder our understanding of the whole book. Many refer to Sunday as the Lord's Day, but the Bible never does. The phrase, "the day of the LORD" is used 29 times in the Bible (first mention: Isa. 2:10-12, 17-21). The day of the Lord is the second coming of Christ in particular, but includes that which leads up to it (tribulation period) and that which follows it (kingdom age). In the Bible the word "day" is sometimes used to refer to a period of time other than a normal 24 hour day. The Lord's Day is not a 24 hour period, but a prophetic period of time in which the Lord judges the earth. It includes the tribulation period, second coming of Christ, kingdom age, final battle with Satan, renovation of heavens and earth by fire, and the great white throne judgment. The book of Revelation reveals this day in great detail. It stands in contrast with this present age in which man is having his day.

What did John mean by, "I was in the Spirit"? Every believer is in the Spirit (Rom. 8:9), but that is not what is being referred to here. John was in the Spirit in the same sense that this phrase is used throughout the book of Revelation (4:2; 17:3; 21:10). The Holy Spirit transported him to the future day of the Lord to be a witness and write what he saw. God did this for other prophets (Ezek. 37:1, in 40-48 the prophet saw the future temple).

The voice of a trumpet (loud as trumpet) speaks of impending judgment (Joel 2:1, 15; 3:16; Zeph. 1:14-16). Compare the voice of the trumpet when Moses received the law (Ex. 19:16-20).

Verse 11 is a great verse on the deity of Christ (compare with Isa. 44:6). It's important to note that the whole book was sent to the seven churches for their doctrine, not just the seven letters in chapters 2 and 3. There are certain terms in this first chapter that cause most to assume the book was written to the body of Christ ("washed us in His own blood"; "churches"). A church is simply a called-out assembly and there is more than one church in the Bible. Israel was a church in the wilderness (Acts 7:38). There will be assemblies of saints in the tribulation period. Certainly Christ loves us and washed us from our sins in His own blood (Acts 20:24; Eph. 5:25), but that is also true of Israel. The Jewish apostles that wrote to tribulation saints taught that cleansing and redemption was by the blood of Christ (Matt. 26:28; 1 Jn. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:18; Rev. 7:14). Israel, as a nation, gets remission of sins at the second coming of Christ (Acts 3:19-21). Contrast with Rom. 5:11 (we have NOW received the atonement). Why these seven churches? They are representative churches. Why churches in Asia and not Israel? They are scattered outside the land during the tribulation period (Jam. 1:1; 1 Pet. 1:1).

John saw the glorified Son of Man as the coming King and Judge (vs.12-16). He says, "like unto" because He looks very different from the last time he saw Him! Compare this vision of Christ with Isa. 53. This vision is the major theme of the book. Here is the one that is going to be revealed from Heaven!

- The seven candlesticks represent the seven churches (v.20). Candlesticks are not lights, but are to hold light (Matt. 5:14-15). Gold speaks of royalty (royal priesthood, 1 Pet. 2:9).
- Christ is seen in the MIDST of the candlesticks (Matt. 18:20).
- “Son of man” is a Messianic title never used by Paul (Dan. 7:13-14; Matt. 19:28; Jn. 5:25-27). It is interesting to compare first and last references in NT (Matt. 8:20; Rev. 14:14).
- The long robe is symbolic of dignity and honor. The golden girdle speaks of royalty. That He was girt about the chest indicates action. His robe was pulled up to where His feet were visible.
- White like wool and as snow speaks of absolute purity (notice “as” and “like”).
- Eyes LIKE fire – judgment, searching and knowing all things, nothing hid.
- Brass symbolizes judgment (brazen altar, brazen serpent). Tread the winepress (feet, 19:15).
- His voice is as the sound of many waters; very powerful (Ezek. 43:2).
- The seven stars in His right hand are the seven angels (v.20). The angels are literal angels, not pastors (Heb. 1:13-14).
- The sharp two-edged sword is the word of God (Heb. 4:12).
- Countenance as the sun in its strength (Mal. 4:1-3; Matt. 17:1-2), contrast Isa. 52:14.

John’s reaction seeing the glorified Son of Man reminds me of Daniel’s (Dan. 10:5-9). There is no doubt that the one described in vs.13-16 is Jesus Christ (v.18)! It is emphasized that John SAW what he wrote (v.2, 11, 19). Christ Himself provides an outline for the book (v.19). We don’t need to interpret the symbols in the book of Revelation because they are interpreted for us (v.20).

## Overview of Chapters 2-3

The apostle John was transported to the future day of the Lord and saw the glorified Son of Man ready to come back to the earth as King and Judge. He is seen standing with His long garment girt about His chest (signifying preparation for activity) in the midst of seven golden candlesticks which represent seven churches in Asia. The Lord instructed John to write what he sees in a book and send it to the seven churches. He addresses each of the seven churches in chapters 2-3. The letters to the seven churches are given first because judgment begins at the house of God (1 Pet. 4:17).

The letters to the seven churches will find their true interpretation and fulfillment when used for special instruction by the people on the earth during the day of the LORD; by Israel, and especially the remnant. They are *representative* churches (note that what is said in each letter is intended for all the churches, “what the Spirit saith unto the churches”). The letters to the seven churches reveal the main problems that tribulation saints will have to overcome, solutions to those problems (which correspond with attributes of Christ, 1:10-20), and promises to the overcomers. So what Christ says to these seven churches, He says to all of the tribulation saints.

The instruction in these letters will help the tribulation saints endure the awful things described in 6-19. The commendations, rebukes, corrections, instructions, and promises that the Lord gives to the seven churches in Asia directly correspond with the material that is found throughout the rest of Revelation. The Bible is a complete revelation (nothing will be added). Where is the specific doctrine and instruction written directly to the tribulation saints? It is found in Hebrews through Revelation. We can get a blessing out of these books just like we can from the OT (for us), but we must be careful to rightly divide the word of truth lest we fall into doctrinal confusion and error.

These churches do not represent seven stages of church history as commonly believed, but seven stages of Israel’s history:

- **In the Wilderness:**

1. Ephesus = Israel’s espousals (the Exodus, Jer. 2:2)
2. Smyrna = Israel’s testing (tried in the wilderness)
3. Pergamos = Israel’s failure (Balaam and Balac)

- **In the Land:**

4. Thyatira = the day of Israel’s’ kings (Jezebel)

5. Sardis = Israel's removal (art dead)
6. Philadelphia = the day of Judah's kings (key of David)
7. Laodicea = Judah's removal (spue out, Lev. 18:28)

General observations about the letters to the seven churches:

- Christ is seen in the MIDST of the churches (2:1; Deut. 23:14; Matt. 18:18-20)
- Angels – 76 refs. in Revelation, only 13 in Paul's epistles
- "I know thy works" (works mentioned 12 times in Rev. 2-3) – works are required to prove faith under the kingdom program (Jam. 2:24). Contrast with Rom. 3:21-22; 4:5.
- "Overcometh" (7 times) – They must overcome the temptations of the tribulation to be blessed. Contrast with Eph. 1:3.
- There are major differences between these seven letters and the seven church epistles of Paul.

Each letter, though the structure itself varies, is based upon the same general plan:

- The **introduction**, consisting of Christ's command to John to write, with an appropriate attribute taken from the previous vision in chap. 1.
- The **conclusion**, consisting of Christ's command to him that hath an ear, to hear; with His promise, fulfilled in the latter portion of the book.
- Between these we have the **subject-matter** of the letter.

There are seven parts to each letter (the order/layout varies):

- 1) Introduction
- 2) Citation of attribute(s) of Christ
- 3) Declaration of knowledge of their works
- 4) Description of their state
- 5) Solution to their problem
- 6) Injunction to hear (precedes promise in 1-3, follows promise in 4-7)
- 7) Motivation provided by a promise

## Chapter 2

### **The Church of Ephesus (vs.1-7)**

The seven stars are seven literal angels that minister to the seven churches (Heb. 1:14-2:5). In the Bible we see how God uses angels to give messages to His Jewish people (not what they do for us today). That they are in the right hand of Christ implies their position of authority. The seven golden candlesticks are the seven churches (Matt. 5:14-15). That Christ is said to be walking in the midst of these churches matches the language God uses in His relationship to Israel (Lev. 26:12; Deut. 23:14) and the kingdom church (Matt. 18:15-20).

Christ begins with a commendation on this church for their labor and patience and their rejection of false apostles. All seven letters begin with the declaration from Christ, "I know thy works" (Isa. 66:18). Works are required under the gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 7:21; Jam. 2:24; contrast Titus 3:5). Patience (referred to 7 times in Rev. and 19 times in Heb.-Rev.) will be required to endure the tribulation period (Jam. 5:7-11; Rev. 14:12). There are many false prophets and apostles today, but this especially be the case in the tribulation period (many warnings in tribulation epistles, Matt. 24:4-5, 11, 23-27; 1 Jn. 4:1-3). How will they try them? Some say by the signs of an apostle, but the false prophet will work signs. They must try them by their message (has Christ come in the flesh) and by their fruits (Matt. 7:15-23). The twelve apostles that God chose and sent to Israel will be resurrected at His second coming and their names are on the 12 foundations of the New Jerusalem.

Christ not only knows our works, He also knows our hearts! Motive matters in our service to God. This church had the right works and doctrine, but they left the love they first had for the Lord (Jer. 2:2). Christ taught His disciples that the greatest commandment of the law was to love God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength. Works alone did not save anyone in the OT and works alone will not get anyone through the tribulation. There must be works from a heart of faith and love.

Christ instructs them to do three things; remember, repent, and redo the first works. They had works, but they needed to do works with the right heart as they did at the first ("first works"). Repentance is emphasized in the gospel of the kingdom. Christ had come before, at His first advent, seeking fruit, but He found it not. Now He is coming again, and the cry goes forth once more, "Repent;" for, He who is coming is at hand. Repentance is the *one condition of national blessing* for Israel. It is the essence of the proclamation of the King and the Kingdom (Matt. 3:1-2; 4:17; Acts 2:38; 3:19). The warning to the church is that if they don't repent then they will be removed when Christ comes again to earth (notice "quickly").

There is no evidence that there ever was a sect called the Nicolaitanes in the early history of the professing church. The name Nicolaitanes means "destruction of the people." It will be a religious sect in the tribulation period connected with the Babylonian system that will seek to corrupt the kingdom church. The Lord commends them for hating the deeds of this group. The Lord says that He hates their deeds and doctrine (v.15). It is always right to hate what God hates (even in this age, Rom. 12:9)!

Christ uses the expression in v.7 fourteen times in the Bible (spiritual ears, Jn. 8:47). Six times (# of man) in the Gospels He used it as the Son of Man; and eight times (# of new beginning) in Revelation, as the risen Lord speaking from heaven (at the close of each of these seven letters and in 13:9). The Spirit inspired John to write the words he heard from Christ and the Spirit will use these words to speak to the tribulation saints.

The need to overcome is emphasized in these seven letters (Matt. 24:13-14). The apostle Paul never exhorts the body of Christ to overcome in order to obtain blessings because we have already overcome all "in Him." We are already "more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Rom. 8:37) and "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3). But those who are addressed in these seven letters will be living in the days of the Beast, in the midst of the tribulation. Of some we read "the Beast...shall make war against them, and shall overcome them and kill them" (11:7). Of others it is said is "they overcame him (*the accuser of their brethren*) by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (12:11). Of others again, "It was given unto him (*the Beast*) to make war with the saints and to overcome them" (13:7). Hence the reiteration of the final promise in 21:7, "he that overcometh shall inherit all things." The Revelation is full of overcoming. The overcomers who are addressed at the close of each of these seven letters will be living in the days referred to in these passages. They will be special overcomers of a specific form of evil. They are thus prophesied of in Isa. 66:5: "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." They are spoken of in Dan. 11:32 as those who "do know their God, shall be strong and do exploits." In Matt. 24:13, as those who "shall endure unto the end."

The tree of life literally gives life to those that eat of it. It was on earth in the beginning and will be once again in the end (Gen. 3:22-24; Rev. 22:2). When Adam fell paradise was lost and the tree of life could not be accessed. When paradise is restored this tree will once again be available. How will people gain right to this tree (22:14)? There will be people that enter the kingdom in natural bodies. The body of Christ does NOT need this tree (Phil. 3:20).

No one can put this letter by the side of that of Paul to the Ephesians and think for a moment that it can be the same church that is addressed. It is not a matter of argument or of opinion; it is a matter of fact. Just read the two epistles, one after the other, and note the standing of *grace* in the one, and the standing of *works* in the other. In Paul's epistle to the church at Ephesus, God speaks to those who are all of them on the highest ground of privilege and of grace. Here, there is no blessing at all, except to the *overcomers*.

### **The Church of Smyrna (vs.8-11)**

The name Smyrna is associated with myrrh which was used for embalming fluid. The title of "first and last" speaks of the deity of Christ. That He "was dead, and is alive" speaks of His humanity. This attribute corresponds with His promise to this church.

Their tribulation and poverty is a result of not taking the mark of the beast (13:16-17). James teaches that poverty is a requirement to enter the kingdom (Jam. 2:5-7; 5:1-3). They are rich in faith and will receive a hundredfold in the kingdom of heaven.

Satan will sow tares among the wheat (Matt. 13:34-43). He will send wolves in sheep's clothing (Jews are God's sheep) to infiltrate God's synagogues. The name "Jew" is from "Judah" which means praise. God gave Israel her name. It is blasphemy to for a serpent to call himself a Jew. The Pharisees were of Satan (Jn. 8:44). They will also blaspheme the Son of God by denying that He is the Christ. They will blaspheme the Holy Ghost by turning against those in whom He dwells (Jn. 16:1-3; Acts 7).

That the devil will personally persecute these people puts this at the middle of the tribulation (12:9-13). Commentators spiritualize the ten days to mean anything but ten days (e.g. ten historical persecutions by Roman emperors). I take it to be literal. They will be tried in prison (tortured) for ten days to decide if they will take the mark of the beast. If they take the mark they will be damned (14:9-12). If they lay down their lives they will be resurrected and given a crown of life (Matt. 10:16-39; Jam. 1:12; Rev. 2:13; 20:4-6; 21:7-8). Those that are not faithful unto death will be hurt of the second death (20:14-15). The body of Christ is sealed unto the day of redemption and can never be in danger of the second death.

There is an emphasis in Revelation on the necessity to overcome in order to obtain the blessings promised in this book. Those to whom this book is written will have to overcome the greatest tribulation that has ever come on the earth. Deception and temptation will be at an all-time high. For example, in the tribulation period the antichrist will require people to receive his mark in order to buy and sell. Those that receive this mark must worship him as God. Keep in mind that there will also be great famine in those days. Those that reject the mark and are apprehended

will be beheaded. But all of those who take the mark and worship the beast will suffer eternal damnation in the lake of fire. The tribulation saints will have to overcome this great temptation. They will have to trust in God to supernaturally provide their daily bread and those that face execution will have to trust that God will raise them up from the dead at His second coming. Christ promises a crown of life to those that are faithful unto death. They must endure to the end (of life, or GT) to be saved. How will they be able to overcome such things? They won't be able to do it on their own. Their Lord overcame the world and He will enable them to do the same if they abide in Him (Jn. 16:33). Israel is born again as a nation at the second coming of Christ but individual tribulation saints are born again before that (Jam. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23). It is those who have the Holy Ghost who will have ears to hear what He saith unto the churches. In his first epistle, the apostle John writes to tribulation saints about how they can be overcomers (2:12-24; 4:1-6; 5:1-5, 16-21). If their faith and love is real, they will be faithful unto death.

### **The Church of Pergamos (vs.12-17)**

The sharp two-edged sword is His word (1:16) by which He chastises His people and destroys His enemies (v.16; 19:11-16). Balaam is mentioned in this letter and he was slain with a sword.

Satan is cast to the earth in the middle of the seven year tribulation period (Rev. 12). Evidently he will use Pergamos as his headquarters or at least a branch office. His seat refers to his throne and authority (13:2; 16:10). Historically, Pergamos became the seat of the ancient Babylonian mysteries. It had a pagan temple of world-wide fame and great magnificence which was devoted to the worship of the serpent as the god of healing.

By rejecting the mark of the beast, the church at Pergamos held fast the name of Christ and did not deny His faith even in the face of great persecution (14:9-12). There is no historical record of a martyr by the name of Antipas. Commentators cite tradition, but not scripture or any reliable history. Antipas will be a martyr in the future day of the Lord. He is not first man named in prophecy long before his birth (Josiah, 1 Kin. 13:2; Cyrus, Isa. 44:28).

The church at Pergamos was on very dangerous ground by allowing those that held the doctrine of Balaam and also of the Nicolaitanes to assemble with them. Balaam is mentioned 63 times in the Bible (historical record in Num. 22-25). Balak, the king of the Moabites, who worshipped the false god Baal, hired the prophet Balaam to curse Israel. But he could not curse those whom God had blessed. So, he taught Balak how to corrupt Israel through idolatry and fornication so that they would bring God's judgment upon themselves (Num. 25:1-9). Idolatry is spiritual fornication and is linked with physical fornication. Baal, Balak, and Balaam picture the unholy trinity of the dragon, beast, and false prophet. Balaam represents apostasy. Peter warned of the way of Balaam (2 Pet. 2:15) and Jude warned of the error of Balaam (Jude 11). The doctrine of Balaam

will be taught by false teachers in the tribulation period (2 Pet. 2:1-3, 12-22). All of this has to do with the great whore (Rev. 17:1-5). This is the second mention of Nicolaitanes in this chapter (only 2 refs. in Bible). Historically, there is no evidence that there was ever a sect called the Nicolaitanes in the early history of the professing church. The name Nicolaitanes means "destruction or conquering of the people". Apparently it will be a religious sect in the tribulation period connected with the Babylonian system that will seek to corrupt the kingdom church. The Lord commended the church of Ephesus for hating the DEEDS of this group. He said that He hates their deeds and doctrine. Doctrine and deeds go together!

They must repent of their compromise with false doctrine. Christ is coming quickly (emphasized in Rev.) and when He comes He will fight against those who hold to these doctrines with the sword of His mouth. This refers to His second coming to the earth in judgment.

The hidden manna is set in contrast with the public banquet that accompanied idolatry. The godly remnant of Israel will have to flee into the wilderness in the last 3½ years of the tribulation period and there they will be nourished by God (Mic. 7:5-7, 14-20; Rev. 12:14). The Exodus is a prophetic picture of an even greater deliverance of Israel (Pharaoh = antichrist). Moses even shows up again in the tribulation period. Some think that the hidden manna could be a reference to the pot of manna that was hidden away in the ark of the covenant. If so, the connection with the tribulation saints is that the overcomers will be a kingdom of priests. There are other possibilities. It could be said to be hidden to set it in contrast with the public banquet that accompanies idolatry. The brook Cherith by which God supernaturally fed Elijah (shows up again in trib. as 1 of 2 witnesses) and Jezebel's (mentioned in next letter) table at which the false prophets of Baal feasted illustrate this contrast. Perhaps Christ Himself is the hidden manna (hidden away in heaven). Christ said that He was the true bread from heaven and those that believe are partakers of Him (Jn. 6; Rev. 2:28; Heb. 3:14).

Commentators offer a wide variety of speculation as to what this white stone will be. The problem is that they look to historical customs of the East (in court a white stone = not guilty and a black stone = death penalty). It is much better to look to the Bible and its prophecy. We do know it concerns Israel and the kingdom and that white symbolizes purity. Bullinger probably has the best comment on this: *"This new name for the new Israel is the subject of prophecy. Isa. 62:2 tells of the time when "Thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name" (see also Isa. 65:15, "call his servants by another name"). Rev. 19:11-16 is the fulfillment of this promise. What that new name will be is not yet revealed, but its association with the "white stone" reminds us that as they will be "a kingdom of priests," so they will have the priestly signs as Aaron had. On the front of his mitre was a plate of gold "HOLINESS TO THE LORD." Here, instead of a plate of gold, they are to have a white stone, on which will be an inscription equivalent to*

*Aaron's, with their new name: thus distinguishing them in a most emphatic way from those who will worship the Beast and receive his mark in their forehead. Those who will be on the earth in those days will thus be divided into two opposing parties: the party of the Beast, and that of the Lamb; each having its own distinctive mark or brand.”* On the breast plate of high priest were twelve stones with names of twelve tribes (also six on each shoulder).

### **The Church in Thyatira (vs.18-29)**

Christ was called the “Son of Man” in chapter one. This Son of Man is also the Son of God. His eyes like unto a flame of fire speaks of His eyes searching the very hearts of men in judgment (v.23). His feet like fine brass speaks of how He will tread down the wicked in judgment (Isa. 63:1-6).

The tribulation saints must show charity to those in poverty and affliction for their faithfulness to Christ (1 Jn. 3:16-18). There are saints in this church that increase in their devotion to Christ.

