

# **What Jesus Revealed To the Churches!**

**A Study of the Book of Revelation**

by  
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# Introduction

## **An Uncovering**

The very title makes it clear that the writer wanted his message to be known. Thayer says the word "revelation" means, "an uncovering, prop. a laying bare, making naked." Three Old Testament writers used signs and symbols to set forth their messages, Ezekiel, Daniel and Zechariah. Ezekiel and Daniel wrote during the days of Babylonian captivity. Their messages carry hope for the remnant that would be saved. Revelation was written during the trying days of the Roman persecution. The message was meant to be read and a blessing is pronounced upon its readers (Revelation 1:3; 22:7).

Its purpose was to warn the church to keep itself pure, while assuring Christians that victory would ultimately be theirs. It offered comfort to those in sorrow, even promising a great end to sorrow in heaven. Likewise, it gave hope to a people who must have thought at times that Rome had even conquered their Lord by saying that God was still on his throne and in control of all the world's affairs. Its theme might be said to be, "We shall overcome, because our Lord is Lord of lords and King of kings" (Revelation 17:14).

## **The Author and Date of Revelation**

The book's author was obviously John (Revelation 1:1, 9; 22:8). However, he merely writes the words of Jesus (Revelation 1:1, 5, 10-19). The letter is addressed to seven churches in Asia (1:11). Since seven is a symbolic number for perfection and we know that there were other churches in Asia in cities such as Colosse, Laodicea, Hierapolis and Troas (Colossians 1:2; 4:13; Acts 20:5-12), we believe that this group of churches stands figuratively for all churches.

The date of the book has been the object of considerable controversy. There are two basic trains of thought. Some think it was written during the reign of Nero (54-68 A. D.), while others think the reign of Domitian a more likely time (81-96 A. D.). We are of the latter opinion for several reasons. First, Nero's persecution was mainly limited to the area around Rome, while Domitian's extended over most of the empire. Second, the cult of emperor worship did not really take shape until Domitian. His father, Vespasian would not accept worship, but Domitian took for himself titles such as "God", "Lord and God" and "Jupiter" (McCord). There was an annual sacrifice before Domitian's magistrates in which one had to say, "Caesar is Lord" and burn a pinch of incense. Once one had completed this sacrifice, a certificate, good for one year, was issued. Jews were allowed to forego such because they were recognized as Monotheists, but Christians had to comply and were persecuted if they did not. Third, the conditions of the church at Ephesus argues for a later date. Paul wrote to them around 62 A. D. and commended their faith and love (Ephesians 1:15). It is hard to imagine that Jesus would be prepared to remove their lampstand from its place for having left their first love just six short years later (Revelation 2:4-5). Fourth, Ireneus in the second century and Eusebius in the fourth century A. D. both indicate John wrote during the time of Domitian.

## **A Message For the First Century**

Many try to take the message of Revelation literally and thereby develop many fanciful doctrines. Such is dangerous as the book itself sets forth many symbols with their meaning. The seven stars in Christ's right hand were angels and the lampstands were churches (1:20). Seven lamps of fire before God's throne are seven Spirits of God, as are the seven eyes (4:5; 5:6). The bowls of incense are prayers (5:8). The red dragon is the devil (12:3, 9). Seven heads are seven mountains, ten horns are ten kings and a woman is a great city (17:9, 12, 18). Fine, clean, white or bright, linen represents the righteousness of the saints (19:8). When death and hell are cast into the lake of fire, it is called the second death (20:14).

One has to read carefully, recognizing that the book was written to a troubled people who needed courage and hope. The message had to be hidden from the persecutors and yet plain to the persecuted. It was not sealed because the message of hope would soon begin to come to pass (Rev. 22:10; 1:3). In light of this book's stern warning, we must avoid going beyond what is written and adding to or taking away from the Revelation (Rev. 22:18-19). Just as there were some secret things that belonged to God in Moses' time, so there are things not uncovered for us today (Deuteronomy 29:29). Our goal shall be to understand what is uncovered, bearing in mind that it cannot contradict other plain teachings of scripture, and leave the rest to God's judgement.

## **The Futurist Method of Interpretation**

There are several methods of interpreting Revelation. It is helpful to know what these are so that one can understand the origin of various trains of thought on particular passages. Most interpreters hold that the first three chapters are addressed to a circular rout of seven literal churches of that day.

One holding the futurist view sees chapters 4-19 as occurring primarily before Christ's second coming. Then they see the millennial reign (20:1-10), followed by judgment (20:11-15) and heaven, or hell as the case may be (21-22). They generally take all the book literally and hold the premillennial theory to be a true one.

## **The Continuous-Historical Method**

Those following the continuous-historical method of interpretation believe that the book describes all of the history of man until the end of time. This view has been held almost exclusively by Protestants and has seen the beast of Revelation 13 as the papacy. Not to be outdone, one Catholic saw the beast as Protestantism. As can already be seen, those who hold this view vary widely in their understanding of what a particular sign or symbol may be. This view has led some to predict the exact year, and even day, of the end of time, which has proven to be embarrassing.

## **The Preterist and Philosophy of History Methods**

Preterist interpreters hold that the book was written solely for those of John's day. They

believe that it has all been fulfilled. Naturally, Catholic scholars have liked this view because the Catholic church and the pope could not be foretold in such a view. These read the book only as history.

The philosophy of history, or symbolic, view holds that the symbols in Revelation describe forces which are constantly at work in the world. Thus, the book accurately predicts events throughout time. The forces of good and evil are always in conflict, but God will ultimately win out.

### **The Historical-Background Method**

The historical-background method recognizes the dire circumstances of first century readers. Therefore, an immediate meaning in the first two centuries A. D. must be found for the bulk of the book. However, there is clearly a message for Christians of every age. This method takes the best of the other methods and, hopefully, avoids their pitfalls. We will try to pursue this approach.

To get the most out of this method of study, it is important that the student put on his first century colored glasses to examine the text. Before one can explore possible meanings for his time, he must recognize the essential meaning for the time when the Lord made his revelation known through John.

# "The Revelation of Jesus Christ"

## Revelation 1

### Jesus, the Author

We have already observed that Revelation means an uncovering or a laying bare. Particularly, this is Jesus' Revelation, but as John has done so often before (John 4:34; 6:38; 7:16; 8:29; 12:44, 49; 14:24; 17:8, 20-23), he stresses that it is a message from the Father and given through the Son. There must have been great comfort in the thought that the victory set forth within the coming pages would "shortly come to pass." This vision was delivered by heavenly messenger to John, who simply identifies himself as the Lord's slave. Once, he had wanted more for himself (Mark 10:35-40), but now he had seen the Lord submit and serve others (Philippians 2:5-8; Matthew 20:20-28) and was following his lead.

The angel merely reported God's word, as it had been revealed to him, and the things he had seen. He immediately pronounced a blessing on those who would read and hear, in the sense of yielding to, the words of this prophecy. This is the first of the blessings, or beatitudes, pronounced in this book (Revelation 1:1-3; see also Revelation 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14). This blessing is for all those who will hear and do the things the book says to do (James 1:22-25). Combining this with the blessing of 22:7, one can have no doubt that John intended for the message to be understood and obeyed.

### The Seven Churches of Asia

In light of the symbolic nature of this book we have already suggested that seven churches are addressed because it is a perfect number. These seven would seem to stand for all churches and contained a representative sample of all the good and bad characteristics generally found in the churches of that, or for that matter this, day.

The greeting "Grace to you and peace," seems to have been the common Christian greeting of that day (Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:3; etc.). We are dependant upon the riches of God's grace for salvation and long for His indescribable peace (Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-10; Philippians 4:7). The source of these great blessings is God, the Father, the eternal one. Also, they come from the Holy Spirit by whom the message of grace and peace was delivered (John 16:12-14). He is here designated by the symbolic words, "the seven Spirits which are before his throne" because he has perfectly delivered God's message and is the perfect Spirit of God (Revelation 1:4).

### Identifying Jesus

This letter is also from Jesus, who is the "faithful witness" of God's will (Revelation 1:5; John 3:31-32; 8:14; 18:36-38). Jesus was also the first one to be raised from the dead to die no more (1 Corinthians 15:20; Colossians 1:18). This would be a source of great encouragement since Antipas had already died for the faith and others would likely soon follow (2:13). Knowing

that God can raise the dead should give us courage, even in the face of death (Romans 8:11). Christ is likewise the ruler over all who are in authority on the earth (Romans 13:1; Ephesians 1:20-21). It might have seemed that no one could control Rome, but the Lord was in authority and would judge them for their misdeeds (John 19:10-11). Certainly, no one has ever loved any of us more than Jesus did and does (John 5:13; Romans 5:6-8). Because of that love, He gave His blood that our sins might be washed away (Hebrews 9:14, 28; Ephesians 5:25-26).

We are kings in that we are a part of the body of the King and shall rule over all (Revelation 1:6; Ephesians 1:22-23; Philippians 2:9-11; 1 Corinthians 6:1-3). We are, furthermore, made a priesthood that we might offer up sacrifices of praise to God's name (1 Peter 2:5-9; Hebrews 13:15). At the mention of God the Father, John breaks forth in praise to His name (Ephesians 3:20-21).

John was there when the men in white apparel promised that Jesus would return in a manner like He left (Acts 1:9-11). Now, he further reveals that every eye shall see Him come again. Lest there be any doubt whether the wicked are included with the righteous in that sighting, John tells us that they who pierced him will see along with all the families of the earth, who will wail because He is coming back and they are unprepared. Jesus is eternal and his saints need not fear temporary powers like Rome because He is also Almighty (Revelation 1:7-8).

## **John**

John was more than just a brother in Christ. He was also one going through the extreme distress of persecution. He may have been banished to the Isle of Patmos because of his continued preaching about Jesus our Lord. John indicates that he and the brethren from Asia were already in the kingdom of Jesus Christ, not looking forward to its coming (Colossians 1:13). Notice that he writes as if his time on Patmos was in the past in Revelation 1:9, so it may be that a part of this book was written after he left the island. Another part of the revelation may have been written while John was seeing it (Rev. 10:4).

McCord says, "It so happens that the word "Lord's" (Kuriakes, pertaining to the Lord) appears only twice in the New Testament, once in referring to the Lord's supper (1 Cor. 11:20), and once in referring to the Lord's day (Rev. 1:10). Apparently these two, the supper and the day, belong together." John would have been in the spirit of mind so important for worship (John 4:23-24). However, it seems likely that he is here telling us that he was receiving a revelation from the Holy Spirit (4:2). Trumpets were used to direct troops in battle, so a voice like a trumpet would seem to be a commanding, or authoritative one.

## **The One Who Told John to Write**

The one who is the beginning and end of all things, our Lord, told John to write what he saw in a book and send it to the seven churches. We will say more about each of these in the next two chapters. John turned to see the source of the powerful voice and saw seven golden lampstands. Gold was the metal used to plate many of the vessels in the tabernacle and in vessels of divine service. The tabernacle was lighted by a single lampstand with seven lamps on it.

Now, each church is a lampstand with a lamp shining for the Savior. In the middle of the stands is Jesus robed in the flowing robes of one in high office. The one like the Son of man is a familiar figure from the Old Testament prophecy of Daniel (7:13-14). There, He came to the Ancient of Days, whose hair was as wool, to receive a kingdom and dominion. Here He is ruling in the midst of His churches. Notice, each church is an independent lampstand and Christ is right there with them (Revelation 1:11-13).

White snow is so pure it reflects light and is nearly blinding. Jesus is pictured in the same manner as Daniel pictured the Father, thus He is God. His eyes are able to penetrate and discover the thoughts and intents of the heart. His feet flow as metal still in the crucible. Such would be hot and burn all they touch. Hailey says this reminds us of the promise God made to His people in Malachi 4:3. His voice is powerful like great waves crashing against a rocky shore (Revelation 1:14-15; Ezekiel 43:2).

The right hand is the hand of power (Psalm 110:1; Hebrews 1:3-4). The stars the hand holds will be talked about more in verse 20. Here, it should be observed that they are under His control and protection. The sharp two-edged sword proceeding out of His mouth must represent judgement (Revelation 1:16; 2:12-16; 19:15, 21). Man cannot look on His face because it shines like the sun.

### **John's Response To Jesus' Greatness**

The vision of Jesus was so powerful and awe-inspiring that John fell down as if he were dead (compare Isaiah 6:5; Ezekiel 1:29; Daniel 8:17, 27; 10:8-10). Jesus does not want His followers to fear Him but be comforted by His presence. Jesus was there in the beginning of the world and will be there in the end (Isaiah 41:4; 44:6; 48:12). He had to die on the cross, but now is alive and able to give life to those who come to Him. He conquered death and opened up the way from the place of disembodied souls (Hades) so Christians need not fear the end of life on this earth (Revelation 1:17-18).

Jesus gave John his commission to write things which were, are and will be. There is really an element of all of these in the whole book. In this book, it is always wise to look for an inspired interpretation of the figures. In Revelation 1:20, the stars and lampstands are identified by Jesus. The stars are angels. Hailey says, "Jesus addresses each letter to 'the angel of the church...,' and concludes with the appeal, 'He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.' Whoever is addressed is to hear; the angels are addressed; the churches are to hear. It follows that the angels are that part of the church addressed which is to hear; this would be the spirit or active life of the churches."

# To the Angels of the Churches Part 1

## Revelation 2

### The Church that Abandoned Its First Love

All the letters to the churches begin with a salutation to the angel of the church and a description of Jesus. One can readily see Jesus' authority over the churches because He holds the seven stars, or angels, in His right hand. His walking in the midst of the lampstands shows His constant love and concern for the churches. Ephesus was a great city with its main deity being Artemis, or Diana. Paul first visited the city on his second missionary journey. He could not stay long because he was on his way from Corinth to Jerusalem and wanted to be there for the Passover, but he promised to return if it was God's will (Acts 18:19, 24-28). Paul did return on his third missionary journey (Acts 19:1-12, 21-41). This stay must have lasted three years and was brought to an end by the uproar caused by Demetrius the silversmith after the sale of shrines dropped off. Paul left town after the mob was quieted, but he did call for the elders from Ephesus to come to Miletus, as he was on his way home, and bade them a moving farewell (Acts 20:1, 17-38). Of course, Paul also wrote a letter to this church and left Timothy in that city on another occasion to correct problems (Revelation 2:1; 1 Timothy 1:3 ff).

Clearly, the Lord knows the situation in each of his churches and is interested in them (Psalm 139:7-12, 23-24, Hebrews 4:13). The word labor suggests strenuous and exhausting work. The Christians in Ephesus were active in God's service. This church had purity of doctrine, as can be seen in their not bearing "those who are evil" and finding false apostles liars (1 John 4:1; Acts 20:29-30). Of the word "patience", Thayer says, "steadfastness, constancy, endurance...in the New Testament the characteristic of a man who is unswerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to faith and piety by even the greatest trials and sufferings." The name of the Lord, for which Ephesus patiently labored, is very important to Christians because of the salvation and justification in it (Revelation 2:2-3; Acts 4:12; 1 Corinthians 6:11).

