

REVELATION AND THE END-TIMES

Overview: (note: all Scriptures are from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted)

1. **Title:** “**The Revelation of Jesus Christ**”

- The Greek word we translate as “**revelation**” is Αποκαλυψις, (**apokalupsis**) from which we get our word **Apocalypse**
- It signifies literally, a revelation, or discovery of what was concealed or hidden (i.e. an **unveiling**)
 - “*But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, ⁴whose minds the god of this age has blinded.*” (2Corinthians 4:3)
- This revelation was given by GOD to Jesus Christ who gave it to his angel who showed it to John who sent it to the Churches.

2. **Author:** The **Apostle John** (“*the disciple whom Jesus loved*” – John 21:20)

3. **Date:** Written between **70-95 A.D.** during a period of **extreme persecution** of Christians by Roman Emperor **Nero**, probably after the destruction of Jerusalem in September 70 A.D.

4. **Location:** John had been exiled to the island of **Patmos** located 60 miles southwest of Ephesus in the Aegean Sea. Volcanic and mostly treeless, the Romans used it as a **penal colony**, forcing prisoners to work in the granite quarries.

5. **Situation:** John received these prophecies through a **series of vivid visions** containing **symbolic images** that **echo** those found in the **prophetic books** of the **Old Testament**.

- John records these visions in the **chronological order in which he received them**, many of them pictures of the same events from different perspectives
- John does **not**, however, provide a **chronological order to the events** – e.g. Jesus is born in chapter 12, exalted in chapter 5 and speaks to the churches in chapters 1-3
- The visions contain **figurative language** pointing to the **spiritual realities** behind **historical events**, past, present and future
- The symbols point to what is **ultimately indescribable** and the minute details are **not** intended to be **interpreted literally**

6. **Purpose:** The book of Revelation provides the “**end of the story**” to God’s plan of redemption through Jesus Christ

- It is the “**Lamb slain from the foundation of the world**” (Rev. 13:8) who conquered Satan and death who now sheds more light about the “**Day of the Lord**” and the **Second Coming of Christ** that were prophesied in both the old and new testaments
- It is the **Lamb of God** who is presented here as the “**Alpha and Omega**”(Rev. 1:8) who is “**on the throne**” (4:2) and is **Lord of the final harvest** (14:14-20)
- It is the **Lamb of God** who pours out His **wrath** in **judgment** upon Satan and his allies (20:10-12) who completes the implementation of a “**new heaven and a new earth**”(21:1) and **restores** the blessings of the Paradise of God (22:1-5)

7. **Structure:** The book of Revelation is primarily divided into **two sections** as given in Rev. 1:19:

- a. “**the things which are**” comprising chapters 1-3 (the letters to the seven churches)
- b. “**the things which will take place after this**” comprising chapters 4-22

8. **Interpretation:** There are **many different interpretations** of the symbolic visions. Prominent Bible scholars and theologians have debated and disagreed over the meaning of Revelation for almost 2000 years. **Only** time will tell which interpretation is correct.

- We will **point out the differences** in the most accepted interpretations as appropriate to give you an understanding and flavor of what each one prescribes
- These interpretations are:
 - **Contemporary Historical** which regards the visions of the book as referring primarily to events belonging to the **closing decades of the first century** or even ending in **70 A.D.** when the **temple was destroyed** (the Preterist viewpoint)
 - **Continuous Historical** which presupposes that the visions refer to events in human history from the days of Rome to the end of history and see the **2nd Coming of Christ after the Millennium**
 - **Dispensational (Futurist)** which sees the visions as **prophetic descriptions** of what is to transpire in the so-called “**end days**” which are **yet to come**
 - **Symbolic (Idealist)** which **denies** that the vision pertain to **any specific events** (past, present or future) but which provide **spiritual principles** for Christians to apply in every era of history
- The **Futurist** interpretation is the **most widely accepted** and is the one **used in this study**. However, within this interpretation there are **differing interpretations of timing** – in particular of the Tribulation, the Rapture and the Millennium
 - The **Great Tribulation** is a **horrendous period** during which much of the earth and its inhabitants are **destroyed** through war, pestilence, famine and earthquakes; some see this as a **literal 7-year time period** while others believe it is “**age-long**” or a symbolic term for the age-long struggle of evil against Christ’s rule
 - The **Rapture** (i.e. the “**catching away of the saints**” to meet Jesus in the air) is seen as occurring either **before** the Great Tribulation (Pre-Trib), **midway** through the Tribulation (Mid-Trib), at the **end** of the Tribulation (Post-Trib) or just prior to the “**Day of the Lord**” (Pre-Wrath)
 - The **Millennium** is a **thousand-year** or **symbolic period** of time of Christ’s reign on earth; some “post-millennium” interpreters see the Tribulation as “age long” (i.e. throughout the Millennium) whereas others see the **Tribulation** occurring **before the Millennium** (Pre-Millennial)
- The **Pre-Wrath, Pre-Millennial** interpretation is the one **assumed in this study**, although we will point out places where different interpretations appear to have some merit.
 - Fortunately, the **fundamental truths** of Revelation **do not depend** on adopting a particular point of view. They are available to anyone who reads the book for its overall message and **resist** the **temptation** to become **overly enamored** with the details

9. **Relationship to Other Prophetic Scriptures:** Eschatology is the study of Scripture dealing with the “**last hour**” or “**end-times.**” References to these final events are **scattered throughout Scripture**.

- We will also study **many of those Scriptures** and visions (e.g. Daniel) **as they relate** to the events and topics being addressed in Revelation – and, therefore, we will use the **Scriptures to interpret Revelation**

10. **Final Thoughts**

- Revelation is the last or **final book** in the Bible for a reason – it is written in such a manner as to **tie all of Scripture together** into one cohesive whole
- **Don’t be afraid of Revelation** because the content is so **symbolic and obtuse** – **trust God** that He will **bless you with understanding** as you study this most important and **extraordinary book**
- **Don’t be afraid of Revelation** because of the **horrific events** that are foretold – believers will be **raptured** out of the world before the **cataclysmic events**
- Revelation **opens and closes** with a **promise of blessing** to its readers and hearers (Revelation 1:3 and 22:7) if we “*keep those things which are written in it*”

Read Revelation 1:1-3

v1: Revelation is an **opening up and revealing** of the **mysteries** that were closed up in the time of Daniel (about 600 B.C.)

- *“But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the **time of the end**; many shall run to and fro, and **knowledge shall increase**.”* (Daniel 12:4)
 - Many shall endeavor to try and **figure out the unknowable**
 - **Knowledge** of the world **has increased** in **astronomical proportions** just recently, another **sign** that we are in the **“latter days”**
- However, the Revelation given is **still somewhat “veiled”** by the **symbolism**, which will not be **fully understood** until the **future becomes history**
 - Then the **seals shall be broken**, and the true sense of it will become plain as the end-days unfold
 - This revelation not only concerns **events to come** but also **reveals more about who and what Jesus Christ is** – the **Lamb of God** and the **Lion of Judah** (Rev. 5:5)
- Revelation was **given to Jesus Christ** by God the **Father**
 - *“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but **only the Father**.”* (Mark 13:32)
 - *“I do nothing of Myself; but as **My Father taught Me**, I speak these things.”* (John 8:28)
- Jesus then sent it **“by His angel”** to the **Apostle John** in a series of visions
 - This revelation was also **“signified”** by His angel which means **“marked”** in Greek – thus, it bore the unmistakable **mark of Jesus Christ** such that John had no doubts from whence it came
 - John then was **commissioned** to show it **“unto His servants”** – i.e. to all believers
- The revelation is about **“things which must shortly take place”**
 - This phrase has caused **Christians throughout history** to believe that these end-time events would **happen in their lifetimes**
 - However, there are **two Greek words** here that are translated into the English phrase “shortly take place”
 - **“en tachos”** is **more accurately** translated **“fixed, brief period of time”**
 - Thus, the **events** revealed are **fixed** – i.e. **certain to happen**, and, they will occur “shortly” – i.e. a **brief period of time** (e.g. the **7-year** Tribulation) which, in light of **eternity**, *“one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”* (2Peter 3:8)
 - So **what is “shortly” to God** may not seem so **short to us**

v2: It is noted here that **John** has **already proven himself** as a **reliable witness** in his writing the **Gospel** of John as well as the **three letters** also contained in the Bible

- Thus, Jesus has **entrusted him** with writing the **record of the visions** of Revelation
 - It is **Jesus** who is the **“Faithful and True Witness”** (Rev. 3:14) and who is **“the Word”**
 - But here he has **entrusted that truth to John** who has already proven himself trustworthy
- It includes **“all the things which he saw”** (KJV)
 - That is, **what Jesus saw from the Father** and showed in visions to John

v3: Both the **reader and hearer** of **“this prophecy”** are **blessed** – i.e. given a **spiritual gift of understanding** and discernment which may, at first, even be subconscious

- But only if we **“take to heart what is written in it”** – i.e. believe it and act on it

- This is the first of seven blessings or “beatitudes” in the Book of Revelation
- Furthermore, this verse goes on to say that “*the time is near*” (KJV) or “*at hand*” (NKJV)
 - This is a different Greek word (“**eggus**”) than in verse 1 which denotes a **state of readiness** and the **initiation** of the series of events that will **ultimately be fulfilled in whole**
 - This phrase may also be considered as an **urgent call to obedience** when connected with the preceding admonition to **take it to heart**

Read Rev. 1:4-6

v4: The **seven churches** to whom this epistle was directed were **real churches** located in “*Asia*”

- Asia here means an area that is now **western Turkey**
 - The seven churches were located about **50 miles apart**, virtually forming a **circle** moving clockwise **north from Ephesus** and coming around **full circle to Laodicea**
 - The entire Book of Revelation was apparently sent to each of these seven
- Many see these **seven churches** and letters as being **specific** only to the **existing churches**, or perhaps as **principles to churches** throughout the ages
 - However, other prophecies that have already been fulfilled in the Old Testament reveal that most (if not all) Biblical prophecies from God have meaning in the time they were written as well as in the **present and the future** (i.e. they have both **near** and **far** application)
 - Thus, instead of these first three chapters standing alone, they in fact are the **foundation for understanding the rest of the visions** in the entire Book of Revelation
- From this perspective, we can interpret the **characteristics of each church** (as described in the ensuing chapters) as being **representative** of the entire “**Church Age**” up to the **Second Coming** (dates below are approximate and taken from “The Unveiling” by Keith Harris)
 - **Ephesus:** The **loveless church** – 70 to 170 A.D.
 - **Smyrna:** The **persecuted church** – 170 to 312 A.D.
 - **Pergamos:** The **compromising church** – 312 to 606 A.D.
 - **Thyatira:** The **corrupt church** – 606 to 1520 A.D.
 - **Sardis:** The **dead church** – 1520 to 1750 A.D.
 - **Philadelphia:** The **persevering church** – 1750 to 1948 A.D.
 - **Laodicea:** The **lukewarm church** – 1948 A.D. to ?????
- The “*seven Spirits who are before His throne*” represent the **total** (seven is the number of **completeness** and **perfection**) full **nature** of God in the person of the **Holy Spirit**
 - They are the “*seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth*” (Rev. 5:6)
- Although John is writing the book, he notes that it is really from “*Him who is and who was and who is to come*”
 - This **description** of **Jesus** is **given four times** in Revelation and conveys the same idea as Jesus being the “*Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End*” that is **also used four times** in the Book of Revelation (these are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet)
 - Thus, **Jesus existed before our world** of time and space and is **alive now** and **will exist after the end of time** – and, in fact, He represents what comes after time and space are ended

v5: Jesus is described in terms of His three (the number of holy perfection) primary characteristics:

- 1) “*the faithful witness*” – Jesus perfectly represented the Father and was **faithful unto death** through his **redeeming sacrifice** of His life
- 2) “*the firstborn of the dead*” -- Jesus was the **first “Adam”** to be **resurrected**, opening the path to heaven and **everlasting life to all of us**
- 3) “*the ruler over the kings of the earth*” – **Jesus now sits on the throne** in both dominion and judgment over the entire world
- John then **dedicates** this work to “*Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood*”
 - Jesus did not do this great work assigned to Him by the Father out of **obligation**, but out of **love**
 - And, by becoming the **perfect sacrifice** for our sins, His shed blood is what **washes us clean** from our sins and **justifies us before God**

v6: In so doing, Jesus also makes us “*kings and priests to His God and Father*”

- The sacrifice of Jesus now confers on all believers the **privileges** that had **belonged to Israel** (see Exodus 19:6, 40:15)
 - Whereas the **Jews had both kings and priests, Jesus became both King and High Priest** and passes on this **authority and responsibility** to the **Body of Christ**
- All of which is done in the name of and to the **glory of God the Father**

Read Rev. 1:7-8

v7: The Lord’s return (the so-called **Second Coming**) is described in several places in Scripture as being “*with clouds*” or “*in the clouds*” (Mark 13:26)

- His return will be **highly visible and unmistakable** – “*every eye will see Him*”
 - This includes **non-believers as well** – “*even they who pierced Him*”
 - This also suggests that, in a very literal sense, even those who actually pierced him (i.e. the Roman soldiers) **who are now dead** will also be aware of His coming
- This will cause all the “*tribes of the earth*” to mourn
 - They will mourn because it will be clear that He is **returning in Judgment**, both the living and the dead

v8: This initial salutation and introduction concludes by again referring to Jesus as “*the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End*” – i.e. from **eternity to eternity**

- The emphasis here is on He who “*is to come*” which is at the **heart** of the Book of Revelation
 - And, to make it clear that this is **God** in the **person of Jesus** who comes, the verse concludes by referencing Him as “*the Almighty*” whose power and authority is **absolute and complete**

Read Revelation 1:9-16

v9a: John refers to himself as a “*your brother and companion in the tribulation*”

- This was a time of great **persecution** of Christians by the Roman Empire, and Paul wanted all who read this book to know that he too was **suffering along with them** – and with Christ as well
 - This reference to tribulation means their current trials **not the “great tribulation”** to come
- However, John goes on to note that he is also their companion in the “*kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ*”
 - This introduces three **primary themes** in the Book of Revelation:
 1. **uffering:** *Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, “Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?” ¹⁴And I said to him, “Sir, you know.” So he said to me, “These are the ones who come out of the **great tribulation**, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (Revelation 7:14)*
 - “*Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but **share with me in the sufferings** for the gospel according to the power of God, ⁹who has saved us and called us with a **holy calling**, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.” (2Timothy 1:8-9)*
 2. **atient Endurance:** *“I know your works, your labor, your **patience**, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; ³and you have **persevered** and have **patience**, and have labored for My name’s sake and have not become weary.” (Revelation 2:2-3)*
 - “*Let us run with **endurance** the race that is set before us, ²looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him **endured the cross**, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Hebrews 12:1)*
 3. **Kingdom:** *“Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdoms of this world have become the **kingdoms of our Lord** and of His Christ, and He shall **reign forever and ever!**” (Revelation 11:15)*
 - *So He said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children, **for the sake of the kingdom of God**, ³⁰who shall not **receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come eternal life.**” (Luke 18:29)*
- John is saying that there will be trials, you **will suffer persecution**, but you **must endure** with patience **until the end** and then the Kingdom of God is yours with all its **glory and riches**

v9b: John now identifies his particular persecution – he has been exiled to a **Roman penal colony** on the island of **Patmos** in the Aegean Sea off the west coast of what is now Turkey

- Why” “*For the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ*”
 - That is, for **preaching the Gospel**
 - Historians have noted that Christians received very **harsh treatment** on Patmos

v10: John states that he was “*in the Spirit*” – the first of **four such mentions** in Revelation, each marking his **four major visions**

- This is a state of “**spiritual exaltation**” – **not a dream**, but a **vision** like Peter’s in Acts 10:10 (the sheets from heaven which Peter saw from a rooftop showing him that God can make unclean food clean – and, therefore, that Gentiles can be made clean too)

- Here **Christ comes to John**; in the next three visions **John is told to “come”** and is lifted up into the **heavenlies**
- This occurred on the **“Lord’s Day”** – i.e. the first day of the week on which **Christ rose from the dead**
- John heard a **“loud voice as of a trumpet”**
 - A trumpet is used to **herald a major event or announcement**
 - The **seven angels** use the trumpet to **announce** each of their seven **plagues**

v11: John notes again that he has **received this “word”** from the **“Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last”**