Jezebel was the evil daughter of the pagan king of the Zidonians (Ethbaal). She married Ahab, the wicked king of Israel. She stirred him up to be more wicked than any king before him and to make Baal worship the state religion of Israel (1 Kings 19-21; 2 Kings 9). Jeroboam was the first who made Israel thus to sin (referred to 13 times), but it culminated under Ahab and Jezebel. Under these two, organized idolatry of the grossest kind became the religion of the State, as opposed to the true religion established in Jerusalem. It had its own priesthood, so numerous and powerful that the prophet Elijah was specially raised up by God to do battle against them, and warn the people against the enormity of the evil. Yet again Elijah will perform a similar duty under more awful circumstances. For the Jews to commit idolatry is spiritual fornication and adultery against God. Pagan idolatry usually involves physical fornication (temple prostitutes). Under the law it was a serious transgression for a Jew to eat meat offered in sacrifice to an idol (Daniel purposed in his heart not to eat such meat). But under grace Paul taught that Gentiles could eat such meat bought at market so long as to be careful not to be a stumbling block to the weaker Jewish brethren. Jezebel had plenty of opportunity to repent through the preaching of Elijah, but she would not. Instead she sought to kill him. She was judged by God in exact accordance with what He prophesied about her death. She was cast out of a window and the dogs ate her flesh. I believe that the Jezebel referred to here is the great whore described in chapter 17. It is the idolatrous religious system that will be united with the political system of the antichrist. She stands in stark contrast to true Israel which is also symbolized by a woman but is seen as a virgin bride. This is the third reference to false doctrine in this chapter (Nicolaitanes, Balaam, and Jezebel). All the evil is traced up to Jezebel. The teaching is the same as that of Balaam, and of the Nicolaitanes—only it is more organized and under the direct auspices of the State. Balaam was outside Israel; Jezebel is within. This is what it will be in the days of the Beast: and this is why

these exhortations, teachings, and warnings are written in these epistles. We do not fully comprehend them, because we are not living in those days. Three of the assemblies are warned with regard to this evil (Ephesus; Pergamos; Thyatira). Satan will seek to overcome the tribulation saints through severe persecution. But he will also use false doctrine (2 Pet. 2). God gives the idolaters space to repent in the beginning of the tribulation but they will not so they will be cast into great tribulation (9:20-21). He will judge them according to their works (Rev. 18:1-8).

This false doctrine is called the depths of Satan. This stands in contrast to the deep things of God (1 Cor. 2:10). Those that have rejected the depths of Satan are to hold fast to the truth and righteousness that they have till Christ comes. He will put no other prophetic message of judgment upon them.

The overcomers will be those who endure faithfully to the end (Matt. 24:13; Heb. 3:6, 14; 6:11; 1 Pet. 1:13; 4:7). They will inherit the kingdom with Christ and reign with Him over the nations (Ps. 2; Lk. 22:28-30).

**“And I will give unto him the morning star”** (Christ, 22:16) - The prophecy in Num. 24:17, "there shall come a *Star* out of Jacob, and a *Sceptre* shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth" connects this promise with Israel and with the day of the Lord's judgment.

The injunction, “He that hath an ear to ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches”, was given before the promise in the first three letters, but now after in the final four. There are sets of seven in the Bible that are divided into three and four. In Revelation the seven churches, seals, and trumpets are divided like this. I don't yet fully understand the significance of this division.

It will be Satan's goal to overcome the tribulation saints by tempting them to deny the true Christ and worship his false Christ. He will use severe persecution (as we saw in the letter to Smyrna). However, three of the four letters in chapter two warned about false doctrine (Nicolaitans, Balaam, and Jezebel). Satan knows that deception from within is more effective than persecution from without. The churches in Pergamos and in Thyatira are rebuked for allowing and tolerating false teachers in their midst. In the Bible false doctrine is compared to leaven (Matt. 16:6-12). We are warned in several passages that a little leaven will leaven the whole lump. I believe that the woman Jezebel mentioned in the letter to Thyatira refers to more than a female false teacher. I believe she represents the great whore described in chapter 17. I believe that she is the woman in the kingdom parable of the leaven (Matt. 13:33). The mysteries of the kingdom that Jesus taught in parables (to hide from enemies) covers a period of time that includes the tribulation

period (NOT the Grace Age). The idolatrous religious system represented by Jezebel is called the “depths of Satan”. In the context of the mysteries of this present age the apostle Paul refers to the deep things of God and the depths of His knowledge and wisdom. Satan is very wise (not wise as God) and he has his mysteries too. His Babylonian religious system is called a mystery (17:5). Paul spoke of the mystery of godliness in the context of the incarnation of Christ. He also spoke of the mystery of iniquity in the context of the antichrist (2 Thess. 2). Satan does not know when the rapture of the body of Christ will take place. We are hindering the revelation of the antichrist. So, the mystery of iniquity “doth ALREADY work” (2 Thess. 2:7).

We can certainly draw some *applications* from the warnings in chapter 2 about false doctrine because false doctrine abounds today and Paul has much to say to the body of Christ about it. False doctrine abounds today, but it will culminate in the tribulation period in the greatest time of deception that there has ever been (Rev. 12:9). In this age a true believer can be deceived and there are consequences of that, but we cannot lose salvation (2 Tim. 2:16-19). However, those that are deceived in the tribulation period and worship the beast will suffer eternal damnation (14:9-12).

## Chapter 3

### **The Church in Sardis (vs.1-6)**

The seven spirits are the angels of the seven churches (1:20). The seven Spirits of God is a reference to the Holy Spirit (1:4; 4:5; 5:6). Each letter begins with an attribute of Christ based on the vision of Him in chapter one. The attributes cited in each letter correspond with the problem in each letter. In other words, Christ is the answer for what the problems they are facing. (Ephesus – left first love, Jesus in the midst; Smyrna – martyrdom; He that was dead and is alive; Pergamos – false doctrine; He that hath the sharp sword; Thyatira – false doctrine; He that hath eyes like fire and feet as brass) What is the problem in Sardis? They are DEAD (spiritually). Well, it's the Spirit of God that quickens those that are dead spiritually.

This church had a profession of faith but their faith was DEAD (Jam. 2:14-26). They had works but they were not works of faith. Faith is believing what God said. If God requires certain works for salvation then faith will do those works. This present dispensation is the only one in which God does not require works for salvation.

The works were not perfect because they were not done in faith. There were a few there (v.4) that had the right works, but they too were on the verge of death. They must be watchful and strengthen the remaining things that were right (Lk. 21:34-36). We are to watch also, but not for the second coming!

What was the message they heard (Matt. 24:14)? They are to remember HOW they heard it, i.e. they had received it in faith. They must hold fast to the truth they had and repent of their faithless works. If they fail to watch His coming will be like a thief to them, i.e. unexpectedly, and they will be judged by Him (Matt. 24:36-51). This is very different from what Paul wrote to the body of Christ.

He refers to "names" because He is about to warn about the possibility of having their names blotted out of the book of life. There are just a few in this church that are not defiled. Notice, "even in Sardis," implying the awful condition of that church. The garments are the robes which represent their works (16:15). Their works can be defiled by the flesh (Jude 1:8; 23). Zechariah saw the high priest of Israel clothed with filthy garments and Satan standing by to resist him (Zech. 3). Those that keep their garments clean will be worthy to wear a white robe and walk with Christ in His kingdom.

White raiment is the righteousness of saints (19:7-8). The body of Christ is clothed in the righteousness of Christ (Phil. 3:9). The book of life is an interesting thing to study in the word of

God. It seems that it is a book that contains the names of those that are saved (Phil. 4:3). Nobody in the body of Christ can have their name blotted out of the book. But it is possible for those in the tribulation to have their name blotted out if they worship the beast (13:8; 20:15; 22:19; Dan. 12:1). This promise to the overcomers matches what Jesus taught in His earthly ministry to Israel (Matt. 10:32-33; Lk. 12:8-9).

### **The Church of Philadelphia (vs.7-13)**

The church of Philadelphia seems to be in the best condition of the seven churches. Smyrna was also a good church. They are the only two churches that Christ does not tell to repent. They are not rebuked like the other churches. All the Bible teachers that think these seven churches represent the Church Age claim that their church is a Philadelphian church. There are many churches named Philadelphia Baptist Church or Church of the Open Door. But the terminology and phraseology of this letter is rooted in the prophetic kingdom program of Israel and not the church epistles: the key of David, the synagogue, false Jews, "I will make them come to worship before thy feet", the hour of temptation, the temple of my God, and New Jerusalem.

The tribulation period will be the greatest time of wickedness and deception that this world has ever experienced. In stark contrast with the antichrist, Jesus Christ is the one who is holy and true! Each letter begins with attributes of Christ based on the vision of Him back in chapter one. Although the words, "holy" and "true" are not used in that passage, the description John gave was certainly of the One who is holy and true (6:10). Many times in prophecy we read of the "Holy One of Israel". He is the true God as distinguished from false gods. In chapter one the risen and glorified Christ was seen as the one with the keys of hell and of death. Keys are associated with doors or gates and symbolize the authority to open and shut. When He gave Peter the keys to the kingdom of heaven, He gave him apostolic authority to act in His stead while He was away. The key of David is found in one other passage (Isa. 22:15-25, Shebna is a type of the antichrist and Eliakim is a type of Christ). Christ will sit upon the throne of His father David (Lk. 1:31-33). If Christ opens the door to the kingdom to someone no man can shut it and if he shuts the door to the kingdom to someone no man can open it (Lk. 13:24-30). He says who comes in and who stays out. In fact, Christ is the very door into the kingdom (Jn. 10:9).

This church kept the word of Christ (His instruction to them) and did not deny His name by worshipping the beast and taking his number and name. Therefore He sets an open door to the kingdom before them that no one could shut. It is a door of deliverance.

This is the second mention of those who say they are Jews but are not (2:9). These false Jews are wolves in sheep's clothing and tares among the wheat that Satan seeks to use to infiltrate the church in order to turn them away from Christ and betray those who do not. Jesus told some

religious Jews in His day that they were of their father the devil. They sought to kill Christ. Jesus said that they would receive the one who would come in his own name (antichrist). Just as those apostate Jews persecuted the little flock that followed Christ so it will be in the tribulation. But when Christ comes His enemies will bow before Him and His people that will reign as kings with Him (Isa. 49:23; 60:14; 66:5; Rev. 1:5-6). The word “worship” is used in the sense of honor and respect (Lk. 14:7-11).

Many premillennial teachers try to use v.10 to teach a pre-tribulation rapture of the body of Christ. That is a great mistake because this is obviously speaking of a deliverance for those IN THE TRIBULATION! Furthermore the deliverance is conditioned on faithfulness. That they kept the word of His patience means they rejected the mark of the beast (14:12)! This promise is not limited to the saints in Philadelphia (v.13).

“The hour of temptation” is not referring to a 60 minute period. The word “hour” is used to refer to a definite and brief period of time. It is the 3 ½ years of Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:21). Jesus taught His disciples to pray to delivered from this temptation (Matt. 6:9-13; Lk. 21:35-36). Some think v.10 is a promise to be kept through the GT. Others that it is promise to be raptured out of it (the 144,000 will be raptured, 12:5-6; 14:1-7; Isa. 26:20-21). Either way it has NOTHING to do with the body of Christ!

The declaration, “I come quickly” (v.11a) is made four times in Revelation and refers to the second coming of Christ to the earth. He exhorts them to hold fast (hold on firmly) to the word and name of Christ. If they fail to do this they will lose their reward in the kingdom (2 Jn. 7-11).

The overcomers are promised a special position in the temple (pillar = display). They had “little strength,” but will be a strong and secure pillar in God’s temple. We are not going to be a pillar in the temple, we are the temple of God. Those that worship the beast receive his name. The overcomers will be totally identified with the true and living God by having His name (22:4), the name of His city, and a new name written upon them (2:17; Isa. 62:2). The New Jerusalem which comes down from heaven following the Millennial Kingdom is totally identified with ISRAEL (names on the gates).

### **The Church in Laodicea (vs.14-22)**

Those that believe the seven churches of Rev. 2-3 represent stages of church history all agree that we are currently in the last stage represented by the church of Laodicea and that the rapture is pictured in 4:1. But, of course, they believe that *their church* is still a Philadelphian church. We know that the last days before the rapture of the body of Christ will be days of apostasy and it’s not because of what this passage says, but because that is what Paul said in 2 Timothy 3. While

we can draw some spiritual applications from this passage, we must understand that its doctrinal interpretation concerns the future tribulation period. Is it possible for a Bible-believing church made up of genuine believers to become lukewarm in their service for the Lord? Well, if this is written TO the body of Christ in this age that means Christ is on the outside of any lukewarm church and that such a church is in danger of being spued out of His mouth. In other words, completely separated from Christ! Does such language match the doctrine in Paul's epistles (Rom. 8:39)?

Christ says three things of Himself in v.14:

- 1) **Amen** – It is fitting that He uses this title in the last of the seven letters. “Amen” basically means, so be it established. He is the Amen because through Him the purposes of God are established. In Revelation, God's purpose is to pour out His wrath by the hand of His Son, whom He has made Judge of all the earth.
- 2) **Faithful and True Witness** – For the tribulation saints that overcome He will be faithful and true to fulfill His promises in these seven letters. But He will also be faithful and true to judge those that reject Him (19:11).
- 3) **Beginning of the creation of God** – This does not mean that He was the first one created by God like the cults believe and teach. He is the beginning of all things because all things are made by Him (1:8; Col. 1:15-16). He is the beginning of the new creation (21:1, 5).

People like cold water and hot coffee, but if either becomes lukewarm it is very distasteful. Have you ever picked up a cup of lukewarm coffee thinking it was fresh? It makes you want to spit it out! By saying this church is lukewarm the Lord is saying that it is undesirable. This church was going through the motions without a zealous heart for God. That the Lord would have them either cold or hot but not lukewarm reminds me of several OT passages (Josh. 24:14-15; 2 Kings 18:21). They were double-minded (Jam. 1:8) and those in such a condition will not be overcomers in the tribulation period. The Lord will spue them out just as He did their fathers (Lev. 18:24-30; 20:22).

This church is deceived about their true condition, but the true and faithful witness reveals it to them. What a contrast in perspective! In the tribulation period the rich are evil and the poor are good. Those that reject the mark of the beast will become poor and while people have goods they are required to give to the poor (2:9; Jam. 2:5-7; 5:1-3). Christ taught that it was impossible to serve God and mammon (Matt. 7:24) and that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom (Matt. 19:23-24). According to Paul a believer in this age must work for his own needs and can be rich and still right with God (trust God and give, 1 Tim. 6.).

Where are we ever told to buy anything of God? The remedy for their condition is found in the Lord. They must look to Him for:

- Gold tried in the fire – purified faith (1 Pet. 1:7, 18)
- White raiment – righteousness (2:4-5; 16:15)
- Eye salve (ointment) – Isa. 6:9-10

Christ will not spue them out immediately, but in love He gives them an opportunity to repent (just as He did for Israel in the OT). In the tribulation period Christ chastens Israel (Heb. 12:5-29).

Verse 20 is commonly used in gospel presentations to teach that a sinner must open the door of his heart and let Jesus in to be saved, but that is not what this verse teaches. Asking Jesus to come in your heart means nothing if you don't believe the gospel and trust Him as your Savior. Christ is **standing** at the door as the Judge (Jam. 5:8-9). The language of this verse matches what Jesus taught in His earthly ministry to Israel (Lk. 12:29-48; 22:29-30; Rev. 19:9).

It is when Christ returns to establish His kingdom on earth that He will sit on the throne of His father David (Lk. 1:32) and the throne of His glory (Matt. 25:31). Between His ascension and second coming He is seated with His Father in His Father's throne (Ps. 110:1). This means that the covenants are not being spiritually fulfilled today through the church. The overcomers will reign with Christ in the kingdom (2:26-27; 5:10; 20:4). Christ overcame Satan by the word of God and loving not His life unto the death. The tribulation saints must overcome Satan the same way (12:11).

## Chapter 4

In chapters 4-5 the apostle John is in heaven before the throne of God. The book of Revelation alternates between scenes in heaven and on the earth. The heavenly vision is preparatory for what follows on the earth. In chapter one the apostle John saw a vision of the glorified Christ about to come back to the earth as Judge and King. The Lord gave him seven letters to write seven churches in Asia Minor which represent the tribulation saints on the EARTH. The instruction in these letters will help the tribulation saints endure the awful things described in 6-19. The commendations, rebukes, corrections, instructions, and promises that the Lord gave in those letters directly correspond with the material that is found throughout the rest of Revelation. The churches are dealt with first in this book because the apostle Peter said that judgment must begin at the house of God (1 Pet. 4:7, 12-19).

After writing the seven letters John sees a door opened in heaven. The Bible speaks of three heavens (sky, space, God's habitation). Apparently there is an entry point somewhere between the second and third heaven (Gen. 28:17). It is through this door John is taken up into heaven. The next time heaven is opened the Lord returns to the earth with His armies (19:11). The Lord has a great and powerful voice like a trumpet (1:10-11a). By His word He causes John to be caught up in the spirit (1:10; 17:3; 21:10) to heaven to see things that are about to take place. John is an eyewitness of the things he writes in this book.

The common view of most fundamental pre-millennialists who believe in the pre-tribulation rapture of the church is that this is a picture of the rapture. They believe that chapters 2-3 provide a prophetic picture of church history in seven stages and that John being taken up to heaven is a picture of the church being raptured before the tribulation period begins in chapter 6. They teach that the voice as of a trumpet matches Paul's description of the rapture (1 Thess. 4:16-17, "voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God"). They teach that the word "hereafter" proves that chapters 2-3 take place before the tribulation period (1:19). They also teach that the absence of the word "church" after chapter 3 is strong proof that their interpretation is correct. On the surface this view may sound good and seem right, but it will not hold up to scriptural scrutiny and a consistent right division of the word of God. I would venture to say that many who teach this view are simply parroting the notes in the Scofield Bible or other works such as Larkin's or Ironside's commentary on Revelation. Much wrong teaching gets passed down by tradition and tradition blinds us to understanding God's word. Most will not reconsider this view because they fear man. This view is taught by many respected Bible teachers, but it is wrong and holding to it will hinder our understanding of Revelation. It also opens the door for false doctrine (such as the body of Christ obtaining its blessings by overcoming, the body of Christ getting the kingdom, the

body of Christ going through the tribulation). We have clearly seen that the doctrine in 2-3 does not match the Pauline epistles, but it perfectly matches Israel's prophetic kingdom program. We have already given many reasons why we know these seven churches are not the body of Christ. They are literal Jewish churches in the tribulation period that represent the tribulation saints. If they do picture seven historical stages it is seven stages in Israel's history.

Here are more problems with the common view:

- ✓ The rapture could not be imminent if seven stages of church history prophesied
- ✓ It requires becoming a deep student of history to interpret the scripture
- ✓ John was not in the body of Christ and so he doesn't represent it (Matt. 19:28; Gal. 2:9)
- ✓ John is a type of the tribulation saints who have the antichrist revealed to them (Jn. 13:18-30)

John sees a throne set in heaven. It is the established throne of God. While the thrones on earth begin to totter and to fall as man's day closes in the predicted upheavals, there is a throne that cannot be affected or disturbed. He who sits upon it will laugh as He looks upon man's rebellion and madness against Him (Ps. 2; 9:1-9; 10:1, 12-18). The one (His "shape") upon the throne shone with colors like a jasper and sardine stone. We can't humanly comprehend the brightness of God's glory. Apparently there are colors associated with His presence. The sardine stone (mentioned only here) may be the same thing as the sardius stone. Both are mentioned in connection with the breastplate of the high priest (Ex. 28) and the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21). That city shines with the glory of God and the light is said to be as a jasper stone (21:10-11). There is a rainbow about the throne. I am not sure if this is saying that the rainbow was in sight like an emerald or the throne. God gave the rainbow as a token that He will not judge the earth again with a flood. But He will judge it with fire. So the rainbow speaks of a scene of judgment and it tells of hope and deliverance for those who trust and serve Him. In wrath He will remember mercy!

John sees twenty-four seats around the throne of God. These are seats of authority. Upon the seats are twenty-four elders clothed in white raiment (purity and righteousness) and crowned with golden crowns. These elders are seen worshipping God (v.10-11; 5:14; 11:16; 19:4) and they have harps and golden vials full of odours which are the prayers of the saints (5:8). Who are they? Twelve is the number of governmental rule. God has divided the earth into twelve zones (Deut. 32:8). That is likely after the pattern of heavenly things. Perhaps the heavens are divided into twelve zones. The twenty-four elders could be kings over these twenty-four zones.

The lightnings, thunderings, and voices (v.5) all speak of the mighty power of God and His judgment (Ex. 19:16; several times in Rev.). The seven Spirits of God make up one Holy Spirit (1:4; 5:6). Fire is symbolic of the Holy Spirit.

What is the sea of glass (v.6)? There is a great deep between the second and third heaven. The Lord told Job that the face of the deep is frozen (Job 38:30). Perhaps that is the sea of glass.

The four beasts around the throne are very interesting. They unceasingly declare the holy and eternal nature of the triune God (1:4; 11:17). Four is the number of the earth (4 corners of the earth; 4 seasons; 4 elements – earth, air, fire, and water). These four beasts represent the creatures on the earth (lion = head of the wild animals; calf = chief of domesticated animals; man = mankind; eagle = supreme among flying animals). I take these to be literal beasts that look exactly as described in the passage. If they were symbolical the explanation would be given in the passage. They remind me of the living creatures, called cherubims, which Ezekiel saw and described in Ezekiel 1 and 10 (also seen in association with the throne and glory of God), but a strict comparison will show some differences. The cherubims had four wings and these have six. The seraphims (Isa. 6) have six wings and cry “holy, holy, holy” (emphasis 8:13, trinity), but they are seen above the throne not around it. Are these seraphim, cherubim, or neither? Each of the four living creatures had four faces (man, lion, calf, eagle), but these are not said to have four faces. It simply says that one was like a lion, one like a calf, one like a man, and one like an eagle. The creatures that Ezekiel, Isaiah, and John saw were all associated with the throne of God. Ezekiel saw them supporting a mobile throne that came down to the temple on the earth. Isaiah saw them above the throne of Christ in the millennial temple. John saw them around the Father’s set throne in the third heaven. The implication is that there are possibly different ranks among the seraphim and cherubim. The four beasts that John saw are involved with God’s judgment on the earth (“come and see” in 6:1 and also the 7 golden vials, 15:7-16:1).