Like the husband or wife continuing faithfully in the marriage bond solely out of a sense of duty, the church at Ephesus had grown cold in and left her first love. Like Israel of old (Judges 2:7-13), it appears second generation Christians had lost the ardor for the Lord and his service that had once characterized them (Acts 19:19-20; 20:36-38; Ephesians 1:15). It is possible to faithfully attend all worship services and perform all the tasks the Lord has commanded His people to perform and yet lack the love that makes those acts acceptable (1 Corinthians 13:1-3). The works the Lord has named that the Ephesian brethren had been involved in were in defense of the gospel. They also needed an offense, so the Lord encouraged them to "remember...repent, and do" (Revelation 2:4-5; 2 John 6,8; 1 John 5:3; 2:4). If they did not get busy and do those works, the Lord said He would no longer recognize them as the true church.

As he had in verse 2, the Lord praised them for hating sinful deeds. God, and His people, hate evil deeds, not those who perform those deeds (Psalm 45:7; Hebrews 1:9). The Lord wrote to the church but made it plain that it was up to the individual to hear. Notice God's truth is not



put into the heart by some mysterious power, instead they had to hear it. The word "overcomes" describes one conquering as in a battle or over a trial (Revelation 2:6-7).

### **To the Persecuted Church**

Smyrna was located 40 miles to the north of Ephesus. It was a town originally founded by Alexander the Great. It was the home of the olympic games and there was a large library there which was later transferred to Alexandria. As early as 23 B. C. this city built a temple to Tiberius, the emperor, and led the way in Asia for emperor worship under Domitian. There was a large population of Jews in this city. To a church threatened with persecution and death, it must have been reassuring to know Jesus is eternal and has overcome the grave (Revelation 2:8).

How easy it is for those in suffering to feel all alone and as if no one cares. Jesus knows each person's past, present and future suffering and has promised to help bear those problems (Hebrews 2:17-19; 4:15-16; 1 Corinthians 10:13). Jesus also knew of their poverty, in fact, he had experienced similar conditions (Matthew 8:20). Christians are not to concentrate their efforts on obtaining material wealth (Matthew 6:19-20). The church at Smyrna was physically poor, but spiritually rich. Jesus also knew about the blasphemy, or the speaking against, that was coming out from those who said they were Jews. There was a synagogue there but the Lord said it was Satan's and not his. God's true Israel in the Christian age is composed of those who are circumcised in heart (Revelation 2:9; Romans 2:28-29; Philippians 3:3).

Though severer trials were yet to come and they would last a complete period, the church could be assured the time would one day be over (2 Timothy 3:12; Philippians 1:29). The church's real enemy is Satan, called the devil, which means accuser or slanderer and would coincide with the thoughts being presented (compare John 8:44; 1 Peter 5:8; Luke 22:31). He would try them, or tempt them to sin, in the fullest possible way. Prison could describe exile, arrest or death. Christians are not to fear any of these things, for if they remained true to the faith, even if it cost them their lives, eternal life would be their crowning reward (Luke 12:4-5; James 1:12; 2 Timothy 4:6-8; 1 Peter 5:4; 1 Corinthians 9:25). Remember, this is the home of the olympics, so having eternal life described as a victory crown would be quite meaningful. The brethren were urged to heed the words of this letter and if they did they would be immune from the second death (Revelation 2:10-11; 20:14; Romans 6:23). That immunity is promised to those who overcome.

### **To the Compromising Church**

Pergamos was the capital of the province of Asia. It was built on a large conical hill overlooking a broad fertile valley 30 miles north of Smyrna and 15 miles inland from the sea. The sharp two-edged sword out of Christ's mouth would seem to be His word, with which He defends and comforts the faithful while fighting against the faithless (Hebrews 4:12; Ephesians 6:17). Jesus knows what Christians do as well as what they go through because he knows where they live. Hailey says, "As early as 29 B. C. a temple dedicated to Roma and Augustus was erected in the city as the first and, for a time, the only temple of the imperial cult in all Asia." There was an altar to Zeus there which was 90 feet square and 40 feet high. There was also an

altar to Athena and they worshiped Asklepios the god of healing and medicine. This god was symbolized by a serpent on a staff and there was both a temple and school of medicine in the city devoted to him. Despite all of this, the Christians there held fast to the deity and Lordship of Jesus, or his authority. Antipas was an example of a faithful witness who had died for his testimony (Revelation 2:12-13; 1 John 2:22; Jude 3).

While most of the church at Pergamos was faithful, they tolerated the doctrine of Balaam. This must have reference to Numbers 23-24 where Barak, king of Moab, tried to get Balaam to curse God's people. When God would not allow such a curse, Balaam advised the king to use the women of Moab to entice Israel into idolatry through harlotry (Numbers 31:16; 25:1-9). The word "stumbling block" comes from the word skandalon which is the part of a trap the bait is placed upon. The doctrine of the Nicolaitans must have been that one could be a Christian and still participate in the pagan feasts going on in the city. Such a doctrine would entice people away from service to God (1 Corinthians 10:21; 2 John 7-11). Tolerating error in the name of love seems to have been the problem of this church (Revelation 2:14-15; 1 Corinthians 5:1-7).

God first wanted repentance from an indifferent church. Of course, the goal of their disciplinary actions would be to restore the erring, or their repentance. If the church does not take care of such matters, the Lord will because such is an effort to seduce his bride (Numbers 31:8; II Corinthians 11:2-3; Ephesians 5:23-27). Seeking to bring a curse upon the Lord's bride will cause one to be slain by his sword. There is the usual admonition to heed the words of this letter followed by a promise to those who overcome. Hidden manna seems to be a description of food at the Lord's banquet table. This could even describe receiving Christ in his fullness in heaven (John 6:33-35). McCord says, "As a white stone was a sign in a Greek trial of acquittal and innocence so Jesus was illustrating the complete justification of sinners in heaven according to the divine plan of the ages." The name on it was known only to Christians who received the stone. It may well actually be a descriptive name for those Christians in their new relationship with the Lord in heaven (Revelation 2:16-17).

### **To the Corrupted Church**

Forty miles southeast of Pergamum was the city of Thyatira. The city was famous for its purple dye, which Lydia sold (Acts 16:11-15). It was the home of numerous trade guilds, the ancient forerunner of modern day unions. Each guild had its own god and worshiped it. One was expected to be a guild member, to keep his job, and attend its functions, which would include feasts in honor of the god that would end with grossly immoral acts. This was the smallest of the towns whose churches were written to, but its church received the longest letter. The chief deity of the city was Apollo, the Greek sun god, which may account for Jesus identifying himself as the Son of God. Also, this designation calls to one's minds the fact that He was God incarnate and resurrected from the dead (John 1:14; Romans 1:4). Jesus' eyes burn through all of the outward show and excuses for one's actions and see to the real heart of his reasons for acting (Hebrews 4:13). A discussion of brass can be found in 1:15 (Revelation 2:18).

Jesus was aware of their works, which were greater at the time of this writing than they had been at the beginning of the church. They had grown in works. One of their works was love,

which would be needed for brethren, enemies and the lost (John 13:34-35; Matthew 5:43-48; John 3:16). Next, they were involved in the work of service or ministering as their Lord had been (John 13:1-17). Faith is a belief in God and a diligent seeking to please him (Hebrews 11:6). Patience describes endurance and may refer to persecution, though this would be the only reference to it in this letter (Revelation 2:19).

Jezebel is likely not the woman's actual name but symbolically tells us what kind of woman she was. 1 Kings 16:30-33; 18:4, 19 tells us Jezebel cut off true prophets through persecution and put in their place 400 false prophets. She divorced morality from religion (2 Kings 9:22). The church allowed, or did not restrain, their Jezebel. She claimed to be a spokesman for God and led the church away from truth and into error through deception. It is possible she said the pagan feasts and immoral practices of the trade guilds could be participated in by Christians without violating God's will. Of course, Christians cannot tolerate sin (Revelation 2:20; Ephesians 5:8-11; 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22; 1 Corinthians 5:1-6).

Somehow Jezebel had been warned and given time to turn from her sin, but she had not changed. She had been leading God's people to a bed of adultery, so God was going to put her on a bed of pain and suffering and affliction. Her children would be those who took on her doctrines and attitudes. The expression "the minds and hearts" is used to describe the deepest seat of the emotion, actually the bowels. Jesus wanted all the churches to know he was watching and observing even their deepest feelings and they would be rewarded according to how they had sown (Revelation 2:20-23).

The Lord was proud of those who had remained faithful in this matter and would place no other burden on them than being faithful. Some had been talking about knowing the "depths of Satan." It may be that Jezebel and her followers said one had to experience all the evils of Satan in order to combat him. Those who overcame, are faithful to keep the Lord's works until the end, were promised power over the nations (Revelation 2:24-26).

When the potter gets through making pottery at the end of the day, he goes back and examines his works. Those that are flawed are taken out and smashed with a rod of iron. Christians have this power, it seems, because they are part of Christ's body and He will judge and punish the wicked of all nations. The morning star comes out not long before daylight and is a very bright star. It is a symbol of hope. Though the night had been dark and long and treacherous, this star heralds the coming of a new day. Revelation 22:16 tells us Jesus is the bright and morning star. Thus, we can say those who overcome will be in heaven with Jesus. The Lord urged His readers to listen to what He said so they could be rewarded (Revelation 2:27-29; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

# To the Angels of the Churches Part 2

## Revelation 3

### To the Dead Church

On a plateau at the foot of Mount Timolous, in a fertile valley, at the intersection of several roads, stood the city of Sardis. It was 35 miles southeast of Thyatira. Three sides of the plateau were perpendicular cliffs, so the inhabitants thought they only had to defend one side. The church in Sardis had a name with men, but not with God (1 Samuel 16:7). She had a reputation of life, vigor and great spiritual strength. It likely was a large church and it may be that people of the community wanted to join in the growth. No false doctrine was taught in Sardis and no untruth had taken root, but there was a heartless holding of truth. Her outward appearance was deceptive because it hid a spiritual graveyard. Christ knew of her works. Men thought of her works as beautiful clothes, but the Lord saw them as grave clothes disguising a corpse (Matthew 15:7-8; 1 Timothy 5:6). Matthew 8:22 tells us Jesus said for the spiritually dead to bury the physically dead (Revelation 3:1; compare Ephesians 2:1).

Sardis' overconfidence over an easy defense had led to defeat in 549 and 218 B. C., when she left the cliffs unguarded. How appropriate that an overconfident church should be told by its Lord to be watchful (Mark 13:35-37). Their lamp was growing dim and, if they did not act quickly, it would soon go out. They needed to fire up the spark to reignite the whole. Someone has said there is not enough fire in a Sunday morning Christian to light a candle. Those is Sardis needed to pump the bellows to rekindle the fire for the embers were ready to die (Ephesians 5:14-16). God had not found their works filled full, or perfect. They were an empty shell that God wanted filled with his purpose (Revelation 3:2; Matthew 23:27-28).

Verse 3 To put life back in a dead church, the Lord would urge them to remember, or we might say, to look back on a long glorious history as a challenge to do the Lord's will again. Most people obey the Lord's commands with great excitement and at that reception truly rejoice. (Acts 2:41; 8:39; 16:33-34) Recalling that joy and the relief one feels when released from sin should prick the conscience and rekindle the desire. They needed to hold fast to the word or else we will drift. (Hebrews 2:1-3) Also, they were instructed to repent, or lay down their inactivity and dead spirituality. (II Corinthians 7:10) Again, they are told to watch because the Lord was going to come unannounced and unexpected by some. (Matthew 24:43)

Verse 4 Hendriksen points us to the Lord's knowing the faithful by name. Even in a church of corpses, God sees the live souls. Those who do God's will are not lost in a dead crowd. (Genesis 6:5-8; 19:15-16; I Kings 19:10, 18) Our sins are washed in Jesus' blood. (Isaiah 1:18; Hebrews 9:22; Ephesians 1:7; Revelation 7:14) Because they had kept their spiritual garments clean (I John 1:7), they would be clothed in the garments of purity in heaven (Isaiah 61:10; Revelation 19:8)

Verse 5 When people die on earth, their names are removed from the voting rolls. It appears that

Israel had a book of the living and the dead had their names removed. (Isaiah 4:3; Ezekiel 13:9; Nehemiah 12:22f; Psalm 69:28; Revelation 20:11-15) Sardis had a lot of names on the "church roll" who would not be written on the pages of God's book of life. Those who keep on overcoming will also hear their names confessed by the Lord before the Father. (Matthew 10:32; Luke 13:24-27)

Verse 6 As always, a blessing is pronounced upon those who hear and heed the words of the letter.

Verse 7 Twenty-eight miles southeast of Sardis was the town of Philadelphia. It was located in a very fertile but dangerously volcanic area. The city was founded by Attalus II who was nicknamed the brother-lover. He was reported to be dead in a battle so his brother was persuaded to assume the throne. When the king returned, his brother stepped down so he could rule again. The region was known for its earthquakes and this city was almost totally destroyed by one in 17 A. D. Isaiah 22:22 describes Eliakim, the faithful steward of Hezekiah the king. He was given the key to the palace so that no man could enter into the royal palace or presence without him saying it was allowable. Thus, there was only one way to the throne. How appropriate that Jesus should be described as the one having the key of David. (John 14:1-6; Acts 4:12; I Corinthians 3:11) As an indication of Jesus' authority, he says, "he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth." Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:22-23; Revelation 1:18)

Verse 8 The city of Philadelphia was established to spread the Greek culture to the region round about it. The language that had once been native to this area was dropped by this city and the Greek language adopted. Now, Jesus wants the church to be as mission minded as the city had been. A door of opportunity was before them in spreading the gospel. (I Corinthians 16:8-9; II Corinthians 2:12; Colossians 4:3-4) The Lord tells the church she has a little strength, which may indicate her need to grow. Growth is possible and victory can be ours. (Romans 8:31; Philippians 4:13) If we keep the word, we can use the door to teach others of God's saving message. (Romans 1:16-17) They had not denied the name of Jesus.

Verse 9 The true Jews, God's nation, in the Christian age are members of the Lord's church. (Romans 2:28-29; I Peter 2:9; Philippians 3:3) When the Jews rejected Jesus as God's Son, they ceased being God's people. Thus, they "say they are Jews, and are not." Instead of their synagogue being devoted to God, it was now dedicated to Satan, God's adversary who encourages people to rebel against God and commit sin. We know Jesus has all authority and all will have to yield to it in worship one day. (Philippians 2:9-11) This may be what Christ refers to as worship of the church as God's true Israel by the so-called Jews.