- John wants to leave no doubt that this is from **God Almighty** Himself, the **Living Word**
- He is further **instructed** to **“what you see write in a book”** – much of which is extremely **hard to describe in words**
 - The **scope** of what John “saw” is so **great in magnitude**, that human words alone would have **failed to convey** the full impact
 - Then the **Holy Spirit enabled John** to translate what he saw into **rich, symbolic prose** that gives us a **good idea** of what John saw but by no means the full breadth and depth of the vision)
- After recording the visions, John is then told to **send the book to seven existing churches** located in a **50-mile circle** in what is now **western Turkey**
 - Each of these were **existing churches** and the **specific messages** given to each one had **direct applicability** to their situation at that time
 - These messages are also applicable as **warnings** and **guideposts** to all churches in all ages
 - Furthermore, they **define the progression of the churches throughout this church age**, leading up to the Laodicean church which represents our pre-tribulation state (i.e. “lukewarm... neither hot nor cold”) – see Overview for the dates represented by each church

vv12-13: Since the **voice** comes from **behind him**, John turns to see who is speaking and sees **seven golden lampstands** instead of a person

- These seven **lampstands** represent the **seven churches** which are **lights in a dark world** and a derivative of the golden **candlestick in the temple** which had six branches and a main stem
 - The number **seven** is the sum of **three** (divine completeness in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit) plus **four** (the number of the **world** as in four directions, etc.), so it represents **divine completion and perfection in the world**
 - **Gold** represents **royalty**, the divine **sovereignty of God**
- Then John sees **“One like the Son of Man”** standing in the **midst** of these **lampstands**
 - **“Son of Man”** is a name that Jesus used often to **describe Himself** (e.g. Matthew 8:20) and John probably used it here because Jesus’ appearance was so **magnificently transfigured**
- Jesus also called Himself the **“light of the world”** (John 8:12) and, indeed, in this vision he is the **source of the light** being put forth by the **golden lampstands**
 - **“The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.”** (Revelation 21:23)
- Jesus Christ is further described as wearing a **full-length robe** that had a **“golden band... girded about the chest”**
 - This signifies Jesus as being both **regal and priestly**, no longer the crucified Christ but rather the **sovereign Lord** of the Universe

vv14-16: Christ's "*head and hair were white like wool...snow*" -- these symbolize Jesus as a **pure and righteous judge** with great and ancient wisdom

- His eyes were like a "**flame of fire**" which reminds us of Jesus being described as a "**consuming fire**" in Hebrews 12:29 and denote His **omniscience** and all-penetrating Divine **knowledge**
 - It is the fire of His eyes that **judges** our works when we are risen into heaven
 - "*Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,* ¹³*each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be **revealed by fire**; and the fire will **test each one's work**, of what sort it is. ¹⁴*If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a **reward**. ¹⁵*If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but **he himself will be saved**, yet so as **through fire**."* (1Corinthians 3:12-15)**
- The "**feet of brass**" symbolize **immutability and omnipotence**, having been **refined in the furnace** into strong, tempered, durable brass
- His **voice** which had first sounded like a **trumpet**, now comes across as "*the sound of many waters*"
 - It has the both the **soothing** effect as well as the **awesome power and depth** of many waters as first described in Ezekiel 43:2 – "*And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east. His voice was like **the sound of many waters**; and the earth shone with His glory.*"
 - This is a **commanding voice** and one that represents **many different qualities** all in one
- Jesus is seen holding "**seven stars**" in his **right hand**
 - The stars represent the **guardian angels or messengers** of the seven churches
 - The **right hand** conveys **righteousness and power** – and, thus, these angels are **well-protected** and have His power available to **sustain** them
- And out of Jesus' mouth is a "**sharp, two-edged sword**" which is His instrument of **Judgment** which He **wields** in Chapters 2-3 in divining the **good and bad in each church**
 - We know from Ephesians 6:17 that the "**sword of the Spirit**" is the "**word of God**" and Jesus **is** the **Word**
 - Hebrews 4:12 tells us that, "*The word of God is **quick and powerful** and sharper than any two-edged sword, **piercing** even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a **discerner** of the **thoughts and intents** of the heart.*"
- And Jesus' **countenance** was "*like the sun shining in its strength*"
 - This imagery shows **indescribable glory and majesty and strength**
 - This is consistent with the other imagery of Jesus as the **light of the world** and an **all-consuming fire**

Read Rev. 1:17-20

v17: John was so awestruck that he was "**slain in the Spirit**" – i.e., he "*fell at His feet as dead*"

- Virtually every instance in the Bible where someone **encounters** the Lord or an angel of the Lord, they are struck with great **awe and fear**
 - In fact, in the Old Testament, should anyone **see the face of God** they actually would **die** for real
- That's why the **first words** of angels and Jesus are usually, "**Do not be afraid**"

v18: Jesus then **identifies Himself** to John as the "**First and the Last**" who "*lives and was dead*" and who is "*alive forever more*"

- These statements show Jesus as the "**Lamb slain before the foundation of the world**" (Rev. 13:8) which reveals His **eternal presence** as well as His **victory over death**

- Furthermore, Jesus now reveals that He has taken the **“keys of Hades and of Death”** away from the Devil. There are **two keys** mentioned here, of Hades (Hell) and death

Death: Paul writes in Romans 1:3-4 that *“Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, ⁴and [was] declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.”*

- Paul also writes in 1Corinthians 15:54-55, *“So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: **“Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?”***

Hades: This Greek word ᾍδης (hadeôs pronounced *hah'-dace*) is most properly defined as *“unseen”* or *“that which is out of sight.”* It is more commonly used to represent the **place (state)** of departed souls: — i.e. grave, **hell**.

- Jesus holds the **key to Hades** because he went **down there and got it**, as shown in Acts 2:25 – *“When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.”* (Now this, *“He ascended”*—what does it mean but that He also first **descended into the lower parts of the earth?** ¹⁰*He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.*)
- Peter also writes about Jesus going **down to Hell** in 1Peter 3:19 – *“Also He went and **preached unto the spirits in prison**”* between the crucifixion and resurrection at which time the **sin** which Jesus became, on behalf of mankind, was **delivered to its place** (2Corinthians 5:21) for the redemption of **such as Noah** (which Peter references in verse 20)
 - And what did He descend into Hades to do? To **take away the key from the devil** who had stolen it from Adam and Eve through deceit, which gives Him (and, therefore, us) **complete authority** over the devil’s domain
 - *“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the **gates of Hades** shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹And I will give you the **keys of the kingdom of heaven**, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”* (Matthew 16:18)

v19: Jesus appears to **reiterate** his call on John to write down these visions, but he adds **three dimensions** to it, which in the **dispensational/futurist interpretation** has three implications

1. *“the things which you **have seen**”* refers to things **past** that John witnessed in his walk with Jesus
2. *“the things which **are**”* means the **Church Age** as described in chapters 2-3
3. *“the things which **will take place after this**”* that John will see in **subsequent visions** in ch. 4-22
 - An alternate viewpoint is that these three dimensions are 1) what John **has just seen**; 2) the **letters** to the churches; 3) and the following **three visions** in the subsequent chapters

v20: Here Jesus **explains** what the **seven lampstands** and **seven stars represent**, as we noted beforehand:

- The **seven lampstands** represent the **seven churches**
 - The **Churches** are represented by these **lampstands** because they **hold the oil** and the **fire**, and **dispense the light**. A lamp is **not light in itself**, it is only the **instrument** of dispensing light, and it must receive both oil and fire before it can dispense any – which **comes from Jesus Christ** standing in their **midst**. So no Church has in itself either grace or glory, it must receive **all its power from Christ** as its head, or else it cannot dispense light nor life.
- The **seven stars** represent the **angels** of those churches (although some say these are the **ministers** of those churches)

- Strong's Greek Dictionary tells us that the Greek word used here is ἄγγελος or “**aggelos**”; to *bring tidings*); a **messenger**; especially an “*angel*”; by implication a *pastor*.
- Again, as a **messenger**, the angel (or pastor) cannot (or should not) speak anything other than **what the Lord gives him to speak**

The Letters to the Seven Churches (Chapters 2-3)

Before digging into each of the letters, it is important to know that there is a **repetitive structure** used in each:

1. First, the Lord Jesus has a **greeting** which **reveals** things about himself
2. Second, the Lord **commends** each church for the **good** that He sees in them (except for the Laodicean church which has no commendations – and this is the one representing our portion of the Church Age)
3. Third, Jesus states a **criticism** of the bad things He sees in them (except for the Smyrna and Philadelphia churches)
4. Fourth, He then gives each of them an **instruction** (or command)
5. Finally, Jesus also gives a different **promise** to the “**overcomers**” in each church

Also, as we go through each letter, recall from our Overview that there are **several ways of interpreting** what these commendations, criticisms, instructions and promises mean to us:

There were actually **several other churches** also in Asia (now western Turkey) at that time: Troas (Acts 20:5); Meletus (Acts 20:17); Colossae (Col. 1:2); Hierapolis (Col 4:12) and others

- John was surely aware of them, so why was the Revelation message sent to **just these seven** churches and not all of them?
 - The seven churches were **selected** for their **particular traits** which **apply to all of Christendom**
 - Thus these seven churches were not only **literal**, but also **representative**
- These churches set the **tone** for the entire book of Revelation concerning the **true Church** and the **false church**
 - The **false church** is the one over which the coming **false prophet** and the **one-world religion** will preside (i.e. the Laodicean church)

We will **interpret** each letter to the seven churches as:

1. **Literal Interpretation:** an actual, **real church** with specific characteristics at that time
2. **Historical Interpretation:** as it applies to the **development of church history** over the ages to the present time
3. **Symbolic Interpretation:** representing **doctrinal application** useful to all churches in all eras
4. **Prophetic Interpretation:** to interpret **future Biblical realities** and to set the foundation for the **subsequent visions and chapters** in the book of Revelation

The Letters to the Seven Churches (Revelation 2-3)

Read Revelation 2:1-7 (Ephesus, the Loveless Church)

v1: The **first letter** is to the church at **Ephesus** which represents the **first church of the Church Age** (from 70 to 170 A.D.)

- Ephesus was **the most important city** (of about 230 cities) in western **Asia Minor** (now Turkey)
 - Because it was at an intersection of **major trade routes** with access to the Aegean Sea, Ephesus became a **commercial center**
- It boasted a **pagan temple** dedicated to the Roman goddess Diana; **false teachers and prophets** abounded, but the Ephesus Christians were **steadfast in their faith**
- Paul made Ephesus a **center for evangelism** for about 3 years (Acts 19:10) and the church flourished there for some time, but later became a **harsh, condemning, unloving church**
 - According to tradition, Ephesus was **John's residence** before and after his exile to Patmos
- This was a **difficult time** for the early church, because the **apostles were dying off** and **Jerusalem was destroyed** by the Romans in 70 A.D.
 - The word "**Ephesus**" means "**relaxed**" and that is exactly what happened to Ephesus: in the **spiritual**, they **relaxed** in their **love** and **devotion** to **Jesus**; in the **natural**, they **relaxed** in their **greatness** and soon lost their trade status to Smyrna

Jesus then **reaffirms** Himself to John as the One who:

- "*holds the seven stars*" (i.e. the **angels of the seven churches**) in His right hand
- "*walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands*" (i.e. **the seven churches**)
 - Jesus holds the spiritual **authority** (i.e. in His right hand) over the seven churches and is the One who provides the **power** (i.e. the light for the lampstands) to these churches

v2: "*I know your works, you labor, your patience*" – because Jesus is **omniscient** and **omnipresent**, He **knows all** and **sees all** in each church

- Jesus **commends** the Ephesus church for their: **works; labor; patience; intolerance of evil**; and their ability to **discern and confront false apostles**

v2b: "*and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have **tested** those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars*"

- The necessity to "**test**" the words, teachings and lifestyle of self-proclaimed apostles, prophets and teachers was **especially important** in the **early days** of the church – and will be once again in the **last days** as well
 - "*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but **test the spirits**, whether they are of God; because many **false prophets** have gone out into the world. ²By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, ³and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the **spirit** of the **Anti-christ**, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.*" (1John 4:1-3)

v3: Jesus further **commends** them for their **perseverance and patience** and the fact that they "*have not become weary*" in their labor for "*My name's sake*"

- The Greek word used here for "**patience**" is "hupomone" which literally means "**endurance, constancy**"
 - So they were not just sitting back and taking it easy, but they were "**waiting on the Lord**" and **holding steadfast** despite great opposition

- They **did not quit nor get discouraged**, but **persevered and endured**

v6: Jesus adds a further **commendation** in verse 6: “*you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate*”

- The word “**Nicolaitan**” refers to followers of Nicolaus (one of the first seven **deacons** in the Jerusalem church) and literally means, “*conquering the laity*”
 - Nicolaus and his followers wanted to set up an order of “**apostolic succession**” (i.e. clergy, bishops, archbishops, cardinals, and popes) which is **foreign to the New Testament** (e.g. apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers – see Ephesians 4:11)
- The Nicolaitans were a **heretical sect** within the church that **compromised** with the **pagan society** all around them and which permitted **idolatry** and **immorality** within the Christian church

v4: Despite all this, however, the Ephesians had become **cold, harsh and unloving** – which is the same kind of attitude the **Pharisees** displayed in Jesus’ time on the earth

- In this world of **good and evil**, every emotion, attitude and desire has a good and bad side – and when the good is carried too far, it can become bad
 - For example: **resting** as the Lord commanded or becoming **slothful**; being a **strong witness** for the Lord or becoming too **strident and overbearing**
- The “**first love**” is what we all feel for Jesus when we’re **first saved**
 - However, like the first love we feel for a spouse, we often (but not always) **grow cold over time**; so too can our love of the Lord become **stagnant and stale**
- Notice too that the Lord says this first love was “**left**” not “**lost**”
 - When something is **lost**, we **don’t know where to go** to find it, but when it is **left** somewhere, all we have to do is **go back there and get it**
 - Jesus Christ is **always outside the door of our heart** – not matter how far or how long we’ve strayed away from Him, it is only **one step back** to renew our relationship

v5: Jesus doesn’t just **criticize**, He also gives the **solution** to the problem from a foundation of “**tough love**”

- He always **commends first** and **criticizes second** and then **provides the answer** as well as the **punishment** if they don’t heed His commands
 - **Repentance** is always the **first step back** – without “*godly sorrow*” (2Cor. 7:10) there will be no true “**turning away**” from our wicked ways which is the real essence of repentance
- Jesus first tells them to “**remember... from where you have fallen**”
 - That is, consider the state of **grace** and **blessing** and **joy** in which they once stood, but from which they have “*fallen away*” (Hebrews 6:6, NIV)
- Jesus then instructs the Ephesians to “**do the first works**” that were originally done with **love** and zeal for the **Lord**
 - Now, they’re being done with love and zeal for the **law**, but “*the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life*” (2Cor. 3:6)
- When we become **legalistic** we’re not seeing with the mind, eyes and heart of Christ, but rather **condemning based on the law alone**
 - “*For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.*” (1Samuel 16:7)
- Jesus then **warns** them of the **consequences** if they do **not obey** His correction:

- “or else I will come to you quickly” – i.e. He won’t do it through someone or something else but rather He will come **quickly and directly** to **take it away** which will leave it **vulnerable** to Satan and the world
- “and remove your lampstand from its place” – i.e. they will not be one of the churches in whose midst He stands and whose angel is in His right hand (**they will lose their light** and become dark)

v7: Jesus now says at the end what He says to **all seven churches**:

- “He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches”
 - Here Jesus is talking about **spiritual hearing** of which we are all **capable**, but which is impossible for those who have not been “born again” and do not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ
 - “But the **natural man** does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are **foolishness** to him; nor can he know them, because they are **spiritually discerned**.” (1Corinthians 2:14)
- Jesus then gives His **covenant promise** to those “**overcomers**” who **hear and obey** what He has communicated to them
 - **Overcome** is a **military term** that means “subdue, conquer, **prevail**, get the **victory**”
 - Spiritually it means to “**continue steadfastly** in the faith against all opposition” for then we have our “**victory in Jesus**” (1Cor. 15:57)
- These **overcomers** shall “eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God”
 - That is, the **perfect and eternal fellowship** that God and humanity **first enjoyed** in the Garden of Eden before the Fall will be restored to them
 - Symbolically, this admonition also **reminds us today** that we too must **live and walk “in the Spirit”** and keep alive the **fever** of our **first love for Christ**

Read Revelation 2:8-11 (Smyrna, the Persecuted Church)

v1: This **second letter** is to the church at **Smyrna**, about 50 miles northwest of Ephesus and represents the **second stage** of the Church Age (from 170 to 312 A.D.)