The four beasts around the throne represent the different kinds of creatures on the earth. There is a classification missing; the creeping things. Before his fall, Satan was called Lucifer (light-bearer) and was “the anointed cherub” (Ezek. 28). He seems to have been the worship leader (musical being) positioned above the throne of God (“covereth”). He is connected with both the ox and serpent. When we compare Ezek. 1:10 with Ezek. 10:14 we learn that the face of a cherub is that of an ox. The ox has been especially associated with idolatry throughout history (e.g. golden calf in the wilderness). Satan is called, “that old serpent” (Rev. 12:9; 20:1). When he appeared in the garden to beguile the woman he was said to be more subtle than any *beast* of the field. When God cursed the serpent He said that it would be cursed above all *cattle*.

The scene described in vs.9-11 is where people get the idea that we will cast our crowns before the Lord at the judgment seat of Christ, but that is NOT what is going on here! The twenty-four elders (have seats of authority) acknowledge the Lord’s supreme authority over all (Col. 1:16-17). The Lord is about to take back all that He created.

## Chapter 5

In chapters 4-5 the apostle John is in heaven before the throne of God which is set for judgment about to be poured out on the earth. John sees a book (scroll) in the right hand of God that has writing within it and on the backside and it is sealed with seven seals. The “right hand” symbolizes power, security, and favor. What is the book? The book is associated with judgment (will be clear as the seals are opened) and redemption (v.9). We could think of it as the title deed to the universe (Jer. 32:6-15). The fact that the book was written within and without, implies that it is *filled* with the wrath of God and His judgments (Ezek. 2:9-10). The seven seals show that its contents were complete and secure until the appointed time. It is related to the book that Daniel was told to seal up until the time of the end (Dan. 12:1, 4, 9). The time has now come to open the book, and there is only one that is worthy to open its seals. The most high God, possessor of heaven and earth (Gen. 14:19) has the right to give the book to the one who is worthy to receive it. Satan said, “I will be like the most high.” It has been his ambition to be Christ, and to possess heaven and earth. But that power belongs to Christ (Matt. 28:18).

John “wept” when no one could be found worthy to open the book. This shows the sinfulness and hopelessness of man without the mercy and grace of God. In all creation, no one was worthy to open the book. Who is worthy to open the book and unleash these judgments on men and devils? What man could claim to be worthy to execute judgment on sin? The answer is no one. In doing so, he would condemn himself. If no one could be found, paradise was indeed lost and could never be regained. All the promises of God and the hopes for mankind were for naught, if no one could be found. Not only was no one worthy to *open* the book; no one was worthy to *look* upon it! “*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*” (Rom. 3:23). I think that Ps. 24 describes the One who is worthy.

John is comforted and told not to weep for “...*the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof*”. The lion is the symbol of a king and of the tribe of Judah. It was from this tribe Israel’s king was to come. “*Judah is a lion’s whelp...*” (Gen. 49:9). Not only is He of Judah, but also He is the “Root of David.” He is both the root and offspring of David (22:16). As the Branch He is David’s promised Son who would rule forever over a just and righteous kingdom (Jer. 23:5). As the Root He is David’s Lord! This is He of whom all the prophets spoke. He is the one subject of the Law of Moses, of the Psalms, and of the Prophets!

Christ prevailed as the greatest overcomer (3:21). He overcame temptation in the wilderness as the “Son of Man” by obeying the word of God. He overcame in Gethsemane through prevailing

prayer. He overcame at Calvary by yielding Himself to the death of the cross. He overcame the grave by His power over death. Weep not! The Lamb is worthy and has prevailed!

John looks and sees in the *“midst of the throne”* (v.6), not a Lion, but a Lamb as it had been slain. The Lamb that had been slain was now standing! He is the resurrected Christ, and so shall He be throughout all eternity. He will be *“as a Lamb that had been slain.”* In Revelation He is called the Lamb over 25 times! Paul never used that title in any of his church epistles. This ought to convince anyone that the title is associated with Israel and her redemption. In John’s gospel, He is the Lamb that will take away the sin of the world when He judges the world and sets up His righteous kingdom in the earth (Jn. 1:29, the 12 didn’t understand His sacrificial death until after the resurrection, Lk. 24:45). In the Revelation, He completes that purpose (see 6:16-17).

The beasts and the twenty-four elders worship the one worthy to open the book (vs.8-10). The twenty-four elders represent the tribulation saints as they offer up their prayers. It is the tribulation saints that sing the new song. Notice that they are redeemed *“OUT OF every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.”* This is not referring to Gentiles, but to the scattered Jews (Jam. 1:1). The new song is in contrast to what they sang at the time God brought them under the old covenant (Ex. 15). It is God’s purpose for ISRAEL to be kings and priests on the EARTH (Ex. 19:6; Isa. 61:6; 1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6; 20:4).

What a scene it will be when the great angelic host (100,000,000 plus thousands of thousands) worships Christ as He prepares to take over the world (vs.11-12)! To worship is to ascribe worth. They ascribe Him worthy of seven things (v.12) by which He will reign in His kingdom. This is followed by universal worship (v.13) because He will have a universal kingdom.

## Chapter 6

From 6:1 to 7:8 the vision shifts back to the earth. John is beholding in heaven what is taking place on the earth as the seals are opened. In chapters 2-3 Christ wrote seven letters to the saints who are on the earth during the tribulation period. Chapters 6-19 provide a detailed description of that period. Judgment is poured out earth as seven seals are opened, seven trumpets are sounded by seven angels, and seven angels pour out seven vials (like bowls) which are the seven last plagues. At the opening of the seventh seal the seven angels prepare to sound their trumpets and after the sounding of the seventh trumpet the seven vials are poured out.

But all of these judgments are not poured out in an exact chronological sequence because in this sixth chapter we see six of the seven seals opened and the entire tribulation period is covered from the rise of the antichrist to the second coming of Christ. That Christ opens the seals demonstrates that the judgments are all under His divine control. The seventh seal is separated from the six and when it is opened in chapter 8 there is silence in heaven before John sees seven angels with the seven trumpets. The trumpet judgments take us back through the tribulation.

1. First seal – White Horse of False Peace (vs.1-2)
2. Second Seal – Red Horse of War (vs.3-4)
3. Third Seal – Black Horse of Famine (vs.5-6)
4. Fourth Seal – Pale Horse of Death and (vs.7-8)
5. Fifth Seal – Souls of the Martyrs under the Altar (vs.9-11)
6. Sixth Seal – The Wrath of the Lamb (vs.12-17)

We are living in a parenthetical mystery age that was revealed through the apostle Paul in which God is building the church which is the body of Christ. This age will end with the mystery of the rapture and at some point after the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy will be fulfilled. I believe that there could be a gap of time (perhaps 33 years) between the rapture of the body of Christ and the beginning of Daniel's seventieth week (making it 40 years between rapture and second coming). There was 33 years between the birth of Christ and His entry into Jerusalem the week of His crucifixion. What do we mean by Daniels' seventieth week (Dan. 9:24-27)?

- From the time Gabriel gives Daniel this prophecy to commandment to restore Jerusalem = 49 years
- From the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem to crucifixion of Christ = 434 years (483)
- From the Antichrist confirming the covenant to second coming of Christ = 7 years (tribulation)

Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week is split into two periods of 42 months (Rev. 11:2; 13:5). In the first 3 ½ years the antichrist rises to power through false peace, makes a covenant with Israel, and helps to restore the sacrificial system in the temple. But peace will be taken from the earth and wars will abound followed by famine and pestilence. A fourth of the world's population will die in the first 42 months of the tribulation period. In the midst of the week Satan enters the antichrist and he will break the covenant with Israel, cause the sacrifices to cease, and will sit in the temple and declare himself to be God (the abomination of desolation). This marks the beginning of the "great tribulation" which will last 42 months. The world will be required to worship him and those that do will receive his mark in their forehead or in their right hand. Those that refuse to take his mark and worship him will not be able to buy or sell. The godly remnant of Israel that refuses to worship the beast will be the special object of his persecution. Many of them will be beheaded and the rest will flee into the wilderness where God will supernaturally provide for them just as He did in the Exodus. In the great tribulation Satan will pour out his great wrath knowing that he has but a short time. But God will also pour out His great wrath. Jesus said of the great tribulation that "except those days should be shortened, there shall no flesh be saved." After the great tribulation the sign of the Son of man will appear in heaven and He will return in power and great glory to wipe out His enemies, save His people, and establish the kingdom.

The Lord Jesus prophesied of the tribulation in His discourse to His disciples on the mount of Olives (Matt. 24:1-35). The prophecy in Matthew 24 lines up perfectly with Revelation 6.

Daniel's 70 <sup>th</sup> Week	Matthew 24	Revelation 6
"Beginning of Sorrows"	False Christs (v.4-5)	False Christ (v.1-2)
	Wars (v.6-7)	Wars (v.3-4)
	Famines (v.7)	Famine (v.5-6)
	Pestilences, beasts (v.7)	Pestilence, beasts (v.7-8)
"Great Tribulation"	Martyrs (v.9-28)	Martyrs (v.9-11)
"After the Tribulation"	Signs in heaven (v.29-30)	Signs in heaven (v.12-17)

In the first eight verses of this chapter we see four horses that symbolize judgment. The horses are different, but the rider is the same. This passage describes the impact of the antichrist's regime. Horses are used in scripture in association with battle (Prov. 21:31; Job 39:19-25).

### **The white horse (vs.1-2)**

Most commentators throughout church history have taught that the rider of this white horse is Jesus Christ, but they are all dead WRONG! Any commentary that teaches that is not worth reading unless you just want to learn about the wrong interpretation of Revelation. Even the

marginal reference in my Oxford Bible gives 19:11 and as a cross reference. Assuming that things which are similar in the Bible are the same is a great hindrance to Bible study and will lead to real problems! The post-millennialists think this refers to Jesus conquering the world gradually as the church spreads the gospel. Christ is not the rider on this white horse, He is in heaven and opens the seal when this rider appears. Jesus Christ comes back to earth on a white horse, but it is AFTER the tribulation and not at the beginning (19:11-16). A simple comparison between 6:1-2 and 19:11-16 shows many contrasts between them:

- A crown vs. many crowns
- A bow vs. a sword
- Hell followed vs. the armies of heaven

A crown was GIVEN to the antichrist and then goes forth to conquer. He rises in a time of peace and then brings forth war (Dan. 8:25; 11:21; 1 Thess. 5:1-3). The prefix “anti” in antichrist means instead of as well as against. He is the false and counterfeit Christ. Satan is a great IMITATOR (5:5 with 1 Pet. 5:8). In this age Satan’s primary tactic is DECEPTION. He has counterfeit Jesus, spirit, gospel, churches, and ministers (2 Cor. 11). His deception will culminate and climax in the tribulation when he deceives the whole world and God sends him to do it (2 Thess. 2:1-12).

#### **The red horse (vs.3-4)**

Red = blood; Sword = war. A general breakup of the nations will enable the nations to be absorbed into a universal kingdom under the antichrist.

#### **The black horse (vs.5-6)**

Black = famine; Balances (for measuring the weight of money) = economy. Famine will naturally follow world war. How great the temptation will be to take the mark of the beast to be able to buy and sell (13:17).

#### **The pale horse (vs.7-8)**

Pale = death. Death speaks of the great pestilence that will naturally follow war and famine. God uses the sword, famine, beasts and pestilence as judgments (Ezek. 14:21). Christ came to give life; the antichrist will bring death.

The first four seals reveal the impact upon the earth of the antichrist and his kingdom. The fifth and sixth seals show the response of the tribulation saints and of the Lord to the antichrist and his kingdom.

#### **The response of the godly remnant to the antichrist kingdom (vs.9-11)**

Which altar? John speaks of both the altar in heaven (8:1-3) and on earth (11:1-2). I think it is the altar in heaven (Heb. 12:18-24). John sees that souls of the tribulation martyrs who stood against

the antichrist and his system. They are seen in connection with the altar because they gave their life as a sacrifice as they stood for the word of God (gospel of the kingdom denies the antichrist) and the testimony of Jesus Christ (1:2, 9; 12:11; 20:4). Some believe that these martyrs will be executed in the temple in sacrifice to the devil (animal sacrifices were by decapitation, Lev. 1-2). White robes were given to these souls (3:5). The martyred souls cry out for God to avenge their blood. The cry of “how long” is found throughout the prophetic scriptures, especially the psalms (e.g., Ps. 94). He that is holy and true will execute His judgment on the wicked in just a “little season” (16:1-7).

### **The response of Christ to the antichrist kingdom (vs.12-17)**

The opening of the sixth seal takes us ahead to the end of the tribulation period and shows us that the Lord will certainly avenge the blood of His saints (Matt. 24:29-30). There are four accounts of the second advent given in Revelation (6:12-17; 11:14-19; 14:13-20; 19:11-21) just as there were four accounts given of the first advent in the Gospel records. We read of an earthquake five times in Revelation and twice of a “great earthquake” (16:17-21). The sun will turn as black as sackcloth and the moon red as blood (Joel 2:28-31; Acts 2). The stars falling to the earth refers to either angels or meteors (8:10-11; 9:1). The heaven will be rolled back as a scroll to reveal the sign of the Son of man (Mk. 14:61-62; Rev. 19:11). The second coming of Christ is preceded by a great shaking that will affect the heavens, earth, and kingdoms on the earth (Isa. 13:6-13; 24:18-23; 34:1-8; Hag. 2:6-7, 20-22; Heb. 12:24-29). Those on the earth will try to hide in the mountains from the One they see on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb (Isa. 2:10-12; Lk. 23:30). Today is the “day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2), but the “great day of his wrath” will come after this age ends with the rapture.

## Chapter 7

In the previous chapter Christ opened six of the seven seals on the book which He alone is worthy to open (title deed to the universe). The opening of the six seals provides a basic overview of the tribulation period. The seventh seal is not opened until chapter eight, so chapter seven is parenthetical and answers the question at the end of chapter six.

Who shall be able to stand? None of the wicked (Ps. 76:7; Nah. 1:6; Mal. 3:2-4), but there will be some who do stand through the tribulation and that's who we see in this chapter. There are two groups in this chapter. The 144,000 sealed Jewish servants and a great multitude of all nations that was no doubt reached through the ministry of the 144,000. The sealing of the 144,000 takes place at the very beginning of the tribulation and John sees the great multitude who are said to have come out of great tribulation (v.14). In Revelation we are moved forward and backward frequently. We are shown the second advent of Christ four times! This book is not laid out in an exact sequential and chronological order. This is typical of a prophetic book. There are many passages in OT prophecy in which it goes from the first advent to the second and back to the first, or it will go from a historical setting to the kingdom age or eternal state. We never read of the present age in prophecy because it was a mystery revealed through Paul and is only dealt with in his epistles.

### **The judgments do not begin until the servants of God are sealed (vs.1-3)**

Men have accused the Bible of teaching that the earth is flat because it refers to the four corners of the earth. The Bible taught that the earth was a "circle" about 2,700 years ago (Isa. 40:22). It must be a sphere for it to be both day and night on the earth when Christ comes again (Lk. 17:30-37). People still refer to the four corners of the earth today (north, south, east, and west). The four winds blow from the four corners (Jer. 49:36; Matt. 24:31; Isa. 11:12; 43:5-7). John looking down from the third heaven saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth holding (restraining) the four winds so that no wind was blowing on the earth or sea. Not even a tree was blowing in the wind. There was absolute stillness. When the four angels let the four winds loose they will hurt the earth, sea, and the trees. This has to do with catastrophic judgment in the tribulation (6:13). I think the point of this is to show that the 144,000 are sealed before the tribulation. Who knows how long those angels had been standing there waiting for the command to hurt the earth and sea with the four winds. There are also four angels bound in the river of Euphrates waiting to bring destruction (9:13-15). John saw an angel ascend from the east with seal of the living God (in contrast to idolatry of the beast) and crying to the four angels not to hurt the earth, sea, or trees until they (other angels help to seal the 144,000 which are scattered to the four corners, 14:3; Jam. 1:1) have sealed the servants of God in their foreheads. This seal in the forehead stands in contrast the mark of the beast which will be in the forehead or right

hand (13:11-18). We don't have to guess what this seal is (14:1). The Bible uses the expressions "in their foreheads" and "upon their foreheads" interchangeably (13:16; 20:4). It is a visible mark. Those marked by God will be preserved from judgment (Ezek. 9; Rev. 9:1-6). The overcomers will have the name of God in their forehead (3:12; 22:4). All those that have the mark of the beast will suffer under the wrath of God (14:9-13).

### **The 144,000 (vs.4-8)**

False teachers have long tried to apply this number to their followers (Russell and the JW's), but this a literal passage. The 144,000 are 12,000 from the twelve tribes of Israel. When the twelve tribes are listed in the OT in regards to their inheritance in the land, Levi and Joseph are usually omitted. Levi, as the priestly tribe, had no inheritance in the land because God was their inheritance as they served Him in the tabernacle. Joseph's two sons Manasseh and Ephraim took his and Levi's place. But in this passage both Levi and Joseph is included and its Dan and Ephraim that are excluded (Deut. 29:16-21). The tribes of Dan and Ephraim were responsible for introducing idolatry in Israel (Judg. 17-18). Afterward, Jeroboam set up the idolatry of the golden calves in the tribe of Dan (1 Kings 12:28-30) and Ephraim was said to be joined to Idols (Hos. 4:17; 5:3-4, 9). There is a strong possibility that the antichrist will come from the tribe of Dan (Gen. 49:16-19). The 144,000 are said to be the firstfruits unto God, i.e. they come before the main harvest (7:9-17) at the end (14:1-5). It is possible that kingdom church of the book of Acts had 144,000 members (Acts 21:20). James wrote to the scattered kingdom church (Jam. 1:1). They were called a kind of firstfruits (1:18). So James wrote historically to the kingdom church of Acts and prophetically to the tribulation saints. Some have suggested that the 144,000 are the resurrected kingdom saints that God will use to finish their commission to preach the gospel of the kingdom in all the world.

Their ministry: Matt. 24:14; Mk. 16:15-18 (was interrupted and will be fulfilled).

- Cast out devils - Increased devil activity in the tribulation
- Tongues – To preach the gospel in all the world in 3 ½ years
- Take up serpents – The first sign (Ex. 4), points to the kingdom (Isa. 11), see also Rev. 9:19
- Drink any deadly thing – Rev. 8:8-11
- Healing – Many sick and suffering in the tribulation period

As we will see in chapter 14, the 144,000 will be raptured up to heaven before the great tribulation (Rev. 12:1-6; Isa. 66:7-8).

### **The great multitude (vs.9-17)**

The sealing of the 144,000 takes place at the very beginning of the tribulation. The great multitude is said to have come out of great tribulation, so John sees them after the tribulation.

Marvin Rosenthal, in his book "The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church" claims that this great multitude is the church that had just been raptured up to heaven. Why do so many Bible teachers these days believe that the body of Christ is going through the tribulation? They fail to consistently divide prophecy and mystery. The book of Revelation is not written to the body of Christ and neither is it about the body of Christ. Our rapture is not revealed in this prophecy which concerns the consummation of Israel's kingdom program! According to this description, this great multitude is not the body of Christ that God is building in this present age.

- **"a great multitude, which no man could number"**

This stands in contrast with the sealed servants of God who are numbered exactly as 144,000. The tribulation will be an awful time of judgment, but we must not get the idea that few will be saved. Israel will be saved as a nation after the tribulation at the second coming of Christ and Gentile nations that blessed the Jews will enter the kingdom.

- **"of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues"**

Most commentators believe this is a great multitude of Gentiles (Gen. 10:5). However, I am not sold on that because most of the description of this multitude in this passage would identify them as Israel. During the tribulation Israel is scattered among all nations, kindreds, people, and tongues (5:9-10). If this is a great multitude of Gentiles they are saved through the rise of Israel and are connected with their kingdom. The order in prophecy is that Israel is blessed and then as a result so are the Gentiles (Ps. 67). So, in this chapter it is the Jews first and then the Gentiles. If this great multitude are Gentiles it would prove that it is not the body of Christ wherein there is neither Jew nor Gentile (Gal. 3:28).

- **"stood before the throne, and before the Lamb"**

This describes the position of servants. They will serve God as priests in His temple day and night (v.15). This was one of the promises given to the overcomers (3:12).

- **"clothed with white robes"**

Again, white robes were promised to the overcomers (3:4-5). White speaks of purity and no sinner can be pure before God without the blood of the Lamb (v.14; Col. 1:14; 1 Pet. 1:18-19). However, THEY washed their robes and made them white. This speaks of works (19:7-8). White robes are given to the martyrs that are slain for rejecting the mark of the beast and refusing to worship him (6:9-11; 12:10-11). I was washed the moment I trust Christ as my Savior and I did not do the washing (1 Cor. 6:11; Titus 3:5)!

- **"palms in their hands"**

The palm branches are associated with the feast of tabernacles which was the seventh feast in the seventh month (Lev. 23:33-44, time of harvest). The seven feasts that the Lord gave Israel provide a prophetic picture of God's dealings with Israel. The last three feasts are:

1. Trumpets – re-gathering of Israel after the tribulation
2. Atonement – salvation of Israel under the new covenant
3. Tabernacles – Kingdom Age, the millennial rest

- **“cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God...”**

They ascribe their salvation out of great tribulation to God and the Lamb (v.14). The great tribulation is the last 3 ½ years of the seventieth week of Daniel (Matt. 24:15-21). The 144,000 are caught up into heaven just before Satan is cast out and are therefore kept from the great tribulation (3:10). This multitude will be saved out of it. This is pictured by Enoch and Noah.