Verse 10 They had patiently endured, just as Christ had endured. (II Thessalonians 3:5 marginal reading) Because of their endurance, Jesus promised to keep, or protect, in the hour of trial soon to come upon all the earth, which must describe world-wide persecution. They had held to them and he would hold to them.

Verse 11 The word "quickly" can be translated suddenly or unexpectedly. If the end of time is in view, this is the meaning here. However, this verse could be talking about one of the Lord's

providential comings to protect his people and judge their enemies.

Verse 12 In a city that had known devastating earthquakes, how reassuring to think the one who overcomes will be a pillar that, once in place, would to out no more, or always stand. To identify the owner and the one honor is given to be this dwelling place of God, there are names written on its pillars. God's name will be on them because they are his people, children. Also, the name of heaven, or new Jerusalem, will be on them because they are citizens of it. Finally, the Savior's new name because we are saved by his blood.

Verse 13 Again, the importance of heeding the words of the letter is used to close it out.

Verse 14 Laodicea was 40 miles southeast of Philadelphia. It was in a fertile valley at the junction of several major trade routes. It was a wealthy city famous for much gold, because it was a banking center, its black woolled sheep and fine garments made from that wool, and an eye powder which was used to help weak and failing eyes. There was an earthquake that destroyed the city in A. D. 60. The people were proud to say they rebuilt without any aid from Rome. Jesus is described as the "Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God." Within these words, we find supported, truthful statements coming from the very creator of all the things we know of. (Colossians 1:16-17; John 1:1-3) He had made these people, knew what they were really like and would testify as to the true state of affairs.

Verse 15 There were warm springs nearby, at Hierapolis. The word "hot" is translated "zealous" in some places and means a boiling water. The hot springs were valued for medicine and treatment of various aches. Beneath the city of Laodicea, at Colossae, one could find nice, cold drinking water. The hot springs from Hierapolis flow over the plateau and become lukewarm by the time they spill over a cliff next to Laodicea. Such water was not good for medicine or drink, thus it was useless. The church in Laodicea was, like the water outside of the city, useless. Jesus wished they were either refreshing or aided in healing. It should be noted that some have taken the position that Jesus would rather they were unconverted sinners than lukewarm Christians and cite Hebrews 4:4-6 and II Peter 2:20. God abhors those who take no stand and try to deceive others, while in fact only deceiving themselves.

Verse 16 When one gets tepid water in his mouth, he is inclined to spit out, or more literally vomit forth. This was the Lord's reaction to a useless church. Hendricksen says, "Christ does not really say: 'I will spew thee out of my mouth', but 'I am about to spew thee out of my mouth'. The Lord is still waiting."

Verse 17 They were self-sufficient. Just as the city did not need the help of Rome to rebuild in A. D. 60, the church did not see the need for God. They saw themselves as rich and getting richer, therefore needing not one thing from anyone. In fact, their spiritual condition was one of a man "enduring toils and troubles; afflicted, wretched," according to Thayer. They were also pitiable, that is, when others looked at the church they turned their heads because of the pathetic sight they had seen. The word "poor" here suggests one out on the streets begging. Their vision had been clouded over by smoke so they could not see these things. In a city with an eye powder used in the treatment of ophthalmia, they were so near-sighted they could not see their condition. They were without spiritual clothes in a city known for its garment industry.

Verse 18 Though they were spiritually destitute, the Lord will not force them to change but counsels them to change as a loving brother or friend might. They did not need physical riches but needed the riches of the knowledge of God (Matthew 13:44-46; Colossians 2:1-3) and a faith proven in the crucible of trials. (I Peter 1:7) White raiment would depict the holiness and purity which comes from the cleansing blood of the lamb. (Revelation 1:5; 7:14; Acts 22:16) They also needed their spiritual eyes opened so they could look into the mirror of God's word and see their faults. (James 1:25) Christians should not be as concerned with outward appearance as they are with inward. (II Corinthians 4:18)

Verse 19 Despite their problems and the very stern language the Lord has used, they should be assured he still loved them. (Hebrews 12:7-11) The word "zealous" comes from the same root word as the word "hot" in verse 15. The Lord wanted them to turn aside from sin so he would not have to spew them out.

Verse 20 The Lord wanted to be let into the door of every Christian's heart. He would not give up but continued to seek an entrance. He kept on knocking on the door of individual Christian's heart and kept calling for an entrance so he could change the church. To hear the Lord's voice, one must heed and obey. The word "sup" causes us to think of dining with the Savior at his table. Here is a church out of fellowship with its Lord.

Verse 21 Jesus has overcome the tomb and is now seated with God on his throne and is reigning. (Acts 2:32-36; Hebrews 1:3) Just as he overcame and began to reign, the Christian who overcomes will reign with Christ in glory.

Verse 22 We need to listen to these words and obey.

## CHAPTER 4

Verse 1 After he had been given the letters to the seven churches, John saw a door standing open in heaven. The voice is likely of Jesus, as in Revelation 1:10. He invites John into heaven to view things that will happen in future. The second coming of Christ and the judgment of the living and the dead are included, so not all of the events have taken place even yet.

Verse 2 Perhaps John repeats the fact that he is in the Spirit because he wants us to realize this is not a reference to his, or the church's, bodily resurrection. (Rev. 1:10) With all that was, and would be, happening to these Christians, it seems very important that John should see the throne and God seated upon it. (Psalm 103:19)

Verse 3 The jasper stone may have been a diamond (21:11) and the sardine a ruby, but we cannot be sure. The rainbow gave the appearance of a velvety green emerald. The meaning of all this is unclear. We can conclude God's radiance is beautiful and the rainbow around his throne awe-inspiring. The rainbow does remind us that God's faithful are kept safe and can count on his

covenant to be kept without deviation.

Verse 4 The exact identity of the twenty-four elders is unknown. They wear white, the color for purity and holiness, and have golden crowns on their heads, which may symbolize the victory Christ has given them. Since there were twelve tribes of Israel, it may be these represent the leaders of God's people redeemed in physical and spiritual Israel.

Verse 5 The lightnings and thunderings remind us of God's appearance on Sinai and suggest God's greatness. It would be better to say seven torches here represent the Holy Spirit. Since he worked in the area of delivering the word, this seems a very appropriate figure. (John 16:12-14)

Verses 6-7 All of the beauty described above would be reflected in a crystal sea. The four "living creatures," which is a better translation than beasts, are reminiscent of those in Ezekiel 1:1-14 and 10:20. Thus, we may assume these are also cherubim. Such were placed on guards over the Garden of Eden and at both ends of the mercy seat. (Genesis 3:24; Exodus 25:18-20) In heaven, they serve the Lord. The faces may represent wild animals or strength (lion), domesticated animals or service (calf or ox), flying creatures or swiftness (eagle), and mankind or intelligence (man). In either case, God is served by all categories of beings.

Verse 8 Isaiah 6:1-3 describes seraphims around God's thrones with six wings crying, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory." They worship Him because he is full of holiness, all authority and is eternal. It may appear to those on earth that a Roman emperor is in charge, but in heaven the Almighty sits on his throne.

Verses 9-11 Upon hearing praise given to God, the twenty-four elders join in praise and cast their crowns down before him as an acknowledgment of the source of those crowns. Earthly rulers might demand worship but they are not eternal, did not create all things and do not therefore deserve the worship that only a creator can demand.



## CHAPTER 5

Verse 1 The Father is pictured holding a scroll in his right hand. McCord says, of the scroll, that it "apparently held the answer to man's urgent need." It is a full revelation since the scroll is written on both sides. Its message is held secure since it is sealed with seven seals, which would be of wax and have an impression of the sender's signet ring on it.

Verse 2 A powerful angel asks who is worthy to open the book, or, as Hailey says, "literally, 'of sufficient weight,' i.e. of moral character and ability to open the book."

Verse 3 There was no demon, man or angel who qualified to unlock the secrets to man's need.

Verse 4 John here feels the deep sorrow all who would live with God in eternity must feel without Christ. There is no other worthy to carry out God's great plan. The word "wept" here is the same one used when Peter had denied the Lord three times and when the Lord beheld Jerusalem and thought of her failure to turn to him. (Matthew 26:75; Luke 19:41)

Verse 5 One of the twenty-four older men steps forward and urges John not to weep. His tears are based upon incomplete knowledge. No created being could open the seals, but there was one who could. John is told to look at the lion of the tribe of Judah. Jesus is so called because he was the fulfillment of the great prophecy made by Jacob concerning Judah's descendants. (Genesis 49:9-10; Hebrews 7:14) Further, He is called a Root of David because he is the one who fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 11:1-16. (See also II Samuel 7:12-17; Luke 1:32-33) How reassuring it must have been to those Christians to know He overcame, or conquered, sin and death and was worthy to pen the scroll. (Hebrews 2:14-18; II Timothy 1:10) Because He has overcome, Jesus has the keys to Hades and death. (Revelation 1:18)

Verse 6 When John turned to see this great lion, he saw a Lamb which appeared to have been newly slain. Only by becoming as submissive as a lamb and dying could Jesus conquer death and become the king. (John 1:29; Isaiah 53:4-12; Philippians 2:8-11; I Peter 1:18-19) The Hebrews saw a horn as a symbol of power and seven of them represent perfect power. The seven eyes stand for the Holy Spirit which was sent forth, and sent other forth, into all the earth to testify of Jesus. (John 16:13; 15:26; Hebrews 2:1-4)

Verse 7 From the fact that He appeared newly slain and that he sat down on the throne, we conclude Jesus took the scroll after his death and resurrection. (Acts 2:22-36; Hebrews 2:8-9; Psalm 110)

Verse 8 Now, the same ones who worshiped the Father in chapter 4 are seen worshiping the Son. The harps they laid down symbolize joyful music, of which there will be none of in fallen Babylon. (Rev. 18:22) The text tells us the golden vials full of incense represent the prayers of the saints. How comforting to know these are offered before the throne.

Verse 9 They burst into song about the redemption available to all men in the church which

Jesus purchased with his own blood. (Isaiah 42:10; Acts 10:34-35; 20:28; I Corinthians 6:19-20; II Peter 2:1; Daniel 7:13-14)

It is a new song because the truths only became reality after the death and resurrection of the Lamb.

Verse 10 The redeemed are made a kingdom (ASV) and priests. (Rev. 1:6; I Peter 2:9) We can also be said to be ruling with Christ who is King of kings. (Matthew 19:28, where the regeneration would be the new birth.)

Verse 11 Many angels joined in song with the four beasts and 24 elders. Their total is really beyond numbering. (Hebrews 12:22)

Verse 12 Christ is worthy in every way, which is clearly seen in these seven expressions of worthiness.

Verse 13 Now, all of creation joins in the song of praise to the great Lamb of Calvary.

Verse 14 The only thing left to do is say Amen, or so be it, and fall down in silent worship before Christ.

## CHAPTER 6

Verse 1 Instead of reading the scroll, it seems each time a seal is opened a part of its message is portrayed. One of the four beasts spoke with a voice like thunder and said "Come." It is doubtful the words "and see" belong here. John is watching and the first rider is bid to come.

Verse 2 The rider on the white horse must be Christ. White is used to symbolize purity and holiness, especially in this book. In Revelation 19:11-16, a rider on a white horse is clearly identified as Christ. He was described as a conqueror in 5:5 and is most logically the conqueror here. In fact, the entire book sets the Lamb up as one who has conquered or is conquering. (Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21; 11:15; 12:11; 17:14) The bow was used for hunting or war. It seems likely we see here a weapon used by Christ against his enemies, perhaps even his word. (Psalm 45:5; Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12) He is given a victory crown. It is not easy to believe God would give one to anyone other than Jesus.

Verses 3-4 At the opening of the second seal, a red horse came forth. Its rider was empowered to take peace from the earth. He carried a short sword, like the one used by Roman soldiers. The word for "kill" is the same as the one translated "slain" in Rev. 5:6 and 6:9, and may therefore indicate the terrible bloody persecution which followed the preaching of the gospel. (II Timothy 3:12; Matthew 10:34-39)

Verses 5-6 The black horse would seem to represent mourning. (Jeremiah 4:28) Food is sold by weight, with enough wheat for one man for one day selling for a day's wages. (Matthew 20:2) He could buy three times as much barley for the same price and thus be able to feed his family, but what of life's other necessities? The fact that oil and wine are not to be hurt may suggest God placed limitations on a famine. However, Hendricksen says no famine existed since a man evidently could get all the wheat he wanted if he had the money. In that case, the oil and wine would represent luxuries which would not stop flowing. The rest of Revelation seems to bear out deprivation especially for those who followed Christ.

Verses 7-8 The word describing the fourth horse's color is usually translated "green." (Mark 6:39; Revelation 8:7; 9:4) It would thus describe someone who is sick or dead. Its rider is death and Hades follows to claim the disembodied spirits. Their power was limited, which indicates Christ is still in control. However, they are allowed to work in a fourth of earth, which indicates this terrible event falls on Christian and non-Christian alike. The sword here is the longer two-edged sword used by most nations in war, so we believe war is its meaning. This is followed by hunger, death by plague and beasts eating up the weakened people remaining. Such a pattern often accompanies war.

Verses 9-11 Man is a living soul. (Genesis 2:7; I Corinthians 15:44-45) Man also has a spiritual soul which will not die. (Matthew 10:28) McCord indicates the word "destroy" is elsewhere translated "lost." (Matthew 10:6; Luke 15:32; 19:10) Since life is in the blood and the blood of sacrificed animals was poured out at the base of the altar (Leviticus 17:11; 4:7), we conclude the souls here mentioned are the lives offered in

sacrifice to the Lord. The word "slain" here is the same as was used in Rev. 5:6. Their blood does not cry out for revenge but the wrath of justice. (Genesis 4:10) They had been sacrificed because the faithful kept God's word and testified as to its truthfulness. How reassuring to know their sacrifice did not go unnoticed in heaven. Their enemies may have thought they won by sending them to their deaths, but they are actually given white robes of purity and assured of ultimate victory. They must wait for a "little time" until those who served with them and others who would be martyred should join them. This "little time" is the same wording as is used by Jesus in John 7:33 and 12:35. It seems to this writer that this time of waiting for God's avenging judgment would come when God destroyed the persecutors.

Verse 12 The language of this verse is very similar to prophetic descriptions of God's judgment against Babylon and the opening of the doors to the kingdom, which also meant the bringing to a close the Jewish system. (Isaiah 13:1, 10-13; Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:16-21) Here is the prophetic language describing the Lord's vengeance upon the persecutors.