- Smyrna was a **beautiful, proud city** of great **wealth** and **commercial greatness** with a **large Jewish population** that was closely aligned with Rome and eager to meet its demand for emperor worship
 - Their chief product was **myrrh** used for perfume, embalming and purification
 - The name “Smyrna” literally means “**bitterness**” (from myrrh)
 - In contrast, Smyrna was a **poor, persecuted** church for which both the Romans and the Jews held great **hostility** (e.g. bitterness) which made it very difficult for Christians to live there
- Smyrna **grew** in commercial strength as Ephesus **relaxed** in their overconfidence
 - The pride of this city, however, gave rise to **widespread vanity** and a sense of **competition and cruelty** toward everyone else, all of whom they regarded as **inferior**
- Since Ephesus did not abide by Jesus’ admonition, their **lampstand was indeed removed** during the Smyrna Church Age which resulted in a **lack of divine protection** and a **resurgence of persecution** against the Church
 - Such **persecution** would cause people to make a **choice**: remain **faithful** to Christ and suffer, or **deny Him** and give in to the world’s focus on **pleasures of the flesh**

Jesus now states His second **characteristic** as He had twice already to John in the first chapter

- “the **First and the Last, who was dead and came to life**”

- It is Jesus **victory over death** and the devil in His **resurrection** that gives Him the **authority** over the Church and later to **open the scroll** with the seven seals

v9: Jesus once again states that He “*knows*” what’s going on in both the city and church of Smyrna

- Specifically, He **commends** them for their: **works; tribulation; and poverty**
 - It may seem strange to **congratulate** them for their **poverty** and that they are actually “*rich*” – but Jesus is talking **spiritually** here, not in the natural
 - However, this stands in stark contrast to the church in **Laodicea** which **thinks they are rich** (in the natural) but are actually **poor in Spirit**
- Jesus also says he is well aware of their **extreme persecution** by the large contingent of Smyrna **Jews** who Jesus says are actually **not real Jews** but rather a “*synagogue of Satan*”
 - “*For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter*” (Romans 2:28-29)
- Jesus speaks of the “*blasphemy*” of these so-called Jews who speak of God in **evil or irreverent** ways and thus have applied a sacred name to the things of Satan
 - “*Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men.*” (Matthew 12:31)

v10: Because Jesus knows the **persecution** they are under, He tells them “*Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer*”

- We do not have to fear anything of the devil **because we have the victory in Jesus**
 - Though we may **suffer physically**, we need not fear “*those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*” (Matt. 10:28)
 - Nor do we have to take what the devil throws at us because, “*He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.*” (1John 4:4)
 - Furthermore, we can **stand fast** against the devil’s ploys if we “*submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee.*” (James 4:7)
- Jesus then becomes **prophetic** and tells them that some of them are going to be “*thrown in prison*” by the Devil “*that you may be tested*”
 - Jesus, who had already vanquished the devil, is now **allowing Satan to test the Smyrna church** much like he allowed **Simon Peter** to be tested by the devil
 - “*Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat.* ³²*But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.*” (Luke 22:31)
 - Such testing is akin to being **refined in the fire** which is always for our benefit and growth
 - “*That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.*” (1Peter 1:7, KJV)
 - “*My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,* ³*knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.* ⁴*But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.*” (James 1:2)
- Jesus also says that they “*will have tribulation ten days*”
 - **Ten days** is usually **symbolic** of either a **relatively short period of time** or specifically of **ten years** (e.g. Daniel’s prophecy of the seventy weeks of years)

- And, indeed, all the Asian churches were **particularly persecuted for a ten-year period** by the Roman Emperor Diocletian
- Jesus goes on to say, however, what the **reward** is for those who remain *“faithful unto death”*
 - To these He promises the *“crown of life”* where the crown represents the **garland or wreath** awarded to the winner of an athletic contest
 - The *“crown of life”* however, means that the victor receives an **eternal victory** and the promise of **eternal life** in Heaven

v11: Here Jesus says that that the **overcomer** *“shall not be hurt by the second death”*

- The **second death** is spiritual, following the first physical death
 - It is when **unbelievers** are cast into the **“Lake of Fire”** and **eternal torment**
 - *“Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. ¹⁵And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”* (Revelation 20:14)
- We need to be such **overcomers** in these last stages of the end-times, because persecution will grow and our faith will be tested
 - *“And they overcame him [the devil] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.”* (Revelation 12:11)

Read Revelation 2:12-17 (Pergamos, the Compromising Church)

v12: The next letter is to the church in **Pergamos** (literally “citadel” or “marriage”), which is another 50 miles or so north of Smyrna and represents the **third stage** in the Church Age from 312 to 606 A.D.

- Pergamos sat on top of a mountain arising out of a beautiful valley which gave it an **air of royalty** – and, indeed, it was one of the **most renowned cultural and religious centers** of the world
 - Two of the great **boasts** of the city were its famous **college of medical priests** and its **library** (2nd only to Alexandria in Egypt – Mark Anthony later gave the Pergamos library to Cleopatra)
- Pergamos, the area’s **oldest city**, was the **Roman imperial and administrative center** of Asia and a capital city **capital city** for four hundred years and featured a great **Acropolis** which rose about 1000 feet in the center of the city
 - Several **temples** were built there in honor of the **Roman gods**

Jesus greets them with the ominous **characteristic** of *“He who has the sharp two-edged sword”*

- The two-edged sword is the **Word of God** which not only **exposes and rebukes** sin, but also **slays** the **ungodly**
 - *“The word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”* (Hebrews 4:12)

v13: Jesus points out that where they dwell is *“Satan’s throne”*

- This was not a knock against the Pergamos church, but rather recognition that Pergamos itself was the **official center of emperor worship** in all of Asia and there was a 200 foot-high altar to Zeus
 - In the spiritual realm, this would mean that there is a strong **territorial spirit** there appointed by Satan (much like the *“prince of Persia”* who withstood the archangel Gabriel for twenty-one days before the archangel Michael came to help him (Daniel 10:13))
- So then Jesus actually **commends** them for holding *“fast to My name”* and not **denying their faith**
 - The *“faithful”* **Antipas** was apparently the **first Christian martyr** in this area who was slowly roasted to death

v14-15: However, despite their steadfastness in the faith, Jesus has *“a few things against”* them

- Namely, that there are some Christians there who *“hold the doctrine of Balaam”*
 - **Balaam** was a **soothsayer** who was asked by King Balak of Moab to put a **curse** on Israel, but he couldn't because the **Lord God would not permit** him to do so
- So instead, he suggested that Balak give a **great feast** where the **women** lead the Israelite men **astray** and into eventual **acceptance of Moab's gods**
 - This was the *“stumbling block”* that Jesus referred to which had now seduced the Pergamos Christians into **idolatry** and **sexual immorality**
- Jesus also accused them of holding *“the doctrine of the Nicolaitans”* which produced similar abominations (just as he had accused the Ephesians of doing)
 - It was **Emperor Constantine** who formalized the “marriage” of **Christianity and pagan worship** for political purposes and made it the **religion of the land** (and the beginning of the Catholic church)
 - And even today we have **seducing spirits** originating from Egypt and ancient Babylon that foist **paganism on Christians** through Freemasonry

v16: Jesus now admonishes them to **repent** or else He will fight against them directly Himself with the *“sword of My mouth”*

- Recall that in Chapter 1, verse 16 Jesus was holding the **two-edged sword** in His mouth
 - Since Jesus is **the Word**, this says that He is going to **purge the church** with the **word of His judgment** as well as **judgment by the Word**
- It is always thus – He has **given us the Word** to guide us and then **holds us accountable** to it
 - But now not the **letter** of the law, but rather the **Spirit**

v17: The reward for those who **overcome** is that they will get to eat some of the *“hidden manna”*

- **Manna** was the Hebrew name meaning *“what is it?”* given to the small, round wafers the Israelites found on the ground each morning on their **exodus out of slavery** in Egypt (Exodus 16) which kept them well-fed and **perfectly nourished** for forty years
 - Jewish **apocryphal mythology** (Maccabees 2:4-8) maintained that there was a **pot of manna on Noah's ark** and that it was taken up to heaven by an angel **inside the ark of the covenant** after it had been hidden by King Josiah at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.
- However, we know now that Jesus is the true *“bread of life”*
 - *Then Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world...I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.”* (John 16:31-33, 35)
- Jesus also says that these **overcomers** will be given a *“white stone”* with a *“new name”* written on it which no one else will know
 - **White stones** were used in those days by jurors who **voted for acquittal**, and thus imply that Jesus is **casting His judgment in favor** of salvation and eternal life
 - And the *“new name”* refers to our **name of adoption** when our relationship with our true Father is restored which no one **in the world** can know

Read Revelation 2:18-29 (Thyatira – the **Corrupt Church**)

v18: The **fourth letter** is to the church in **Thyatira**, a “**frontier**” town and the **least important** of the seven cities

- The two main industries of the city were wool and dye and it had **many trade guilds and unions**
 - The city of Thyatira sponsored **many idolatrous feasts and orgies**
- Thyatira represents the **Church Age** from 606 to 1520 A.D.
 - The **corruption of Christianity** as a religion that began in the 300’s A.D. with **Emperor Constantine** now accelerated and was **saturated with paganism**
- Whereas the **Pergamos era** (312 to 606 A.D.) had **revealed Satan’s seat**, the “*depths of Satan*” (v24) were now **revealed** to the **fullest extent**
 - The **outward church** was now almost **completely pagan** in its **form of worship** and its **imposition of man-made rules**
 - The **true Church** was being **pushed into the background** with “**heretics**” severely persecuted
- The **Roman Empire** fell in **450 A.D.** and its **power** shifted from the **Emperors** to the **Popes**
 - In **1200 A.D.** the **Papacy** had reached its **pinnacle of power**
- **Pope Innocent III** declared, “As the Vicar of Christ, **all power** is given to me in **heaven and earth**”
 - This is in **direct contradiction** to the Scriptures: “*God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth.*” (Acts 17:24)
- The Papacy now claimed the power to **excommunicate and condemn to Hell**
 - This led to the period of time we now call the “**Dark Ages**” which lasted until the **Reformation** in 1520 A.D.

Is it any wonder, then that Jesus now **identifies Himself** as the “**Son of God**” leaving no doubt as to who is writing to them

- Jesus then describes Himself as having “*eyes like a flame of fire*” and “*feet like fine brass*”
 - This is the **same description** He used to first identify Himself to John (Rev. 1:14-15)
- All of Jesus’ self-descriptions are **repeats** of what He said to John in the **first chapter**, but spread out to the different churches – so there is **individual meaning** to each **particular church**
 - His eyes like a “*flame of fire*” reminds us of Jesus being described as a “*consuming fire*” in Hebrews 12:29 and denote His **omniscience** and all-penetrating **knowledge & judgment**
 - The “*feet of brass*” symbolize His **immutability** (changelessness) and **omnipotence**, having been **refined in the furnace** into strong, tempered, durable brass
- These characteristics do **not bode well** for the corrupt church in Thyatira

v19: But first, Jesus **commends** them for their **love, service, faith** and **patience** – so there was still **much that was good** about this church in **Thyatira** at that time and in the **Church Age**

- Jesus also goes on to say that “*as for your works, the last are more than the first*”
 - Despite the **corruption and degradation** of the church at the **top levels of power**, the **works** of the church **continued to grow**
 - Growth will **always come** from a foundation of **love, service and faith**

v20: However, Jesus then **accuses** the church of allowing *“that woman Jezebel... to teach and seduce My servants”*

- **Jezebel** was the wife of **King Ahab** who **promoted the Canaanite religion** in Israel and who **chased Elijah** into hiding after **murdering all the other prophets**
 - Ahab was the **worst of all the Kings**, but it was really **Jezebel** who wielded the **reins of power**
 - Jezebel **wasn't even an Israelite** but rather from **Zidonia** whom Ahab took as his wife
- Just as the **actual Jezebel** had corrupted the **leadership of Israel**, so too was the **symbolic Jezebel corrupting** the leadership of the **historical Thyatira church** as well as the **Church Age** it represents
 - Jezebel, *“who calls herself a prophetess”* claimed to be representing God whereas Jesus un-masks her as a **false prophet** who led her people into **literal and spiritual fornication**
 - It appears that there was an **actual woman** in the Thyatira church (possibly the wife of the Bishop) who **used her power and influence to corrupt the true church**
- In the symbolism of the end-times, many see **Ahab** as a prototype of the coming **Antichrist (beast)**, with **Jezebel** representing the **false prophet**
 - *“And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the **beast**, and out of the mouth of the **false prophet**.¹⁴ For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.”* (Rev. 16:13-14)
- Note also that Jesus accuses the church of **allowing** this corruption of leadership
 - The church allows such things to occur either through **directly giving permission** or by **indirectly not voicing opposition**
- In the **world**, people can be **subjugated by worldly power** – but in the **spiritual realm**, the Body of Christ is given **spiritual weapons** that are *“mighty in God for pulling down strongholds”* (2Corinthians 10:4)
 - The problem in the church in the **past** and in the **present** is that the body **does not avail themselves of the power** that has been given to us – so we are **all to blame** for the state of the church and of the world today.

v21: Here Jesus points out that He has given *“her”* (i.e. Jezebel) *“time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent”*

- Keep in mind that throughout the **Old Testament**, God uses the **reality of sexual immorality** as also being **symbolic of spiritual harlotry**
 - God first sent Elijah to **pronounce severe judgment** upon Ahab to which Ahab showed **token repentance**, so God relented and put off His punishment (1Kings 21:29)
 - Thus, **God gave Jezebel time to repent**, but **she did not** and **seduced her sons** into the same sins that she had gotten Ahab to commit (2Kings 9)
- So too is Jesus giving the church in Thyatira as well as the Church in the Dark Ages time to repent

v22: Jesus says that *“unless they repent”* He will *“cast her into a sickbed”*

- And, those who *“commit adultery with her”* will be cast *“into great tribulation”*
 - **Adultery** usually takes place in a bed which, in **spiritual terms**, is a *“sickbed”* leading unto death (*“for the wages of sin is death”* – Romans 6:23)
 - In the natural, **disease** (e.g. STDS, AIDS) is often **transmitted** through such adulterous encounters – i.e. physical punishment

- The result for all concerned is **“great tribulation”** which is certainly an **apt description** of both the church and the world during the **Dark Ages**
 - So too is this symbolic of the **Great Tribulation** to come, because the church did not, has not and will not **fully repent**

v23: Jesus further says that, as punishment for a lack of repentance, He will **“kill her children”**

- The **two sons** of the actual Jezebel who became kings were **both slain** as well as **all the seventy sons** of Ahab (2Kings 10:1)
 - In the case of the **church** at Thyatira, **“her children”** refers to **all the spiritual followers** of the **“false prophetess”** there
 - In the **Church Age**, this refers to all those who **supported the wicked rule of the Papacy** during the Dark Ages
 - In the **future**, it refers to those who are **“deceived”** by the **beast** and the **false prophet** who will all wind up in the **“lake of fire”** (Rev. 19:20)
- This will all be done in such a way that **“all the churches know”** that it is Jesus is the one who **brings judgment** down upon them
 - Because He has **“eyes like a flame of fire”** He is the only one who **“searches the minds and the hearts”**
- And then Jesus will **“give to each one of you according to your works”** – this is **not saying that works produces salvation**, but rather that even the **saved** will have their **works examined**
 - *“Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,¹³ each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. ¹⁴If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.”* (1Corinthians 3:12)

v24: Now Jesus speaks to the **“rest”** – i.e. those who have not accepted **“this doctrine”** and who have not succumbed to the **“depths of Satan”**