- **“They shall hunger no more...”**

The blessings of vs.16-17 are the result of God dwelling among them (v.15; Ezek. 48:35). They had suffered in the great tribulation. This is the fulfillment of prophecy (Isa. 25:8; 49:5-12; Ps. 23; Ezek. 34:11-16; Matt. 5:1-12). Similar blessings are described in the eternal state (21-22).

## Chapter 8

With the opening of the first six seals of the seven-sealed book, John saw a basic overview of the tribulation period. The seventh chapter was a parenthetical vision of those who will be saved in the tribulation. The seventh seal is designedly severed from the other six because with its opening John will see the great tribulation as seven angels sound their seven trumpets. They are divided into four and three which is a common division of seven in the Bible. The first four cover seven verses while the other three cover fifty-one verses. The last three are more severe and they are announced as three woes (v.13).

### **The seventh seal (vs.1-6)**

Why was there silence in heaven about the space of half an hour (from John's perspective)? No explanation is given in the text so we can't say for sure. Perhaps the silence is indicative of the solemn things which are about to be seen. The seven sealed book is now fully opened and there is an ominous hush as the seven angels prepare to sound their trumpets of judgment. The prayers of the saints are about to be answered. They have been crying out for God's vengeance (6:9-10). Their prayers will be the imprecatory psalms (e.g., Ps. 58; 79). Perhaps the silence indicates that He is about to answer their prayers (Lam. 3:22-26). The present day of grace having closed, and the time of the wrath of the Lamb having begun, petitions for judgment on the persecutors of the saints now begin to have their appropriate place and fulfillment. The next thing that happens after the silence is that the seven angels that stood before the throne of God (as servants, like Est. 1:10) were given seven trumpets. The blowing of trumpets is associated with proclaiming war (Num. 10:9; 31:6; Joel 2:1-11). Jericho fell when seven trumpets sounded seven times on the seventh day.

The tabernacle and temple that was on earth was made after the pattern of things in heaven (Heb. 8:5; 1 Chron. 28:19). There is a temple in heaven (11:19). John saw an angel standing at the golden altar of incense (not the brazen altar) with a golden censer with which he offered much incense with the prayers of the saints (Ps. 141:1-2; Lk. 1:5-20). The throne is in the place of where the ark of the covenant would be on earth. The angel filled the censer with fire from the altar (speaks of the holiness of God, a consuming fire) and cast it into the earth resulting in voices, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake (judgment, 4:5; 11:19; 16:18). The prayers ascended up before God and His judgment descended on the earth.

### **The first trumpet (v.7)**

I believe that this is just as literal as the seventh plague on Egypt (Ex. 9:22-26, 31-32). There is much similarity between the plagues that God poured out on Egypt and the judgments that fall in the tribulation period (Ex. 34:10; Mic. 7:14-15). The redemption of Israel from Egypt will be

repeated on a grander scale (Jer. 23:5-8). This judgment destroys the third part of the world's agriculture. There will be great famine in the tribulation period.

### **The second trumpet (vs.8-9)**

John did not say that it was a great mountain, but that it was "as it were a great mountain". Perhaps it will be a meteor. The third part of "the sea" (not seas, probably the Mediterranean) becomes blood (like first plague) which results in the destruction of the third part of marine life and shipping industry.

### **The third trumpet (vs.10-11)**

The great star that falls from heaven is either a meteor or possibly an angel (called stars, flame of fire, see 9:1) whose name is Wormwood (a plant that has a bitter and nauseas taste, Prov. 5:4). The fall of this star causes the third part of the fresh waters to become bitter as wormwood resulting in the death of many men that drank of the waters (Jer. 9:14-15; 23:15). When our Lord hung upon the cross, His enemies "Gave Him vinegar to drink mingled with gall" (Matt. 27:34). But at the sounding of the third trumpet, many wicked men will die from the water made bitter by the Divine Judge. In the tribulation period God will test the fidelity of Israel. Will they worship Him only or take the mark of the beast and worship the false Christ? Compare Numbers 5:11-31 with Mark 16:17-18 and Revelation 8:8-11 and see if you catch the connection. The "overcomers" will make up the bride (compare Rev. 3:4-5, 12 with Rev. 19:7-8).

### **The fourth trumpet (vs.12-13)**

Under the sixth seal the sun became black, the moon became as blood, and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth. That will occur after the tribulation just prior to the second coming of Christ. This is not the same as the judgment of the fourth trumpet. Here it is a third of the sun, moon, and stars that is darkened. This will be during the great tribulation (Lk. 21:25). It was on the fourth day that God brought the sun, moon, and stars into view to provide light for man but under the fourth trumpet He withdraws the third part of that light. This will have an effect on the well-being of people, will disturb the seasons, and hinder the growth of fruits and vegetables.

The first four judgments are partial (the third). As we proceed we will see how the judgments become more severe (v.13).

## Chapter 9

In the previous chapter the Lamb opened the seventh seal and as a result seven angels prepared to sound seven trumpets of judgment. The implication is that these judgments are in response to the prayers of the martyred saints in which they cry out for God to judge their enemies. As a result of the first four angels sounding their trumpets:

1. The third of the trees and grass were burnt up by hail and fire mingled with blood
2. The third of the sea became blood, the third of the sea creatures died, and the third part of the ships were destroyed by as it were a great mountain burning with fire being cast into the sea.
3. The third of the rivers and fountains of water became poisoned by a great star called Wormwood falling from heaven.
4. The third part of the sun, moon, and stars were darkened.

These are literal and catastrophic judgments, but they are partial (“a third”) and the worst is yet to come (8:13)! The first four were on the earth, but the last three will be directly on the inhabitants of the earth.

### **The fifth angel sounds his trumpet (vs.1-12)**

The star that falls from heaven is a person. It is an angel (Job 38:7; Rev. 1:20). Some think it is Satan (Lk. 10:18). Satan is not an angel, but he does appear as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14). When Christ comes to set up His kingdom on the earth Satan will be bound in this bottomless pit for a thousand years (20:1-3). Is it the same angel that was given the key to the pit? Some think that the fact he fell from heaven indicates that it is a fallen angel, but “fallen” could just be a descriptive word for a fast descent. Job referred to the “bars of the pit” (17:16)

The bottomless pit (mentioned seven times in Revelation) is a literal pit located in the heart of the earth (Num. 16:23-35). A bottomless pit in the heart of this spherical earth is not hard to imagine. A doughnut shaped pit is a bottomless pit. The Bible speaks of Lucifer being brought down to the “sides of the pit” (Isa. 14:15). There are various distinct compartments mentioned in the scripture that form what we call the underworld. The Bible refers to those who are “under the earth”. There must be fire in the pit because it is likened to a great furnace and enough smoke to darken the sun and the air arises out of it when it is opened.

An army of supernatural, demonic, and mutant locusts come out of the smoke of the pit. God did not originally create these creatures in this form any more than He created Satan as a great red dragon. They degenerated into that form through their own wickedness. They had been tormented through the ages in the bottomless pit and now they have the opportunity to torment

those that had not the seal of God in their foreheads for five months. There was an outbreak of demonic activity at the time of the first advent of Christ (Lk. 8:26-31). The plague of locusts upon Egypt were no ordinary locusts (Ex. 10:14) and these are anything but ordinary!

- Locusts are stifled by smoke, but these come out of it
- Locusts are said to have no king (Prov. 30:27), but these do (v.11)
- Locusts attack vegetation, but these attack men.

Bullinger said that they seem to be a kind of “infernial cherubim” because “the horse, the man, the lion, and the scorpion are combined in them”.

These are literal creatures that will torment men in the great tribulation, but it is important to note the words “as” and “like” are used ten times in their description. John is describing them with vocabulary he had.

- 1) Their shape is *like unto* horses prepared unto battle (meaning the size of a horse?)
- 2) They have *as it were* crowns *like* gold (counterfeit) on their heads
- 3) Their faces are *as* the faces of men (bearded)
- 4) They have hair *as* the hair of women (long hair)
- 5) They have teeth *as* the teeth of lions
- 6) They have breastplates *as it were* breastplates of iron
- 7) The sound of their wings is *as* the sound of chariots of many horses
- 8) They have tails *like unto* scorpions with stings

They are commanded to only hurt those which have not the seal of God in their foreheads (those who have the mark of the beast). Those who are sealed will have power over them (Lk. 10:17-20). They have tails like scorpions and when they strike a man it causes such torment that they will desire to die, but death will flee from them. They do not seek repentance and the Lord, but death! This awful plague will last for five months (corresponds to season for locusts, May-September). In the Bible, five is the number of death (see Gen. 5).

Who commands them? Their king (v.11). There are principalities and powers in Satan’s kingdom of darkness. Some think this may be the same angel mentioned in v.1. Some think it is Satan (star, appears as an angel of light, fall as lightening) and others one of his fallen angels (compare 8:13 with 12:12). The name of this angel in both Hebrew and Greek means Destroyer (perhaps both languages given to imply his judgment on both unbelieving Jews and Gentiles). The beast (antichrist) is said to ascend out of the bottomless pit (11:7; 17:8). It is prophesied that the antichrist will “destroy wonderfully” (Dan. 8:23-25). He is called the destroyer in Jer. 4:7. The antichrist will die and be resurrected and Satan will then enter him or (if Apollyon is not Satan) cause him to be possessed by this spirit being. Satan entered Judas (Jn. 13:27) to betray Christ (perdition is from same word as Apollyon, Jn. 17:12; 2 Thess. 2:3-4). When Judas killed himself it

is said that he went to his “own place” (Acts 1:25). This would indicate Apollyon is not Satan because he is not yet in the bottomless pit (20:1-3). So when Satan enters the antichrist it will be in the same way that he entered Judas. There is an unholy trinity (16:13): dragon, antichrist, and false prophet.

### **The sixth angel sounds his trumpet (vs.13-21)**

The four angels are probably four of the fallen angels that are said to be bound (Jude 6). They are bound in the great river of Euphrates which is on the border of the Promised Land and is the region where Babel was located (16:12-16; Jer. 46:10). The result of these angels being loosed is they lead an army of 200 million demonic horsemen that kill the third part of men. Yet the men that weren't killed still refuse to repent from their idolatry (9:20-21)! One of the sins mentioned in connection with their idolatry is sorcery. The nations will be deceived by the sorceries of the Babylonian religion (18:23). The same Greek word translated *sorceries* is where we get our word pharmacy. Drug use is one of Satan's strongholds and through it many are deceived even today.

## Chapter 10

Just as there was a parenthetical passage between the opening of the sixth and seventh seals, so there is one between the sounding of the sixth and seventh trumpet (10:1-11:14).

### **A mighty angel with a little book (vs.1-7)**

Who is this mighty angel? There is a difference of opinion about this among good Bible teachers. Some think it is Christ Himself (He is called the angel of the LORD). Others think it may be Michael the archangel who stands for the people of Israel (Dan. 12:1). They say that the word “another” indicates that it is not Christ who is above the angels. I take the word “another” to be setting forth in contrast this mighty angel with the angel of the bottomless pit (“another” as comp. with 9:1, 11). George Williams wrote, *“He is here seen coming down out of Heaven (v.1) and His great opponent is seen ascending out of the abyss (11:7). The conflict now increases in intensity- the two Messiahs, with their hosts, prepare themselves for the battle; and permission is given to Satan to place in the field all the power of his demonic kingdom together many peoples, nations, tongues and kings (v.11).”* Another reason some do not think this angel is Christ is that He swears by Him who made all things, which Himself (v.6; Jn. 1:3). But God the Father and the God the Spirit was also involved in creation (4:9-11). Besides, God swore by Himself in His covenants with Abraham (Heb. 6:13) and David (Ps. 89:3).

The description of the mighty angel fits Christ more than any other:

- 1) Cloud (Rev. 1:7; Ex. 13:21; 16:10) – to veil glory
- 2) Rainbow (Rev. 4:3) – signifies promises of God (cloud = storm; bow = mercy)
- 3) Face as the sun (1:16; Matt. 17:2; Mal. 4:1-3) – signifies His glory and power
- 4) Feet as pillars of fire (Rev. 1:15) – signifies judgment
- 5) He has an opened book in His hand (same book as in chap. 5 with seals now open)
- 6) His position signifies that He is about to take possession of what is His (v.2; Josh. 1:3)
- 7) Cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth (Rev. 5:5; Joel 3:16)

When the mighty angel cried out with a loud voice seven thunders uttered their voices. They said things that John understood and was about to write down. The thunders are God’s voice from heaven (Ps. 29; Jn. 12:27-31) announcing the even greater judgments that are yet to come. John heard a voice from heaven telling him to seal up what he heard and not write them not (Dan. 12:4-9). What the thunders uttered were sealed up, but I think they were revealed later in the book as the seven last plagues. By the end of Revelation nothing is sealed (22:10).

The mighty angel lifts up his hand to heaven and swears with an oath that there should be time no longer. This does not mean that from this point on there will be no more time because the

Kingdom Age is marked by time as a thousand years. This means that the time will no longer intervene to answer the cry of the martyred saints for vengeance (6:9-11). The seven last plagues will fall when the seventh angel sounds his trumpet (begin to sound implies it will a drawn out thing).

The mystery of God has nothing to do with the great mystery (the body of Christ) revealed by Christ to Paul! There are mysteries associated with the prophetic kingdom program of Israel (Matt. 13). This mystery is in accordance with what God declared to the OT prophets (Amos 3:7-8), but the body of Christ was hid from the prophets (Eph. 3:5). The mystery here is in relation to the judgments that must fall for Christ to bring in His kingdom and very well be what the seven thunders uttered (seal up, the last plagues).

It is a great hindrance to Bible study to think things that are similar are the same. A preacher that believes and teaches a mid-trib rapture of the church told me that this verse is referring to the end of the present age and the rapture. He thinks the mystery of God refers to the mystery of the body of Christ and he connects the seventh angel sounding his trumpet with the "last trump" that Paul mentions concerning our rapture (1 Cor. 15:51-52). But Paul said "last trump," not "last trumpet". A trump is the sound that a trumpet makes. This is the last trump of the "trump of God" (1 Thess. 4:16), not the trumpet of an angel. It is lazy "Bible study" to jump to the conclusion that 1 Cor. 15:52 and Rev. 10:7 are referring to the same thing just because both verses mention a mystery and trumpet. There are many different mysteries in the Bible as well as different trumpets that are sounded for different reasons. When the seventh angel sounds his trumpet in the tribulation period it is a long and drawn out event because it introduces the seven last plagues. But at the last trump when the church is raptured it will be "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye". Why do so many Bible teachers today insist on putting the body of Christ in the tribulation period? They do not rightly divide the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15). The tribulation period is the time of Jacob's trouble (Jer. 30:7) and is the subject of PROPHECY. The body of Christ was a great MYSTERY that was hid from the prophets. Besides, there are major doctrinal differences between this age and the tribulation period. For example, the gospel of the grace of God is the only gospel that is to be preached in this age, but the 144,000 Jewish evangelists will preach the gospel of the kingdom in the tribulation period and then the end will come (Matt. 24:13-14). Paul's gospel went into all the world in the first century (Col. 1:6, 23) and the end still hasn't come! And the gospel of the grace of God certainly doesn't require that we "endure unto the end" to be saved.

### **John eats the little book (vs.8-11)**

The angel tells John to eat the book. John is not the only prophet who has been told to eat the word of God (Jer. 15:16; Ezek. 2:6-3:3). The words are sweet to the taste because they are the

words of God (Ps. 19:7-11; 119:103). Jeremiah and Ezekiel suffered bitter things as a result of their obedience to eat the word of God. The bitterness comes from fulfilling the responsibility to declare God's judgment upon a people that will not repent. John knows that there will be Jews who worship the beast and must suffer the wrath of God!

- Sweetness= coming salvation of Israel and glorious kingdom established
- Bitterness= judgment must first fall

It is implied here that John will be resurrected to prophesy in the tribulation (Jn. 21:20-23). In fact, Jesus taught the twelve that they would go through the tribulation (Matt. 24)!

## Chapter 11

We are now about half way through the book of Revelation. I remind you that 10:1-11:14 is a parenthetical passage between the sounding of the sixth and seventh trumpets that fills in some details in relation to the judgments being poured out.

### **The temple (vs.1-2)**

This is not referring to the temple in heaven (11:19), but on earth (v.2 makes that clear). There have been two temples in Israel's history:

1. Solomon's temple (destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in about 583 BC)
2. Post-captivity temple (desecrated by Antiochus Epiphanes in about 168 BC), later enlarged by Herod (destroyed by the Roman Emperor, Titus in 70 AD)

Presently there is no temple in Jerusalem, but we know for sure that a third temple will be rebuilt. The temple worship will be re-instituted by the covenant that the antichrist will make with Israel (Matt. 24:13-22; 2 Thess. 2:3-4). This temple is distinct from the fourth and greatest temple that will exist in the millennial reign of Christ (Ezek. 40-48).

The mighty angel of chapter 10, whom I believe to be the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, instructs John to measure the temple, the altar, and the worshippers in the temple. Obviously God knows everything and has no need to find out these measurements. The fact he is told to measure people helps us understand that the purpose of this is not to find out measurements. The act of measuring signifies ownership (the contrast in v.2 makes this clear). In chapter 10 we saw how Christ signified ownership of the earth by placing one foot on the earth and the other on the sea. Notice that the Lord calls the temple the "temple of God". The worshippers are of the godly remnant of Israel that is looking for redemption at the second coming of Christ. There was a remnant in the temple looking for redemption at His first coming (Lk. 2:25-39). The kingdom church met in the temple in the book of Acts. The Gentiles will tread Jerusalem (holy city in sense of set apart for God's purpose) under foot 42 months which is the 3 ½ years of great tribulation (Lk. 21:19-24). Notice that the measuring reed was like unto a rod. The figure of a rod is used concerning God's chastening of Israel (Ezek. 20:37). That the Gentiles tread Jerusalem under foot for 42 months is part of that chastisement.

What is the temple of God in this present age (1 Cor. 3:9-17)? All men are on the same level before God in this age (no difference, Rom. 10:12) and must come to Him as individuals sinners through Jesus Christ. There is no distinction between Jews and Gentiles in the body of Christ (Eph. 2:11-22). This proves that there will be a dispensational change after the rapture and that God is not dealing with the body of Christ in the tribulation period.

### **The Two Witnesses (vs.3-13)**

These are two literal men, not the OT and NT as the “spiritualizing” commentators claim. God gives them great power to accomplish their ministry for 3 ½ years (as Christ). Sackcloth speaks of mourning (Gen. 37:34, first mention). They are represented by the olive tree and candlestick. Olive trees produce olive oil which is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Candlesticks send forth light (Zech. 4, Satan resisted, 3:1). The fire and plagues are just as literal as when God used Moses and Elijah (fire out of the mouth literal but by word, Jer. 5:14). There are two passages that make me believe that Moses and Elijah (law and prophets) are the two witnesses: Mal. 4; Matt. 17:1-13.

Both Moses and Elijah:

1. Were prophets (v.10)
2. Stood before God
3. Preached to types of the Antichrist
4. Destroyed their enemies with fire
5. Smote the earth with plagues
6. Were on Mt. Sinai forty days and nights
7. Had ministers that took up their ministry
8. Mentioned together in last chapter of OT in context of the coming day of the LORD
9. Were with Christ on the mount of transfiguration

Some think that it is Enoch and Elijah because both were caught up to heaven without dying and they think that according to Heb. 9:27 everyone must die once. Well, many have died twice (all those raised in OT and earthly ministry of Christ) and many will not die even once (1 Cor. 15:51).

God said that things are established in the mouth of two or three witnesses (Deut. 17:6; 19:15). A witness is one who gives testimony (v.7) to what he knows to be true. The two witnesses will testify in the great tribulation (last 3 ½ years) against the antichrist, apostate Israel, and of the second coming of the true Christ.

Jesus Christ is the faithful witness (Jn. 18:37; Rev. 1:5). There are a number of similarities between the two witnesses and the faithful witness (v.8 connects them).

- 1) Ministry in great power (signs and wonders)
- 2) Ministry of 3 ½ years
- 3) Invincible until ministry completed
- 4) Killed at Jerusalem through instrumentality of the son of perdition
- 5) Enemies rejoice at their death
- 6) Raised on the third day
- 7) Earthquake accompanied death and resurrection

## 8) Ascended in a cloud

The two witnesses are represented by the olive tree and candlestick. Olive trees produce olive oil used in the candlestick to send forth light which is symbolic of the Holy Spirit (Zech. 4, Satan resisted, 3:1).

We have come now to the sounding of the seventh trumpet. The last three of the seven trumpet judgments are declared to be woes on the inhabitants of the earth (11:14; 8:13).

- **5<sup>th</sup> trumpet** – Demonic locusts torment those who have not the seal of God in their foreheads for five months (9:1-12)
- **6<sup>th</sup> trumpet** – Demonic army of 200 million horsemen kill the third part of men (9:13-21),

Just as there was a parenthetical passage between the sixth and seventh seal, so there was one between the sixth and seventh trumpet (10:1-11:13).

### **The Seventh Trumpet (vs.15-19)**

The vision now shifts from earth back to heaven. When the seventh angel sounds his trumpet, great voices in heaven tell of the purpose of its sounding. In chapter 19 great voices in heaven tell of the completion of that purpose and John sees the second coming of Christ (19:1-6). The events under the seventh trumpet cover the last 3 ½ years of the tribulation (10:7). The third woe begins with Satan being cast out of heaven to the earth (12:7-12) and includes the seven last plagues (15-16). The sounding of the seventh trumpet reaches from 11:15 all the way to chapter 20. This explains why the heavenly voices, which immediately follow on its sounding, anticipate the end and speak as though it has already been accomplished (“hast reigned”). J.A. Seiss wrote, *“The tense of the expression is that peculiar to prophetic language, which fixes upon a result yet future, or only beginning to be, as if already accomplished.”* The seventh trumpet announces the coronation of the rightful King (1 Kings 1:39). The theme of this prophecy is the revelation of Jesus Christ (1:7) and so it’s no wonder that we are given four views of it in the book (6:12-17; 11:15-19; 14:14-20; 19:11-21).