Verses 13-14 As a further description of the terrible nature of these events, John sees the stars falling from heaven like winter figs being blown off the trees during a high wind. The heavens being rolled up like a scroll would be familiar language to early Christians. (Isaiah 34:4) Mountains seem so permanent, yet they and islands are moved from their normal place. Someone's world is coming crashing down around them.

Verses 15-17 Every class of wicked men will run to hide from the Lamb on his throne. This includes rulers, nobles, military leaders, rich, slaves, and freemen. Since similar language is used to describe other national calamities, it seems very possible that this is a description of God's judgment against a great persecuting nation, or Rome. (Hosea 10:7-8; Isaiah 2:19; Matthew 24:29-34; Luke 23:30) The question of verse 17 comes when God is about to destroy a people. (Nahum 1:1, 6)

## CHAPTER 7

Verse 1 The answer to the closing question of chapter 6 is found in this chapter. God sends four of his messengers to restrain the destructive forces.

Verses 2-3 A seal was used by kings to identify things, particularly messages or commands, as his. It left an impression in hot wax that belonged only to him. (Genesis 41:42; Esther 3:10; 8:2) A fifth angel carries God's seal and commands the four angels to continue restraining the destructive forces until God's people could be marked. The East is the direction light comes from to a darkened world. Christians are sealed with the Holy Spirit to show they are truly God's people. (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30; Romans 8:15-16) However, when we see the 144,000 in chapter 14, they have the name of God written on their foreheads, so this may be the seal. Before the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B. C., Ezekiel had a vision of God's faithful being marked and kept safe. (Ezekiel 9:1-6)

Verses 4-8 That the 144,000 cannot be literal, fleshly Israel becomes quite apparent when we note the tribes of Ephraim and Dan are omitted. The number is obtained by multiplying 12 x 12 x 1000. Shelly says, "Since twelve is the number for organized religion in apocalyptic literature and one thousand is the number for completeness and wholeness, this is simply a graphic way to refer to the totality of the faithful church on earth." The church is God's Israel today. (Romans 2:28-29; Galatians 6:15-16; 3:27-29; Matthew 19:28) We believe the 12,000 sealed out of every tribe is a symbol showing not one righteous one will be lost out of all God's people. God knows all those who are his. (II Timothy 2:19) There is no promise that these will not go through severe trials, but we can be sure that God will not allow those trials to reach unbearable proportions, and those who continue to love the Lord's appearing will be crowned. (I Corinthians 10:13; II Timothy 4:6-8)

Verse 9 John's eyes are now lifted from the scene on earth to the one in heaven. Once again, the picture is of the redeemed, as we will see in verse 14, but this time God's protective seal is not required because they are now around the throne. They wear white robes of purity and carry palm branches, which symbolize joy. Palms were used during the Feast of Tabernacles, which was a whole week of rejoicing. (Leviticus 23:33-44, esp. 40) Also, palms were used to line the path of the Lord's triumphal entry. (John 12:12-19) The multitude cannot be numbered by man and comes from every nation under heaven.

Verse 10 They shout praises to God and Christ because they have been saved from past sins, kept pure in times of trial and now stand triumphant before the throne.

Verses 11-12 Upon seeing the redeemed praising God for their salvation, the angels, 24 elders and four beasts join in. They say "be it so" and praise God with seven different expressions followed by another "be it so."

Verse 13 The question here asked by one of the elders is apparently for John's sake and to call attention to the means of their salvation.

Verse 14 Instead of "they which came," this would be better rendered, "they which are coming." Notice again, the tribulation was already a reality when John wrote. (Rev. 1:9) We wash our robes in Jesus' blood when we put him on in baptism. (Acts 22:16) Hailey notes the word washed is active, which indicates there is something for them to do. (Romans 10:9-10; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3-5) Yet, in verse 10 they gave praise to God for salvation.

Verse 15 While Caesar was being worshiped for a few years on earth, God is worshiped continually around his throne. The word for temple here is for the actual building housing the holy place and most holy place. In other words, it is God's dwelling place. The promise to those who have washed out their robes in the blood is that God will dwell with them, which sounds like a later description of heaven. (Rev. 21:3)

Verses 16-17 During the persecutions, Christians suffered for the want of food, water and adequate shelter to keep off the sun's burning rays. In heaven, Jesus will see that these needs are met. (Rev. 22:1-2) Also, God will wipe the tears out of their eyes. (Rev. 21:4)

## CHAPTER 8

Verse 1 With his saints sealed, God is ready to deal with the wicked and the seventh seal is opened. As He prepares to act, there is a half hour of silence in heaven. This silence can describe quiet expectation and reverent awe. (Habakkuk 2:20)

Verse 2 Seven angels stand ready to sound the seven trumpets which bring down judgments from God upon the wicked.

Verses 3-4 Prayers are often associated with incense. (Rev. 5:8; Psalm 141:2; Luke 1:8-10) Since the incense was given to the angel, it could be, as some have suggested, this represents the Lord's mediations in our behalf. (Romans 8:34; I Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 7:25) Notice, here we have the prayers of all the saints, not just martyrs, and when mixed with the incense they ascend up before God.

Verses 5-6 The angel now takes coals from the altar where he had just offered the prayers and incense and pours them upon the earth. God has heard the prayers of his saints and has the angel pour out this fiery, judgment on the earth, here evidently wicked mankind. We have seen thunderings and lightnings before, to which is now added an earthquake. (Rev. 4:5; Isaiah 29:6; Joel 3:16) Trumpets were used in battle to sound commands or to give warnings, which would seem to be the sense here. (Amos 3:6; Hosea 5:8; Joel 2:1; Ezekiel 33:3-4)

Verse 7 God used hail and fire against his enemies and in judgment often in the Old Testament. (Job 38:22-23; Isaiah 28:1-2; 30:30-31) The blood may be representative of the blood of the innocent martyrs being poured back on the wicked. (Genesis 4:10; 9:6; Isaiah 26:21; Psalm 79:10) A third part of the earth is, of course, a wide area, yet limited. Thus, we see the warning nature of this trumpet.

Verses 8-9 Another calamity in nature is here used to describe a warning coming from God. Something like a great mountain on fire is cast into the sea and one-third is turned to blood, one-third of all creatures in the sea destroyed, along with one-third of all ships. God can use natural disasters to warn wicked men. When God was preparing to bring judgment down upon Babylon, he used similar words. (Jeremiah 51:24-25, 42)

Verse 10-11 The previous trumpet brought trouble to the sea and this one brings it to fresh water. "Wormwood" describes bitter sorrow and misery. (Deuteronomy 29:18; Jeremiah 9:15; 23:15; Lamentations 3:19; Amos 5:7; 6:12)

Verse 12 Our environment is greatly effected by the sun, moon and stars, as one can see by observing radical changes occurring during an eclipse or sunspots. Men now know the moon has a direct relation to tides. Disasters in nature can thus be viewed as warnings from God. They are limited, as previously in the trumpets.

Verse 13 It would be better to have the word eagle here instead of angel. The eagle is a swift

bird of prey with keen eyesight. Hosea warned Israel using the eagle as a symbol of the Lord's coming. (Hosea 8:1) When God planned to use the Chaldeans in judgment against his people, Habakkuk described their horsemen as hungry eagles. (Habakkuk 1:6-8) This eagle warns that the previous trumpets are not as terrible as the three which are coming, designated also as three woes.



## CHAPTER 9

Verse 1 Earlier (Rev. 1:20), we were informed that the seven stars were the angels of the seven churches. The star here has fallen (ASV) and we believe this to be Satan. (Luke 10:18; Isaiah 14:12-14; Ezekiel 28:1-19) Isaiah's prophecy is first concerning the king of Babylon, and Ezekiel's concerns the king of Tyre, but in both instances much is said about them which could not have been true of men. Such must suggest they are personifications of Satan. The bottomless pit, or abyss, is the abode of demons (Luke 8:31), a place of temporary punishment for the beast and Satan himself. (Revelation 17:8; 20:2-3) Satan is given the key to the abyss, which shows us that God limits Satan's authority. (Job 1:12; 2:6; Luke 22:31-32)

Verse 2 When the pit was opened, it belched forth the blue-black smoke of an industrial furnace. This represents the light (truth) darkening influence of sin and the delusion which comes with it. (II Corinthians 4:3-4; Ephesians 2:1-3)

Verses 3-4 Since they do not eat grass or other green plants, we know these locusts should be taken figuratively. Out of the smoke of sin and delusion comes lies and false doctrine. Scorpions have a very painful, but rarely fatal sting. Christians are not hurt by lies and false doctrine because they have the truth. Obviously the limitation is a spiritual one since lies and false doctrines can lead to many deaths, as was the case during World War II which was brought on by the Nazi lies.

Verses 5-6 Their victims suffer mental and spiritual pain because of the sting, but, though they desire it, they do not die. The word for torment is used of Lot and by the demon who possessed the man in the land of the Gadarenes. (II Peter 2:8; Mark 5:7; Luke 8:28) Again, we can see that God is in control because he only allows this to continue for five months.

Verse 7-10 Though lies and false doctrines do not actually war against us, their shape, breastplate and the sound of their wings should warn us war is not far behind. Their victory crowns were not lasting, since they are only "like gold." The appearance of their faces, hair and teeth lets us know these are men gone wild on the false teachings.

Verse 11 This has to be a description of the fallen star of verse 1 and can be none other than Satan. In both Hebrew and Greek, his name is destruction or destroyer. (John 8:44)

Verse 12 The first woe ends with the sins of the wicked turning on them and placing them in a tortured state.

Verses 13-14 In Rev. 6:9-10, the martyrs cried out from under the altar and, in 8:3-4, the prayers of the saints were offered upon the gold altar. The voice now coming from the horns of the golden altar lets us know both sets of prayers have been heard. It is said that Solomon's empire extended to the Euphrates River, which would be a fulfillment of the prophecy to Abraham. (I Kings 4:21; Genesis 15:18) Just as armies from unknown territories would cross the river and plunder Israel when she was disobedient, these verses indicate God has armies prepared and held

ready to punish a disobedient world.

Verse 15 God controls events and precisely sets the time for his workings.

Verses 16-19 This army of 200,000,000, which must describe a complete number, would surely terrorize anyone. Its destructive work includes the killing of one-third of mankind and should serve as a powerful reminder, or warning, to turn to God.

Verses 20-21 Like Pharaoh of old, these wicked people do not know when to yield to the Almighty. The one-third of mankind killed clearly did not include Christians since this description of those remaining lets us know they were idol worshipers. (Romans 1:18-28) The word demon goes with idols because they were false deities and evil spirits would be associated with this worship. (Deuteronomy 31:17; Psalm 106:37; I Corinthians 10:19-20) When one turns away from proper respect for God, he will next turn to abuse of man whom God made. "Sorceries" comes from the Greek word pharmakeia, which is translated witchcraft in Galatians 5:20, and means the use of drugs in association with the worship of the occult.

## CHAPTER 10

Verse 1 Three angels in Revelation are called "mighty." (Rev. 5:2; 18:21) Often in the New Testament clouds are associated with Deity. (Matthew 17:1-5; Luke 21:27; Acts 1:9-11; I Thessalonians 4:17; Revelation 1:7) The rainbow reminds us of God's covenant with Noah and the throne of God in this book. (Genesis 9:13-16; Revelation 4:3) It may signify God's remembrance of his promise not to destroy the world by water ever again. The pillars of fire remind us of how the children of Israel were led at night. (Exodus 13:21) These symbols combine in the appearance of this angel to let us know he had come from God with a great message.

Verse 2 The angel holds a little open book with a message for all the earth, as can be seen in the angle placing one foot on the sea and the other on land.

Verses 3-4 The angels crying with a loud voice like a lion's roar ought to draw attention to the message from God which he carried. Thunder is a warning of approaching storm. John was going to write, as he had earlier been commanded (Rev. 1:11, 19), but the message of the seven thunders is sealed from man's view. God is through warning man and the time of judgment has come. (verses 6-7) Some have suggested these unknown messages serve as ample notice, to those who would set specific dates for the end, that God has kept some things secret which might keep us from knowing the exact timing of the end.

Verses 5-7 The raising of a hand toward heaven indicates an oath taken with God as witness. At the end of chapter 9, mankind had refused to repent despite the terrible judgments God had brought upon him, so time will now be no more. It may appear that Rev. 10:8-11:13 is a delay in the ending of time. However, it is actually an interlude, or parenthetical statement, to reassure us of certain matters and in no way delays, in terms of time transpiring, the coming of the seventh trumpet. The New Testament reveals the mystery of God's plan to save man. (Romans 16:25; Ephesians 1:9-11) When time ends, that mystery will be finished.

Verse 8 If the voice from heaven is not God's, certainly the message is from Him. John is to take the little open book.

Verses 9-11 John went to the angel and asked for it but was told again to take it. Coffman sees this as meaning God's message cannot be given to a man but he must take it through his own study. (II Timothy 2:15; Acts 17:11) The word of God is sweet in the mouths of his people. (Psalm 119:103; 19:9-10) Ezekiel had a vision very similar to this one. (Ezekiel 2:8-3:3) There is joy in receiving God's message, but the reception is often followed by bitter persecution. Eating would symbolize the assimilation of the message of the open little book. Of course, God's message also contains bitter pronouncements of judgment upon the wicked which are bitter for a preacher to receive and have to deliver. John was one of the Lord's apostles and had been preaching to many people since Pentecost. Now, he is told he will speak God's word to many people, nations, languages and rulers. This he did in person after returning from Patmos and

does, through the words he wrote, even today.

## CHAPTER 11

Verse 1 John is given a reed which is strong enough to be a rod one might use to measure. He is told to measure the "temple of God." The word used here for temple is not hieron, which describes the buildings courts and porches (John 10:23; Matthew 24:1-2), but naos, which is literally the sanctuary. (Matthew 27:51) In the New Testament, the church, or its individual members, are frequently called the sanctuary, or dwelling place, of God. (I Corinthians 3:16-17; Ephesians 2:21; I Peter 2:5; I Corinthians 6:16; Revelation 3:12) When one considers earlier references to the Jews as the synagogue of Satan (Rev. 2:9; 3:9), it is impossible to believe we have here the Jewish temple. Instead, we conclude the Revelation follows the New Testament pattern with the temple being the church. The altar of incense is where the prayers of the saints are offered and the worshipers are faithful members of the church. After referring to Rev. 21:15; Ezekiel 40:5; 42:20 and Zechariah 2:1, Hendriksen concludes, "that measuring the sanctuary means to set it apart from that which is profane; in order that, thus separated, it may be perfectly safe and protected from all harm."