- To these He **promises** that He will not put on them any more **“burdens”**
- But for those who do sink to **“the depths of Satan”** severe judgment will follow
 - In fact, this will lead to both the **death of the individual** as well as to a **dead church** in the next **Church Age** (see the fifth letter to the Sardis church in the following section)

v25-26: Jesus **encourages** those who have not succumbed to Jezebel and Satan to **“hold fast”**

- **Holding fast** suggests **shipwrecked victims** tightly gripping a lifeline as the **turbulent sea** attempts to pull them under
 - If they can hang on and **overcome the spiritual turbulence**, Jesus promises that He will give them **“power over the nations”**
- Jesus then goes on to quote Psalm 2:8-9 which speaks of Him ruling with **“a rod of iron”**
 - This refers to His **Second Coming** as the **Lion of Judah** in judgment and to **“rule the nations”**
 - *“Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. ¹⁶And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”* (Rev. 19:15)
 - This **power and authority** was received by Jesus from **“My Father”**

v28-29: The **overcomers** will share in **Christ's triumph over evil** and in His messianic rule and also receive "*the morning star*"

- Jesus Himself heralds the dawn of a new day – "*new heaven and a new earth*" (Rev. 21:1)
 - "*I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the **Bright and Morning Star.***" (Rev. 22:16)

Read Revelation 3:1-6 (the **Dead Church**)

v1: **Sardis** was the ancient capital of the kingdom of Lydia – a city of **great wealth** in which King Croesus issued the **first gold coins**

- Here it represents a **decadent city of luxury, apathy and religiosity** – i.e. "*having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!*" (2Timothy 3:5)
- The **Sardis Church Age** began around 1520 A.D. and lasted until around 1750 A.D.
 - During this time period, true Christians grew weary of the **over-lording power and control of the Papacy**
- On October 31, 1517 **Martin Luther** nailed his **95 Theses** on the church door at **Wittenburg, Germany** which touched off the **Reformation**
 - These **95 theses** were based on the writings of **Wycliff** in the late 1300s who was really the **father of the reformation** initiated by Luther
 - **Wycliff's tenets** included:
 - 1) **no writing** whatsoever has any authority except as it is **based upon the Scriptures** (the Roman Catholic church held their services in Latin and discouraged people reading the Bible, instead foisting upon them their own writings and interpretations)
 - 2) there are only **two church orders** (i.e. hierarchy) in the New Testament – **bishops and deacons** – not popes, cardinals, etc.
 - 3) Papal policies of **indulgences and confessions** are not Scriptural and should **not be taught**

Jesus now identifies Himself as the one who has "*the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars*"

- Recall that the **seven Spirits** refers to the **total ministry and person of the Holy Spirit** – the **seven horns and seven eyes** of the slain **Lamb of God**
 - The **seven-fold ministry** of the Holy Spirit is said to be: 1) the **Comforter** (John 14:16); 2) the **Spirit of truth** (John 14:17); 3) the **presence of Christ** (John 14:18-20); 4) the **Spirit of Christ** that indwells the believer (John 14:21-22); 5) the **abiding presence of the Trinity** (John 14:23-24); 6) the **Teacher** (John 14:25-26); and 7) the **peace of Christ** (John 14:27)
- The **seven stars** represent the **angels of each of the seven churches**
 - Jesus is saying here that even though **He is no longer physically present**, the **Holy Spirit** is both **omnipresent and omnipotent** and is acting **through the Church**
- Jesus next says that the church at Sardis has "*a name that you are alive, but you are dead*"
 - The Sardis church had a **reputation** of being **active and successful on the surface**, but was actually **spiritually dead**
 - Although, like **many churches today**, they had **lots of programs and ministries**, they only had the "*form of godliness*" not the **substance** thereof

v2: Apparently a **few good things remained** which Jesus says are **ready to die** as well

- Therefore they should **be watchful** and **strengthen** these things while they still can because, otherwise, Jesus finds all their **abundant activities and works** to be found **wanting**

- Being told to be **watchful** implies that they have been **careless and inattentive** – i.e. **asleep at the switch**

v3: Jesus then instructs the Sardis church to “**remember**” what they had **received and heard** and to **repent** of their **current state**

- A **consistent theme** throughout all of Scripture is to **remember what God has done for us in the past** so as to **keep our faith strong in the present**
 - This is **similar** to His telling the first church at Ephesus to “**remember from where you have fallen**”
 - In the Sardis Church Age, some like **Martin Luther** did indeed **remember the Scriptural basis** of what the church should be
- If they don’t “**watch**” Jesus says that He Himself will “**come upon you as a thief and you will not know what hour I will come**”
 - This tells the Sardis church at that time that **judgment** will be brought down upon them by Jesus at a **time** and in a **manner** that will be **completely unexpected**
 - Symbolically, this also **looks ahead** toward Jesus’ **Second Coming** which will also be like a “**thief in the night**” (1Thess. 5:2 and 2Peter 3:10)

v4-5: Apparently there were still “**a few names**” in Sardis (and in the Church Age) who have “**not defiled their garments**” (i.e. their souls)

- These few shall “**walk with Me in white, for they are worthy**”
 - **White garments** are the “**robes of righteousness**” (Isaiah 61:10) of Jesus Christ that He puts on those He finds worthy – our own robes are as “**filthy rags**” (Isaiah 64:6)
 - “*Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, “Who are these arrayed in **white robes**, and where did they come from?... These are the ones who **come out of the great tribulation**, and washed their robes and **made them white in the blood of the Lamb.**” (Rev. 7:13-14)*
- Jesus also promises not to “**blot out his name from the Book of Life**”
 - The **Book of Life** is God’s **eternal registry** of who are counted among the **redeemed**
- Notice that the Scripture says “**blotted out**” – that means the name was **once there and is later removed**
 - This is a **point of argument** for those who maintain that we **can lose our salvation**
- To have one’s name **erased** from this Book means they would **lose their citizenship** in the **Kingdom of Heaven**
 - “*Anyone **not found** written in the **Book of Life** was **cast into the lake of fire.**” (Rev. 20:15)*
- Jesus says that He will actually “**confess**” the names of the **overcomers** “**before My Father and before His angels**”
 - The Greek word for “**confess**” means to “**acknowledge or agree fully**”
 - “*Whoever **confesses Me** before men, him I will also **confess before My Father** who is in heaven. But whoever **denies Me** before men, him I will also **deny before My Father** who is in heaven.” (Matthew 10:32)*
- What a privilege to have Jesus Christ **acknowledge** us as His **true disciples** before **God the Father!!**

Read Revelation 3:7-13 (The Faithful Church – Church Age from 1750-1948 A.D.)

v7a: **Philadelphia** was a small town that became a **center of Greek culture** in Asia Minor (now Turkey) and was a **gateway** from Asia Minor to the province of Asia (further east)

- It was renowned for its **vineyards** but was subject to **frequent earthquakes** – it was built on an **active fault** and was rebuilt by Emperor Tiberius after it was destroyed by a massive earthquake
 - The name literally means, “**brotherly love**” and commemorates **devotion of Attalus II to his brother Eumenes II**
 - The city’s name was later changed to “**Neocaesarea**” – the “New City of Caesar)
- The people of Philadelphia were **missionary minded – but not to spread the gospel**
 - The mission of the city was to **spread Greek culture** to the surrounding areas
- There were also **contentions** between the **Christians** and the **Jews** who claimed to be the **only true followers of the one true God**
 - The **Jews** considered themselves to have the monopoly to the **key of David** – i.e. the **ongoing authority** of the **everlasting throne** promised by God the King David’s descendents
 - “*The key of the house of David I will lay on his shoulder; so he shall open, and no one shall shut; and he shall shut, and no one shall open.*” (Isaiah 22:22)

Jesus, however, declares that **He is holy and true** and that it is **He who holds the key of David** and **He is the one who opens and shuts the doors**

- The Greek word for “**key**” is “kelos” which represents a **symbol of authority**
 - Thus Jesus is saying that He has assumed all **authority associated with the Kingship of David**
 - “*All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.*” (Matthew 28:18)
 - Jesus then gave that authority to **His Church**
 - “*You are Peter and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven*” (Matthew 16:18-19)
 - The Catholic papacy has long used this verse to claim the **sole authority to bind and loose** – i.e. the power to **excommunicate** and **reinstate** whoever they wish
 - However, an examination of the Greek here reveals that the word for **Peter (petros)** was also used for the name we translate **Peter**, but that the word for **rock (petra)** is the **feminine** form of the word that is **only used for rock**, not for a person’s name, and certainly **not a male**
 - The **foundation** that Jesus spoke of here was **Peter’s exclamation** in the previous verse that Jesus is indeed “*the Christ, the Son of the living God*” – it is **He** (not Peter) **who** is the “*chief cornerstone.*” (Matthew 21:42)
- Jesus also referred to the “**key of knowledge**” when he condemned the scribes for **taking it themselves** away from those who **sought the Kingdom**
 - “*Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered.*” (Luke 11:52)
 - This is also considered prophetic of the “**lawyers**” of the Church creating **man-made rules** that placed themselves as the **gatekeepers of heaven**
- The church at Philadelphia also represents the **sixth stage of the Church Age** (from 1750 to 1948 A.D.) during which the **Protestant Reformation** took hold, the **Industrial Revolution** transformed the world and the **USA developed into the world’s preeminent superpower**

- And also, by the way, a time of **emergence** of “lawyers” assuming great **political and social power** in the Western World

v7b: With the **authority** given Him by the Father, Jesus further declares that it is **He who opens and closes doors** which no man can **alter**

- And when **He opens** them **they stay open** – and when **He closes** them **they stay closed**
 - These doors are most likely the **gates into the Kingdom of Heaven**
- Some, however, see these as symbolic of **doors of opportunity** for **service and evangelism**
 - “*I came to Troas to preach Christ’s gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord.*” (2Corinthians 2:12)
 - This view gets added **credence** because Philadelphia was known as a **missionary city** for spreading **Greek culture**

v8: So when Jesus says that He has set before the church at Philadelphia “*an open door*” some see this as symbolic of a **call to missions**

- And, in the Church Age of 1750 to 1948 that the Philadelphia church represents, this was indeed a time of **great missionary zeal and accomplishments** – the age of the great **revivals**
 - Prior to this time, it seemed quite **impossible** to meet the **requirement** that the **Gospel** would have to be **preached** to “*all the nations*” before Jesus was to come again (Matthew 24:14)
 - Now, during the so-called **Information Age** this once impossible goal is **almost in hand!**
- Jesus says they qualify for this missionary work because they “*have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied my name*”
 - This was especially meaningful, because this church had **little political, social or religious strength** in the midst of the **strong Greek culture** and the **vehement opposition of the entrenched Jewish presence**
 - However, they were **ideally positioned** for the task and **earned the right** to do so because they **kept the faith** despite great opposition

v9: In fact, because this is indeed the “*faithful church*” Jesus says that He will make “*those of the synagogue of Satan*” to come and **worship at their feet**

- This is **second reference** in these letters to the “*synagogue of Satan*” which Jesus uses to mean those **Jewish synagogues** that are **actively opposing** the **Christian church** and that have become a **den of iniquity**
 - This is a wordplay on their **official title** of “*Synagogue of the Lord*” (Numbers 16:3) which they had **forfeited** in their unbelief to the **Church**
 - It is the **Church** that **Jesus loves**, not just the Philadelphia church, and that’s what He wants the **Jews – and the world – to see**

v10: This is one of the **key verses** that speaks of what we today call the **Rapture** (more about this later)

- Jesus says that because they kept His “*command to persevere*” He will **keep them** (and all who do likewise) from the “*hour of trial which will come upon the whole earth*”
 - The “*hour of trial*” is the “*great tribulation*” that Jesus speaks of in Matthew 24:21 – “*For then there will be great tribulation such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, nor ever shall be.*”
 - The **Rapture** is when the remaining believers are “*caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air*” (1Thessalonians 4:17)
 - Thus, the **Rapture** will occur **before the great tribulation** according to this verse

- Some translations call the *“hour of trial”* (NKJ) the *“hour of temptation”*
 - The Greek word *πειρασμός* or *“peirasmos”* is defined in Strong’s Greek Dictionary as meaning *“a putting to proof (by experiment [of good], experience [of evil], solicitation, discipline or provocation); by implication adversity:—temptation”*
 - It would appear that either *“trial”* or *“temptation”* work equally well here – especially in light of the closing of the verse which says this is all to *“test those who live on the earth”*
- A **trial or temptation** does indeed **test us**
 - This **test** is for those who **remain after the Rapture** and represents their **final chance** to choose **Jesus or Satan, life or death**
- This **test** will not be as **obvious** as it might seem be because **Satan is very clever – the great deceiver** (Rev. 13:14)
 - The coming **One-World Government** and **One-World Religion** will appeal to **humanity’s reason** and desire for **peace and tolerance** (more about this later)
 - It won’t seem like a bad idea **on the surface** – except that it is built upon **humanity’s wisdom, not God’s**
 - *“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.”* (Proverbs 14:12)

v11: As in several of the previous letters to the churches, **Jesus advises them** (and us) to *“hold on to what you have”*

- We would not have to *“hold on”* or *“hold fast”* if there weren’t some **forces** at work that would seek to **pull us away** from that which we are holding on to
 - Specifically that Jesus is *“the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me”* (John 14:6)
- There will be **tremendous forces of persecution (trial) and persuasion (temptation)** that will try to convince us to **let go of Jesus**
 - This will occur **before the great tribulation** during a period Jesus calls *“the beginning of sorrows”* (Matthew 24:8)
- If we do successfully *“hold on”* then *“no one will take your crown”* – i.e. no one will be able to **take away (lose??) your salvation**
 - *“Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”* (James 1:12)
- Jesus begins this verse by saying that He is *“coming quickly”*
 - This (and similar references) have caused **believers of every era** to think that His Second Coming was **imminent**
 - However, with the Lord, *“one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”* (2Peter 3:8)
 - Also, quickly could refer to the **suddenness of His coming**, not the timing
 - For example, Jesus tells us in one of His parables, *“Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning—lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!”* (Mark 13:35-37)

v12: To the Philadelphian **overcomers** Jesus promises that He will make them (us) a *“pillar in the temple of my God and he shall go out no more”*

- In the days of the Roman Empire, a city often honored a notable citizen by erecting a **pillar** in the **temple** with His name **inscribed on it**
 - When Jesus **inscribes our name** onto a pillar in the **new temple (i.e. Church) in the New Jerusalem**, it will be **permanent** part of the edifice (i.e. he shall go out no more)
- There is probably also a reference here to the two pillars in Solomon’s temple in Jerusalem called Jachin and Boaz, meaning **stability and strength**
 - *“Then he set up the **pillars** by the vestibule of the **temple**; he set up the pillar on the right and called its name **Jachin**, and he set up the pillar on the left and called its name **Boaz**.”* (1Kings 7:21)
- The Church is the **temple**, Christ is the **foundation** on which it is built, and His ministers (all believers) are the **pillars** by which it is supported
 - *“When James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be **pillars**, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship.”* (Galatians 2:9)
- In addition, Jesus says that he will **write** on the **overcomer** *“the name of My God”*
 - This indicates close **identification with and possession by God**, much like the Jewish priests had written on their foreheads, “kodesh laihovah” (Holiness to the Lord – Exodus 28:36-37)
 - It is also on the **forehead** where everyone will either receive the **mark of the beast** (Rev. 13:16) or the **seal of God** (Rev. 7:3)
- Also written on the **overcomer** will the *“the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem which comes down out of heaven from My God.”*
 - The **New Jerusalem** will come down from heaven along with the **New Heaven and New Earth** foretold in Revelation 21:1-2
- Finally, Jesus will write on the **overcomer** *“My new name”*
 - This is **not** the **new name** of the **believer** promised in Rev. 2:17, but rather **Jesus Christ’s** new name that symbolizes all that **He has become** by virtue of **His work of atonement and redemption** on our behalf (which will become fully known following the second advent)

Read Revelation 3:14-22 (The Lukewarm Church – Church Age from 1948 A.D. to Present)

v14a: **Laodicea** was the **wealthiest** city in the area (modern-day Turkey) during Roman times and was widely known for its **banks, medical school and textile industry**. Its major **weakness** was the **lack of an adequate water supply** – all of which is reflected in the letter from Jesus Christ.