Christ will come as the King of kings to take over the kingdoms of the world (Dan. 2:44; 7:13-14, 25-27). This means that the kingdoms of this world are not presently His (Lk. 4:5-8; 2 Cor. 4:4). Jesus called Satan “the prince of this world” (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). The great question in the scripture is, “Who gets the kingdom?” Satan gives the kingdoms of the world to his false christ, but when the true Christ returns the Father will give Him the kingdoms that are rightfully His (Ezek. 21:25-27; Matt. 28:18; Ps. 2). Christ is not presently sitting on HIS throne (3:21; Matt. 25:31).

The Lord is an eternal King ruling in His spiritual and eternal kingdom (1 Tim. 1:17). That is the kingdom we were translated into upon salvation (Col. 1:13), but the literal and visible reign of Christ on earth is yet to come (1 Tim. 6:13-16). The kingdom of heaven will be the kingdom of God established on EARTH (Christ used the terms interchangeably). Prophecy concerning that kingdom is not being fulfilled “spiritually” through the church in this age.

The kingdom of Christ does not last for just one thousand years. After a thousand years there will be a final battle with Satan, but Christ will reign forever (Ps. 10:12-18; Isa. 9:6-7; Lk. 1:32-33).

The twenty-four elders fell out of their seats on to their faces worshipping God and thanking and praising Him for who He is and what He is about to do:

- thou hast taken to thee thy great power
- and hast reigned
- the nations were angry (19:19)
- thy wrath is come (19:15)
- and the time of the dead, that they should be judged (20:4-6, 11-15, Lk. 19:11-27)
- thou shouldest give reward (Matt. 5:1-12; 16:27)
- and shouldest destroy them that destroy the earth (2 Thess. 1:7-9)

The purpose of the vision of the open temple (v.19) is to reassure the remnant of God’s faithfulness. They will be able to connect God’s mighty working with the ark. The last plagues are poured out from the temple in heaven (15:5-16:1). Where is the “lost ark”? The earthly one contained the tables of the old covenant. John sees the real one that the ark on earth was a pattern of and it is the one that matters now (Jer. 3:12-19). It is the ark of a New Testament (Heb. 9).

Revelation is the book of unveiling and of opening:

- ✓ A door is opened in heaven (4:1)
- ✓ Seals are opened (6)
- ✓ The bottomless pit is opened (9:2)
- ✓ The temple of God in heaven is opened (11:19; 15:5)
- ✓ Heaven is opened (19:11)
- ✓ Books of judgment are opened (20:12)

## Chapter 12

At the end of the previous chapter the seventh angel begins to sound his trumpet and its purpose is announced by great voices in heaven (11:15). The sounding of the seventh trumpet is a drawn out process and the events that occur under it cover the last 3 ½ years of the tribulation at the end of which Christ will come to establish His kingdom in the earth (10:7). I remind you once again that the last three of the seven trumpets are three woes upon the inhabitants of the earth. The third woe begins with Satan being cast out of heaven to the earth (12), includes the seven last plagues (15-16), the destruction of Babylon (17-18), and the battle of Armageddon (19). Therefore the sounding of the seventh trumpet reaches from 11:15 all the way to chapter 20.

### **The woman, the dragon, and the man child (vs.1-6)**

In this passage John sees wonders in heaven, but they represent literal personages and events (“wonders” used in relation to SIGNS, Deut. 13:1-3). Most commentators apply these wonders to the past, but the context clearly concerns what will take place in the middle of the tribulation period (v.6). I’m not saying that there aren’t any historical applications in this passage. Prophetic passages often have more than one application (ex: Isa. 14 concerning the fall of Satan from heaven applies to both the past and future). The first prophecy in the Bible concerns the woman, her seed, and the serpent (Gen. 3:15). We can trace that enmity through the scriptures. According to the historical application the woman is Israel, the dragon is Satan, and the man child is Christ. Christ is of Israel according to the flesh (Rom. 9:4-5). Satan sought to prevent Him from coming into the world and to destroy Him as soon as He was born, but Christ ascended up to the throne of His Father and will return to rule the nations with a rod of iron. In eternity past Satan drew some of the angels away with him in His rebellion against God. But these historical applications are secondary and do not fit the primary interpretation of the passage in its future context.

Religion teaches that the woman is the Virgin Mary or the church, but the Bible teaches that she is Israel. The Bible interprets itself (2 Pet. 1:20). One of the major keys to Bible study is comparing scripture with scripture. Many passages liken the nation Israel to a woman (Isa. 54:4-8). The mention of the sun, moon, and twelve stars in association with this woman connects us back to Joseph’s dream (Gen. 37:9-11). Why does God use the sun, moon, and stars to represent Israel? God made the literal sun, moon, and stars for signs and to give light upon the earth (Gen. 1:14-19). Israel is the light of the world (Matt. 5:14). This woman stands in contrast with the great whore in chapter 17. Another connection between the sun, moon, and stars with Israel is found in Jer. 31:35-37. The woman is with child and is travailing in birth pains (Jer. 30:4-7; Jn. 16:16-22). In typology the sun represents Christ, the moon represents Satan (counterfeit light that rules the night), and the stars represent the kingdom saints (Dan. 12:3). In this wonder Israel is seen

clothed with the glory of Christ (Isa. 60:1-3), Satan (her great adversary) is under her feet, and her twelve tribes are reigning as kings. This is a sign of her salvation.

The great red dragon is shown to be Satan in the immediate context (v.9). Satan is referred to as the dragon thirteen times in Revelation. For a detailed description of this dragon read Job 41. Leviathan is certainly not a crocodile or hippopotamus (Isa. 27:1; Ps. 74:14)! Why seven heads, ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads? These are the signs of the universality of his dominion: for Satan is the "prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2) and "the prince of this world" (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). His color is the color of fire, and of blood. This is a sign of his cruelty and blood-thirstiness (Jn. 8:44. 1 Jn. 3:12), and of the war which he makes "in heaven" and "on earth." The heads, horns, and crowns are the sign of earthly power, gathered up in himself: for to whomsoever he will he gives or delegates it (Lk. 4:6-7; Rev. 13:1-2). In the tribulation period the dragon casts a third of the angels (his angels) from heaven to the earth. In the days of Noah, Satan devised a plan to corrupt the seed line in an effort to prevent the seed of the woman from coming to bruise his head (Gen. 6:1-4). Jesus prophesied that the days before His return would be as it was in the days of Noah (Matt. 24:36-39). There is an implication in prophecy that the sons of God will once again come down to mix with the seed of men (Dan. 2:40-44).

The dragon stands before the woman with a desire to devour her child as soon as it is born (because he is to rule the nations). The man child is part of the wonder (or sign) in heaven and therefore represents a group and not an individual. Who is the man child that Israel brings forth and is caught up to the throne of God in the middle of the tribulation (Isa. 66:5-8)? The man child of Isaiah 66 and Revelation 12 are one and the same. They are the firstfruits of the nation that will be saved at the second coming of Christ. I believe that the man child is the 144,000 sealed servants of God that preach the gospel of the kingdom in all the world during the first half of the tribulation. As I already pointed out, there is a historical application to Christ. The things said of the man child could apply to Christ and to the 144,000. That is fitting because the 144,000 are identified with the Lamb and are seen with Him in heaven (14:1-5). When did they all get there? God catches them up in a mid-tribulation rapture! The 144,000 will be part of the overcomers referred to in chapters 2-3 (2:26-28; 3:10). Two men in the Bible were said to "walk with God". Enoch prophesied of the flood and the second coming (Jude 14). He pictures the firstfruits of Israel that are caught up before the great tribulation. Noah was a preacher of righteousness and was preserved through the flood judgment. He pictures the faithful remnant that will be preserved through the great tribulation (v.6, 13-17). The rapture of the church which is the body of Christ took place BEFORE the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel even began!

### **War in Heaven (vs.7-12)**

Angels are called stars and are associated with stars, so this is the real star wars! I believe the war takes place in the second heaven and that Michael and his angels initiate the war. In the past Michael would not rebuke Satan (Jude 8-9), but now he is given the command from God to cast Satan out. God has absolute authority over all and He will have no trouble casting Satan out when its time according to His perfect plan. This is the first step in Christ taking over Satan's dominion (v.10). The defeat of Satan in heaven assures the defeat of his false Christ on earth.

The Bible says that there are so many angels that man cannot number them (but God has). A third of the angels followed Satan in his rebellion. This will be the biggest war in history! The angelic host is highly organized into different ranks and positions of government (Eph. 6:12; Col. 1:16).

Michael ("who is like God?") is one of two named angels in the Bible (Lucifer was a cherub). Gabriel (4 times) is always seen bringing God's message to His servants. Michael is mentioned six times in the Bible (Dan. 10:10-21; 12:1-2; 1 Thess. 4:16; Jude 9). He is called a "chief prince" and the "great prince". He is mentioned in the context of resurrection three times.

Notice in v.8 that Satan and his angels are said to have a "place" in heaven. He hasn't been in hell yet. Place refers to both location and position (Lk. 14:7-11; Jn. 11:47-48). Satan has been on the earth (Garden of Eden, days of Job, temptation of Christ), but his primary habitation is in the second heaven (Job 15:15; Eph. 2:2; 6:12).

Notice in v.9 the titles and description which clearly identify the great red dragon (20:1-3). There is no doubt who he is. He is the "old serpent" that deceived the woman in the garden. The name "Devil" means accuser or slanderer. The name "Satan" means adversary. He is the great deceiver (Jn. 8:44). The whole world will worship his false christ (1 Jn. 2:18; 5:16-21).

Notice the emphasis in this passage on Satan being cast out: "cast out into the earth"; "cast down"; "cast unto the earth". Lucifer's exalted himself and so he must be abased (Isa. 14:1-17; Ezek. 28:1-19). Christ humbled Himself and so He is exalted far above all heavens and given a name above every name (Phil. 2:5-11)! Jesus prophesied of Satan being cast out of heaven (Lk. 10:17-19). Lucifer said, "I will" five times concerning his purpose to exalt himself, but he is demoted five times!

- 1) He was cast out in his original rebellion in eternity past
- 2) He will be cast out of heaven in the middle of the tribulation
- 3) He will be cast down to the earth
- 4) He will be cast down into the bottomless pit

## 5) He will be cast into the lake of fire

The brethren that Satan accused before God day and night refer to Jews in the tribulation and not the body of Christ (Rom. 8:33). Their salvation does not come as a nation until the second coming of Christ. That is when they receive the atonement (Lk. 21:28; Acts 3:19; Rom. 11:26-27). The book of Job is a prophetic picture of the suffering of the Jews in the tribulation (Job 1:6-12).

How will the tribulation saints overcome Satan?

- By the blood of the Lamb – there is no redemption for us (Col. 1:14) or Israel without the blood (1:5-6)
- By the word of their testimony – their testimony concerning Jesus Christ (1:2, 9; 6:9)
- By not loving their lives unto the death – take up their cross, lose life (2:10), when Satan accused Job he said, “all that a man hath will he give for his life” (Job 2:4)

The casting down of Satan and his angels brings rejoicing in the heavens, but woe on the earth. Who are those that dwell in the heavens? I believe that we are in that group having been raptured to heaven before the tribulation. We will replace Satan and his angels in the government positions that they lost. We will receive a glorified body fit for our purpose in the heavens (2 Cor. 5:1). We will judge angels and reign in heavenly places throughout the ages to come.

Knowing that he has but a short time (1,260 days), Satan will wreak havoc on the earth, especially against Israel (1 Pet. 5:8). He knows that his destruction is prophesied, but he is so full of pride he probably thinks he will have a chance to defeat God’s purpose. The great tribulation is a time in which both Satan and God are pouring out wrath (Matt. 24:21-22). Satan will focus his wrath on Israel and bring great persecution on her, but those who faithfully endure to the end will be saved (Matt. 5:10).

The antichrist reigns peaceably in human form for the first three and a half years but after his “deadly wound” is healed he reappears in superhuman form, breaks his covenant with Israel, sits in their temple declaring himself to be God and sets out to destroy Israel. Michael, who cast Satan out, will also stand for Israel in those days (Dan. 12:1). The ministry of angels is for Israel, not the body of Christ. In this age they are not teaching us but we are teaching them (Eph. 3:10).

Jesus taught His disciples to flee to the mountains when they saw the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet (Matt. 24:15-21). Many modern commentators on Revelation think the wings refer to an airplane. I think the two wings of a great eagle signify the miraculous swiftness that God will give them to escape (Isa. 40:27-31). The sign of the eagle takes us back to how God brought Israel out of Egypt (Ex. 19:4-6). The Exodus was a dress rehearsal for even greater events in the great tribulation (Pharaoh= antichrist, plagues, Moses). God is going to

supernaturally nourish Israel in the wilderness with manna in a place He has prepared for her (v.6; Isa. 26:20-27:1; Matt. 6:9-13). There is much prophecy about how God will bring Israel back into the wilderness (Ezek. 20:33-38; Hos. 2:14-23; Mic. 7:5-7, 14-20).

Most think the flood (v.15) is symbolic of a great army (Ps. 124; Isa. 59:19; Jer. 46:7-8). I think it could literally be water as a flood. It doesn't say "an army like a flood". It says "water as a flood". At the first Exodus it was through the sea that Israel went into the wilderness with its forty-two stations. It will be a flood which drives her into the wilderness for 42 months. The Red Sea helped Israel when God caused it to swallow up the armies of Pharaoh. God will cause the earth to literally open to help Israel escape Satan's attack. He cause the earth to open in the past when Israel was in the wilderness (Num. 16; Ps. 106:16-17).

The remnant in v.17 are those who are left after the rapture of the 144,000 (v.5). They are **law keeping** Jews (1 Jn. 2:3-4) that believe Jesus Christ is the true Messiah (Acts 21:20). Israel will keep God's law from the heart in the kingdom (Isa. 2:1-5; Matt. 5:17-19; 28:19-20).

## Chapter 13

In the last chapter we considered the war in heaven that will take place in the middle of the tribulation period. The seventieth week of Daniel (7 years) is divided into two periods of 42 months; 1,260 days; time (1 year), times (2 years), and half a time (half year) = 3 ½ years. Michael and his angels will fight against Satan and his angels and cast them down to the earth. We considered the result of that as it concerns Israel (12:13). In this thirteenth chapter we will consider its further effect as it concerns all those that dwell on the earth.

This chapter reveals two beasts that will have great power in the tribulation period:

- I. The Beast arising out of the Sea (vs.1-10)
- II. The Beast arising out of the Earth (vs.11-18)

The two beasts are political and religious leaders empowered by Satan. George Williams wrote, *“Man must have rule and religion notwithstanding the efforts of anarchists and skeptics, and so Satan will provide him with these two Wild Beasts, and they will produce a system of government and of religion which will be heartily welcomed by the world and by the majority of the Hebrew people.”*

This chapter presents the unholy trinity (Rev. 16:13) of the dragon (anti-God), the antichrist, and the false prophet (anti-Spirit). How appropriate that this is the subject of chapter THIRTEEN!

### **The Beast arising out of the Sea (vs.1-10)**

The Sea is the Mediterranean and it is from that region the antichrist will arise. Also, in various prophetic passages the sea represents the nations. From man’s viewpoint the antichrist will be an attractive and charismatic leader, but God sees him as he really is, a BEAST (37 times in Rev.). The seven heads and ten horns connects the beast with Satan (12:3). What do the seven (number of fullness) heads and ten (number of Gentiles) horns represent (see 17:3, 7-18)? The beast is a one-world political system, but it is headed up under a literal man that will be empowered by Satan himself. In 12:3 it was the heads that were crowned, but here it is the horns. The ten kings receive the kingdom under the antichrist AFTER Satan is cast out of heaven. Upon the heads of the beast is the name of blasphemy which identifies them with the antichrist who is the great blasphemous (vs.5-6; 2 Thess. 2:3-4). The Bible has much to say about the antichrist. He has many titles and is represented by many types (beginning with Nimrod, first king of Babel, the 13<sup>th</sup> from Adam, whose name means rebel). The only person the Bible says more about is the true Christ.

Notice the words “like” and “as”. The mention of these three fierce animals connects us back to Daniel 7. The fourth beast is the beast of Rev. 13. It is diverse from the other three in that it is a

combination of all three and empowered by Satan. The dragon will give the beast his power, seat, and great authority (i.e. worldwide dominion) in exchange for what Satan covets the most; worldwide worship. Satan will have a throne on the earth in the tribulation period that he gives to the beast (2:12-13; 16:10). The true Christ rejected this offer (Lk. 4:5-8).

The antichrist himself is one of the seven heads. As the counterfeit Christ he will die and rise again (5:6). Satan has the power to raise the dead and do great signs and wonders (2 Thess. 2:7-12). The antichrist will rise again in superhuman form as Satan incarnate for the last 42 months of the tribulation period (9:11; 11:7; 17:8). He will have the same spirit that was in Judas Iscariot (Jn. 17:12; Acts 1:25; Lk. 22:3; Jn. 6:70-71; 13:26). The world will wonder after the beast and worship Satan through worshipping the beast (12:9). The unbelieving religious leaders accused the true Christ of being the devil and in the great tribulation men will think the devil is the true Christ! The true Christ came as a servant and was rejected of men (Isa. 53:1-3). Not so with the false Christ!

*Bullinger wrote, "It is clear from this that everything is combined in this man to make him not only acceptable to the world, but to call forth their wonder, admiration and praise. He is not in any way a terror to men, but full of blandishments, attractions, allurements, and activities which will be all put forth in the interests of human greatness and happiness. It will be Satan's brief millennium, in which mankind will, by every art and artifice, be made happy. It will be a time of peace and progress for the whole world. Great secrets of nature will be discovered; evil angels will be the teachers, and deceiving demons the guides of mankind. Great inventions and discoveries will be made, and turned to the utmost possible account. Philanthropy will be the governing principle of the world and of the "Church." The great ethical revival is at our doors. Its advent is announced by the foremost preachers of the day. All this is preparing the way for the man of sin, and the lawless one, who shall be a law unto himself and unto the whole world. Men will delight in him, and regard him as the greatest benefactor the world has ever known. Kings will gladly owe him suzerainty; and behind all will be Satan himself, swaying the hearts, tongues and energies of thousands of willing agents."*

The saints (v.7) are the believing remnant of Israel that will not worship the beast (12:17, first commandment). They are pictured in the OT by:

- The three Hebrew children ("image", Dan. 3)
- Mordecai (Est. 3, 7)

Many will love not their lives unto the death (12:11) and will be beheaded for not taking the mark of the beast (2:10-11; 20:4). The antichrist will have worldwide dominion. Those who worship him will not have their names in the book of life (3:5-6; 14:9-12; 20:15). The phrase "from the foundation of the world" is always used in association with the kingdom.

For the last time in scripture this appeal (v.9) goes forth. Assemblies are no longer in question (as in chapters 2-3). It has come down to individuals. The end is near, hence this admonition is given for the last time.

The Hebrew idiom in v.10 expresses destiny, and denoting a certainty of approaching judgment, from whichever side it comes (Jer. 15:1-2). The expression means that so sure and certain will these judgments be which are executed by the beast, that none will escape them by armed resistance. The patience and faith of the saints will be to give up their lives trusting God to raise them from the dead to enter the kingdom (Jam. 5:1-11).

### **The Beast arising out of the Earth (vs.11-18)**

Why does the first beast arise up out of the sea and the second up out of the earth? I am not completely sure, but at least it shows that they are two distinct beasts (some teach they are the same). This passage reveals the position, power, and program of the false prophet.

### **His Position (vs.11-12)**

In the Bible horns signify power and two is the number for testimony. The false prophet will testify that the first beast is the Lord. He will be like a lamb in how he presents himself, but he will be a wolf in sheep's clothing (Matt. 7:15)! That he will speak as a dragon shows that he gets his power from Satan. He will speak subtlety and deceitfully (Gen. 3:1; 2 Cor. 11:3). He will doubtless have counterfeit bibles at his disposal!

The word "power" as used in v.12 has to do with authority. Satan will give him great authority like he does for the first beast. That he is a religious leader is proven by the fact that he causes the world to worship the antichrist. The resurrection of the antichrist is the miracle that the false prophet will use to declare that he is the Lord and must be worshipped. Like the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ, the false prophet glorifies the antichrist. In the holy trinity the Father gives authority to the Son (Matt. 28:19), the Son glorifies the Father, and the Spirit glorifies the Son (Jn. 16:13-14). In the unholy trinity Satan gives authority to his son ("son of perdition", 13:2), the antichrist glorifies the dragon (13:4), and the false prophet glorifies the antichrist. It is fitting that the anti-Spirit is a prophet because the Spirit spoke through prophets (2 Pet.1:21).

### **His Power (vs.13-15)**

The false prophet will do the same miracles and wonders as true prophets (Matt. 24:24). Elijah called fire down from heaven to turn the hearts of the children of Israel to worship the true and living God instead of Baal. The false prophet will do the same wonder, but for the opposite reason! Also, Elijah will be present in the great tribulation doing wonders (11:5-6). The false

prophet will deceive the world through the power of Satan (12:9; 2 Thess. 2:9-12). Miracles alone do not prove that a prophet is of God (Deut. 13:1-5). God has always exalted the truth of His word over miracles (2 Pet. 1:16-21). God has always forbid images in worship, but Satan has always sought to introduce them (devils are behind all idol worship). This image will be set up in the holy place of the temple (idols called "abomination"). This will be a dead giveaway to the believing remnant of Israel that this is the antichrist. There is a perfect prophetic picture of this in Dan. 3 when the king of Babylon set up his image and required all people to worship it (three sixes associated with the image). Today we can understand how an image can be made to talk, but I don't think this will be the result of technology. I think it will be by supernatural power from Satan but it will be a "lying wonder" because he does NOT have the power to give life (Ex. 8:16-19). They will be killed by beheading (20:4).