Verse 2 The Gentiles would here represent those outside of the church. The marginal reading in the King James is "Cast out," instead of "leave out." This may suggest that some who might be thought of as part of the church, like Jezebel and the Nicolaitans, would be cast out and counted as part of the profane. These profane ones would trample the holy city, which is the church now (Hebrews 12:22) and later will be heaven. (Rev. 21:2, 10; 22:19) While the faithful are measured, or protected, the nominal Christian will turn to worldly thinking and assist in abusing and tearing down all the church stands for. (Compare Luke 8:12-13; Hebrews 6:4-6) Forty-two months, or 1260 days, or three and one-half years, is a recurring figure in Revelation. (Rev. 11:2, 3; 12:6, 14; 13:5; also Daniel 7:25; 12:7) God will not allow the church to be trampled forever, so three and one-half years is used to represent a short, or broken, period of time.

Verses 3-4 Hailey notes a number of Biblical instances where two witnesses were needed to confirm a fact. (Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:6; Numbers 35:30; Hebrews 10:28; Matthew 18:16; John 8:17) Summers notes that, "The number (2) in Oriental symbolism carried the idea of strength." Since their testimony continues for the same length of time as the persecution of verse 2, it seems most likely the witnesses would be the word of God and the church, especially as the members' lives testify to the word's power. They prophesy in mourning, as is symbolized by the sackcloth they wear. This may be because of the rejection of their testimony by the world. The two olive trees remind us of Zechariah's vision. (Zechariah 4:1-6) They, along with seven candlesticks, are identified as the word of the Lord. Perhaps the two candlesticks stand for the faithful church, since only two churches had no criticism from the Lord. (Smyrna and Philadelphia)

Verses 5-6 God gives his message power and providentially supports those who deliver it. God told Jeremiah his word would be like a fire to devour the sinful people. (Jeremiah 5:14; also note 20:9) Elijah had power over the rain and Moses was able to turn the water to blood. (II Kings 17:1; 18:1-45; Exodus 7:20-25) Though we have no New Testament record of those actual

happenings, God did, and does, powerfully defend his messengers. (Acts 12; especially 20-23; Luke 18:7-8)

Verse 7 The beast, which must be Satan, comes out of the abyss and kills the two witnesses. Notice, this did not happen until their message had been delivered. God does not allow Satan to stop his plan. Satan wars with God's children by lying to them, as in Eve's case, persecuting and killing them. He is just as happy to see a church lose its influence for good by turning it inward and causing it to cease delivering the word as he is to see the saints physically put to death.

Verse 8 The "great city" is always Babylon in Revelation. (Rev. 14:8; 16:19; 17:5, 18; 18:2, 10, 16, 18, 19, 21) This is a worldly city full of spiritual adultery, slavery, or tyranny, and one that rejects the truth, thus is said to have crucified the Son of God.

Verses 9-10 Real joy will be expressed by the world over the death of the two witnesses because they had tormented the world with their testimony. The worldly celebrate, even exchanging gifts. Leaving the bodies of the witnesses unburied shows the scornful attitude they had for the truth and its deliverers. Three and a half is half of seven, which represents a broken, short, troublesome space of time. Coffman also suggests it means evil's triumph is never complete.

Verse 11 Every time evil ones believe they have at last killed the church and destroyed the word of God, God revitalizes them. Hailey is reminded, in this verse, of the story of Belshazzar whose merrymaking was turned to fear by the finger of God writing upon the wall. (Daniel 5)

Verse 12 God's calling of the faithful into heaven will happen at Christ's second coming and immediately before the end of the world. (I Thessalonians 4:13-18; I Corinthians 15:23-24) The faithless persecutors will view the victorious faithful ascending into heaven.

Verse 13 God now begins his judgment against the worldly city, as is symbolized by the earthquake. One-tenth, or a part, collapses and 7,000 men are killed. This cannot be the destruction of Jerusalem since 1,100,000 men were killed then. When the rest of the evil see God's judgment begin, they worship in fear. There is no indication of repentance on their part, only terrified worship.

Verse 14 Once the righteous have been raised, the end will not be delayed, unlike what Premillennialists would have us to believe.

Verse 15 As noted in verse 12, this will take place at the end of time. The vision has reached the end once to reassure Christians being persecuted. We will view the same span of time from a different perspective in the coming chapters. No matter how hopeless things may seem in that narration, we can rest easy because we have seen the end. The voices here may well be those of the redeemed who have now been taken up into heaven. (Verses 11-12)

Verses 16-17 The 24 elders join in the worship of Christ as the Almighty one who has reigned.

Verse 18 Worldly nations had shown their anger by killing God's messengers and rejoicing at

their deaths. The elders here rejoice that, in response to man's wrath, God has brought his wrath and judged all people. The righteous were first rewarded and then the wicked revealed.

Verse 19 Heaven is now opened and the ark of the covenant revealed. The ark was the place where God had promised to meet and commune with the children of Israel. (Exodus 25:21-22) It is here used to symbolize the place of God's meeting and communing eternally with the church, heaven.

## CHAPTER 12

Verses 1-2 This woman apparently stands for the faithful remnant of God's people in Israel. (Micah 4:10-5:3) Since she represents the faithful, it is appropriate that faithful Christians be viewed as her seed. (verse 17) She is clothed in beauty with a crown on her head with twelve stars, which may well represent the faithful angels of the twelve tribes. Of course, the remnant had to be preserved so the promised seed could be born.

Verses 3-5 Verse 9 tells us the dragon is Satan. The seven heads could represent wisdom, vitality or, as in the case of the woman in scarlet, mountains. (Rev. 17:9) The ten horns could be power of kings. (Rev. 17:12) These crowns are the crowns of kings and not the victory crowns of the saints, the woman in white or Christ. (Rev. 2:10; 3:11; 6:2; 12:1; 14:14) His swinging tail drags down stars out of heaven, which would certainly show his power. It may also refer to Satan's leading good angels astray in rebellion against God. (II Peter 2:4; Jude 6) Hailey also notes a parallel with Daniel's vision, in which the stars that were cast down were part of the holy host of people. (Daniel 8:10, 24) Certainly, Satan tried to destroy Jesus just as soon as he was delivered from Mary's womb. (Matthew 2) However, the text here portrays Christ as being caught up right after he was born. (verse 5) We conclude Christ's life, from the Divine perspective in the Revelation particularly, is but a moment. Thus, all the efforts of Satan to stop Jesus while he was on earth must be in view. The dragon may have thought the battle won at the cross, but God raised him and took him up to rule on his throne, thus the victory goes to Christ. (Compare Acts 2:22-36) The rod of iron is mentioned in Psalm 2:9 as something Jesus would use to defeat his enemies. (Also Revelation 2:27)

Verse 6 Since Jesus is now ascended, the woman must here symbolize the church, who would be God's faithful at that time. When fleshly Israel was delivered from Egypt, she went to the wilderness to worship, receive the law and take a God-guided journey to the promised land. Spiritual Israel worships God today, follows his law and journeys toward heaven. They were fed with manna and protected from their enemies by the Lord, just as we receive Divine care and protection. (Matthew 6:24-35; Romans 8:28-39) We should also note that some of them fell, which should serve to warn us. (I Corinthians 10:1-13) The text says "they" will care for the woman, thus indicating God and Christ together. (verse 5; Matthew 28:18-20) Her time period in the wilderness is the same as the testimony of the two witnesses. (Rev. 11:3) If we were correct in saying they were the Word and the church, this could stand for the whole Christian age since Christ's word will not pass away. (Matthew 24:35) However, here it more particularly applies to the short or broken period of time God will allow the church to be trampled. (Rev. 11:2-3)

Verses 7-9 If the details of this vision are chronological, then the devil stormed heaven after the great defeat he suffered at Christ's resurrection. Michael, the archangel, called in Jude 9, and his angels oppose them in battle. Satan and his forces are defeated and thrown down to earth. There was no place in heaven for him to hide, indeed all heaven was now secured against him.

Verses 10-11 Michael and his angels won because Jesus had already won. How reassuring to know the same blood is available to us in our battle with Satan and he cannot defeat us as long as that blood is ours. Christ truly was given all authority after he overcame death. (Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 1:20-23; I Peter 3:21-22) All of this is announced by a "loud voice," which may describe the voice of one being or a large group speaking as one. The latter seems best since the voice says, "our brethren."

Verse 12 Satan is now defeated in the heavens, so there is rejoicing there. Twice beaten and knowing he has a limited time to work, Satan will turn his attentions to earth. He will vent his anger while he can and do as much damage as he can.

Verse 13 Since he could not defeat Christ on earth or in heaven, Satan naturally turns his attentions to the righteous who brought Him forth.

Verse 14 This description of the deliverance of the righteous reminds us of other faithful ones who were delivered. (Exodus 19:4; Deuteronomy 32:9-14; Isaiah 40:31) Time (1), times (2) and a half time is equal to 42 months or 1260 days.

Verses 15-16 Satan now tries to overthrow the faithful with a flood of evil. Since it comes out of his mouth, it may be this describes lies he uses to defeat the righteous. (Compare Genesis 3:1-5; John 8:44) The earth opening its mouth to swallow the flood describes God's providential care for those who are his. The third battle is lost.

Verse 17 The rest of the woman's seed would be individual Christians. We need to beware of Satan because he is like a lion looking for the weak, young or stray. (I Peter 5:8)



## CHAPTER 13

Verses 1-2 It may be this beast is a composite of the four beasts of Daniel 7. In which case, we could well say this beast is Daniel's terrible fourth beast and has parts of the other three because their dominion is prolonged in the life of the fourth. (Daniel 7:12) If that be the case, this beast is Rome, the fourth kingdom of Daniel 2 and 7. In the prophetic books, such a creature typified God-opposing forces. (Isaiah 27:1; Ezekiel 32:2f) As in the case of the dragon (Rev. 12:3), the beast has seven heads and ten horns. The dragon had seven crowns on his heads, but the beast wears ten crowns on his horns and names that speak evil against God on his heads. The ten horns would indicate the great power he had and the seven heads his intelligence. The ten crowns, which are those like a ruler wears, show his authority. Instead of yielding to God, who actually ordains governments, this beast has turned to Satan for direction and the exercising of wicked power.

Verse 3 At the close of chapter 12, Satan had turned from trying to destroy the church and to the persecution of its individual members. Roman persecution was intense under Nero and went dormant for a time after his death. It was then revived and intensified under Domitian. It may be this is a picture of those events. Some suggest Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension to this throne stunned Rome until the church had time to gain strength. Coffman suggests the death of the Roman Empire came in 476 A. D. and it was revived and worshiped by the world in the form of the Roman Catholic church. There are almost as many theories as there are commentators. Suffice it to say, Satan's allies look all the more invisible because they can live through a death stroke.

Verse 4 Thus, the earth worshiped the beast as more powerful than any other.

Verses 5-6 The beast is very proud and speaks things against God. This will only last a short, or broken, period of time. (Rev. 11:2-3; 12:6, 14) He also speaks against the tabernacle of God, which would be the church, God's dwelling place. The sense of "them that dwell in heaven" may be found in referring to angels, or the members of the church whose citizenship is in heaven. (Philippians 3:20; Ephesians 1:3; 2:6)

Verse 7 This power may have come from Satan, but only as God allowed. (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6; Romans 13:1, John 19:10-11) Remembering the promises of earlier chapters (Rev. 2:7, 10-11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22), we realize this overcoming was short lived and has only to do with this life. (Rev. 11:7, 12; compare Matthew 10:28) Satan and his forces will have control of people all over the world. (Rev. 5:9; 7:9; 11:9)

Verse 8 Everyone, but Christians, worships the beast. God planned from the very beginning to send Jesus to die and redeem lost mankind. (Ephesians 1:4-11; I Peter 1:20; Acts 2:23; 4:24) Those not written in his book would be those not redeemed.

Verse 9 This exhortation urges the same hearing and heeding as the letters to the churches in chapters 2 and 3.

Verse 10 What a consolation it must have been to suffering Christians to know God was aware of their persecutions and would appropriately punish their persecutors. This would also warn against taking up the sword to avenge such persecutions. Christians patiently endure to the end knowing the One on the throne will judge all and set things right.

Verses 11-12 This second beast is identified as the false prophet in Revelation 16:13 and 19:20. He comes up out of the earth, which had swallowed up the flood the dragon cast out of his mouth. (Rev. 12:16) Like many false prophets, this one appeared to be a lamb, but spoke like the devil. (Matthew 7:15-20; II Corinthians 11:14-15) Through the use of the powers of the first beast, the second beast causes the world to worship the first. This may be a description of Emperor worship. This pagan priest thereby caused the head of the Roman Empire to be worshiped.

Verses 13-14 The two witnesses were given fire to devour those who would oppose them. (Rev. 11:5) The false prophet deceives the world with fire, making men believe he is equal to the witnesses. (Matthew 24:24; II Thessalonians 2:8-12; II Timothy 3:13) He uses false miracles to cause the world to make images to the first beast and worship him. Prior to Domitian, all emperors were declared gods after their death. He had himself proclaimed a god while he lived and the priests enforce the worship.

Verse 15 Without the priests, there would have been no life in Emperor worship. They caused it to be carried out the world over and put to death those who refused to comply.

Verses 16-17 The mark symbolizes allegiance designating what Lord they followed. (Rev. 7:1-8) Christians, who would refuse such a mark, would find themselves excluded from society and be boycotted economically.

Verse 18 The numbers seven stood for something perfect or complete. Summers suggests six represented evil and three sixes together would stand for evil raised to the ultimate. Some would make much of the fact that John says it "is the number of a man." However, the original has no definite article in front of it. It is simply a human number as the measure of Rev. 21:17 is a human measure.

## CHAPTER 14

Verse 1 In chapter 7, we saw these sealed to be kept safe. Now, we see not one of them was lost, for they are with the Lamb on Mount Zion, which is the church, heaven's vestibule. (Psalm 125:1; Hebrews 12:22-24) There is a sense in which heaven is ours while we are still on earth. (I John 2:24-25) It is our possession in promise and can only be taken away if we are not faithful. The Father's name written in their foreheads must be the seal of chapter 7.

Verses 2-3 The speaker, or speakers, is not identified but the voice comes from heaven with an awesome sound like a large body of flowing waters and great thunder. It also had a sweet melody like harpers playing their harps. The word "they" here apparently refers to those who make up the voice in heaven. They are singing a new song which cannot be learned by men, save for the 144,000 redeemed. Perhaps the song is of redemption and its joys and benefits which could only be known by the redeemed.