- The name “**Laodicea**” means “**people-judgment**” – and indeed it was judged and **found wanting**, so now it is only a **deserted heap of ruins** the Turks call “Eski Hisar,” or “**old Castle**”
- The **Laodicean church** reflected the city itself – **smug, arrogant, wealthy, self-sufficient**
 - This was the **worst church** of the seven – the **only one** about which Jesus had **no commendation at all**
 - The Apostle Paul also admonished the church to “**take heed to the ministry** which you have received in the Lord **that you may fulfill it**” (Col. 4:17)
- The **Laodicean church** also represents the **present (and last) era** of the Church Age (1948 to ???)a
 - Laodicea represents the **sad condition** of the **end-time church** in general, in which the mainstream denominations have largely become a **religious institution** having **no Holy Spirit inspiration or motivation** and is dominated by a **spirit of religiosity** (i.e. form but not substance)
- The largest church, the **Roman Catholic Church**, still reflects its **paganistic roots** going back to its founder, Emperor Constantine, in the early 300s with its **idols, saints, man-made rules, etc.**

- The fastest growing “church” is that of the so-called **Latter Day Saints** (i.e. the Mormons) which is a **cult** that **denies the deity of Christ** and substitutes a **works-based salvation** that violates **Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross**
- 1948 is considered to be the **beginning of the final Church Age** because that is when the **State of Israel** was formed, **emphatically fulfilling** one of the **key prophecies** about the **signs of the end-times** (more about that later)

v14b: Jesus describes Himself here as the *“Amen, the Faithful and True witness”*

- **“Amen”** in Greek literally means **“surely, verily, so be it”**
 - Here **“Amen”** is the **“God of Truth”** prophesied in Isaiah 65:16 – *“He who swears in the earth shall swear by the God of truth.”*
- It also represents Jesus as the **guarantor** of all of **God’s promises**
 - *“For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen.”* (2Corinthians 1:20)
- As the **“Faithful and True witness,”** Jesus looks forward toward His role of **coming again** on a white horse to **judge the nations**
 - *“Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.”* (Rev 19:11)
- As the **“Faithful and True witness”** Jesus remains **completely faithful** to the **truth** He receives from **God the Father**
 - *“I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things.”* (John 8:28)
- Then Jesus goes on to say that He is also **“the Beginning of the creation of God”** – i.e. Jesus was not only there **at the beginning** of the creation of this world, but that He Himself **was the Beginning** of that creation
 - John 1:1-3 tells us that *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.”*
 - That Jesus is the **vehicle** for the **creative powers of God** the Father is reiterated in Colossians 1:15-16 – *“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.”*

vv15-16: As noted earlier, Jesus has **no commendation** for the Laodicean church but rather launches right into His **criticism**, namely that they **“are neither cold nor hot”**

- That this is an **undesirable condition** is brought home by Jesus going on to say that He **wishes** that they were either **“cold or hot”**
 - To add **symbolic emphasis**, Jesus further says that since they are only **“lukewarm”** He will **“vomit them out of My mouth”**
- So, what exactly does Jesus mean by **“lukewarm?”**
 - The Greek word translated here as **“lukewarm”** is **χλιαρός** or **chliaros** which means **“tepid”**
- To take the **analogy of temperature** a step further, we all like to **drink liquids** that are either **satisfyingly hot** (e.g. coffee, tea, hot chocolate) or **refreshingly cold** (e.g. water, soda, iced tea)
 - Drinks that are **lukewarm** are **not satisfying or refreshing** and we too might **“spue”** (KJV) them **out of our mouths**

- **Hot** can also refer to **healing, medicinal things** – such as the **hot, mineral springs** in Hierapolis that was nearby Laodicea
 - Similarly, **cold** can refer to a **refreshing dip in cool water** on a hot summer day
- To be **tepid or lukewarm** in a **spiritual sense** is to be **indifferent, apathetic, complacent**
 - Interestingly, this is how the **Church of today** has been described by **modern-day prophets**
 - This is also a **condition** fostered by **material wealth and self-satisfaction** which again describes both our secular and church world today (at least here in America)
- **Spiritually speaking**, someone who is neither cold nor hot is **neither a pagan nor a Christian**
 - These are what we call “**nominal Christians**” today – i.e. **in name only** and our country has many more of these than those who are **on fire** for the Lord
 - These are the ones about which Jesus says in Matthew 7:21, “*Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father.*”
 - Billy Graham estimates that **perhaps 10%** of those in America who **call themselves Christians** are actually “**born again**”
- It is also much easier to **reach the lost** (i.e. the **cold**) than it is those **lukewarm, nominal Christians** who, like the Laodiceans, are **smug and self-satisfied**
 - The entire **New Age religion** that is sweeping the western world is based on **self – self-worth, self-motivation, self-satisfaction, self-actualization**
- This, in effect, **denies God’s existence** – leading to a very accurate **prophecy** of the Apostle Paul about conditions in the **end-times**
 - “*For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power... always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.*” (2Timothy 3:2-5)

v17: Jesus goes on to tell the Laodiceans that He is well aware of their **boastful, self-satisfied attitude** – “*you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’*”

- But Jesus has news for them – **spiritually**, they are “*wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked*”
 - This is the opposite of the church of **Smyrna** who were **materially poor but spiritually rich** (see Rev. 2:9)
- Thus, the Laodiceans are not only **lukewarm** they are also **filled with pride**
 - As the Scriptures teach us over and over again, “*Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoils with the proud.*” (Proverbs 16:18)
 - And, indeed, both the **city and church** of Laodicea have lain in **ruins** for centuries

v18: Having stated His **criticism**, Jesus then offers His **correction**: “*buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see*”

- Not only is this **sound spiritual advice**, it also **knowingly speaks to the very things** about which the Laodiceans were **so proud**
 - They were not only **wealthy** but also a **financial banking center** in the region – but Jesus says they need **His gold**, not the **gold of the world**

- They had a **great textile, garment industry** – but Jesus says they need to be **clothed** in His **white garments** (i.e. His robes of righteousness)
- And their **medical school** had discovered and sold an **eye salve** to the rest of the world – but Jesus says they need to **anoint their eyes with His eye salve** so that they might **spiritually see**

v19: Jesus now goes on to tell them that, **despite His strong criticism, He still loves them** -- “*As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten*”

- This is **true for us today** – some of our **trials** may actually stem from His “**tough love**” for us so that we too can be **refined into gold** by the fire and **wear His white garments** with **anointed eyes**
 - “*My son, do not despise the **chastening of the LORD**, nor detest His **correction**; for whom the LORD loves He **corrects**, just as a father the son in whom he **delights**.”* (Proverbs 3:16)
 - “*But when we are judged, we are **chastened** by the Lord, that we may **not be condemned** with the world.”* (1Corinthians 11:32)
 - “*My brethren, count it all **joy** when you fall into various **trials**, knowing that the **testing of your faith produces patience**. ⁴But let patience have its **perfect work**, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.*” (James 1:2-4)
- Jesus then tells them to be “**zealous**” (i.e. **hot**) and **repent** of their **lukewarmness and pride**
 - As stated in Titus 2:14, it is Jesus “*who **gave Himself for us**, that He might **redeem** us from every lawless deed and **purify** for Himself His own special people, **zealous for good works**.”*

v20: As a **complacent, lukewarm** church, the Laodiceans have in effect **closed the doors of their hearts** to Jesus and the Holy Spirit

- Despite this, Jesus **reminds them** (and us) that **even though we might reject Him**, He is always **standing just outside the door** waiting for the opportunity to **come back inside**
 - This continues to display the **paradox of grace** and **personal responsibility**
 - By **His grace**, He is **always there**, never wishing that we should perish, but that we “*should all come to everlasting life*” (John 3:16)
 - But our **personal responsibility** is to **hear and heed His voice** – and then **open the door**
- When we do respond, either as new converts or long-time believers, Jesus promises to have a **close, intimate, personal relationship with us**
 - “*I will come in to him and **dine with him**, and he with Me.*”
- This **personal relationship** is what Jesus really **wants from and with us** – and what God wanted when we were first in the Garden of Eden
 - “*God is faithful, by whom you were **called into the fellowship of His Son**, Jesus Christ our Lord.*” (1Corinthians 1:9)

v21: To those who **do hear** and **do open the door** (i.e. the **overcomers**), Jesus promises that they can “*sit with Me on My throne*” – imagine that, sitting in **Christ’s lap!**

- This **final promise** is the **best of all** – and, most amazingly, it is given to the **worst church!**
 - This just shows how even the **worst sinners can repent, conquer and reign** with Christ regardless of **who they are** and **how bad they are**
- The **throne** means the **authority to rule** – and overcomers are invited to **rule and reign** with Christ
 - “*Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first **resurrection**. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be **priests of God and of Christ**, and shall **reign with Him** a thousand years.*” (Rev. 20:6)
- We will get into what this **thousand year reign** means when we discuss Chapter 20

Church (and Church Age)	Characteristic of Jesus	Commendation	Criticism	Correction	Challenge	Covenant Promise
Ephesus – The Loveless Church (70 to 170 A.D.)	He holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven lampstands	Patience, perseverance, rejects evil, labors for Jesus' name sake, hates the Nicolaitans	They have left their first love (i.e. love for Christ no longer fervent)	Remember from where you have fallen, repent, and do the first works	Jesus will come quickly and remove their lampstand	The tree of life in the Paradise of God
Smyrna – The Persecuted Church (170 to 312)	He is the First and the Last, who was dead and came to life	Although materially poor, they are spiritually rich	None	None	Do not fear the coming tribulation; be faithful unto death	The crown of life
Pergamos – The Compromising Church (312 - 606)	He who has the sharp, two-edged sword	They have held fast to the faith of Christ	Some hold the doctrine of Baalam and the Nicolaitans	Repent	He will fight against them with the sword of His mouth	Hidden manna, a white stone with a new name
Thyatira – The Corrupt Church (606 to 1520)	The Son of God who has eyes like a flame of fire and feet like fine brass	Love, service, faith and patience; latter works more than the first	Allow Jezebel to teach and seduce the saints; tolerate cult of immorality	Repent, hold fast to what they have	Jesus will cast them into a sickbed, and kill their children	Power over the nations, the morning star
Sardis – The Dead Church (1520 to 1750)	He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars	Some have kept the faith	They have a name that they are alive, but they are dead	Repent, be watchful, strengthen the things that remain, hold fast	Jesus will come upon them as a thief	Clothed in white garments, not blotted out of the Book of Life
Philadelphia – The Faithful Church (1750 to 1948)	He who is holy and true, who has the key of David, who opens and shuts doors	Kept Jesus' command to persevere in the faith	None	None	Hold fast so that no one can take their crown	Become a pillar in the temple of God with God's name and Jesus' new name written on it
Laodicea – The Lukewarm Church (1948 to ???)	The Amen, Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of creation	None	Lukewarm, neither hot nor cold	Buy His gold, white garments and eye salve	Be zealous and repent; answer His knock on the door of our hearts	Sit with Him on His throne

Read Revelation 4:1-5 (The Throne Room of Heaven)

In the rest of the Book of Revelation (i.e. chapters 4-22), the Apostle John receives **three additional visions** which cover events from **the very beginning of the world** (Genesis) to the **“time of the end”**

- *“The words are **closed up and sealed** till the **time of the end**. Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and **none of the wicked shall understand**, but the **wise shall understand**.”* (Daniel 12:9)

The next two chapters provide the **introduction** to the succeeding chapters which probe in-depth the coming **“day of the Lord”**

- *“But the **day of the Lord** will come as a **thief in the night**, in which the **heavens will pass away** with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be **burned up**.”* (there are 24 verses from Isaiah to 2Peter that refer to the **end-times** this way)

v1: “After these things” – i.e. after the Apostle John received the **letters to the seven churches** from the **angel** which had been sent as a messenger from Jesus Christ

- John went **immediately** from the **first vision** to the **second vision**
 - As he turned his eyes away from the **first vision**, he saw a **“door standing open in heaven”**
 - This is the door of **prophetic revelation**
- Recall that in the **preceding vision**, Jesus spoke to the **Philadelphia church** about **open and shut doors** (see Rev. 3:7-8)
 - Now, John is presented with an **open door**, so he was **already prepared** to **“be of good courage”** and step through
- John was also prepared for what he saw – **a throne in heaven**
 - Because Jesus spoke of **overcomers** sitting with Him on **His throne** at the end of the **preceding chapter** (see Rev. 3:21)
 - This was not just an **entryway into the “heavenlies”** (i.e. the Spiritual realm) but rather into the so-called **“third heaven”** that the Apostle **Paul was caught up into** (see 2Cor. 12:2)
 1. The **first heaven** is the **atmosphere** around the earth (i.e. the **firmament** of Genesis 1:6)
 2. The **second heaven** contains the **sun, moon, planets and stars**
 3. The **third heaven** is where **God and Jesus reside**
- The **“first voice”** that John hears in the second vision is that of Jesus Christ which sounds to John **“like a trumpet”**
 - This is the **same description** John used in 1:10 which **symbolizes** the **heralding of a major event or announcements**
 - The **symbolism of the trumpet** is used frequently in Revelation (e.g. to **announce** the **trumpet plagues** beginning in chapter 8)
- This is also seen by some as **symbolic of the rapture** when we too will be **caught up into heaven** at the sound of the trumpet (1Thessalonians 4:16)
 - *“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a **shout**, with the voice of an archangel, and with the **trumpet of God**. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷Then we who are alive and remain shall be **caught up together** with them in the **clouds** to meet the Lord in the **air**.”*
- In John’s **first vision**, the Lord **came to him** (Rev. 1:10-17) -- here, Jesus tells John to **“come up here”** so that John could receive the **heavenly perspective** about **“the things which must take place after this”**

- By *“after this”* Jesus again refers back to the **letters to the seven churches**
 - But the **futurist, dispensational** viewpoint sees these seven churches as representing the **entire Church Age** which ends with the **Rapture** which, in turn, **initiates the “day of the Lord”**
 - The *“things”* that will take place are **not revealed in chronological order**, although we will continue our study of the Book of Revelation in chapter and verse order

v2: In this second vision, John was **transported “in the Spirit”** to the **Throne Room of Heaven**

- The **only way** to receive such **prophetic revelation** is to be *“in the Spirit”*
 - That is, a state of **heightened spiritual sensitivity** in which we **tune out all worldly things** and **tune in exclusively to the Spiritual realm**
- John first sees a *“throne set in heaven; and One sat on the throne”*
 - This is the **throne of God Almighty** (see v8) as it is frequently referenced in the **Old Testament** (see Psalm 47:8)

v3: There are no **human words or images** that can capture **the grandeur and glory** of God

- The Apostle Paul says that God dwells in *“unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see”* (1Timothy 6:16)
- So, John says He looks like a *“jasper and sardius stone... like an emerald”* -- all three stones were among the twelve gems in the **priest’s breastplate** (Exodus 28:11,17,18)
 - **Jasper** refers to a **diamond-like crystal** which symbolizes **holiness and purity** and is named in the building of the **New Jerusalem** (see Rev. 21:11,17,18)
 - **Sardius** (or Sardine stone) is **deep red**, symbolizing God’s **avenging wrath** and **Jesus Christ’s blood** that was shed to **redeem humanity**
 - **Emerald** is green, the dominant color in the **rainbow**, symbolizing **mercy** and is also one of the building stones in the **New Jerusalem** (Rev. 21:19)
- The **rainbow** also represents **God’s covenant** with **Noah** that He would never again **destroy all of humanity** as He did in the **Great Flood** (Genesis 9:13-17)
 - This showed John that **God’s promises** remain true and are **unchanging**

v4: Around God’s throne were **24 additional thrones** on which sat the *“twenty-four elders”*

- Most scholars believe these to represent the **12 tribes of Israel** from the Old Testament (i.e. the **old covenant**) and the **12 apostles** of the New Testament (i.e. the **new covenant**)
 - They were *“clothed in white robes”* which represent **priestly purity** after they had been **washed clean in the blood of the Lamb** (Rev. 7:14)
 - They also had *“crowns of gold”* on their heads which symbolizes the **sovereignty of God** and that **resurrected believers** are to **reign with Christ** (Rev. 20:6)

v5: From *“the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings and voices”*