### **His Program (v.16-18)**

In this technologically advanced age it is easy to understand how this mark will be quickly and widely implemented. There will a worldwide food shortage as result of the judgments in the tribulation period. They will not be able to make a living or eat without the mark. To receive the mark they must worship the beast (14:9-12). The political and religious system work together. The believers who reject the mark will trust God to provide their "daily bread." People will become spies and will betray one another. There has always been much speculation about this mark, but to me it is pointless to try and figure out something that we will not be around to witness and that will not affect us in any way. The mark is associated with the name and number of the beast. God marks his servants (7:3; 14:1; 22:4) and so Satan marks his. Wisdom will be essential to endure the tribulation period (Lk. 21:12-19; Jam. 1:5). The beast will be a man, but he will be Satan incarnate. Six is the number of a man which falls short of God's perfect number of seven. The number of the beast will be 666. Three is a divine number (Godhead). The antichrist will be a Satan filled man that claims to be God.

## Chapter 14

This chapter (14, 2x7) stands in stark contrast with previous one (13, unholy trinity, mark of the beast). This chapter opens and closes with a heavenly vision of Christ. It opens with a vision of the Lamb and His 144,000 sealed servants and closes with a vision of the Son of man reaping His harvest at the end of the great tribulation. In between those visions John sees angels making great announcements as they fly through the midst of heaven. There are six different angels mentioned in this chapter.

### **The Lamb and the 144,000 (vs.1-5)**

This scene stands in contrast with the false Christ and his marked servants (13:16-17). The overcomers will have the name of God written in their foreheads (3:12; 22:4). This is the same 144,000 that were on earth in chapter 7 and were raptured in the middle of the tribulation (12:5). John sees them on the mount Zion which is in heaven (v.3, 5; Heb. 12:11-29).

The word “voice” (v.2) can refer to any sound (Gen. 3:8). I guess it is verses like this that give people the idea that we will be playing harps in heaven (5:8; 15:2). Some churches believe it is wrong to use musical instruments in church. Evidently they think their church is better than heaven! Harps, cymbals, timbrels, psalteries, and trumpets were instruments used in Israel’s worship in the OT. There are nine references to a “new song” in the Bible (six in Psalms). This song had never been sung before and it is specifically about the deliverance experienced by the 144,000 when they were raptured (“redeemed from AMONG men”) just before the great tribulation and that is why they are the only ones who sing it. Israel will have a new song when they enter the kingdom (5:9-10). They sang when they were redeemed out of Egypt (Ex. 15:1-19). There was a song of Moses (Deut. 32) and there will be a song of the Lamb (15:3-4).

The marriage bed is undefiled (Heb. 13:4). The 144,000 may be physical virgins (Matt. 19:12), but I believe this is referring to the fact they didn’t defile themselves with the Babylonian religious system (v.8; 2:14,20-22; 3:4; 17:1-5). False religion and idolatry is spiritual fornication and adultery (Jam. 4:4). Physical fornication will be involved in that system. Idolatry and immorality go together. The 144,000 confess Christ in sincerity (“no guile”) and they are true followers of the Lamb. They are the firstfruits of the harvest that will come at the end of the great tribulation when “all Israel shall be saved” (7:9-17; 14:14-16).

### **An angel preaches the everlasting gospel (vs.6-7)**

This is not the first angel John saw flying through the midst of heaven with a message (8:13). God does not use angels to preach the gospel in this age or give messages to the body of Christ. Evidently this angel will preach this gospel to the whole world (notice classifications) in a short

time in the great tribulation. Evil will have reached such a climax that the elementary facts of creation must be proclaimed. The word gospel means good news and there are different gospels in the Bible that are preached in different ages. This gospel is called “everlasting” because its basic truth has been declared from the beginning: man should fear God and worship Him because He is the Creator (Acts 10:34-35). The popular teaching is that there is only one gospel in all the Bible. But that cannot be true if words have any meaning. Does the content of this gospel (judgment has come) match the gospel that Paul received by revelation (1 Cor. 15:1-4)? Throughout the earthly ministry of Christ, the gospel of the kingdom did not include His death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (Lk. 18:31-34). The world is deceived into worshipping the beast so this angel preaches that the hour of judgment has come and men must worship the true and living God who made all things (Christ, Jn. 1:1-3) to escape that judgment.

In vs.6-20 there are six angels and the Son of man. The first three angels have messages to herald, the last three take part in the harvest, and the Son of man is in the middle.

#### **An angel announces the fall of Babylon (v.8)**

This is the first mention of Babylon in this book (six times). Her judgment is declared and its reason stated (repeated for emphasis, surety, system and city, double 18:6). Notice that she is both political (city) and religious (fornication). The judgment is described in chapters 17-18 and so we will save our comments on her judgment until we get to those chapters.

#### **An angel announces God’s wrath on all who worship the beast (vs.9-13)**

These verses plainly teach that ALL who worship the beast will suffer eternal torment in the lake of fire. Will the unholy trinity suffer eternal and conscious torment? So will those that followed them (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10-15). God’s wrath is just as infinite as His love. There will be a remnant that patiently endure the great tribulation keeping the commandments of God (includes law) and the faith of Jesus (His doctrine as taught in Gospels and the seven letters) and will therefore be saved (Matt. 24:13). What a great temptation it will be to take the mark! They will be beheaded as martyrs for not worshipping the beast (2:10-11; 6:9-11; 13:9-10; 20:4-6). They have rest in contrast with those who worshipped the beast. Their works follow them in that they will be rewarded for them. The antichrist says, “Worship me and live; refuse to worship me and you will die.” But that is only temporal life and death. Christ says, “Worship the beast and you will suffer eternal torment; refuse to worship the beast and I you will have eternal life.”

#### **The harvest, the Son of man, and three other angels (vs.14-20)**

This is Jesus Christ (1:13; Dan. 7:13-14). The white cloud symbolizes righteousness. “Son of man” is a messianic title (Heb. 2:5-9; Jn. 5:26-27; Matt. 25:31) that is never used by Paul in his epistles to the body of Christ. This is the last reference of Jesus as the Son of man. Compare it with the

first reference in the NT (Matt. 8:20). When Christ comes to the earth He will have many crowns (19:11-12). The Father sends an angel to tell the Son that the time has come for Him to reap (Mk. 13:32-37). The harvest is at the end of the great tribulation (Mk. 4:26-29; Matt. 13:36-43). The prophets spoke of this harvest (Joel 3:9-17). The armies of the earth led by the antichrist will be gathered outside of Jerusalem for the battle of Armageddon (16:12-16; 19:11-21). There is a distinction between the harvest (vs.14-16) and the vintage (vs.17-20). Both occur at the end of the great tribulation, but in the harvest the Son of man separates the chaff and the tares from the wheat while in the vintage the vine of the earth is tread down in the winepress and is absolutely destroyed. The vine of the earth will be utterly destroyed (antichrist as opposed to the True Vine, song of Moses Deut. 32:31-43, apostate Israel “degenerate plant of a strange vine”, Jer. 2:21). Grapes are tread under foot in the wine press (Isa. 63:1-6; Joel 3:9-17). God is righteous in avenging the blood of His servants (6:10; 16:4-7; 17:6; 18:24).

## Chapter 15

This short chapter provides an introduction to chapter sixteen. The apostle John sees seven angels coming out of the temple in heaven with seven vials full of the wrath of God. In the next chapter he sees the angels pour out those vials upon the earth.

### **The seven angels with the seven last plagues (v.1)**

By comparing verse 1 with 12:1-3 we learn that a “sign” is also called a “wonder.” It is interesting to note that the word “seven” occurs eight times in this short chapter of just eight verses. The seven plagues are called the “last plagues” because they will come at the end of the great tribulation and they are the greater plagues of which the plagues poured out on Egypt were just a picture of (Ex. 34:10). Because God is not pouring out wrath in this age of grace many wrongly think that He never will. Thank God that the body of Christ is delivered from the awful wrath to come (1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9).

### **The worship of the martyrs (vs.2-4)**

The sea of glass that John saw in chapter four is now mingled with fire because of the plagues that are about to be poured out on the earth (Heb. 12:29). The wrath of God is filled up in these last plagues. The whole seventieth week of Daniel will come as a result of the wrath of God, but His wrath builds and intensifies until it is fully poured out at the end. Those that were beheaded for rejecting the beast are victorious from God’s perspective because they are with Him and will be resurrected to reign on earth (14:9-13; 20:4). They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, by the word of their testimony, and by not loving their lives unto the death (12:11). These martyrs are yet to be resurrected and yet their disembodied souls are seen playing harps (5:8; 14:2) and singing! That they sing the song of Moses proves that they are Israelites. The song of Moses is either the one in Ex. 15 or Deut. 32. There had to be a new song for a new covenant because Israel failed under the law (Rev. 5:8-9). The song of Lamb is about His judgments and power to rule all nations (Rev. 6:17; Ps. 86:9-12). When He manifests His great judgments there will be nations that wisely choose to fear and worship Him (Ps. 2). Only God is absolutely holy in the very essence of His person.

### **The seven angels prepare to pour out the plagues (vs.5-8)**

The “temple of the tabernacle of the testimony” refers to the holy of holies in heaven (11:19). The testimony is mentioned because the plagues that are about to be poured out are all in fulfillment of His word. Vials are bowls that are fat at the bottom and skinny at the top. A cloud filled the tabernacle (Ex. 40:35) and temple (1 Kings 8:10-11), but now it is smoke which signifies the judgment that is about to fall (Ex. 19:18) and cannot be averted. No man could enter the smoke filled temple to intercede in an attempt to stop the judgment (Lam. 3:43-44).

## Chapter 16

In the previous chapter John saw seven angels coming out of the temple in heaven with seven vials full of the wrath of God. In this chapter he sees them pour out those vials upon the earth. The book of Revelation alternates between visions in heaven and on earth. The heavenly visions are preparatory to what takes place on earth. Chapters 16-18 are the sixth vision "On Earth." This is the most important of all the visions seen by John, in relation to the earth. It has the largest space given to its description. It consists of the great judgments introduced by the sounding of the seventh trumpet (11:15-19), which completes "The mystery of God," (10:7) by the pouring out of the seven vials. The next vision is the last seen in heaven, and it introduces the actual Revelation of the Lord Jesus, personally, to the earth; and thus brings on the conclusion of the whole prophecy.

This sixth vision on earth consists of three divisions:

1. The Great Judgments (16) - The Seven Vials
2. The Great Whore (17) - Mystery Babylon
3. The Great City (18) - Great Babylon

The word "great" is used eleven times in this chapter; more often than in any other chapter in the NT, the next being chapter 18, where it occurs ten times (72 times in Revelation). We are justified, therefore, in entitling the judgments and subjects of these chapters as "great."

There is some similarity between the vial-judgments and those of the trumpets (e.g., waters become blood), but those were measured ("a third") and these are the full wrath of God (15:1). The nation of Israel began with plagues when God delivered them out of Egypt. The ten plagues were literal and demonstrated God's judgment on the idols of Egypt. The Exodus from Egypt was literal history, but it also provides a prophetic picture of the future salvation of Israel (Egypt = world; Pharaoh = antichrist). Moses is one of the two witnesses and will once again smite the earth with plagues (11:6). There is a similarity between these last plagues with the plagues in Egypt:

- The first vial is like the sixth plague, which was of boils
- The second and third vials are like the first plague, when the waters became blood
- The fifth vial is like the ninth plague, when darkness overspread the land
- The sixth vial is like the second plague, of frogs
- The seventh vial is like the seventh plague, of hail

The fourth is the only vial which has no counterpart in the Egyptian plagues; and that is the great "heat." Now, if six out of these seven judgments have already been *once* seen and experienced,

why should not like plagues be sent again, when it is expressly said that the supernatural events connected with Israel's return shall be "like as it was ... in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt" (Isa. 11:16)?

Williams wrote, *"God promised Israel that in the end of His indignation against them He would deliver them from an oppressor more terrible than Pharaoh, and would strike their oppressor with judgments more appalling than those which fell upon the Egyptian tyrant. This promise, so often recalled in the Prophets and in the Psalms, will be at this time fulfilled; and the similarity of these plagues to those of Egypt is consequently most striking. (See Ex. 34:10)"*

### **The seven angels commanded to pour out the vials (v.1)**

The great voice that speaks in this chapter (v.17) is likely the voice of Christ Himself ("wrath of the Lamb", 15:2-4). The mighty voice that shouted "It is finished" from the cross now shouts "It is done" from the throne. At the cross the divine purpose in grace was finished; here the divine purpose in wrath.

### **The first vial – noisome and grievous sore (v.2)**

Noisome means "Noxious to health; hurtful; mischievous; unwholesome; destructive." The painful sores will cause men to make some noise (noisome). Some think this will be leprosy. It will only fall on those who take the mark of the beast. In judgment God will cause them to be marked with these grievous sores (Deut. 28:27, 35).

### **The second vial – sea becomes blood (v.3)**

"The sea" most likely refers to the Mediterranean Sea. The word "soul" is used in the sense of living creature (8:8-9, contrast a third with every). The blood of a dead man congeals and stinks.

### **The third vial – fresh water becomes blood (vs.4-7)**

The fresh water becomes blood contaminating the drinking supply. The word of God forbids the drinking of blood. The believing remnant that have the signs of the kingdom will be able to drink any deadly thing and not be hurt by it (Mk. 16:17-18). Angels are assigned to different spheres and responsibilities (14:18). God executes judgment in righteousness and perfect justice. Under the law the judgment corresponded with the crime; eye for eye, tooth for tooth. It is implied that the Babylonian worship will involve the drinking of the blood of the martyrs (17:6). God avenges the blood of His servants (19:1-2). The altar is mentioned for the prayers of the saints are upon it; and the souls of the martyrs are beneath it. The angel's words, here, show that they are uttered in a different dispensation from the present dispensation of grace.

### **The fourth vial – great heat (vs.8-9)**

In the great tribulation there will “signs in the sun” (Lk. 21:25). Isaiah prophesied that there is coming a day when the light of the sun will be sevenfold (Isa. 30:26). This will be a small foretaste of what the wicked will feel when the Sun of righteousness arises (Mal. 4:1-3). They reject the preaching of the everlasting gospel (14:6-7). They knew God was judging them but instead of repenting and giving Him glory they blaspheme His name! This demonstrates the wicked heart of man.

### **The fifth vial – darkness (vs.10-11)**

This shows that the plagues are concentrated on the region from which the beast reigns in the Middle East. The seat of Satan is in Pergamos (2:13) and he gives his seat to the beast (13:2). His seat may not be stationary. It could be in Babylon by this time. Satan is the prince of darkness, so it is only fitting that darkness should invade his kingdom (Joel 2:1-2). It will be a thick darkness that can be felt (Ex. 10:21-23; 2 Pet. 3:17). This darkness can drive men insane. They will be sitting in absolute darkness with grievous sores and burnt skin. What misery! They will gnaw their tongues in pain (picture of hell). Now they not only blaspheme the name of God but God Himself. They refuse to repent! Many think that if God would cause supernatural manifestations that men would repent. Christ did many signs before the eyes of the very men that crucified Him!

### **The Sixth Vial (vs.12-16)**

The sixth vial, like the third, has three divisions (whereas all the others have only two). These three are (1) the pouring out, (2) the effect, and (3) things seen. The third vial was the same, except that there we had things *heard*: and here we have things *seen*. The Euphrates is indeed a “great river” for it is 1,800 miles long, and a section of it is 3,600 feet wide and 30 feet deep. But it will be dried up (Isa. 11:15-16). The Euphrates was mentioned under the sixth trumpet. At the sounding of the sixth trumpet a vast supernatural army (200 million) is let loose to slay a third part of men (9:13-21). Here, under the sixth vial, a vast human army is gathered together, the whole of which will be destroyed upon the second coming of Christ (14:17-20; 19:11-21; Joel 3:1-2; Zeph. 3:8; Zech. 14). The kings of the east (Babylon is near the Euphrates) journey westward to Palestine. They will be gathered into a called Armageddon (means the mount of Megiddo). The valley there is a great battlefield. Napoleon called it the most natural battlefield in the world. It was there that Deborah and Barak destroyed Sisera and his host (Judg. 5:19) and King Josiah was overthrown by Pharaoh-Necho, king of Egypt (2 Kings 23:29). Slaughter and lamentation are associated with Megiddo (Zech. 12:11). It is a real locality, and the prophesied events that are yet to take place there will be real also.

Verses 13-16 are parenthetical and digress temporarily from the action to explain how Satan lures these armies to the great battle. The unholy trinity will be at work to bring down the armies of the world to the great battle of Armageddon, which is called, “that great day of God Almighty.”

In order to do this, supernatural powers will be required. Thus, the flattery, promises, and miracles of the three persuade them to come into the land of Israel (1 Kings 22). Devils can work miracles (13:11-15). Miracles alone are not evidence that God is using a person. Notice that Satan is consistent with the first mention principle in Scripture. As in the beginning, so it is here. He is ever the great deceiver. He is a liar and the father of the lie. His demonic ambassadors are described as frogs which are unclean creatures of darkness. Contrast with the Holy Spirit descending in the shape of a DOVE (clean, peace) on Christ at His baptism. The warning and the blessing for those who watch and remain faithful is consistent with the kingdom doctrine. It is seen repeatedly in the Gospels, and in Hebrews through Revelation. The garments symbolize conduct (3:1-6; 19:7-8). Christ comes as a thief in His second coming because the world will not be expecting Him.

### **The Seventh Vial (vs.17-21)**

The seventh vial is poured out into the air because it will cause great hail to fall out of heaven (v.21). The temple in heaven is seen at the close of each of the three series of judgments. This is the last, in the new heaven and new earth there will be no temple (22:22). This is the final act, which chronologically brings on the opening of heaven and the coming forth of the Son of God Himself to the battle in 19. But before that happens we will be told of the destruction of Babylon and the Empire of the Beast (17-18). The voices, thunders, and lightnings all speak of judgment (8:5; 11:19). When the seventh angel pours out his vial a great voice from the throne (the LORD) says, "It is done." This will end all up and accomplish all the divine counsels as to these judgments (contrast with Jn. 19:30, spoken in grace). The earthquake of the seventh vial will be the greatest earthquake the world has ever experienced. Some believe the great city to be Jerusalem (11:8). However, it is most likely the city of Babylon (14:8; 17-18) that is divided into three sections and her destruction is complete in one hour. That will be described in full in chapter 18. Some say that "Great Babylon" means "Rome"; others hold that it means "Jerusalem"; while others, like ourselves, simply believe what is written. Babel or Babylon was the scene of the first apostasy from God after the Flood. Always the enemy of God's people, she became in later days the metropolis of the first great Gentile Empire as seen in the image and dream of Nebuchadnezzar. God promised to remember His covenant with Israel; and when He did so He promised to also to remember Babylon in the day of His wrath. Therefore, His people cry concerning it, "Remember, O Lord." (Ps. 98:3; 137). Babylon is only partly destroyed now in token of its total destruction soon to follow. Chapters 17-18 are going to tell us of the causes, and of the manner, and the consequences of that judgment. The cities which are destroyed are probably the capital cities of the confederated nations that were allies of the beast. The earthquake causes topographical changes to the earth. Similar results take place at the opening of the seventh seal (8:5); and at the sounding of the seventh trumpet (11:19). This is the great earthquake spoken of by the prophets (Isa. 2:17-21). The vial, which is poured out into the air, causes such violent storms and

updrafts that hail stones accumulate to a weight of 100-114 pounds each. According to the law, blasphemers are to be stoned (Lev. 24:16). A similar storm was also in Egypt. Hail had been before one of God's engines of war, beyond the use or defense of man (Job 38:22-23; Ex. 9:22-26; Josh. 10:11). Hail stones are associated with divine wrath (Isa. 30:30; Ezek. 13:11). No wonder the blasphemy that follows from the worshippers of the Beast, impenitent to the end, will also be exceeding great. The wicked blaspheme God three times in this chapter instead of repenting. Imagine the wickedness of their heart!

## Chapter 17

In chapter 16 John saw seven angels pour out seven vials full of the wrath of God upon the earth. In chapter 19 he sees Jesus Christ coming to the earth leading the armies of heaven against the antichrist and his armies in the battle of Armageddon. Chapters 17-18 are parenthetical and describe in detail God's judgment on Babylon. This destruction has already been announced by an angel (14:8). Under the seventh vial God remembers Babylon (not that He forgot, but brings it back to mind) and what He promised to do to it (16:17-21). Babylon is only partly destroyed in the earthquake in token of its total destruction soon to follow. Chapters 17-18 are going to tell us of the causes, and of the manner, and the consequences of that judgment. God promised to remember His covenant with Israel and He also promised to remember Babylon in the day of His wrath. Therefore, His people cry concerning it, "Remember, O Lord." (Ps. 98; 137).

We will not examine this chapter in great detail. It is my goal to give a basic understanding of what this chapter is about. I am convinced that many things about the great tribulation will only be understood by those saints who will be in it! The book of Revelation is not about us and neither was it written to us.