Verses 4-5 These verses seem to describe in symbolic terms the spiritual purity of the men and women who make up the bride of Christ. (II Corinthians 11:2; James 4:4) Their purity is in clear contrast to the spiritual fornication others had committed with Babylon the great city. (verse 8) They follow Christ wherever he goes. (I Peter 2:21; Matthew 16:24) The firstfruits were consecrated to God in recognition of the fact that the whole harvest and all on earth was his. Christians are likewise consecrated to God in recognition of his ownership and power. Like their Lord, they would not tell an untruth, especially refusing to call Caesar, Lord. (I Peter 1:19; 2:22; Isaiah 53:9)

Verses 6-7 Hailey says the meaning of "in the midst of heaven" is the highest point the sun reaches. Thus we have an angel in a prominent place proclaiming the gospel in a loud voice to all people of the earth. This may be a symbolic way of portraying the preaching of the gospel to the whole world. The purpose of this gospel proclamation is to get men to reverence God and give him the glory he is due because he created all we know. A sense of urgency is added when one knows the time for God's judgment has come.

Verse 8 God is so sure of victory that he announces it before the battle has begun. Babylon the great city must be Rome and all her pagan vices. The rest of the world had joined her in idolatrous worship, especially of Caesar, and would come to realize the cup of their rebellion would also become the cup of God's wrath.

Verse 9-11 Those who have worshiped idols will have to drink the cup of God's undiluted wrath. There will be no mercy for those who have spurned the blood of the Lamb and worshiped with Babylon. (Compare Hebrews 10:26-31) Fire and brimstone has been used both literally and figuratively in God's judgments upon wicked people. (Genesis 19:24; Isaiah 30:33; 34:9-10; Ezekiel 38:22) The righteous will worship day and night and the wicked will suffer forever.

Verse 12 The previous three verses have described the judgment of those who oppose the Lord. The patience of the faithful will be rewarded ultimately with victory.

Verse 13 The expressions "in him" and "in Christ" occur repeatedly in the New Testament and are associated with a number of blessings. One must be baptized to be in Christ. (Galatians 3:26-27; I Corinthians 12:13) Earlier, the assurance had been given that those already martyred were at rest and those coming out of the great tribulation were worshiping around the throne. (Rev. 6:9-11; 7:9-17) Here, the promise is made to those from this point forward who die in faithful service. They will be given rest from their earthly works. However, the good effects of those works will continue to work on earth in the lives of those who knew them. This is the message of the Holy Spirit both here and in other passages. (I Thessalonians 4:13-18; I Corinthians 15:20-23, 58)

Verse 14 John now sees Jesus seated on a white cloud with a golden victory crown upon his head. In his hand is a sickle, so we assume he is preparing for a great harvest.

Verse 15-16 God dwells in his temple. This angel comes out from the temple shouting the command of the Father. Since he alone knows some seasons, particularly the time of the end, it is appropriate that he should direct Jesus when to begin the harvest. (Acts 1:7; Matthew 24:36) The word "ripe" carries the idea of dried, as when the growing period is over, and ready for harvest. Jesus, of course, does as the Father directs.

Verses 17-18 This angel coming out from the altar with power over fire is likely the same as in Rev. 8:3-5. He, too, is to reap. The clusters are described as fully matured, thus ripe for judgment. It may be that this angel merely helps the Lord in harvesting the whole earth for judgment. However, in light of other descriptions of the order of resurrection, it seems likely Jesus harvested the righteous and this angel harvests the wicked.

Verses 19-20 Since those this angel harvests are cast into the winepress of God's wrath, we believe they are the wicked. The winepress is used as a symbol of judgment in other places. (Joel 3:13; Isaiah 63:1-6) The city the winepress is located outside of may be the new Jerusalem. The wicked thus would be punished out of sight of heaven. Sixteen hundred furlongs, or 200 miles, could be arrived at by multiples of the earth number, four, and a complete number, ten, or it might be the square of 40 since Israel wandered in the wilderness 40 years for their sins and some offenses received 40 lashes. (Numbers 24:23; Deuteronomy 25:3) Either way, we come up with a number standing for the complete judgment of the wicked, since it is their blood that flows.

## CHAPTER 15

Verse 1 The first sign was the woman with child, the second a great red dragon and now we have the third. (Rev. 12:1, 3) In the seals (Rev. 5-8:5), we saw Christ revealed and his saints persecuted and martyred. The trumpets (Rev. 8:6-11:19) served as warnings from God since only one-third of earth, sea, etc., are hurt. Men could have followed Christ or repented at the first two, but this third completes the process (Thayer) of God's wrath and presents his punishment of those who will not repent.

Verse 2 The sea is likely the same one mentioned in the throne scene of Rev. 4:6. The difference here is that it is mingled with fire which may signify coming judgment or the fiery trials Christians go through to at last stand upon this sea. (Zechariah 13:9; Malachi 3:2-4; I Corinthians 3:12-15; I Peter 1:7) Though the devil and his allies intended to defeat them, here they stand victorious. In Rev. 5:8 and 14:2, we have seen the harps as representative of joyful music and a sweet sound. Here, God has given the redeemed the ability to make joyful music and a sweet sound.

Verse 3 They use what God has given them to sing a song of victory and praise. The song of Moses was sung to rejoice over Israel's deliverance from the Egyptians through the Red Sea. Pharaoh's army had been drowned in the sea and God would bring his people to their promised inheritance. (Exodus 15:1-21) The song of the Lamb would be one of triumph in salvation and over all the evil Satan and his forces had brought against them. Since both songs are sung, it may be these are the redeemed of both covenants. Appropriately, God is given all the praise for the victory. A better rendering at the end of this verse would either make God king of ages or nations, as in the margin.

Verse 4 Everyone will at last have to honor God (Philippians 2:9-11) because he is pure. All nations, even Rome, will worship before God's throne and acknowledge his justice in judgments both for rewarding the redeemed and in punishment of the wicked.

Verse 5 John now looked and saw the actual dwelling place of God, or temple, opened in heaven. Particularly, John sees the way opened in the tabernacle of the testimony. This would be the Most Holy Place where the ark of the covenant was kept with the ten commandments on stone which were called the testimony. (Exodus 25:16, 21)

Verse 6 The seven angels of vers one now step out of the temple, obviously coming from the presence of God. They are dressed in white, and, like the Lord (Rev. 1:13), have the breasts girt with a golden girdle.

Verse 7 The wicked have been given ample opportunity to repent, so these angels are given bowls full of God's wrath.

Verse 8 Hailey points out three Old Testament uses of smoke in relation to God's work. (1.)

Smoke was used to represent His glory. (Exodus 19:18; Habakuk 3:3)

(2.) It represented God's anger being poured out in judgment. (Deuteronomy 29:20; Psalm 18:8; 74:1) (3.) Smoke was used to represent God's protective care enshrouding the faithful. When the tabernacle was finished and later when Solomon's temple was finished, God's glory filled those places so no one could enter. (Exodus 40:34-35; I Kings 8:10-11) This smoke may, therefore, best be thought of as God's glory filling his dwelling place so no one could enter while his wrath is being poured out in plagues upon the earth. The time for mercy is over and God is ready to punish those who have not repented.

## CHAPTER 16

Verse 1 A loud voice calls to the seven angels from out of the temple, which may indicate God is speaking, and tells them to pour out the bowls filled with wrath upon the earth.

Verse 2 The first warning trumpet brought hail and fire mingled with blood upon earth and a third part of vegetation was killed as a warning. (Rev. 8:7) An evil, perhaps stinking, and painful open sore or ulcer fell upon the followers and worshipers of the beast. (Compare Exodus 9:9-11) Sinful practices and the worship of false gods, such as pornography, humanism, materialism, atheism, etc., do fester as open sores upon all those who practice them. The highest crime areas in any city surround places peddling pornography and nudity, bars, and particularly I am told, gay bars. Notice, the warnings had been given previously, so this plague is not restricted, except in that it will not come upon the righteous.

Verse 3 The second trumpet brought harm to one-third of the sea and this bowl does, too. (Rev. 8:8) God's promise to Noah (Genesis 8:20-22) would not allow us to think these plagues actually are upon the literal sea, fresh water or sun. Instead, these figures are used to show mankind, in every facet of his being, is to be punished for wickedness. The sea likely represents the teeming masses of humanity. As it turns to wickedness, it begins to rot and stink like the blood of a dead man and all who join in this wickedness likewise die. (Ephesians 2:1-3)

Verses 4-6 Like the third trumpet (Rev. 8:11), this bowl affects the fresh water. Its result is similar to that of the first plague against Egypt except they could dig for fresh water, and this extends to the underground supply as well. (Exodus 7:17-25) The angel of the waters may be one God has appointed to watch over the waters or the one who poured out the bowl. The Lord is declared, by that angel, to have been just in turning the waters to blood because these had been blood thirsty in killing the saints and prophets. The Lord is identified as the one who is and was without saying he is to come. This may be because this is a picture of his coming.

Verse 7 Hendriksen writes, "Underneath the altar the souls of the martyrs had cried for vengeance (cf. Rev. 6:9; 8:3-5) So when this vengeance is rendered, it is the altar that replies: 'Yea, Lord God, the Almighty, genuine and righteous are thy judgments.'"

Verses 8-9 This may be a representation of the Lord's fiery judgment against his adversaries. (Psalm 97:1-3; II Thessalonians 1:7-9) Coffman suggests Christ and his Word are the spiritual light of men as the sun is the physical light of the world. "When that which should be light is so polluted that it will only scorch and burn with fire, then the bowl of the wrath of God has been poured upon the son." Instead of repenting and giving God the glory, those scorched speak against God's name. How tragic the depths of sin can be. (Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26-31) The fourth trumpet darkened the sun and moon. (Rev. 8:12)

Verses 10-11 The fifth trumpet brought the darkening of the earth because of the black cloud from the bottomless pit. (Rev. 9:1-2; Compare Exodus 10:22) In Rev. 13:1-2, we noted the

beast gets his power from Satan. His throne would be the center of God-opposing forces. In John's day, that would have been Rome. Now, it might well be Russia. Darkness can represent the loss of understanding and wisdom. (Psalm 69:23; Isaiah 9:19) The wicked chewed on their tongues because of the pain caused by the sores (verse 2), yet spoke against God's name and refused to repent. These bowls must have come in quick succession as the pain is still felt from the first during the fifth.

Verse 12 The sixth trumpet released four angels who had been bound at the Euphrates and they destroyed one-third of mankind with a great army. (Rev. 9:13-16) Remember, during the reign of Solomon, this was the eastern border and represented a barrier to invading armies. Cyrus dried up the Euphrates to capture Babylon, which was prophesied by Isaiah. (Isaiah 44:27-28; 46:11) First century Christians should have been familiar with this and likely would have seen this as showing God's ultimate control and use of even the matters soon to be revealed.

Verses 13-14 The dragon is Satan. (Rev. 12:9) We have suggested the beast represents God-opposing forces. (Rev. 13:1-3) The false prophet seems to be the same as the second beast (Rev. 13:11-17) and stands for false religion. Frogs were used in the second plague against Egypt. (Exodus 8:1-15; Psalm 78:45; 105:30) Their incessant croaking can be a nuisance and they are often slimy and dirty. Under the law, such creatures were considered an abomination. (Leviticus 11:9-12) They are "spirits of demons" (ASV) sent forth to deceive through what appears to be miracles and bring about an alliance of earth's kings against God. (Compare II Thessalonians 2:8-12; I Timothy 4:1-2)

Verse 15 While the forces of evil are assembling, Jesus warns he will come in a sudden, unannounced manner. (Compare 3:3; II Peter 3:10; Matthew 24:42-44) "Watcheth" and "keepeth" are words which denote continuous action. Coffman quotes F. F. Bruce who says the captains of the Jerusalem temple would burn the clothes of any guard found sleeping at his post. He would flee naked and ashamed.

Verse 16 "Armageddon," or Har-Magedon, means Mount of Megiddo. The city of Megiddo sat on a hill and this may be the place intended, but it is nowhere else called Mount of Megiddo in the Bible. The Bible speaks of Megiddo which "was at the Wadi Ara, guarding Aruna Pass, a vital connection between Africa and Asia," according to McCord. Joshua slaughtered the king of Megiddo. (Joshua 12:21) Deborah and Barak conquered Sisera there. (Judges 5:19-21; 4:13) Kings Ohaziah and Josiah died there. (II Kings 9:27; 23:29-30; II Chronicles 35:22) The latter instance came to symbolize a great nation wide grief. (Zechariah 12:11) This fortress city was on a hill overlooking the main road through the Plain of Jezreel, or Esdraelon. The Midianites assembled there when Gideon defeated them. (Judges 6:33-7:25) The battle which led to Saul's death was also fought there. (I Samuel 29:30)

Verse 17 The earth, salt water and fresh water have previously been involved in the bowls. Now, the air is included. It should be remembered the devil is called the prince of the power of the air. (Ephesians 2:2) God's wrath is now complete, as a voice from the throne tells us.



Verse 18 There are similarities between this and 4:5, 8:5 and 11:19. These seem to grow in intensity. The first had no earthquake. The second, at the end of the seven seals, added the earthquakes and the third, at the end of the seven trumpets, added great hail. Here, we have an earthquake greater than man has seen before.

Verses 19-20 Babylon is shaken into three parts, islands fled, and mountains disappeared. Babylon and all the cities that joined in her wickedness fall. She is given the cup of God's wrath to drink. Never let it be said that God is not just. He only waits for man's sins to become ripe and then will punish.

Verse 21 Hail fell during the seventh plague (Exodus 8:18-26), but we have no indication it was this bad. A talent is thought to have weighed between 60 and 100 pounds. In the midst of a great display of God's wrath, wicked men show how rotten they are by speaking against God's name!

## CHAPTER 17

Verse 1 The angel tells John he will show him the condemnation of the harlot. Tyre was called a harlot by Isaiah (Isaiah 23:16-17), as was Ninevah by Nahum (Nahum 3:4f) Also, Jerusalem was described as a harlot when the people turned from proper service to spiritual adultery. (Isaiah 1:21; Hosea 2:5, 12; 9:1; Jeremiah 2:20) The waters are identified in verse 15 as peoples, multitudes, nations and tongues. It seems possible to this writer that we first have a picture of Rome as the capital city of the empire and then as the head of the spiritually apostate church gone whoring after false religion.

Verse 2 The kings of the earth were materialistic and irreligious because they were drunk on her power.

Verse 3 The woman clothed with the sun was last seen (Rev. 12:1, 6, 14) in the wilderness. So, some have concluded this must be the apostate church portrayed as a whore riding on the beast in the wilderness. However, Old Testament writers use the wilderness to describe a place where God protects his people (Psalm 78:52; Isaiah 51:3; Ezekiel 34:25-31) and a wasteland of punishment. (Isaiah 50:2; Zephaniah 2:13) The harlot may be the apostate church if the wilderness of chapter 12 is the same as the one here. The beast she rides upon seems to be the one of 13:1. Scarlet was the color of luxury and royalty. (Matthew 27:28-29) It is also the color used to describe the stain of sin. (Isaiah 1:18)

Verses 4-5 The woman was arrayed in the clothes of luxury in a gaudy sort of way. Her clothes clearly identify here with the beast she rides (scarlet) and show how much she will spend on her own pleasure. (Gold, gems and pearls) One would expect a fine drink from a golden cup, but her's contains things the Lord hates, the filthiness of sin. It is said the harlots of that day had their names tattooed on their foreheads. She is the mother of all the spiritually unfaithful and the sins of the earth. The description here reminds us of Jeremiah's prophecy in regard to ancient Babylon (Isaiah 51:1-8)

Verse 6 She had thirsted after the blood of the faithful and was drunk on the blood of those who had martyred. John stood in wonder looking at such a sight.