- These convey the **awesome power and majesty of God** – and the fact that He **speaks to us** from within the **spectrum of power**
 - This is similar to the **Old Testament depiction of God** as He manifested Himself before the Israelites at the foot of **Mt. Sinai** (Exodus 19:16-19)
 - In the Book of Revelation, **thunder and lightning** always **mark and important event** connected with the **heavenly temple** (Rev. 8:5, 11:19, 16:18)

- The “*seven lamps of fire*” that were burning before the throne represent the “*seven Spirits of God*” which was earlier seen to symbolize the **seven ministries of the Holy Spirit** (notes for Rev. 1:4, 3:1)

Read Revelation 4:6-9

v6: In front of the throne was a “*sea of glass, like crystal*”

- This is also like the **vision of God Moses saw** on Mt. Sinai (Exodus 24:10) and represents the **un-approachableness of God**
 - This may also represent the **basin in the Heavenly temple** whose **counterpart in the earthly temple** was referred to as the **Sea** (1Kings 7:23-25)
 - There are also some who **theorize** that this **Sea** is where souls go to their **rest** (Hebrews 4:9-11) as they await the **resurrection** (1Thessalonians 4:16-17)
- Around the throne were “*four living creatures full of eyes in front and back*”
 - The King James Version translates “*living creatures*” as “*beasts*” which for us today has **negative, evil connotations** – e.g. the Anti-Christ is also called “*the beast*” (Rev. 11:7)
 - The Greek word here, “*zoon*” is more accurately translated “**a live thing, that is an animal**” in Strong’s Greek Dictionary; the word for the “*beast*” that Satan raises up is “*therion*” which means “**dangerous, untamed animal... a venomous wild beast**”
- These **four creatures** are **cherubim**, the **highest ranking celestial beings**
 - **Cherubim** (plural for cherub) are first mentioned in the Bible as **guardians of Eden** after the **fall of man** (Genesis 3:24)
 - They are next mentioned in the directions to **Moses** for building the **mercy seat** in the **tabernacle** with a **cherub** on either side between which Moses would **commune with God** (Ex. 25:18)
 - These were called the “*cherubim of glory*” (Heb. 9:5) – i.e., of the **Shechinah**, or cloud of glory, for on them the **visible glory of God rested**. They were placed one at each end of the mercy-seat, with **wings stretched upward**, and their faces “*toward each other*” and toward the mercy-seat.” They were **anointed with holy oil**, like the **ark or the covenant**.
 - **Ezekiel** also saw the **cherubim** in his visions (Ezekiel chapters 1 & 10) in which they appear as **four living creatures supporting the throne of God**
- The fact that they were “*full of eyes in front and back*” symbolizes **unceasing watchfulness** (in verse 7 we see that the **eyes were all around and within** as well)
 - They see in **every direction** and **nothing escapes their attention**
 - “*The eyes of the LORD are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good.*” (Prov. 15:3)

v7: John now tries to describe the **cherubim** in human terms and comes **quite close** (under the **inspiration of the Holy Spirit**) to the vision **Ezekiel saw**

- In **John’s vision**, the faces of the four creatures were like “*a lion... a calf (i.e. an ox)... a man... and a flying eagle*”
- In **Ezekiel’s first vision** each one had the “*face of a man.. the face of a lion.. the face of an ox.. and the face of an eagle*” (Ezekiel 1:10);
 - In **Ezekiel’s second vision**, the ox was replaced by a **cherub** (Ezekiel 10:14)
- These four types of creatures represent **majestic courage** (lion), **strength** (ox), **intelligence** (man), and **speed** (eagle)
 - Another interpretation sees the four creatures as representing **all of creation** – i.e. **untamed beasts** (lion), **domesticated beasts** (calf), **mankind** (man) and **fowl** (eagle)

v8: Each of the **cherubim** had **six wings** which represent the **highest order of angels**

- **Ezekiel saw only four wings** – and in Isaiah we learn that it is the **Seraphim** that have **six wings**
 - *“Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³And one cried to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!”*
- **Four is the number of the world** (e.g. four directions, four seasons, etc.), while **six is the number of man**
 - So the **four** is seen as representative of the **angels’ service to the world**
 - And the **six** is representative of their **service to mankind**
 - And their **unceasing praise** are **echoed** by the **4x6=24 elders**
- For just as in **Isaiah’s vision**, the angels **continually cry out with praise** – *“they do not rest day or night”*
 - Their **words of praise** are also quite similar to Isaiah’s vision: *“Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty, Who was and is and is to come”*
 - These words of praise **also reinforce** the description already used several times for **Jesus Christ** – He who **was and is and is to come**
- This is the **first of twenty chorales** in **Revelation** which also help us to **interpret the meanings** of many aspects of **John’s visions**

v9-10: And *“whenever”* (which appears to be **always**) the *“living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne”* the **twenty-four elders** also **fall down before the throne** to worship God

- They too **acknowledge Him** as the **One “who lives forever and ever”**
- And then they *“cast their crowns before the throne”*
 - This is in **acknowledgement** of the **supremacy and sovereignty** of the Lord God Almighty which **petty kings** did before the **Roman Emperor** in the times that John recorded the vision
- This act **also acknowledges** that it is only from **Him and from His throne** that all **blessings flow**
 - *“And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.”* (Rev. 22:1)

v11: The **twenty-four elders** **acknowledge** that **God** is the **only One** who is **worthy of our praise and worship**

- And why? Because *“You created all things and by Your will they exist”*
 - Not only did **God create everything through Jesus Christ**, but these things (and us) **continue to exist** only by **His will and His mercy**
 - Even more so, **Jesus laid down His life** so that we might **continue to live** and have the **hope of eternal life**
- It makes **abundant sense** for the **created to pay homage to their Creator**
 - It is **strange** that **His creation** has largely **chosen to ignore Him**

Postscript:

The **futurist, dispensational** interpretation of **verses 4-11** sees **evidence** of the **Church’s exemption** from the **Great Tribulation** by the fact that these **elders** (representing all believers) **are already glorified, enthroned and crowned**

Chapter 5: The Scroll and the Lamb

Read Revelation 5:1-5

v1: “*Then*” – i.e. right after John was transported “*in the Spirit*” in Chapter 4 up into the **throne room** of heaven where he saw images of **God**, the **twenty-four elders** and the **four living creatures**

- John now saw God holding a “*scroll with writing on both sides*” (NIV)
 - The Greek word used here for “**scroll**” is “**biblion**” which literally means “a book or scroll”
- It was **unusual** to have **writing on both sides** for several reasons:
 - 1) the fibers of a **papyrus** (a tall water plant of Egypt) scroll run **horizontally** on the inside and **vertically** on the outside, thus it is easier to write on the **inside**
 - 2) the writing on the **inside** was protected by the **rolling up of the scroll**, whereas that on the outside was more **exposed**
- When a scroll did have **writing on the outside**, it was usually a **title deed** with the **outside writing** indicating the book’s **content** (i.e. the property covered by the deed)
 - This **deed** represents the **property** (i.e. believers) that **Jesus purchased** (i.e. redeemed) **on the cross**
 - “*In Him* (i.e. Jesus) *you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,* ¹⁴*who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.*” (Ephesians 1:13-14)
- This was in accordance with the **law of redemption of lost property**
 - “*If one of your brethren becomes poor, and has sold some of his possession, and if his redeeming relative comes to redeem it, then he may redeem what his brother sold.*” (Leviticus 25:25)
 - **Adam** sold us out to **Satan**, but Jesus, the **second Adam** (1Corinthians 15:45-47) came to **redeem** what his “**brother**” sold
- Such scrolls were **sealed** until the **property owner or representative** came along to **claim the property**
 - In this case, **seven seals** are used which represents **absolute inviolability** – i.e. this title deed **cannot be counterfeited** nor can it be **claimed falsely**
- God held this scroll in His **right hand** which also indicates **absolute, sovereign control**
 - It also indicates that **nothing can be added to it or taken away from it**
- Another **interpretation of the scroll** is that it represents **God’s last will and testament** – the **redemptive plan of God** as **foreshadowed** in the Old Testament
 - “*Now when I looked, there was a hand stretched out to me; and behold, a scroll of a book was in it. ¹⁰Then He spread it before me; and there was writing on the inside and on the outside, and written on it were lamentations and mourning and woe.*” (Ezekiel 2:9-10)
 - “*And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.*” (Daniel 12:9)

vv2-4: Then a “**strong angel**” (perhaps one of the four around the throne) asked “**who is worthy to open the scroll and loose its seals**”

- This is **equivalent** to the **legal authority’s representative** asking who has the **rightful claim** to the **property** described in the **title deed**

- But “*no man in heaven, nor in the earth, neither under the earth*” (KJV) was found to be **qualified** to break the seals and **open the scroll**
- The Greek word for “man” here denotes **human beings or creatures**
- John was **distraught** and **wept** because “*no one was found worthy*” to open and read the book
 - In the Spirit, John knew **how important** this book was, that it had **life and death meaning**
 - No one was **worthy** because no one was **sinless or blameless**

v5: But one of the **twenty-four elders** spoke up (undoubtedly at the **prompting of God**) to **console John** and **inform him** that there was indeed **someone who was worthy** to open the scroll

- “*the Lion of the tribe of Judah*”
 - **Judah** is one of the **12 tribes of Israel** – and the one from which **King David** and **Jesus Christ** trace their **lineage**
- The **lion** was the **emblem** of the tribe of Judah due to the **prophetic blessing** spoken over **Judah** (Jacob’s fourth son of twelve) as given in **Genesis 49:9-12**

⁹ *Judah is a lion’s whelp;
From the prey, my son, you have gone up.
He bows down, he lies down as a lion;
And as a lion, who shall rouse him?*

¹⁰ *The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
Nor a lawgiver from between his feet,
Until Shiloh comes; [i.e. the Messiah]
And to Him shall be the obedience of the people.*

¹¹ *Binding his donkey to the vine,
And his donkey’s colt to the choice vine,
He washed his garments in wine,
And his clothes in the blood of grapes.*

¹² *His eyes are darker than wine,
And his teeth whiter than milk.*

- Jesus was sacrificed as **the Lamb of God** to pay the **penalty for our sins**, but is **coming back** as the **Lion of Judah** to **judge** the nations
 - “John [the Baptist] saw **Jesus** coming toward him, and said, “Behold! **The Lamb of God** who **takes away the sin of the world!**” (John 1:20)
- Jesus is also referred to here as “*the Root of David*” which relates to the prophecy in Isaiah 11:1

*There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, [David’s father]
And a Branch shall grow out of his roots.*

² *The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him,
The Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The Spirit of counsel and might,
The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.*

³ *His delight is in the fear of the LORD,
And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes,
Nor decide by the hearing of His ears;*

⁴ *But with righteousness He shall judge the poor,
And decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, [i.e. the two-edged sword]
And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked. [i.e. with the Word of God]*
- Jesus is found **worthy** because He “*prevailed*”
 - That is, He lived a **sinless life** and **conquered death and Satan on the cross**

- “For it pleased the Father that **in Him all the fullness should dwell**,²⁰ and by Him to **reconcile all things to Himself, by Him**, whether things on **earth** or things in heaven, having made **peace through the blood of His cross**.” (Colossians 1:19-20)
- “And being found in **appearance as a man**, He **humbled Himself** and became **obedient** to the point of death, even the **death of the cross**.⁹ Therefore God also has **highly exalted Him** and given Him the name which is **above every name**,¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus **every knee should bow**, of those in **heaven**, and of those on **earth**, and of those **under the earth**.” (Philippians 2:8)

Read Revelation 5:6-7

vv6-7: Upon the **pronouncement of the elder**, John now sees **Jesus** in the **midst** of the **throne** and the **four living creatures** and the **elders**

- But instead of seeing Him as the **Lion of Judah**, John sees Jesus as “**a Lamb as though it had been slain**”
 - It was **Jesus’ sacrificial offering** of His life **on the cross** that make Him **worthy to open the book** – not the **power and strength** of the Lion which is **to come**
 - This was the “**Lamb slain from the foundation of the earth**” (Rev. 13:8) – God’s **plan of redemption** all along
- However, since this **Lamb** also “**stood**” we see that it is **still alive**
 - Which is why the verse says, “**as though**” it was slain
- The **Lamb** is then seen as having “**seven horns and seven eyes**”
 - The **seven horns** represent **complete and perfect power**
 - The **seven eyes** represent **complete knowledge and wisdom**
 - The **seven spirits** represent the **complete ministry** of the **Holy Spirit** which is how **Jesus’ power and wisdom** are **enacted in the world**
 - “**When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.**¹⁴**He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.**” (John 16:13-14)
- **Jesus** now comes forward and **takes the scroll** out of the **right hand of God** which represents the **fulfillment of Daniel’s vision** (Daniel 7:9-14):

*“I watched till **thrones** were put in place,
And the **Ancient of Days** was seated; His garment was **white as snow**,
And the hair of His head was like **pure wool**.
His throne was a **fiery flame**, Its wheels a **burning fire**...
The court was seated, and the **books were opened**.
And behold, One like the **Son of Man**,
Coming with the clouds of heaven!
He came to the Ancient of Days, and they **brought Him near** before Him.
¹⁴ Then to Him was given **dominion and glory and a kingdom**,
That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him.
His dominion is an **everlasting dominion**, which shall not pass away,
And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed.”*
- Jesus taking the scroll is symbolic of His being approved and appointed by God to be the Judge over all the earth
 - “**The Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son.**” (John 5:22)

Read Revelation 5:8-10

v8: When Jesus took the scroll, the **four living creatures** and the **twenty-four elders** fell down before Him in a **grand and glorious celebration** because the time has come for Jesus to **fully redeem the world** – “*thy Kingdom come*”

- Each of the creatures and elders had a **harp** and **golden bowls of incense**
 - The **incense** represents the “*prayers of the saints*”
- This verse is the basis for the new **harp and bowl** form of prayer singing that has become a **recent church movement** out of Kansas City
 - This also **explains** why it sometimes takes **repeated prayer** before something happens – they are **stored up in the bowls** until they **overflow** and are then **poured out before the throne**
- The symbolism of **incense as prayers** goes back to the **frankincense** and other **aromas** offered in the tabernacle as **emblems of prayer**
 - “*Let my prayer be set before You as incense, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.*” (Psalm 141:2)

v9-10: A “**new song**” was then offered up in worship by the **angels and elders**

- In the Old Testament, a **new song** celebrated a **new act of divine deliverance or blessing**
 - “*I will sing a new song to You, O God; on a harp of ten strings I will sing praises to You, The One who gives salvation to kings, who delivers David His servant from the deadly sword.*” (Psalm 144:9-10)
- This new song **celebrates Christ’s worthiness to open the scroll** due to His **blood sacrifice**
 - The **twenty-four elders** represent “*every tribe and tongue and people and nation*” – i.e. **every born-again believer**
- The **chronological timing** here is **uncertain** – Christ may **already have taken the scroll in hand**
 - However, we know that **He has not loosed the seals quite yet** because the **plagues** that strike the earth as the **seals are opened** have not yet happened
- The song concludes with the statement that He has “*made us kings and priests to our God*”
 - We are made into a “**royal priesthood**” by Jesus – both in the **present** here on earth and in the **future in heaven**
 - “*But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰who once were not a people but are now the people of God.*” (1Peter 2:9-10)
 - We are also made into “**kings**” so that we can “**reign on the earth**”
 - This will not occur **until Christ returns** and ushers in His **millennial rulership** – “*they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.*” (Rev. 20:6)

Read Revelation 5:11-14

vv11-12: When John took his eyes off of Jesus, he saw **multitudes of angels and elders** around the throne

- The phrase “**ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands**” symbolizes an **infinitely large number**
 - “*A thousand thousands ministered to Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. the court was seated, and the books were opened.*” (Daniel 7:10)