### **The Vision (vs.1-6)**

The beast upon which the woman sits is the antichrist empowered by Satan (13:1-8; 12:3). The great whore of the antichrist stands in contrast to the virgin bride of the Lamb (21:9-10). Satan is the great counterfeiter! Both women symbolize cities that propagate religion, one is true the other false (v.18). Both cities are decked with gold, precious stones, and pearls but one is made rich by Satan and the other by God. Babylon is clothed in purple and scarlet while the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem will be clothed in white (19:7-8). The fornication is spiritual (though involves physical). The issue is IDOLATRY which is referred to as fornication and abomination in the Bible (devils are behind all idolatry, Satan in religion). Babylon is the mother of harlots, the fountain-head of all idolatry. The book of Proverbs contains prophecy (30:1; 31:1). Babylon is the strange woman and the bride of the Lamb is the virtuous woman. False religion has always been the persecutor of God's faithful servants. The greatest persecution is still future! John wonders and marvels at the woman. He evidently didn't understand what he was seeing and so the angel reveals the mystery to him (v.7).

### **The Interpretation (vs.7-18)**

We don't need to interpret the vision because it has been interpreted for us in these verses. Yet most commentators make this woman and the beast to be something other than what the angel says they are. Most fundamental commentators think the woman is Rome. After all, Rome is called the city that sits on seven hills! But the angel said the seven MOUNTAINS that have seven

kings. I believe that the Roman Catholic Church is one of the daughters of this harlot, but the harlot herself is much older and greater than the RCC! The woman is literal Babylon, "that great city." The name Babylon is found nearly 300 times in the Bible. We find its beginning in Genesis 10-11. After the flood it was God's purpose for the descendants of the sons of Noah to spread out and replenish the earth. In rebellion against God man came together to build their own city and religion. The first one world ruler was in the 13<sup>th</sup> generation from Adam and was a descendant of Canaan (who was cursed). Nimrod is a type of the antichrist. About 1,500 years later God used Babylon to judge His people and take them captive. God then judged Babylon but there are prophecies about the destruction of Babylon that have both a near and far fulfillment (Isa. 13:1, 6-13, 19-22; Jer. 50:1, 4-5). Babylon will be rebuilt into a great city (Zech. 5:5-11).

The mystery of iniquity has been at work throughout history but will culminate in the great tribulation under the antichrist (2 Thess. 2) and then Mystery Babylon will be fully exposed for what it is and then destroyed.

## Chapter 18

This chapter goes right along with the previous chapter concerning the fall and destruction of Babylon at the end of the great tribulation.

### **The Announcement of Judgment (vs.1-3)**

After one of the seven angels that had the seven vials showed John the vision of the woman sitting on the beast and gave him the interpretation (beast = antichrist; woman = the great city of Babylon), another angel came down with great power and glory to announce the fall of Babylon. We read three times (completion) in the Bible that Babylon "is fallen, is fallen" (history, Isa. 21:9; prophecy, Rev. 14:8; 18:2). The repetition is for emphasis and surety. It could also signify the fall of both the religion and city of Babylon. God will have issued ample warnings by the end of great tribulation! Babylon will be the center of demonic activity because the prince of devils will be reigning from there (Isa. 14:4-23). There will be literal unclean and ravenous birds due to the carnage (Isa. 13:21; Jer. 50:39), but in the Bible birds are used as symbols of devils (Matt. 13:4, 18-19, 31-32). Devils are behind all idolatry (1 Cor. 10:20). This indictment is found three times (Jer. 51:7; Rev. 14:8). The fornication is idolatry. False religion is a profitable business (v.3)! The city of Babylon will be the wealthiest city on earth in the tribulation. There are prophecies about the fall of historical Babylon (Isa. 13-14; 47; Jer. 50-51), but those prophecies also contain references to a literal Babylon that is yet future (Isa. 13:1, 6-13, 19-22). There has been a city called Babylon after the fall of historical Babylon (1 Pet. 5:13). There is much in Jer. 51 that matches Rev. 18.

### **The Appeal to God's People (vs.4-8)**

There will be Jews in Babylon at the end of the great tribulation that are given the opportunity (Lot is a picture of this) to separate from it before it is destroyed (Jer. 51:44). If they remain there after this warning they are partakers of her sins and will suffer under the same plagues that she will suffer. God calls His people to SEPARATION throughout the word of God (2 Cor. 6:17). We are never instructed to stay within an unclean thing in an effort to purify it. That her sins reached up to heaven means that the time has come for the God of heaven to bring down destruction on Babylon for her sins. The multitude of her grievous sins cried out for judgment (Jer. 51:9). That He remembers (brings to mind with intent to act) her iniquities implies He will now fully judge Babylon for all her iniquities both past (Nimrod and Nebuchadnezzar) and present. When God remembers Babylon He will reward her double for her wicked works (Ps. 137:7-9). Why double? It will be not only justice, but vengeance! She made the nations drink of the cup of the wine of her fornication and so God will make her drink of the cup of His wrath (16:19). According to the law the thief was to repay double. Babylon stole glory that belongs to God alone. The Babylonian religion is represented by a woman (Jezebel, 2:20; Matt. 13:33). She is a queen (Isa. 47). The

idolaters in Israel worshipped the “Queen of heaven” (Jer. 44). God’s judgment upon Babylon will be sudden and complete. He will burn her up with fire (Isa. 13:19; Jer. 51:25). That is not how historical Babylon was judged (that was gradual).

### **The Agony of the World (vs.9-19)**

The kings, merchantmen, and shipmasters will lament the destruction of Babylon because of the resulting economic collapse. There are twenty-eight items of merchandise listed in this passage. Her great sin is idolatry and not commerce. She is not trading for these goods. She is an importer, not an exporter! Merchandise has always gone hand in hand with idolatry (Ezek. 28:16, “multitude of thy merchandise”). Covetousness is idolatry (Col. 3:5). The world will consider Babylon to be great because of its material prosperity.

### **The Absolute Destruction (18:20-24)**

Notice that Babylon is referred to as “her.” Babylonian religion is represented by a woman (Isa. 47). Contrast the lamenting of the world (Alas, Alas, 3 times) with the rejoicing of heaven (4 fold Alleluia, 19:1-6). What a difference in perspective! The kings, merchantmen, and shipmasters say nothing about the loss of life. Their sorrow is for their loss of riches! They will all see the destruction whether they are in the region or not because of the media. The blood of the apostles, prophets, and saints will be avenged (6:9-11). Babylon will shed much blood in the great tribulation, but she shed the blood of God’s people in the past and her daughters (17:6) have done the same. Those that were slain were of Israel (Jer. 51:47-49). The martyred saints are in heaven BEFORE resurrection (soul not sleeping). The symbolic action of the mighty angel shows how sudden and violent Babylon’s fall will be (“in one hour”). Compare Jer. 51:60-64 (angels bound in the river, 9:14). They would not repent throughout the plagues poured out in the tribulation. The expression, “NO MORE AT ALL” occurs five times in this passage and speaks of complete and final destruction. The nations will be deceived by the sorceries of Babylon (Isa. 47:9-13). Her miracle working preachers will be empowered by devils (v.2).

## Chapter 19

This is one of the great chapters in the word of God. It is like a bridge from darkness to light, destruction to deliverance, and cursing to blessing. The three chapters before it concern the seven last plagues full of the wrath of God. Babylon, the whore of Satan, is destroyed out of the earth and her smoke ascends up for ever and ever. The three chapters after it concern the blessings of the millennial reign of Christ and the eternal state. Holy Jerusalem, the wife of the Lamb, descends in blessing down to the earth. There is a great contrast in this chapter between joy in Heaven (vs.1-10) and judgment on Earth (vs.11-21).

### **The Four Hallelujahs (vs.1-6)**

Alleluia (transliterated from Greek) is same word as Hallelujah which is a compound Hebrew word translated "Praise ye Jehovah" in the OT. It occurs 28 (4x7) times (24 in OT, 2x12; 4 in NT, all in this passage). The first reference corresponds with the last (Ps. 104:35). We usually think of praising God in the context of His goodness to His people (Ps. 111). His judgment on the wicked demonstrates His righteousness, holiness, and justice. They would not repent and certainly deserved His wrath (v.2). Babylon corrupted the earth with her idolatry and shed the blood of God's saints (Deut. 32:43; 2 Kings 9:7; Rev. 2:20-24). He must destroy Babylon before He can set up His righteous city in the earth. All heaven rejoices over her destruction (18:20). How will her smoke ascend up for ever and ever? I think this refers to more than the fact that city of Babylon is eternally destroyed, never to be rebuilt (18:21-23, "no more at all" 5 times). The inhabitants of Babylon will suffer eternal and conscious torment in the lake of fire (Jude 7; 14:9-11; 20:10, 15).

Who is rejoicing?

- ✓ Much people in heaven (v.1). These are the same ones that had cried out for vengeance, the martyred tribulation saints (6:9-11). Those that were persecuted are rejoicing because their reward will be great (Matt. 5:10, 12). Note that this is before their resurrection (20:4-6).
- ✓ The 24 elders and 4 beasts "Amen" the Alleluia of the saints and add one of their own. They were seen worshipping God around His throne in heaven in chapters 4-5 when the time had come for Him to interfere in the affairs of this evil world, and wind up His great controversy with it and Satan. Now, again, we see them worshipping God in this chapter, when the great controversy has come to an end.
- ✓ A great multitude that includes all God's servants in heaven. This includes the OT saints, kingdom saints, 144,000 that were raptured (v.14) and angels. Is the body of Christ included in this rejoicing multitude? We are in heaven at this time (raptured before the tribulation).

Jesus Christ is “the Lord God omnipotent” that will reign for ever and ever (Matt. 28:18; Rev. 11:15-18).

### **The Marriage Supper of the Lamb is Announced (vs.7-10)**

John, though a spiritual man, reacts naturally to the words of the glorious angel (see also 22:8-9). This demonstrates the tendency of the human heart to idolatry and that even the godliest of men are not sinless. The angel is just a messenger and in that sense a fellow servant of John and his brethren. The testimony is about Jesus and every knee will bow at that matchless name (Phil. 2:10). It is significant that the angel calls Him Jesus and not the Lord Jesus Christ. The Son of God in His humanity is the spirit, the sum, and the substance of prophecy. It all points to Him (1 Pet. 1:10-11). Jesus is God manifest in the flesh. He never refused worship while on earth!

All of heaven rejoices that the marriage of the Lamb is now come. What is the timing of this event? The return of Christ to the earth after the great tribulation. It will take place on earth. Most teachers and commentators think the marriage supper takes place in heaven upon the rapture of Church because they believe that we are the bride of Christ. The apostle Paul uses the marriage relationship as a metaphor to teach us about our relationship with Christ. In that sense, we are married to Christ **upon salvation** because “he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit” (Rom. 7:4). Contrast Rev. 19:7-8 with 2 Cor. 5:21; Col. 1:12; 2:10. The body of Christ was a mystery hid in God and revealed first to Paul. We cannot be the bride of prophecy!

Heaven rejoices at the destruction of the great whore (vs.1-6) and the marriage of the Lamb to His pure wife (17:1-6; 21:9-27). The whore and the wife are cities that propagate religion. Babylon will be the center of false religion that corrupts the earth. Jerusalem will be the center of pure religion that blesses the earth (city set on a hill, light of the world). Babylon was decked in gold, silver, and precious stones. But she was made rich by her king, Satan. The New Jerusalem is decked in gold, silver, and precious stones. She is adorned for her husband, who is the King of kings, the Lord Jesus Christ. The whore is arrayed in purple and scarlet. The wife is arrayed in fine linen, clean and white. The whore is destroyed out of the earth and her smoke ascends up for ever and ever. The Holy Jerusalem, the wife of the Lamb, descends in blessing down to the earth.

Revelation is the consummation of the prophetic kingdom program of Israel. Is there any OT prophecy about a future marriage between the Lord and Israel? This is a much anticipated event. “The marriage of the Lamb is come” implies that it is a prophesied and promised event. Consider these biblical truths:

- 1) Israel became the wife of God under the old covenant (Jer. 2:1-2)
- 2) She continually committed spiritual adultery against Him with idols (Jer. 3; Ezek. 16)
- 3) After much longsuffering He gave her a bill of divorcement (Isa. 50:1; Jer. 3:8)

- 4) He promised to betroth her again (Isa. 54:6-8; 62:1-5; Hos. 2:14-23). Some claim that because Israel was forsaken that she could not be a virgin bride. She can be called a bride (through remarriage) and a virgin (the blood of the new covenant will wash away all her sins, Jer. 31:1-4, 31-34).
- 5) Christ presented Himself to Israel as a Bridegroom but He was rejected by her (Jn. 3:29). The gospel of the kingdom was likened to a wedding invitation in several parables (Matt. 22:1-14; 25:1-13).
- 6) When He comes again she will receive Him and become His wife (Rev. 19:7-11)
- 7) This relationship will remain in the eternal state (Rev. 21:1-2, 9-14)

Marriage is a union. At His second coming Christ will be joined to His people and them to their land (Beulah). The title of "the Lamb" is always used of the Lord in relation to Israel and never to the body of Christ. She is redeemed by the blood of the new covenant. He is the fulfillment of their sacrificial system. The white linen represents the righteousness of the saints (3:4-5, 17-18; 16:15). Faith that WORKS (Jam. 2). The tribulation is to test her fidelity. Will she worship the beast? Law of jealousies (Num. 5; Mk. 16:17-18). I think that the entire Kingdom age is the marriage supper. She is still the bride after the millennium. Gentiles that feared God and blessed Israel will be guests at the supper (Lk. 14:15; 13:28-29). The word "blessed" appears seven times in Revelation (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14). None of these conditional promises are for us (Eph. 1:3)!

Some claim that the Father will be married to Israel and Christ to the Church. The Bible does not present God as having two wives. The same One that spoke to Moses through the burning bush is the same One that was married to Israel in the OT and presented Himself to her as the Bridegroom in the Gospels (which was still OT ground until the cross, Heb. 9:16) . Who was that? It was the Son of God. Jesus Christ said, "Before Abraham was, I AM" (Jn. 8:58). In Acts 7:30 we learn that it was "an angel of the Lord" that appeared to Moses in the burning bush. The Son of God made many pre-incarnate appearances in the OT as the angel of the Lord.

### **The Second Coming of Christ (vs.11-21)**

The Son of God was born into this world about 2,000 years ago in literal fulfillment of prophecy. The prophecies became more and more specific as God progressively revealed His plan. The coming Redeemer would be of:

- ✓ Of the human race (Gen. 3:15)
- ✓ From a section of that race- Shem (Gen. 9:26)
- ✓ From a nation of that section- Hebrew (Gen. 12:3)
- ✓ From a tribe of that nation- Judah (Gen. 49:10)
- ✓ From a family of that tribe- David (2 Sam. 7:16)

- ✓ Born of a member of that family- virgin woman (Isa. 7:14)
- ✓ Born in a village of that family- Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2)

And there are many more prophecies about the first coming of Christ into the world (life, ministry, death resurrection, ascension). Isaiah 53 contains about 30 prophecies of Christ in just 12 verses! His crucifixion was described in detail about a 1,000 years in advance in Psalm 22. Prophecy proves the inspiration of scripture (2 Pet. 1:19-21; Isa. 46:9-10).

Jesus Christ, who is the truth and cannot lie, promised His disciples, "I will come again". The writer of Hebrews said that Christ will "appear the second time" (Heb. 9:28). There are many more prophecies of His second coming in glory than of His first coming in humiliation. The prophecies of His second coming will be just as literally and exactly fulfilled as were the prophecies of His first coming. The world acknowledges that Jesus was born, but most do not know the truth about who He is and why He came. He was born of a virgin and was God in the flesh. He was the king of the Jews but His own nation rejected Him. He willingly laid down His sinless life on the cross as a sacrifice to pay for the sin of the world. He arose bodily the third day and then ascended up to Heaven. He is coming again in glory to rule and reign on the earth. The world can tolerate baby Jesus in the manger, but they scoff at the prophecies of His coming again in glory. The world is not looking forward to this event, but God is! It is the most anticipated event in scripture.

This present age was a mystery God planned before the world began, but kept secret until he revealed it through Paul after the fall of Israel. The mystery of the body of Christ and our rapture to heaven is only found in Paul's epistles. This age began with a glorious appearing of Christ as recorded in Acts 9 when the message of grace came down to Paul and it will conclude with a glorious appearing of Christ when the body of Christ goes up to meet Him in the air. After that rapture God will resume His dealings with Israel and fulfill the final seven of the 490 years prophesied in Dan. 9. It is AFTER the seven year tribulation period that Christ returns visibly to the earth to establish His righteous kingdom.

The theme of Revelation is stated in its introduction (1:7). The bulk of the book has been about the judgments that will come on the earth before Christ returns. But throughout we have been given several glimpses of His return. Now we have finally come to the actual event. At this point in the book the climax of the revelation has been reached with the presentation of Jesus Christ as the glorified King of kings and Lord of lords. All which precedes this passage is in a sense introductory and that which follows is an epilogue.

## I. **The Advent of Christ (vs.11-13)**

This is the second white horse rider in Revelation. He stands in stark contrast with the first white horse rider who came at the beginning of the tribulation (6:2), the antichrist.

- A. **His powerful entry** (“I saw heaven opened”) – sudden, unexpected, public, visible, glorious, terrifying descent from heaven to earth (Matt. 24:27-30). There is a marked out path He takes into Jerusalem.

### B. **His names:**

- 1) Faithful and True – in contrast with antichrist who was unfaithful (broke covenant) and false. No man is faithful and true in his flesh. Faithful to His promises and true to His person. He is who He says He is and will do...
- 2) No man knew – He receives a new name (3:12; 2:17; 19:7), describing His deity, no man knows but He knows.
- 3) The Word of God – Creator redeems His creation (Jn. 1:1-3, 14, 18)
- 4) King of kings and Lord of lords – His title as the Son of Man, the kingdoms of the world become His kingdoms, many crowns

### C. **His description** (contrast with first coming). He comes:

- 1) Not on a donkey but a fiery white charger
- 2) Not with His eyes filled with tears but as a flame of fire
- 3) Not called a blasphemer and deceiver, but called Faithful and True
- 4) Not wearing a crown of thorns but many crowns
- 5) Not wearing purple robe stained with His blood but His vesture dipped in the blood of His enemies
- 6) Not forsaken by His followers but with His armies following Him in conquest
- 7) Not with a mouth speaking words of grace but of judgment
- 8) Not to bear the wrath of God on the cross but to tread the winepress of the wrath of God

- D. **His purpose** – He is coming to judge and make war with His enemies (“man of war” Ex. 15:3; Isa. 42:13-14; Zech. 14:3). Contrast with this age: grace and peace!

## II. **The Armies of Christ (v.14)**

The word “armies” implies different groups return with Christ to the earth. He comes with angels (Matt. 25:31; 2 Thess. 2:7-9). One angel slew 185,000 Assyrian soldiers! He comes with His saints (Zech. 14:5; Jude 14-15). This is primarily about the saints of Israel. The remnant of Israel still on earth when Christ comes will be raptured into the land.

### **III. The Authority of Christ (vs.15-16)**

The government of the world will now be on His shoulders (Isa. 9:6-7; Zechariah. 14:9). Ps. 2; Isa. 11:1-9; 63:1-6

- 1) He smites – sword of His mouth (2 Thess. 2:8; 1:16; 2:16; 19:21)
- 2) He rules – rod of iron, forced subjection (1 Cor. 15:24-25)
- 3) He treads – all His enemies will be under His feet

### **IV. The Avenging of Christ (vs.17-21)**

This is the battle of Armageddon (14:17-20; 16:12-16). Armageddon means the mount of Megiddo. The valley there is a great battlefield. Napoleon called it the most natural battlefield in the world. It was there that Deborah and Barak destroyed Sisera and his host (Judg. 5:19) and King Josiah was overthrown by Pharaoh-Necho, king of Egypt (2 Kings 23:29). Slaughter and lamentation are associated with Megiddo (Zech. 12:11). It is a real locality, and the battle yet to take place there will be just as real. It is called the supper of the great God because it is the result of God's vengeance on His enemies (Matt. 24:27-28; Lk. 17:34-37; Ezek 39:17-22). The fowl will prevent pestilence. The world thought none could make war against the beast (13:4; 17:14)! The beast and his false prophet are the first to be cast into the lake of fire (different than hell, 20:14).

This supper is in contrast with the marriage supper. One is of joy and the other of judgment. BOTH take place upon the return of Christ to earth: (Isa. 63:4)

- 1) Destruction of His enemies (Ezek. 39:17-22) – “flesh” 6 times, they chose the flesh and now their flesh is devoured. Cleansing to prevent pestilence.
- 2) Deliverance of His people – permanently joined to His people, they to their land (Beulah)

## Chapter 20

In the last chapter we considered the second coming of Christ to the earth. He comes to “judge and make war.” The Father has committed all judgment to the Son (Jn. 5:22, 27; Acts 17:31). The end of chapter 19 and all of chapter 20 demonstrates that truth:

1. The beast and false prophet cast into lake of fire (19:20)
2. The armies of the earth slain (19:21)
3. Satan bound in bottomless pit for a thousand years (20:1-3)
4. The nations ruled with rod of iron for a thousand years (19:15; 20:4)
5. The final battle (20:9)
6. Satan cast into lake of fire (20:10)
7. The lost are cast into lake of fire (20:15)

### **Satan Bound in Bottomless Pit (vs.1-3)**

What humiliation! God sends just one angel to bind Satan and cast him into the bottomless pit. The Bible teaches in many passages that there is a literal pit in heart of earth. Lucifer lifted up his heart in pride and said, “I will” five times (five is the number of death). He is cast down five times (Isa. 14:1-17):

- 1) Cast out in his original rebellion (Ezek. 28:16)
- 2) Cast out of heaven (Rev. 12:7-9)
- 3) Cast into the earth (Rev. 12:9, 12-13)
- 4) Cast into the pit (Rev. 20:1-3)
- 5) Cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10)

What God seals cannot be tampered with! Thank God, because we are sealed with His Spirit (Eph. 4:30)! Notice the emphasis on the “thousand years” in this passage (6 times). Yet, many theologians would tell us that the thousand years doesn’t really mean a thousand years! The preterist view of Revelation (popular among Calvinists) has the whole book fulfilled in the first century. They claim that everything in Revelation is symbolic. They claim that Satan will not be literally bound in a literal bottomless pit. Some teach that Satan has already been bound. If he has, he sure has a long chain! There are symbols in Revelation, but they are interpreted in the context. The Bible interprets itself. The Bible does use symbols and figures of speech, but the far majority of it is to be taken literally.