Verse 7 The angel asks John why he was awed and says he will tell who the woman and the beast are.

Verse 8 If we were right in our suggestions about the deathstroke delivered to the head in Rev. 13:1-3, this would be another good way to portray it. The abyss was the origin of the sun-darkening smoke, locusts and the domain over which Satan rules. (Rev. 9:1-3, 11) This beast out of the abyss is headed for perdition or destruction, utter ruin. The sinful world stands in awe of a beast that lived, died and now is seen rising out of the pit. God foreordained before the foundation of the world that those who obeyed Christ would have their names written in the book of life and be saved. Likewise, those who refuse to obey will be lost. (Mark 16:15-16; Ephesians 1:3-12)

Verses 9-11 Generally, wisdom is the application of knowledge. The seven heads are both seven mountains and seven kings. Some have said the seven mountains are obviously those on which Rome was built and the seven kings are seven of her emperors. Of course, there is a great division over which emperors to count. Coffman suggest the seven heads, mountains, and kings are all representations of the same thing. He believes they stand for empires, since literal kings would not be described as fallen, but dead. He says Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia and Greece would be the five that had fallen. Rome would be the sixth and the apostate church persecuting true believers the seventh. Certainly, kingdoms are described as mountains elsewhere in scripture. (isaiah 2:2; Jeremiah 51:25) Also, Daniel uses the words king and kingdom interchangeably. (Daniel 7:17, 23) This would make the eighth either some power not known to us yet, one of the seven described as the eighth or a revival of one of the seven.

Verse 12 There are always those who ride to power on the wave created by another. They are without real power of their own but do rule for a time with the one they ascended to power with.

Verse 13 Naturally, such kings who draw their power from another will be minded to do as the other instructs and will give all its strength to that end.

Verse 14 These will, at the beast's direction, fight with Jesus, but will lose. Jesus and the faithful will have the victory.

Verse 15 In verse 1, the angel had bid John to come see the whore that sat on many waters and now we learn the waters are nations.

Verses 16-17 The very kings who helped the harlot so they might share in her power actually hate her because of the power she exercises. God will use them to bring her to destruction when her sins are ripe. (Read Judges 7:22; I Samuel 14:20; II Chronicles 20:22-25 to see how God can even make nations fight against themselves.) Hendriksen says the reaction of the horns is like that of Judas Iscariot who betrayed his Lord for thirty pieces of silver yet ended up throwing them away in revulsion when he realized what he had done. (Matthew 27:3-5) These kings now turn their power over to the beast, which Coffman sees as the eighth beast of verse 11, or the lawless one.

Verse 18 The harlot is clearly identified as "that great city," which would seem to be none other than Rome the capital of the Empire and the Holy Roman Empire.

## CHAPTER 18

Verse 1 After the vision of chapter 17, John saw another angel with great authority to carry out his mission. The brightness surrounding him shows his greatness and the greatness of his task. Verses 2-3 That angel announced the certainty of the wicked city's doom. She would become a place inhabited by unclean spirits and foul, hateful birds. This would be because she led others into spiritual fornication by teaching them to love the things of this world.

Verse 4-5 Christians, or God's people, are told by a great voice to come out from such worldly pursuits lest they participate not only in the pleasures of sin but also its terrible rewards. (II Corinthians 6:17-7:1; Ephesians 5:11) Like pieces of paper glued together to form a roll, the sins of Babylon are so numerous that they stretch to heaven. Thus, they have reached an intolerable state, and God will reward them.

Verse 6 To whom is the voice directing these remarks? Perhaps the kings of Rev. 17:16-17. In any case, it will be God doing the rewarding, even if it is through the agency of some other. Since Babylon is to be rewarded in exactly the same way she delivered, it seems she must have delivered a double portion of misery and would now receive the same.

Verse 7 Many scriptures warn of the dangers of pride. (II Samuel 22:28; Proverbs 11:2; 16:18; 29:23) The wicked city, like her ancient counterpart (Isaiah 47:7-8), boasted of her high position, the fact that she was no widow and would see no sorrow. Of course she was a queen of wickedness and, like all harlots, could not be a widow, but the end of her reign and beginning of her sorrow was upon her.

Verse 8 In one swift movement, the queen, who boasted of being seated as in a perpetual reign, would be dead. She would be brought to mourning, just like a widow mourns, and famine would cause her real sorrow. She had overlooked her most powerful enemy, the Lord.

Verse 9-10 Even though they killed her (Rev. 17:16-17), the kings cry loudly and beat the breasts in grief, or bewail and lament. Their sorrow is for their own loss, it would seem, more than the harlots death. They would not dare to go close out of fear and expressed regret over her sudden end.

Verses 11-13 The merchants, or wholesalers, also weep over the death of the harlot for a selfish reason, there is no one left to buy. Purple and scarlet were the colors of royalty and the wealthy. It will be remembered that the harlot wore these colors. (Rev. 17:4) Silk came from the Far East, so the trade of the wicked city was far-reaching. Hailey says, "Thyine wood was an aromatic wood of beautiful texture, imported from North Africa and prized for its aroma and as a resource for making fine furniture." Hendriksen tells that it was also used as incense. Wine, oil and fine flour would be used by the wealthy in their feasts. Hendriksen also writes, "These wicked people trade in bodies and souls of slaves as if they constituted mere articles of merchandise."

Verse 14 All the ripe fruits and costly treats she had developed a taste for would be forever withdrawn.

Verses 15-17a There was nothing the merchants could do but stand fearfully in the distance and mourn their own loss of a great customer. Like the prodigal who had many friends while the money lasted (Luke 15:13-16), the harlot finds no one to help her when sin's rewards come crashing down upon her. Again, we note her end came in a sudden and very brief period of time.

Verses 17b-18 Shipmasters (pilots or captains), passengers, seamen and all others who make their living from the sea (ship builders, fishermen, divers, exporters and importers) also bewailed their loss as they watched her burn.

Verse 19 Dust upon the head is a symbol of grief. (Job 2:12; Ezekiel 27:30) They grieve over the collapse of their trade and fortune, not the death of the harlot.

Verse 20 God's people, in contrast to the worldly minded, are told to rejoice over the punishment of sin. Just so, the readers of the book could rejoice because the ultimate victory of good and righteousness had been assured. Remember, the wicked had earlier celebrated the death of the two witnesses. (Rev. 11:10)

Verse 21 Here we have a symbolic representation of the harlot's destruction. A great millstone would be the one turned by animals in contrast to one woman turned by hand. A mighty angel (Compare Rev. 5:2 and 10:1) casting such a stone into the sea would clearly demonstrate the finality of Babylon's judgment. Once it had been cast into the sea, such a stone would not be seen again. This is very similar to Jeremiah 51:61-64. This is the second occurrence of the expression "no more at all." (verse 14) It will occur four times in the next two verses to verify the finality of this judgment.

Verses 22-24 As Harkrider says, "There will 'no more' be the amusement life, business life, or even the home life which existed in the arrogant, rebellious" city of John's revelation. The reason all this comes to an end is threefold. The merchants of the wicked, worldly city had made profit their sole ambition, the nations of the earth were deceived by her worldly ways and slew God's spokesmen.

## CHAPTER 19

Verses 1-3 While those who had profitted because of Babylon's extravagant wickedness mourned their loss, God's servants rejoiced in the Lord's conquest. (Compare 18:20) The word translated "Alleluia" is found only in this chapter in the New Testament and means, "Praise the Lord." It is shouted by a great multitude, which we assume to be the victorious saints. The harlot's two greatest sins were the leading of others into evil and shedding the blood of God's people. It is, therefore, right and just for her to be judged. The multitude repeats its praise for the Lord as the smoke of Babylon rises forever. The continually rising smoke shows the finality of God's judgment. The harlot will never rise to disturb God's people again.

Verse 4 The four creatures around the throne and 24 elders join in the praises of God.

Verse 5 The speaker is not identified, but his voice comes out of the throne and commands all God's servants, which would include righteous men and angels, to praise God. Coffman says the words "small and great" are used to clearly set forth that it is a command for all of God's servants.

Verses 6-8 The servants speak and their voices are like the shout of a great crowd, water crashing over a fall onto the rocks below and great thunderings. They praise the Lord because he reigns as an all-powerful Lord. When Jesus pronounced a blessing upon those who would be persecuted for serving in his name, he instructed them to "rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven." (Matthew 5:11-12) Now, we see that rejoicing and gladness brought to fruition. Jewish custom required the bridegroom to go away and prepare a place for his bride during the betrothal. She must maintain her purity, or he will divorce her. When the betrothal is over, the bridegroom went with his friends to the house of the bride to receive her and take her home. Under this figure, the church is shown being eternally united to her husband. She wears the white robes of her righteous deeds. (Compare Ephesians 5:25-27; II Corinthians 11:1-3.) We should note the bride had to make herself ready. If she failed to be pure, she would not be received by her husband. She has simple, pure clothing in contrast to the harlot's gaudy display.

Verse 9 Those "called" would be those who accepted the call since the gospel is for all. (Romans 1:16; Matthew 11:28-30)

Verse 10 Why did John fall down to worship this angel? Some have said he was momentarily confused and thought it was Christ. Others say he was so awed by the scenes of victory and praise that he fell down to worship without thinking. We do not know why John did it, but God uses it to show us angel worship is wrong. Only God is to be worshipped, which is one reason we know Jesus is God. (Matthew 4:10; Hebrews 1:6) The angel told John not to worship him as they were both servants of the Father. Hailey says, "The testimony of Jesus is that truth to which He bore witness (John 18:37), which was the word given to Him from God (John 8:28; 12:47; 14:24; Rev. 1:1, et. al.)" Of course, all disciples of Christ hold his testimony in trust, but there may be special reference to the fact that John was one of those intrusted with the charge to deliver that word so others might believe. (John 17:17-20) The very heart of prophecy, or all the Bible, is the testimony of Jesus.

Verses 11-13 A white horse and rider were first introduced in Rev. 6:2. Now, heaven is opened wide to show that horse and rider leading an army against the forces of evil. The "Faithful and True" can be none other than Christ. (Rev. 3:14, 7) Such is confirmed by the fact that his eyes are "as a flame of fire." (Rev. 1:14; 2:18) On his head are many royal bands which show his greatness as a king. The blood on his garment may be from battles already won, but this writer prefers to think it is Christ's own blood shed at Calvary for the sins of the world. "The Word of God" is one of Christ's titles and is only used by John. (John 1:1, 14; I John 1:1; 5:7)

Verse 14 White garments are for those who overcome. (Rev. 3:5) The martyrs underneath the altar were given white robes (Rev. 6:9-11) and those standing before the throne who had come out of great tribulation were wearing them. (Rev. 7:9, 14) So, these armies could be composed of the Lord's saints.

Verses 15-16 The sword coming out of Christ's mouth (Rev. 1:16; 2:12, 16) must be the word of God (Hebrews 4:12-13; Ephesians 6:17), however, it will no longer be used to convert sinners but to judge the wicked. (John 12:48-50) Hinds says, "Ruling with a rod of iron means in strict justice whether in imparting favors or in inflicting punishment." (Psalm 2:7-9; Isaiah 11:4; 12:5; Revelation 2:27; 12:5) The winepress of God's wrath is used in the judgment of the wicked. (Rev. 14:19-20) Jesus is now reigning as King of kings and Lord of lords. (I Timothy 6:15) All the world will recognize him as such when he comes in judgment. (Compare 17:14; Philippians 2:9-11)

Verses 17-18 An angel standing in the sun would be seen by all. Even before the battle is joined, he calls the flesh eating birds, such as vultures, to come to a great feast, which would seem to be in contrast to the wedding feast. (Rev. 19:9) The calling of such birds is reminiscent of Ezekiel's vision of the judgment of Gog. (Ezekiel 39:17-20) Those who had denied the existence of God had lived like animals, so they die a death like animals and are eaten by the birds. The same people are listed here as in Rev. 6: 15-17.

Verses 19-20 Some go into great detail on the events of the battle of Armageddon, but it is over in two verses. The great worldly beast's forces line up to fight God's forces and they are taken. With him are the kings who had destroyed the harlot (Rev. 17:16-17) and the false prophet, which stands for false religion. The beast and false prophet are cast into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. They have joined the harlot in a burning punishment. (Rev. 18:8-9, 18)

Verse 21 All of their allied forces are slain.

## CHAPTER 20

### The Binding of Satan

One of God's angelic messengers is portrayed as being sent down from heaven with a key to the abyss. In the New Testament, "abyss" is particularly used of the abode of demons and their leader, Satan (Luke 8:31; Revelation 9:1-2, 11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1, 3). The key represents power over Satan (compare Revelation 1:18). The great chain is literally "upon the hand" (A.S.V. margin) of Satan and may be the same as the little book of Revelation 10:2, which was also in, or upon, the hand of an angel.

Satan is again described as the dragon because he is ferocious; the old serpent, because he was the deceiver of Eden; the Devil, because he is man's accuser or slanderer; and Satan, because he is man's adversary (Revelation 12:9). Satan had to be restrained for men to be able to enter the kingdom of God (Matthew 12:24-30; Colossians 2:15). The only way for man to overcome the fear of death and the bondage of sin was through Christ's resurrection (Hebrews 2:14; Revelation 1:18). One thousand is a multiple of 10, thus a perfect number standing for a complete period of time. Notice, Satan is still able to work (1 Peter 5:8), but he cannot tempt the Christian without God making a way to escape nor can he hold the Christian in bondage to death. Satan was cast into the abyss and restrained from doing the work he desired to do. He will be loosed for a little time, which Shelly says is a loosing for judgment (Revelation 20:1-3).

Verse 4 The reigning of this verse is on thrones, which have been in heaven throughout this book. Jesus will actually lay down his reign after the resurrection. (1 Corinthians 15:23-25) Those John sees in this verse have received God's favorable judgment. John saw the souls of those beheaded for their faith in Jesus (Rev. 6:9-11) and those who remained faithful in life by refusing to worship the beast or bow to his authority in any way.

Verse 5 All of the rest of the dead that did not obey the Lord and worshipped the beast will not experience the first resurrection. The first resurrection is here described as the souls of the faithful reigning with Christ until they receive their immortal body and he puts down his reign.