- This **infinite number** of angels and elders **also includes all the believers** who are **raptured** (i.e. “*caught up together*”) prior to the Great Tribulation
 - Thus, we will get the **privilege and honor** of **witnessing and participating** in this **magnificent event**
- John then **hears the multitude** praising the **worthiness of Jesus** once again
 - This time, the **emphasis** is on His receiving “*power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing*”
- Not only is Jesus given the **responsibility to judge and to reign**, but He is also given **everything He needs** to do so **perfectly**

v13: All creation now joins in the **praise of the Lamb** who is worthy

- This means that **every creature** now **recognizes and acknowledges** their **Creator** (obviously, not all of them can actually speak)
 - “*As I live, says the LORD, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.*” (Romans 14:11)
- This includes **believers and unbelievers** – however, when **Judgment Day** is over, it is **too late** for the **unbelievers** to receive the **gift of salvation**
 - Part of their **great torment** in hell is the **knowledge of what they missed** through their **unbelief**
- This might seem **unfair** to some, but they were given **many chances** to receive this **free gift**
 - “*And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.*” (Rev. 14:11)

v14: Now the **four living creatures** say “**Amen!**” affirming that “Yes, it is true. So be it”

- And the **twenty-four elders** prostrated themselves before the throne and **worshipped Jesus** – He who “*lives forever and ever*”
 - Throughout the Book of Revelation (**and throughout time itself**) the **twenty-four elders** (representing all **believers**) continue to “*fall down*” and worship before the throne
 - “*And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sat on the throne, saying, “Amen! Alleluia!”*” (Rev. 19:4)

Chapter 6: The Lamb Breaks the Seals

Read Revelation 6:1-2

In the remaining chapters, the **final conflict** between the **Lamb** and the **beast** (i.e. **Christ** and **Satan**) begins and reaches its **culmination** when **Satan** and his followers are **cast into the Lake of Fire** (chapters 19 & 20)

- It is important to bear in mind the **distinct contrast** between the **Lamb** and the **beast**:
 - The **Lamb** is **gentle, compassionate, loving, kind, innocently suffering and dying** to atone for our sins
 - The **beast** is **savage, cruel, hostile and destructive** – seeking only to “*steal... kill... and destroy*” (John 10:10)
- These distinctions are important because, taken out of context, when the **Lamb comes back as the Lion** of Judah, **it may appear** that He is savage, cruel, hostile and destructive
- **He is – but only against the beast and all the evil he created** – and to **save the world from destruction** and bring **true peace**

v1: Now that **Jesus Christ** has been found **worthy** (Chapter 5), He **breaks the first seal** on the **scroll** (i.e. the **title deed** to earth and all its **inhabitants**)

- The scroll cannot be **fully unrolled** until **all seven seals** are broken
 - This will be the time when **Christ returns to reclaim the lost possession**
- In response to the breaking of the **first seal**, one of the **four living creatures** (i.e. an **angel**) calls to **John** to “*come and see*” (KJV & NKJV)
 - Alternately, some translations have the angel saying, “*Come!*” as a **command** addressed to each of the **four horsemen** that **ride forth** with the opening of each of the **first four seals**
 - The “*voice like thunder*” symbolizes that this **comes directly from God**
- These **four horsemen** bring on the **judgments of God** that were **prophesied** by Moses and Ezekiel
 - “*How much more it shall be when I send My four severe judgments on Jerusalem—the sword and famine and wild beasts and pestilence—to cut off man and beast from it?*” (Ezekiel 14:21)
 - Read Leviticus 26:21-33
- Many believe that the **opening of the seven seals** corresponds with the **beginning of the Tribulation** period
 - This is also called the “*time of Jacob’s trouble*” (Jeremiah 30:7, Matthew 24:29-30)
- The **Tribulation** is seen to be a **7-year period** ending with the **return of Christ**
 - This corresponds to the **seventieth week of Daniel’s prophecy**

Read Daniel 9:24-27

v24: “*Seventy weeks are determined for your people and your holy city*”

- Each **week** is equivalent to **seven years** (i.e. one day equals one year – see Leviticus 25:8)

vv25-26: “*From the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks... And after the sixty-two weeks, Messiah shall be cut off*”

- Using the **weeks as years** shows that this prophecy **perfectly aligns** with the dates when the **indicated events occurred**
 - In **445 BC** King Artaxerxes gave the **decree to rebuild the temple**
 - **49 years later** (i.e. seven weeks of years) the **temple was completed** in **396 BC**

- **434 years later** (i.e. sixty-two weeks of years) the **Messiah** (Jesus Christ) **was crucified** (i.e. “cut off”)

v27a: “*Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week*”

- This last and **seventieth week** (i.e. 7 years long) of Daniel’s prophecy will not occur until the **nation of Israel** enters into a **covenant** with the **future Antichrist**
 - The time in between the **crucifixion and the Second Coming** is the **Church Age** which comes to an end when all **living believers are Raptured** out of the world **prior to the Great Tribulation**

v27b: “*But in the middle of the week, He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering, and on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate.*”

- An alternate view is that the **seventieth week already occurred** right after the first sixty two weeks
 - This viewpoint maintains that the **last seven years** refers to the **total destruction of the Jews** in 70AD and that the **intervening thirty-seven years** until the **daily sacrifices** ceased is of **no consequence**
- However, we will take the **futurist or dispensational view** which sees this **seventieth week** as yet **to come**
 - This would put us in the period of time called by Jesus, “*the beginning of sorrows*”

Read Matthew 24:4-14

v6: “*the end is not yet*”

- The “end” is the **Great Tribulation** (v21) culminating in the **Second Coming of Christ** (v30)

vv7-8: “*For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows*”

- Many feel that the **entire Church Age** is represented by this **indefinite period of time** with the **mentioned woes increasing** as we get **close to the end**
 - The **Amplified Bible** translates verse 8 as: “*All this is but the beginning [the early pains] of the birth pangs [of the intolerable anguish]*”
- Others feel that we are **just now** entering into that period with the **terrorist destruction of the World Trade Centers** representing the **beginning of this pre-tribulation period**

vv9-12: “*Then they will deliver you to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold*”

- We have seen **missionaries and Christians** being **persecuted and killed** over the years, with the **level of hatred increasing rapidly**
- And **many false prophets** (e.g. Islam) are **rising in influence** around the world, with the **intolerance of Christians growing** even in America

v13-14: “*But he who endures to the end shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come*”

- We are **getting close** to the time when the gospel will have been **preached to all the world** due to our **communications technology** which has never before been available
- And then the “**end**” (i.e. the Great Tribulation) will **begin** – but “*he who endures to the end shall be saved*”
 - Notice it says “**to the end**” not **through** the end – i.e. right up to the **Second Coming** of our **Lord and Savior Jesus Christ** (i.e. the **pre-wrath rapture**)

Rev. v2: John now looks and sees a **rider on a white horse**

- Because the horse is **white**, some believe that this is **Jesus Christ** because white represents **purity**
 - However, **Jesus** comes riding on His own **white horse** later (see Rev. 19:11) and at this point is **still in heaven** opening the seals on the scroll
- Satan always **counterfeits** everything of **God**, so this is another **deception** that the **world will buy into** when the **Antichrist** comes as a “**man of peace**”
 - This really represents the “**New World Order**” that we already see **beginning to form** and needs to be **in place before the Tribulation can start**
 - The **Antichrist** (the beast) and the **false prophet** (representing a **one-world religion**) will take **full control of the world’s governments** – even performing **signs and wonders** to deceive “*even the elect*” (see Rev. 13:11-18)
- The rider of the white horse, the **Antichrist**, is seen as having a “**bow**”
 - The **horse** is a symbol of **power**
 - Though he has a **battle weapon**, he has **no arrows** – which means that he will **conquer through peace**, most likely putting an **end to wars**
 - Another view is that the **empty bow** symbolizes the **ultimate powerlessness** of the Antichrist when **Jesus returns in His power**
- Note too that he is “*given a crown*” – this is **not from God**, or else it would say so
 - Instead, this is the **world granting him authority to rule** over them by **gaining the trust** of the **world’s leaders** through **political persuasion**

Read Revelation 6:3-4

vv3-4: When Jesus breaks the **second seal**, the second living creature once again says, “**Come**”

- This time a **fiery red horse** comes out which is a symbol of **bloodshed and war**
 - The **peace** that the Antichrist brings is **short-lived and illusory**, for the “**man of peace**” is **not what he seems**
 - “*They have seduced My people, saying, ‘Peace!’ when there is no peace.*” (Ezekiel 13:10)
- As Daniel prophesied, in the “**middle of the week**” (i.e. three-and-a-half years into the Tribulation), **war breaks out again**
 - This rider (also the Antichrist) now takes “**peace from the earth**” because he was given a “**great sword**”
- All of this, however, is **under the control** of the **God** (through the Lamb) who **wrote the scroll and put on the seals** before the **beginning of the world**

Read Revelation 6:5-6

vv5-6: Now we see a **black horse** when Jesus opens the **third seal**

- This symbolizes **economic disruption – inflation and scarcity**
 - A **denarius** was the **daily wage** for a laborer in the first century, which ordinarily would **buy eight times** the amount of **wheat and barley** described in verse 6
- The “**pair of scales**” is seen as representing a **time of scarcity** when everyone would be put under an **allowance**
 - This is most likely where the “**mark of the beast**” comes in to play where, without it, “**no one may buy or sell**” (Rev. 13:17)

- The **oil and wine** represent the **anointing of God** – which implies that **that the remnant who turn to Christ** will be spared

Read Revelation 6:7-8

vv7-8: The breaking open of the **fourth seal** reveals a **“pale horse”**

- This pale color symbolizes **disease and death**
 - And indeed, the rider is now **unmasked and named** – He is **Death** (i.e. Satan) and **Hades follows right behind**
- This **false Christ** would **kill** a **“fourth of the earth”** with the **sword and hunger**
 - And by **“the beasts of the earth”** suggesting a return to **inhumane torture** (such as Daniel in the lion’s den)

Read Revelation 6:9-11

v9: When Jesus opens the **fifth seal**, we now see a **different image** (no more horsemen)

- In the Old Testament **sacrifices**, the **blood** of the slaughtered animal was **poured out** at the **base of the altar**
 - Here, according to one interpretation, John sees the **souls of all the Christian martyrs** – who **were, are, and are to come**
 - The **dispensational view** is that these represent those who **receive Christ** and **are martyred during the Tribulation** (except for the **remnant** of Israel who are sealed for protection)

v10: These **martyrs** are apparently in a **state of limbo** awaiting the **end of the Tribulation period** when Christ will come to **“judge and avenge”** these saints

- Some see them as being under the **“sea of glass”** before the **“throne of God”** first mentioned in Rev. 4:6 and then again in 15:2 where it is seen as being **“mingled with fire”** – perhaps the blood of these saints
 - They are not so much **calling for vengeance** as they are **desirous of reaching heaven**

v11: The LORD is **gracious** and provides **comfort to these martyrs**

- They are given a **white robe** which symbolizes **purity, innocence and triumph**
 - Then they are told to **“rest a little while longer”** which implies that they are **not suffering**, but just **anxious to move on**
 - The Greek word translated **“rest”** also implies a **time of refreshing**
- The **reason** given for their **wait** is that the **time is not yet over** during which **additional martyrs** would be added until their **number was “completed”**
 - God is still **patiently allowing** the world to continue in its **death throes** so that even more **can be saved**

Read Revelation 6:12-17

v12: When Jesus opens the **sixth seal**, a **great cosmic catastrophe** fall on the earth on this **day of wrath**

- The **first event** is a **great earthquake** which probably unleashes **volcanic eruptions** as well as **other disasters**
 - This is the **earthquake** prophesied by **Isaiah** (24:19-20), **Ezekiel** (38:19), **Amos** (8:8), **Joel** (2:10, 30-31), **Haggai** (2:6), and **Jesus** (Matthew 24:7)
- Either **separately** or as a **result of the great earthquake**, the **sun turns black** and the **moon becomes like blood**

- This is consistent with **theories** of what would happen following **great volcanic eruptions** with the **smoke and dust** filtering the sun's and moon's light

v13: Then the *“stars of heaven”* will *“fall to the earth”*

- This suggests a **great meteor bombardment** of earth bringing **added calamity**
 - This was **prophesied in Mark 13:25**: *“the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken”*

v14: Then the *“heavens receded* (NKJ, NIV) *as a scroll”* (NKJ) or *“departed”* (KJV) or *“rolled up and vanished”* (Amplified)

- Obviously, something **quite indescribable** happens here in the **heavens**
 - This is most likely a reference to the **first heaven** – i.e. the **firmament** or the **atmosphere** around the earth, since in Genesis the word for heaven was also used for the **firmament** or sky
- In addition, *“every mountain and island was moved out of its place”*
 - **Everything, everywhere** is affected by this **cataclysmic event**
 - However, this is not yet the **really big one** – that comes when the **seventh vial** is poured out (see Rev. 16:17-20)

vv15-16: This all caused **every single person** on the earth to **flee into the mountains and caves**

- But did they **pray to God for deliverance**?
 - No, instead they **prayed to nature** – i.e. *“to the mountains and the rocks”*
- This is the **end result** of humanity's **secularization** in which **there is no God or Creator**
 - Instead, this movement – which forms the **basis of the new world order** – relies only on **self and nature**
- Here they are finally **forced to acknowledge** that this is all being caused by *“Him who sits on the throne and from the Lamb”*
 - They still **refuse to repent** and instead wish to die instead of bowing their knee

v17: The people recognize this as the *“great day of His wrath”* and know that they **cannot stand**

- In essence, this is God's **final wake-up call** – we see it as the **“Day of the Lord”** which occurs after the **mid-point** of the **7-year Tribulation period** (Daniel 9:27b – the **“abomination of desolation”**)
- God has **warned** of this **“day of wrath”** over and over again throughout both the Old Testament and New Testament periods – but unfortunately, **many** (most??) **will not pay heed**
 - *“For the wicked are reserved for the day of doom; they shall be brought out on the day of wrath.”* (Job 21:30)
 - *“That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of devastation and desolation,”* (Zephaniah 1:15)
 - *“But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath.”* (Romans 2:5)
- This has also been called the **“day of the Lord”** (24 mentions – see separate teaching of that name)
 - *“Wail, for the day of the LORD is at hand! It will come as destruction from the Almighty.”* (Isaiah 13:6)
 - *“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.”* (2Peter 3:10)

Chapter 7: The 144,000 Sealed

Before opening the **seventh seal**, there is a **parenthetical chapter** (just as there is between the first six trumpets and the seventh trumpet in chapters 10-11)

- Following the “*Day of Wrath*” when seal six is opened, there is a period of **quiet and calm** in order to allow the **calamities** which struck the **earth and the heavens** to settle down
 - In this chapter, John sees **the sealing of 144,000** people by the **Holy Spirit** and the **multitudes** before the throne who **came out of the Great Tribulation**
 - The events in this chapter are **not necessarily** limited to the **chronological time-span** between the opening of the sixth and seventh seals

Read Revelation 7:1-4

v1: In the next phase of John’s vision, he sees **four angels** standing at the “*four corners of the earth*”

- This doesn’t mean that the **earth is square**, but rather that it has **four directions** (which is why **four** is considered to be the **number** of the **earth** by Biblical numerologists)
- These four angels were “*holding the four winds of the earth so that the wind should no blow*”
 - These angels now **keep the wind from blowing**, so a **dead calm** settles over the earth
 - These **winds** are often **symbolic** for **evil forces of devastation** – so we see that it is the **angels** which **restrain evil** in the world, not the Holy Spirit

v2: Next John sees **another angel rising up out of the east**

- The **east** is symbolic of the **source of blessings**
 - For example, the **sun rises in the east** – as does the **Son of God**
 - “*For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man.*” (Matthew 24:27)
- The “**seal of the living God**” is the **invisible sign** of God’s **protection and possession**
 - This **seal** protects us from **God’s wrath**, but **not necessarily from tribulation**
 - “*They (forces of evil) were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.*” (Revelation 9:4)
- It is further noted in this verse that the **four angels** have been granted the **power and authority** to “*harm the earth and the sea*”
 - Their **power** is over the **forces of evil** which they can either **allow or restrain** as **commanded by God**
- It is the **removal** of the **hand of restraint** that ultimately allows **the full forces of evil** to overwhelm the world, resulting in the **Great Tribulation**
 - “*For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed.*” (2Thess. 2:7-8)

v3: This **other angel** now cries out to the **four angels** to “*not harm the earth*” until the “*servants of God*” have been “*sealed on their foreheads*”