Millennium is the Latin word for one thousand years. There are three different views about the millennium among professing Christians.

- 1) Pre-millennial – Christ comes to the earth, establishes His kingdom, and reigns for a thousand years before the final battle and last judgment. This is the right view.

- 2) Post-millennial – The church brings in the millennium by converting the world and then Christ comes again.
- 3) A-millennial – There is no millennium.

One of the main objections to a literal millennium are the prophecies that say Christ will reign forever (Lk. 1:31-33). Of course he reigns forever! The millennium is just the introduction and transition into the eternal state. The millennium separates the first resurrection from the final resurrection of damnation. Like all the dispensations before it, the dispensation of the kingdom ends in apostasy. Where would we put the final battle with Satan if there is no millennium? The seven days of creation picture seven thousand years of human history. The last thousand years of human history will be a “rest” (Heb. 3-4). It is interesting that the seventh day was the only day of which it was not said, “and the evening and the morning were the...” (Gen. 2:1-3). The kingdom that Christ establishes in the millennium will have no end (Isa. 9:7).

There is MUCH detailed prophecy about the millennium. It is the most anticipated day on God’s calendar (Ps. 118:22-26). Right now, it is man’s day and Satan is the god of this world. But the millennium is the day of the Lord (1 Tim. 6:14-15). It will be a kingdom of righteousness and therefore peace and prosperity will abound (Isa. 11:1-10). Many scriptures tell of the glories of the millennium.

Many will enter the kingdom in natural bodies. There will be many born (no abortion or miscarriages) during the thousand years, but there will be sin and death (Isa. 65:20) and therefore the millennium cannot be the eternal state (21:4).

### **The First Resurrection (vs.4-6)**

The dead in Christ from this present age are resurrected before the tribulation period. The first resurrection is the subject of OT prophecy and therefore cannot be about us. John sees the martyred tribulation saints resurrected and given authority to reign with Christ in the kingdom. The first resurrection would also include the OT saints and the little flock (Lk. 12:32). The emphasis is on the tribulation saints because the book of Revelation is written to them in particular. By not taking the mark of the beast they chose temporal death in order to gain eternal life. This proved their faith (Rev. 2:8-11; Matt. 10:39). Those that chose temporal life will face the second death (eternal damnation, 14:9-13). The overcomers will reign on earth as kings and priests (1:4-7; 2:26-27; 3:21; 5:9-10). This is God’s purpose for ISRAEL, His EARTHLY people (Ex. 19:5-6; Isa. 61:6; 1 Pet. 2:9). The basic governmental structure of the kingdom will be:

- 1) Christ, the King of kings
- 2) David will reign (Ezek. 37:24)
- 3) The 12 apostles will be 12 princes (Matt. 19:28)

#### 4) The 12 tribes will reign over the Gentiles, earth divided into 12 sections

What about the body of Christ? If we have a role on earth in the millennium, the scripture is silent about it. The kingdom age is not about us! We are destined to reign in heavenly places (2 Cor. 5:1; Eph. 2:6-7).

#### **The Final Battle and Final Doom of Satan (vs.7-10)**

God said that Satan MUST be loosed for a little season. Why? There will be nations that enter the kingdom in natural bodies and many will be born during the thousand year period. There must be a final test. That the nations will be ruled with rod of iron means forced subjugation. God uses Satan to give people a CHOICE. That is why He waits until after 7,000 years of human history to throw Satan into the lake of fire. The great lesson in this is that even in a perfect environment with Christ as King, men will rebel. Men will SEE Christ and still not trust Him!

In the beginning there was a first rebellion of Satan, catastrophic judgment, and recreation (Gen. 1:1-2). So it will also be in the end. Magog was a son of Japeth (Gen. 10:2). In Ezek. 38-39, Magog is a territory and Gog is the prince of that land. The terms express a multitude of nations from the four quarters of the earth. The prophecy in Ezekiel looks to both the end of the great tribulation and the end of the millennium (Ezek. 38:8-13).

The major characteristic of the Devil is that he is a great deceiver. What a contrast between him and the true God that cannot lie! Yet the majority of people choose to believe Satan rather than God. The first mention of the devil (Gen. 3:1) corresponds with the last. Being bound in the bottomless pit for a thousand years did not reform him whatsoever! Satan used the antichrist and the false prophet to deceive the world into worshipping him during the tribulation period. They were the first two to be cast into the lake of fire (19:20). They were not annihilated because they are still there when the Devil joins them a thousand years later. Notice the importance of italicized words in the KJB (“where the beast and the false prophet *ARE*”). Those that are cast into the lake of fire will suffer eternal and conscious torment. The fire and brimstone in the lake of fire is just as literal as the fire and brimstone that God rained down on Sodom and Gomorrah (first mention, Gen. 18:24). By the phrase “day and night” is meant that it will be a ceaseless torment (4:8; 7:15; 12:10). Despite popular opinion, Satan is not presently reigning as a king in hell. He was defeated at the cross but will not be cast into the lake of fire until after the millennial reign (Gen. 3:15). Why does God wait so long to cast Satan in the lake of fire? He did not create the Devil, but He uses him to give people a choice.

### **The Great White Throne (vs.11-15)**

This will be the last of various different judgments. There is not one general judgment as many believe. The Bible reveals future judgments that are distinct as to time, place, purpose, and the persons being judged. For example, the body of Christ will stand before the judgment seat of Christ upon the rapture. Our works will be judged to determine reward. We will not be judged at this great white throne judgment.

The throne is described as being great and white which is suggestive of power and purity. The Judge will execute perfect and righteous judgment, unlike the judgment often carried out by man. He Himself was wrongly judged by man and sentenced to death. This will not be a trial, but a sentencing (Jn. 3:18). The one that sits upon the throne is God (v.12). Based on other passages we know in particular that it is the Lord Jesus Christ (Jn. 5:22, 25-29). He was sent into the world in the likeness of sinful flesh and was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. He humbled Himself and became a man to be our redeemer. Those who reject Him as Savior must stand before Him as Judge. As the God-man, He is the perfect one to judge man. The earth and the heaven flee away from His face because He speaks the word for them to do so (Heb. 1:8-12; 13:8; 2 Pet. 3:7, 10-13). Contrast Isa. 52:14 with Rev. 1:16. Now He is manifested in glory (Prov. 20:8). There is no more place found for an impure heaven and earth for new heavens and earth “wherein dwelleth righteousness” will be made. With heaven and earth dissolved there will be no place for those who are judged to run and hide. They will stand before His throne being held up in space only by His word until they are cast into the lake of fire. Every knee shall bow and confess that Jesus is Lord (Phil. 2:9-11) before they are cast into the lake of fire.

The resurrection of the church which is the body of Christ takes place before the tribulation. The resurrection of the just takes place at the beginning of the thousand year reign of Christ. Afterward, all of the remaining dead are delivered up from three locations: the sea, death, and hell. This is the resurrection of damnation. What about the sea? Does this refer to the sea on earth? Throughout history many have died at sea (millions, if not billions, perished in Noah's flood). Some think it refers to the great deep that is associated with Satan and his angels. Fallen angels will be judged at this time also (Isa. 24:21-23; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6). Hell is not the grave. Death is the recipient of bodies and hell the depository of lost souls (Rev. 6:8). Those that die lost in their sins go to hell in the heart of the earth. Hell is a real place of fire and torment but it is not the lake of fire. It is a holding tank for those awaiting the final judgment.

There are books opened at this judgment. One of the books, distinct from the others, is the book of life. Evidently it contains the names of those from every age who have eternal life. It is mentioned eight times in the NT, seven times in Revelation, and once by Paul (Phil. 4:3). The body of Christ is never warned about having our names blotted out of this book, because that is not

possible (Rom. 8:35-39). It is the “Lamb’s book of life” because eternal life is in Him (1 Jn. 5:11-12). What are the other books? The dead are judged out of the things written in the books. Some think they are the records of every man’s works (including secrets and words). Others think they are the 66 books of the Bible (Jn. 12:48; Matt. 24:35). I think the books are both records of works and the Bible. Men from different ages will be judged according to the revelation God gave them. Those who loved under the law will be judged by the law. What about those who didn’t have the word of God (see Rom. 1:18-21; 2:14-15)? The dead will be judged according to their works (Ecc. 12:14). What kind of works will they be (21:8; Gal. 5:19-21)? God will give eternal life to those who earn it. When judged by works, NONE shall stand (Rom. 2:1-16). No arguments! Every mouth is stopped (Rom. 3:19; Prov. 20:8-9). There are degrees of punishment based on the degree of light rejected and kinds of sins (Matt. 11:20-24). Note the word “every man”. All will be judged individually.

There is a comforting thought in the midst of a gloomy passage (v.14a). Hell will no longer be in the earth and from this point on there will be “no more death” (21:4; 1 Cor. 15:24-26)! The lake of fire is the second death (21:8). There is an old saying, “Born once, die twice. Born twice, die once.” Death is not annihilation or ceasing to exist. It is separation. The second death is eternal separation from God in the lake of fire. The word “cast” carries with it the idea of rejection. It is the same everlasting fire prepared for Satan (Matt. 25:41). Where is the lake of fire? Probably at the bottom of the universe. Why are people cast into the lake of fire? They deserve it because of their sins, but they could have received eternal life if they would have trust Christ. He died for their sins on the cross. Because they rejected His payment they must face the wages of sin (Rom. 6:23). They are cast into the lake of fire because their name is not written in the book of life.

## Chapter 21

I remind you that John was transported in the Spirit out into the future and he saw and heard the things he wrote (“I saw”, “I heard”). This is no fairy tale! This is the truth of God! These final two chapters describe the last and final dispensation, the fulness of times (Eph. 1:10).

### **Vision – “I saw” (vs.1-2)**

We have now come full circle in the circumference of time (Ecc. 1:9; Gen. 1:1). What happened to the first heaven and earth (2 Pet. 3:1-13)? This was prophesied in the OT (Isa. 51:6, 16; 65:17; 66:22) and Jesus spoke of heaven and earth passing away (Matt. 5:18; 24:34-35). There will be three locations: heaven (universe), earth, and the new Jerusalem. The three locations will be populated by three distinct groups of men: Jews, Gentiles, and Body (2 Cor. 5:1). No more sea – in space or on earth? Probably both. The heavenly and earthly sea were both made for division.

### **Voice – “I heard” (vs.3-8)**

The “tabernacle of God is with men” is what God intended in the beginning, but because of sin Adam was driven out of the garden. Israel had this privilege, but it was conditional (Lev. 26:3, 11-12; 1 Kings 6:11-13). In the millennium, under the new covenant, it will be unconditional (Ezek. 37:21-28). Here, it is universal (1 Cor. 15:24-28, full manifestation of trinity).

This is still at least 1,007 years away, but we get a taste of it now in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17):

- God dwells in us (in Christ)
- Old things passed away – no longer “in the flesh”
- All things new – in the Spirit

The former things are passed away: death, sorrow, crying, and pain. These are the results of sin, therefore NO MORE SIN! Romans is the book of “much more” (Rom. 5) and Revelation of “no more” (7 things). We will experience no more sin or its consequences upon the rapture. All things are become new: not merely as to time, but as to kind and quality. He doesn’t describe it because it is beyond our ability to comprehend! The Word of God (Christ) and the word of God (scripture) are true and faithful (3:14; 19:11). The message from Christ on the throne:

1. It is done – 3 times: grace, Jn. 19:30; wrath, Rev. 16:17; plan of the ages, 21:6
2. I am Alpha and Omega (1:8, 11; 22:13) – He created the first heaven and earth and now creates the new heaven and earth (Rev. 3:14). First and last letters in Greek alphabet (the Word).
3. Offer of the water of life (22:1, 17) – A gift to those who will receive it by faith. Freely (Isa. 55:1; Jn. 4:14; 7:37-38). Man cannot earn life in any age!

4. Promise to the overcomer (contrast Rom. 8:32) – But faith must be proven by works in every age except the present age of grace. This is the last of 17 references to overcoming in Revelation (see promises in 2-3).
- Warning of the second death – Those who don't overcome (“but”) will suffer the second death. This verse (v.8) describes those who follow the beast (9:20-21; 22:15).

### **The holy city, new Jerusalem (vs.9-27)**

After the millennial reign of Christ and then the great white throne judgment, God will dissolve the heaven and earth by fire in order to make a new heaven and earth. When John saw the new heaven and earth he also saw new Jerusalem come down from God out of heaven. This great city is presently in the third heaven (Gal. 4:26, “Jerusalem which IS above”; Heb. 11:8-10, 13-16; 12:22; 13:14). John writes a detailed description of this literal city in 21:9-22:5. God’s city stands in stark contrast with Satan’s city (compare vs.9-11 with 17:1-5). The world thought that Babylon was the greatest city (18:15-18), but God’s city will be FAR GREATER than any city ever built by man!

- **The city is lit up by the glory of God** (v.23; 1 Jn. 1:5; Gen. 1:3-5; Heb. 1:1-3). His light is brighter than the sun. Try to imagine the beauty of His light shining through the precious stones of the city. The best thing about this amazing city is that God is there manifested in all His glory!
- **Notice all the twelves** (the number of government) used in describing the great city (capitol of universe). There are twelve:
  1. Gates
  2. Angels at the gates
  3. Names of the 12 Tribes of Israel on the gates
  4. Foundations
  5. Precious stones
  6. Apostles (does not include Paul, he distinguished himself, 1 Cor. 15:5)
  7. Thousand furlongs in the measurement
  8. Pearls
  9. Fruits on tree of life

In light of this description how could anyone claim that this city is not **primarily** for Israel? The nations that are outside of it (wall for separation not protection).

- **The massive size of the city:**
  1. 12 thousand furlongs = about 1,500 miles, probably a pyramid (mount zion)

2. The wall is 144 (12x12) cubits = 288 feet high
  3. If the new earth is the same size as the present one (8,000 miles x 24,000 miles), there will be no problem for this city to be set in the middle of it (no sea).
- **The materials out of which the city is built:**
    1. The wall is made of jasper
    2. The city is made of pure gold
    3. The 12 foundations are made out of 12 different stones (Ex. 28:15-21)
    4. The gates are made of pearl (how big are the gates if wall is 288 feet high?)
  - **What's not in the city:**
    1. No temple (21:22) – whole city is holy, God is dwelling with men
    2. No need of sun, moon, candle (21:23; 22:5)
    3. No night (21:25; 22:5) – constant activity (22:3)
    4. No sin (21:27) – not there will be sin, but said to contrast with all cities before it
    5. No curse (22:3) – contrasted with Gen. 3
  - **What's in the city:**
    1. The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb (21:22-23; 22:1)
    2. Throne of God (22:1, 3)
    3. Israel (names on the gates), the bride of prophecy is of Israel
    4. Kings will visit (21:24, 26; Matt. 25:31-46; 20:8)
    5. Those written in the Lamb's book of life (includes us, Phil. 4:3), His servants (includes OT saints)
    6. River of life (22:1) – a literal river that sustains life
    7. Tree of life (22:2) – just as literal as in Gen. 2-3, Adam and Eve were to eat of the tree of life before the fall.
  - **Paradise** was lost through the first Adam and will be regained through the last Adam. Paradise is always spoken of in Scripture as a definite place from Genesis to Revelation.
    1. On earth in the beginning (Gen. 2)
    2. It was removed from earth (Gen. 3)
    3. It was in the heart of the earth (Luke 23:43)
    4. It is in the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:1-4)
    5. It is promised (Rev. 2:7)
    6. The promise fulfilled (Rev. 22:1-5)

## Chapter 22

The first five verses of this chapter are part of the description of the new Jerusalem that we covered in the previous chapter. The remaining verses (vs.6-21) are the conclusion of the book and it is very similar to the introduction. Both emphasize that the things written in the book will shortly come to pass and they are absolutely sure because it is the word of God. Jesus Himself speaks in chapter 1 and 22. **Compare chapter 1 with chapter 22:**

Things which must shortly come to pass (1:1)

Things which must shortly come to pass (22:6)

Sent... his angel (1:1)

Sent his angel (22:6)

This prophecy (1:3)

The prophecy (22:7, 10, 18-19)

The time is at hand (1:3)

The time is at hand (22:10)

Behold, he cometh (1:7)

*I come quickly (22:7, 12, 20)*

Blessed is he that... keepeth (1:3)

Blessed is he that keepeth (22:7)

I am Alpha and Omega (1:8, 11)

*I am Alpha and Omega (22:13)*

John falls down (1:17)

*John falls down (22:8)*

To the seven churches (1:4, 11)

In the churches (22:16)

The sun shineth in his strength (1:16)

The bright and morning star (22:16)

The testimony of Jesus Christ (1:2)  
He which testifieth of these things (22:20)

Even so (1:7)  
*Even so (22:20)*

### **“He said unto me” (vs.6-7)**

The description of paradise seems too good to be true, but it is true because “these words are faithful and true” (19:9; 21:5; 22:6). He is called the “Lord God of the holy prophets” here because this book is the culmination of prophetic program (called a prophecy five times). The angel gave John the Revelation that the Father gave the Lord Jesus Christ (1:1). He speaks as Christ (vs.12-13, 16), but is not Christ (v.9). He said these things are to be “shortly done” and yet it has been nearly 2,000 years. This is why many claim it was all fulfilled in first century. They have to spiritualize the whole book to try and make it work. What is the answer? The MYSTERY (Eph. 3) interrupted and postponed the day of wrath and John wrote this book from standpoint of Lord’s day. Christ says, “I come quickly” six times in this book (2:5, 16; 3:11; 22:7, 12, 20). Those to whom this book is written to must keep it to be blessed (1:3; 22:7).

### **John’s Response (vs.8-9)**

John used the phrase “I saw” 35 times and “I heard” 23 time in this book (plus other references to saw and heard). John attempted to worship the messenger for the greatness of the message! This demonstrates the tendency of the human heart to idolatry and that even the godliest of men are not sinless. The angel is just a messenger and in that sense a fellow-servant of John and his brethren. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh. He never refused worship while on earth! There are seven beatitudes in Revelation (blessed - 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14).

### **The final words (vs.10-21)**

Daniel was told to “seal the book” (Dan. 12:4), but John was told to “Seal not” (all has now been revealed). The statement in v.11 concerns those living in the great tribulation. In other words, the angel told John to seal not the prophecy for the time of its fulfillment is near. Even though the unjust and filthy will not repent, make the prophecy known (Dan. 12:9-10). Verse 12 is not referring to the Judgment seat of Christ (11:18; Matt. 16:27). Once again, Christ says that He is “Alpha and Omega” (1:8, 11; 22:6, 13), which means He is the first and the last (Isa. 44:6).

Many commentators claim that v.14 is an incorrect translation. They change “do his commandments” to “wash their robes.” They want to make salvation the same in every age, so they change the Bible to match their beliefs instead of changing their beliefs to match the Bible. Faith that WORKS (12:17; 14:12) will required to have right to the tree of life and the city (2:7;

3:12). The tree of life literally gives physical life (vs.1-2). The church which is the body of Christ does not need the tree of life because we will have a body like the glorious body of Christ (Phil. 3:20-21). Those that don't do His commandments will be without, in the lake of fire (Rev. 21:8). Notice that Christ testifies of THESE THINGS in the CHURCHES proving that the churches in the book of Revelation are not the church of this present age because v.14 is certainly not doctrine for today.

Christ is the "root" (deity) and "offspring" (humanity) of David (Matt. 22:41-46, fulfills Davidic covenant). He is the "bright and morning star" (NIV calls Lucifer the same in Isa. 14:12). The bright and morning star is the Sun (Num. 24:17; Mal. 4:2; 2 Pet. 1:19).

The book ends with a final invitation, warning, promise, and prayer (vs.17-21). The Spirit speaks through the bride in the tribulation. The water of life (21:6; 22:1) is a gift to those who will receive it by faith. Man cannot earn life in any age! Works are required to prove faith in some dispensations, but still life is not deserved or earned. The woman omitted "freely" when paradise was lost (Gen. 3:2), but the bride says it here in the context of paradise being restored.

The book opens with promise of blessing to those who keep it and closes with promise of a curse on those who add or diminish from it. This warning must be aimed at those in the great tribulation, else how could the plagues of it be added to them?

There are three clear warnings about tampering with the word of God:

- 1) In the beginning (Deut. 4:2)
- 2) In the middle (Prov. 30:5-6)
- 3) In the end (Rev. 22:18-19)

The book of Revelation opens and closes with the declaration that Christ will come quickly, proving that this book is written to those who will be living in the tribulation period. The book ends with grace because Israel will experience the grace of Christ (1 Pet. 1:10) at His second coming.

It is interesting to compare with first verse of Bible with the last. Jesus Christ is the God who created the heaven and the earth in the beginning (Jn. 1:1-3, 14). In the KJB:

- Gen. 1:1 = 44 letters, 17 vowels, and 27 consonants
- Rev. 22:21 = 44 letters, 17 vowels, and 27 consonants