Verse 6 They are blessed because they are resting from their labors (Revelation 14:13) and are living and reigning with Christ. They are pure, or holy, because Jesus' blood has cleansed them. They will not be cast into the lake of fire (verse 14), but will give the sacrifice of praise to God and Christ throughout Christ's reign as king.

Verse 7 When the word of God is no longer respected by his people, Satan will be loosed to deceive people again.

Verse 8 Gog was the ruler of the people who opposed God's faithful in Ezekiel's vision and Magog the land over which he ruled. Satan's forces come from all over the earth to do battle (Ezekiel 38-39).

Verse 9 Satan's forces will come up against the barracks of the faithful and the holy city, or



church (Hebrews 12:22-28). Their intent is to destroy God's faithful once and for all but God intervenes with the fire of his judgment and consumes his enemies.

Verse 10 The devil is cast down into the lake of fire and brinstone where the beast and false prophet were already being punished. (Rev. 19:20) Since the harlot was burned and the smoke goes up, it might be said all the forces of evil reap the same reward. Thayer says the word torment means, "to vex with grievous pains (of body or mind)". A double plural is used here to indicate time that goes on and on. It is like a repeating number in math. Thus, we could put for ever and ever and ever, etc. God will never be through punishing Satan for what he did. The everlasting fire was prepared for him and the angels that joined him in rebellion. (Matthew 25:41) Note the word translated "everlasting" and "eternal" in Matthew 25:46. Therefore, it could be said the reward of the faithful will only go on as long as the punishment of the wicked continues.

Verse 11 Jesus came forth to judge and make war (Rev. 19:11), so we assume he is the one of the throne. (Matthew 25:31; II Corinthians 5:10; Acts 17:31; II Timothy 4:1) Heaven and earth will disappear when Christ comes in judgment. (Hebrews 1:10-12; II Peter 3:10)

Verse 12 All of the dead will be raised in the same hour. (John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15) There will not be multiple judgments, as some have suggested. Instead, all people of every generation will be judged in one great judgment. (Matthew 25:32; 11:22, 24; 12:41-42; II Thessalonians 1:6-10) Some have suggested the books opened would be the laws of the various covenants under which people have lived. However, it seems more likely these books are the records of our lives as we wrote them with our deeds. The "book of life" is often referred to in scripture. (Exodus 32:32-33; Psalm 69:28; Isaiah 4:3; Malachi 3:16; Luke 10:20; Philippians 4:3; Revelation 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 21:27) A careful reading of these verses makes it plain this book contains a list of all of God's redeemed. We will all be judged based upon the way we have lived. (II Corinthians 5:10; Galatians 6:7-8) The idea of judgment here is a pronouncing of sentence.

Verse 13 The sea, whether the literal sea or a figure standing for the mass of humanity, death or the grave where the earthly remains were laid, and Hades, the waiting place of disembodied souls, will all yield their charges. All will be judged based upon the deeds they have done. (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; Hebrews 4:13)

Verse 14 Death and the place of disembodied spirits stand as the last two enemies to be overcome. Now that they have yielded their captives, they are cast into the lake of fire. (I Corinthians 15:26)

Verse 15 Hell was prepared for the devil and his angels, but some men will be sent there for eternity because they refused to repent. (Matthew 25:41)

## CHAPTER 21

Verse 1 Heaven is God's dwelling place. The new earth is not one of rocks, trees, etc., since, as McCord notes, we will have spiritual bodies for a spiritual existence. (I Corinthians 15:44-50) God is a spirit with no flesh and bones. (John 4:24; Luke 24:39) Jesus became flesh to dwell on earth but has now returned to a spiritual existence. (John 1:14; II Corinthians 5:16) We know we will be like him when he receives us unto glory. (I John 3:2) So, we can say the new earth is a place for spiritual beings. The old heaven and earth will pass away, as other passages also teach. (Hebrews 12:25-28; II Peter 3:10) The sea, in other parts of the earth, has stood for the restless masses of humanity. Coffman says some suggest the sea separated John from his beloved brethren in Asia Minor and now the separation was over. In either case, some troubling barrier has been removed and that is a beautiful thought.

Verse 2 The devil and his forces have done all they could to break up this union, but the church is now seen separated from sin and beautifully dressed for her husband. (Ephesians 5:25-27) New Jerusalem is a title for the church. (Galatians 4:26; Hebrews 12:22) Perhaps she is let down out of heaven because she is specially prepared of God.

Verses 3-4 This voice reminds us of the one in Rev. 16:17 and 19:5. Again, the speaker is unidentified but his message is obviously from God. The tent of God is with men and he makes his dwelling place with them in heaven. Literally, we should read here, "they shall be his peoples," indicating God's elect come from every nation under heaven. (Rev. 5:9; 7:9) The church now has eternal fellowship with her God. God will erase all of sin's consequences for his people in heaven, which are tears, death, sorrow, crying and pain.

Verses 5-7 Either God the Father or Christ now speaks from the throne. (Rev. 3:21) In the previous verse, some things were identified as having passed away. Now, in their place, we see all things made new. Perhaps John was so touched he stopped writing, for he is now told to write these words that cannot be contradicted. The plan of salvation is now complete, having been begun and finished by God. The promise here reminds us of Jesus' words in the sermon on the mount. (Matthew 5:6) The faithful will have their needs filled. Everyone that overcomes will inherit the beautiful place just described and will be received finally into God's family as a son. All of us long for acceptance and can receive it in this greatest form if we overcome. (Ephesians 1:5-6; Romans 8:14-15)

Verse 8 In contrast to the rewards of those who overcome is the punishment of the wicked in the lake burning with fire and brimstone. John now gives a list of some who will be included in that group. The fearful are those who run when the battle is joined. (Hebrews 10:38-39) The unbelieving are those who know the Lord's will but do not do it in preparation for his return. (Luke 12:45-48) Those who are foul and polluted because of association with idolatry and the sins surrounding it would be considered abominable. Murderers willfully take lives of others with no respect for life or law. Whoremongers are fornicators or those who participate in any illicit sexual activity. Sorcerers use drugs and magical arts to control others. Worshippers of

anything but the true God would be known as idolaters. Liars can lie by word, through intimation or silence. (Acts 5:1-11)

Verse 9 This may be the same angel as in Rev. 17:1. It appears the rest of this chapter and most of the next are a more detailed view of things discussed in verses 1-7.

Verses 10-11 John did not need a high vantage point to see the harlot but does to see Jesus' bride. The word "great" is not in the original. She is holy in that she is separated from sin for God's purpose. Her glory is not her own but solely from God. (Compare Exodus 40:34; I Kings 8:11; Ephesians 2:22, 3:21.) She radiated light from the Father like a jasper stone, which may have been a diamond. (Rev. 4:3)

Verses 12-13 A walled city in John's day was considered a place of security. There are three gates on each wall, east, north, south and west. They each have the name of one of the tribes of Israel which may symbolize God's success in bringing all of his chosen ones safely home.

Verse 14 The names of the Old Testament faithful have already been set forth in the symbolism of the twelve tribes and we now see the New Testament faithful joined to them under the figure of the twelve apostles. The foundation stones are listed in more detail in verses 19-20.

Verses 15-17 In Rev. 11:1, John had been given a reed, to measure the temple of God with, that was basically a stick. Here an angel measures the city of God in heaven with a golden reed. Measuring the city causes those who read the book to see the vastness of God's preparation for his people. (John 14:1-6) Twelve is a complete number and 1000 is a full number. A furlong is one-eighth of a mile, so the city is 1500 miles long by the same width and height. If 216 feet is the height of the wall around the city, then we assume the idea here is to emphasize the height of the city and the real lack of need for defense in heaven. The measures were true to those of men in John's day though they were done by an angel.

Verse 18 The wall was made of jasper, or diamonds, and the city was of a gold so pure one could see through it.

Verses 19-20 The twelve foundations were studded with the beautiful stones of John's day, some of which can no longer be positively identified.

Verse 21 As we continue to read the beautiful descriptions of this city, we cannot help but think this is the Almighty's answer to the questions of Rev. 18:18. Each gate, or gate tower, is hewn out of one massive pearl. The street is made of the same transparent gold we have seen earlier.

Verse 22 There will be no need for a special building in new Jerusalem to approach God in, since the glory of the Father and Son will permeate the whole city. We will be able to worship God from one end to the other.

Verse 23 There will be no need for created light because the source of light will be there. There is a continued emphasis placed upon Jesus throughout the book. Here he is the glory of God and

a lamp for the Father's city.

Verse 24 The saved of every nation, including kings who may have yielded to the King of kings, will walk the streets of that city in the radiance of the Son's glory. They will not seek glory and honor but bring theirs to Him.

Verses 25-26 All of the Lamb's enemies have been overthrown so there is no need to close the gates. The night hours have long been feared by good people because thieves and foreign armies have used its darkness to cover their evil deeds. In heaven, there will be no darkness nor evil deeds. Righteous people will bring God all the praise and honor they have received as his servants.

Verse 27 No one who lives an immoral life on earth will be allowed to enter heaven. It will be the home of God's righteous ones exclusively.

## CHAPTER 22

Verse 1 Water is vital to man's earthly survival. Jesus told the woman at the well of living water. (John 4:10) He will provide the same type of water for his saints in heaven. This is either the water of eternal life, or water that sustains life. Earth's waters had been polluted because of man's wickedness (Rev. 8:10-11; 16:4-7), but this water is clear as crystal. Notice, it flows out of the throne, which would indicate its divine source. The throne is shared by God and the Lamb. By this time, Christ has given his rule to the Father. (I Corinthians 15:24)

Verse 2 On earth, man also needs food and medicine to maintain a healthful existence. God will provide for all of our basic needs in abundance. Much as we might say the magnolia grows in the South, indicating the presence of many magnolias, the tree of life grows on both sides of the river of life beside the streets of heaven. Everything man lost because of Adam's sin in the garden of Eden will be restored in heaven's garden. Literally, it could be said these trees will yield fruit twelve times, or once each month.

Verses 3-5 The curse was pronounced upon man, woman and the ground in Genesis 3:16-19, but in heaven it will be removed. Before the fall, God walked in the garden where man lived. In heaven, God's throne will be in the city of the redeemed and they will serve God. Even in heaven, God believes activity keeps man happy. One of our rewards will be seeing God's face, which no man has ever done but many have desired. We will bear the likeness of the father and clearly be identifiable as his. The statements about light are like those in Rev. 21:23, 25. As God's children, we will reign with him. As much as anything else, this reign may be, as Coffman said, over our own selves.

Verse 6 This may be the angel talking, though one does also wonder if it might be Christ. The truthfulness of this revelation is first attested to by God. This is the same God that inspired the prophets to speak his word to men in the Old and New Testaments. (Deuteronomy 18:18; Isaiah 1:1-2; Jeremiah 1:1-2; Acts 1:16; I Peter 1:11; II Peter 1:21) The word "shortly" is used in Acts 12:7; 22:18; Romans 16:20; Luke 18:8; I Timothy 3:14 and Revelation 1:1. It means quickly, shortly, speedily or soon, according to Thayer. The events of the vision certainly were already in motion at the time of John's writing. However, it could also be said that they would happen quickly, or suddenly, without warning. Either would be acceptable.

Verse 7 The Lord is going to come suddenly, when many least expect it. (Matthew 24:42-44) We will be blessed if we closely watch to keep, or do, the things Christ has clearly outlined for his righteous in this book.

Verses 8-9 Even today, it is tempting to reverse the one who taught us the glorious gospel. We must remember it is the message and the who sent it that is worthy of honor and not the messenger. (I Corinthians 3:5-7) The angel indicates he is merely a messenger of God as were

the prophets before him. He is not worthy of worship, any more than the prophets were, but God is. How interesting to realize we are co-workers with angels in God's behalf.

Verse 10 The contents of a sealed book would not be made known until a later time. The persecutions of this book would come about so soon that the churches of Asia needed to read the contents of this book immediately. The wicked need to hear the warnings and change their lives, as the next verse will explain.

Verse 11 This is a solemn warning that should cause sinners to see the need for a change and saints to see the need for constant watchfulness. The word translated "still" could be translated "yet more," which would indicate one grows in sin or grows in righteousness. (II Timothy 3:13; II Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 6:1)

Verse 12 The Lord wants us to realize there will be no time for change at his sudden coming. When he comes again, all will be rewarded according to their works (Galatians 6:7-8; II Corinthians 5:10), therefore we need to resolve to hear and follow him now.

Verse 13 To say the Lord is the Alpha and Omega, is to say he is complete since these are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. To say he is first and last, is to say Jesus is eternal. (Note comments on Rev. 1:17) Hailey says, "The 'beginning' (arche) indicates the first person in a series, one of foremost authority, one by whom all things commence. (cf. Isaiah 40:14, 25)

Verse 14 The American Standard renders the first part of this verse, "Blessed are they that wash their robes." Such would refer to the washing in Christ's blood (Rev. 1:5) which can only be ours if we keep his commandments, so the rendering is basically the same. It is by such continual obedience, or washing, that we will gain access to the tree of eternal life and an entrance into the eternal city.

Verse 15 Those who will not be allowed into the city are described as dogs because, in that day, dogs were wild scavengers who roamed in deadly packs. Also, Cofman says male prostitutes that worked in pagan temples were called dogs, so the word could describe a thoroughly immoral person. The test of this list has been dealt with under comments on Rev. 21:8

Verse 16 In verse 6, we had God's testimony and now Christ adds his to confirm by two witnesses the truthfulness of this message. He had it sent to all the churches of Asia mentioned in chapters 2 and 3. In Rev. 5:5, we noted the title "Root and offspring of David." As the morning star, Jesus could be said to be the herald of a new day that would dawn in eternity for the church.

Verse 17 The Spirit would be the Holy Spirit who spoke through the prophets and to the churches. (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22) Now, he invites Jesus to come as he has promised. (verses 7 and 12) The church, or bride, of Christ also wants Jesus to come and implores him. (Rev. 21:2, 9; I Corinthians 16:22) Of course, there is also an invitation extended by the Spirit through the gospel to sinners to obey. Those who are thirsty for righteousness can receive the water of life that is free or open for all. (Matthew 5:6; 11:28-30)

Verses 18-19 Similar warnings have been written in other places. (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Galatians 1:6-9) The message of this book should be tampered with in no way. To add to it, would be to add to God's word and will cause one to have the terrible plagues of this book added to him. Taking away from it will cause one's place in the book of life to be taken away. Remember, one would only have to ignore or refuse to teach a part of the book to take away from it.

Verse 20 Jesus says he will come suddenly and John adds his prayer for a speedy coming to those of verse 17.

Verse 21 How appropriate to end a book addressed to those facing severe persecution with a prayer for God's favor and good will in their behalf.

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