- Placing a **mark on the forehead** was an **ancient custom** used upon **servants and slaves** (which is still done in India today for the followers of Vishnu)
 - Satan’s “*mark of the beast*” is a **direct counterfeit** of God’s mark

➤ *“He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to **receive a mark** on their **right hand** or on their **foreheads**,¹⁷ and that **no one may buy or sell** except one who has the **mark** or the name of the beast.”* (Rev. 13:17)

- As a **foreshadowing** of this **permanent seal of God**, the prophet **Ezekiel** was told by God to **mark the foreheads** of those who had not **defiled the temple** using the **“writer’s inkhorn”** that he carried at his side
 - *And the Lord said to him, “Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and **put a mark on the foreheads** of the men who sigh and cry over **all the abominations** that are done within it.” To the others He said in my hearing, “Go after him through the city and kill; do not let your eye spare, nor have any pity. **Utterly slay** old and young men, maidens and little children and women; **but do not come near anyone on whom is the mark**; and **begin at My sanctuary**.” So they began with the elders who were before the temple.”* (Ezekiel 9:4-6)
- Similarly, the **seal of the Holy Spirit** will protect **believers** from the **Second Death**
 - *“Now **He** who **establishes** us with you **in Christ** and has **anointed** us is **God**, who also has **sealed** us and given us the **Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee**.”* (2Cor. 1:21-22)
 - *“Do not grieve the **Holy Spirit** of God, by whom you were **sealed for the day of redemption**.”* (Ephesians 4:30)
- Some see this verse as showing that **believers have not yet been raptured**, which will **not occur** until **after** the **mid-point** of the **7-year tribulation period**, and just prior to the **Day of Wrath**
 - Others see this as the **marking of those left behind** after the rapture who **come to the Lord** during the first 3.5 years

v4: Now we come to a verse (along with verses 5-8) that has caused **great controversy and debate**

- Who are these **144,000** who receive the mark?
 - Are they only **Jehovah’s Witnesses**?
 - Are they only **converted Jews**?
 - Are they from **Jew & Gentile descendants** of the **12 tribes of Israel**?
 - Or, is the number 144,000 **simply symbolic** of **all converted believers** during the tribulation?
- According to the **dispensational viewpoint**, the 144,000 literally come from the **Jews** with the **Church and its believers raptured out beforehand** (the **Day of Wrath** has already just occurred)
 - That is, **Jews** who **convert to Christianity** – **12,000** from each tribe
- The Scriptures teach that the Lord will **deal with the nation of Israel** before the **Kingdom** is **fully consummated** on earth
 - *“And I will **pour** on the **house of David** and on the **inhabitants of Jerusalem** the **Spirit of grace** and **supplication**; then they will look on **Me** whom they pierced. Yes, they will **mourn for Him** as one mourns for his only son, and **grieve for Him** as one grieves for a firstborn. In that day there shall be a **great mourning in Jerusalem**.”* (Zech. 12:10-11)
- This **fulfills** the **prophecy** of **Isaiah 10:21-22**
 - *“The **remnant will return**, the remnant of Jacob, **to the Mighty God**. For though your people, O Israel, be as the sand of the sea, a **remnant** of them **will return**; the destruction decreed shall **overflow with righteousness**. For the Lord **GOD** of hosts will make a **determined end** in the midst of all the land.”*
- Just as **God’s redemptive plan** began with the **Jews**, so shall it **end there** with believers now having already been raptured

Read Revelation 7:9-17

v9: There are essentially **two viewpoints** concerning the **identity of the multitude**

- That they are **not just Jews** is clear – they come from **every nation, tribe, people and tongue**
 - And that they are **saved believers** is also clear, because they have been given their **white robes of righteousness**
 - The **palm branches** are said to be **symbolic** of their **victory over the devil**
- One **viewpoint** is that they represent **all the redeemed throughout history**
- A **second viewpoint** is that they represent only the **martyrs** from the **fifth seal** (Rev. 6:9-11) who are the **“souls under the altar”** who are told by God that they must **“rest a little longer”**
 - This **interpretation** is further **supported** by verse 9:14 which identifies these as **“the ones who come out of the great tribulation”**
- Our viewpoint is that the **rapture** has **just occurred** prior to the **sixth seal** (the Day of Wrath) and these are the **multitudes of believers** who have been **raptured** as well as the **“dead in Christ”** who shall go first (1Thessalonians 4:16)

v10: The **multitude** then cried out that **“salvation belongs to our God... and the Lamb”**

- This is in **recognition** that **all roads do not lead to God or salvation** - Yahweh alone is the **author of salvation**
 - Instead, **Jesus** says, **“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”** (John 14:6)

vv11-12: In this **chorus of praise** to God by the **angels, elders and four living creatures**, there is a **seven-fold list of attributes** expressing **divinely perfect praise**

- These are: **blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honor, power, and might**

vv13-14: Here, one of the **elders** asks **John** who are the **multitudes in the white robes?**

- John **admits that he doesn't know**
 - So the **elder** identifies them as the ones who **“come out of the great tribulation”**
- Translated **literally**, this is a present participle meaning, **“ones coming out”**
 - This would suggest an **ongoing process**, a **“continuous and repeated action, not a once-for-all action,”** so others **will be saved after the rapture**
- The **“great tribulation”** refers to the period of time from the **sixth seal day of wrath** until Christ's **Second Coming**
 - Some commentaries say that this **tribulation has been going on since the Church first formed**
- The **multitude** are wearing robes that have been **“washed white in the blood of the Lamb”**
 - This is the **only way we become pure and righteous** – by the **shed blood of Jesus Christ**

v15: The **multitude** are **“before the throne”** and serve God **“day and night”** in His **temple**

- All **16 references** to **God's temple** in Revelation **designates the inner shrine** rather than the **outer precincts**
 - **God's temple** will be in the **New Jerusalem** – but it will **not be an earthly temple or building**, but rather **“the LORD God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple”** (Rev. 21:22)
-

- Furthermore, **God will “dwell among them”** – literally **“spread His tabernacle over them”**
 - **God’s presence will permeate everything in the New Earth, New Heaven & New Jerusalem**
- These **tribulation saints** become **God’s servants** in His **temple** as further seen in Rev. 22:3-4
 - **“And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.”** (Rev. 22:3-4)

v16: This verse shows that **believers will eternally be provided for**

- They will never **hunger or thirst anymore** – nor will there be any need for the **sun’s heat or light** because **“the Lamb is its light”** (Rev. 21:23)

v17: Jesus – the **Lamb** – will be **“in the midst of the throne”** and will **“shepherd them”**

- The Lord Jesus is the **“Good Shepherd”** (John 10:11)
 - And because He is our **shepherd**, we **“shall not want”** (Psalm 23:1)
- In addition, He will **“lead them to living fountains of waters”**
 - Several Old Testament Scriptures refer to the Lord as a **“fountain of living water”**
 - **“For My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water.”** (Jer. 2:13)
- Then God will **“wipe away every tear from their eyes”**
 - In a **final act of mercy and grace**, God Himself will **take away the sorrows** that we accumulated **in the world** and we will **never grieve again**

Chapter 8-9: The Seventh Seal & The First Six Trumpet Judgments

After the opening of the first **six seals** in Chapter 6 and an **interlude** in Chapter 7 to **seal the 144,000**, attention now focuses on the **seventh seal**

- The **seventh seal** unleashes the **seven trumpet judgments**
 - The **first four** trumpet judgments affect the **natural world** (Chapter 8)
 - The **last three** trumpet judgments affect the **unredeemed** (Chapters 9-11)
- The **seven trumpet judgments** are reminiscent of the **plagues God poured out on Egypt** to induce the Pharaoh to **release the Israelite slaves** (see Exodus 7:14 – 12:30)
 - Except in this case, they do not **deliver** the **Israelites** but rather **rain down judgment** on them as well
- The **Dispensational** interpretation sees the **seven trumpet judgments** as the beginning of the **second half** (3.5 years) of the **Tribulation period**
 - These **seven trumpet judgments** are **more severe** in totality than the **seven seals**, but **not** as **completely devastating** as the **seven bowls** (or vials)

Read Revelation 8:1-6

v1: When **Jesus the Lamb** opens the **seventh seal**, all of **Heaven fall silent** in **awestruck anticipation**

- This is an **acknowledgment** of the **momentous occasion** of Jesus now being in **full possession** of the **title deed to earth**
 - The **dramatic pause** of **half-an-hour** could either mean literally **30 minutes** or symbolically a **brief, limited period of time**
- This period of **solemn expectation** of the **stupendous events to follow** is **foreshadowed** in Old Testament times when the **priest** went into the **holy place** in the **temple** to burn incense
 - All the people would then **remain in silent prayer** until the **priest** came back out

v2: The **seven angels** may be the **seven angels** to the churches or the **seven spirits** spoken of earlier in 1:4 and 3:1

- Some feel that these **seven angels** are those who **present the prayers of the saints** before the throne of God, as believed in the **intertestamental period**
 - Nonetheless, they are given **seven trumpets** with which to **announce** the **severe judgments** to come

vv3-4: Yet **another angel** then comes bearing a **golden censer** acting in the **role of priest** before the altar

- The **censer** was a **gold firepan** used to hold **live charcoal** for the burning of **incense** (Exodus 27)
 - It was most likely shaped as a **ladle or shovel** so that they could be **taken out of the fire** (Numbers 16:6, 17-19, 37-39, 46)
- The **censer** was used in the **purification rituals** on the **Day of Atonement** (Leviticus 16:12-14)
 - “It was the custom of the priest to **take fire from the great altar** in a silver censer, but on the **day of expiation** the high priest took the fire from the great altar in a **golden censer**; and when he was come down from the great altar, he **took incense** from one of the **priests**, who brought it to him, and went with it to the **golden altar**; and while he **offered the incense** the people **prayed** without in **silence**, which is the silence in heaven for half an hour.” See Sir Isaac Newton.

- This **angel** was given *“much incense”*
 - The **incense** was a **sweet-smelling substance** burned as an **offering to God** and was a **symbol** of the **Hebrew’s prayers**
- Now in **this instance**, the **incense** is **mixed** with the *“prayers of all the saints”* – including those **martyrs** who cried out in Rev. 6:9-10
 - These **prayers** are those for **protection, vindication** and the **salvation** of those **left behind** after the rapture
- The **angel** is not an **intermediary** – only **Jesus Christ** can fulfill that role
 - They are **messengers** – in this case, **gathering the prayers, mixing them with incense** so that they will **rise up to the throne**
 - *“Let my prayer be set before You as incense, the lifting of my hands as the evening sacrifice.”* (Psalm 141:2)

vv5-6: After the **incense and prayer ascended** before God, the angel *“took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar and threw it to the earth”*

- The **fire from the altar** represents the **judgments of God** that are about to **descend** upon the earth
 - This results in *“noises, thunderings, lightnings and an earthquake”* which **breaks the silence** both **on earth** (Rev. 7:1) and **in heaven** (Rev. 8:1)
- This also **signaled** the **seven angels** to **prepare** to blow their **trumpets**
 - The **temple priests** used **trumpets** to announce the **Day of Atonement** (Leviticus 25:9), which is a **solemn holy day** marked by **fasting and humiliation** (Leviticus 16)
- **Trumpets** were also employed in the **Feast of Trumpets** as part of the **Passover** celebration in which people were **punished for not participating**
 - This **foreshadows** the **rejection of Jesus Christ**, in which the **people remaining on the earth** will be **punished** for not participating in **His atonement** for our sins

Read Revelation 8:7-13

v7: First Trumpet – vegetation stricken

- When the trumpet sounded, **hail, fire and blood** were *“thrown to the earth”* consuming **one-third** of all the **trees** and **all the grass** (i.e. hay)
 - This is something like the **ninth plague** sent on Egypt: *“The Lord sent **thunder and hail and fire mingled with the hail...and the hail struck every herb of the field and broke every tree of the field. Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, there was no hail.**”* (Exodus 9:24-26)
 - Here **Goshen** represents the **saints** who have already been **raptured away to safety**
- Some see the **hail and fire mingled with blood** as **symbolizing gunpowder and cannon balls**, and **bombs** (i.e. war)
 - Why **one-third**? It is hypothesized that this is because the **Jews rejected Jesus**, who represents **one-third of the trinity**

vv8-9: Second Trumpet – seas stricken

- Most scholars see this **plague** as deriving from **widespread volcanic eruptions** which **pollute the seas** and kill **one-third of all sea creatures** as well as **destroy one-third of all ships**

- This is **akin** to the **first plague** sent on Egypt: *“Behold, I will **strike the waters** which are in the river with the **rod** that is in my hand, and they shall be **turned to blood**. And the **fish** that are in the river shall **die**.”* (Exodus 7:17-18)

vv10-11: Third Trumpet – waters stricken

- The **great star that falls from heaven** is widely considered to be an **asteroid** or **large meteor** (or a **meteor shower** since **one-third** of the **rivers and springs of water** are affected)
 - The **waters** referred to here are **fresh waters** as opposed to the **salty seas** stricken by the **second trumpet**, so this would like **affect our drinking water supplies**
- **Wormwood** is a **bitter herb** that is used in the Bible to symbolize the **tragic results of sin**, as prophesied by Jeremiah
 - *“And the LORD said, “Because they have **forsaken My law** which I set before them, and have **not obeyed My voice**, nor walked according to it, but they have walked according to the dictates of their own hearts and after the Baals, which their fathers taught them,” therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: “Behold, I will feed them, this people, with **wormwood**, and give them water of **gall** to drink.”* (Jeremiah 9:13-15)
- So here *“a third of the waters became wormwood and many men died from the water”*
 - This could also be referring to **man-made pollution** defiling our fresh water supplies

vv12-13: Fourth Trumpet – heavens stricken

- Now **one-third** of the heavens (i.e. sun, moon and stars) are **affected** – i.e. *“darkened”* – which could be caused by **the sun exploding** or the **formation of a nearby black hole**
 - In the **ninth plague** of Egypt, thick **darkness** covered the land for **three days** (Exodus 10:21-23) which **suggests** that in Revelation we have the **final exodus of God’s people**
- Then an **angel** flew through the *“midst of heaven”* crying *“woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth”*
 - The phrase, *“inhabitants of the earth”* usually refers to **unbelievers** or the **wicked** – *“Therefore the curse has devoured the earth, and those who dwell in it are desolate. Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men are left.”* (Isaiah 24:6)
- These **three woes** constitute the **final three trumpet judgments** which are to fall on the **unrighteous**, not on the **righteous** (Rev. 9:4)
 - The **seventh trumpet judgment** (or **third woe**) is comprised of the **seven bowls**, just as the **seventh seal** was comprised of the **seven trumpets**
 - They are called **woes** because they are **increasingly severe**
- The **first four trumpet judgments** were directed **toward the earth itself**
 - Now, the **final three trumpet judgments** are directed **toward the inhabitants of the earth**

Read Revelation 9:1-6

v1: When the **fifth trumpet sounds**, John sees a *“star fallen from heaven to earth”*

- This refers to an **angelic or demonic being** sent out on a **mission** to open the *“bottomless pit”* (i.e. hell) with a special *“key”*
 - The **bottomless pit** is literally translated *“the shaft of the abyss”* and is the **reservoir of evil**
 - Some say this **angelic being** is **Satan himself** -- *“I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.”* (Luke 10:18) while others say it is the **same angel** who later **binds Satan with a great chain** and casts him into the **Lake of Fire** (Rev. 20:1-3)

- There are actually **three different Greek words** that are translated into the **one English word** for “**hell**” – which gives rise to the notion that there are **three stages of hell**
 1. **Hades** (same as the Hebrew sheol) which is the place where the **dead** of both the **Old and New Testament** go if they have not **accepted God’s gift of redemption**. They are to be **held there** until the **Great White Throne Judgment** (Rev. 20:12).
 - This is a place of **torment** (Luke 16:28) into which **Jesus descended before ascending to heaven** to take back the **keys of hell** (Acts 2:24-27, Ephesians 4:8-10, 1Peter 3:18-20)
 2. **Tartaros** which is the **lowest abyss of Hades** where the **fallen angels reside** (2Peter 2:4). These **fallen angels or demons** were cast out **along with Satan** (Rev. 12:4, Jude 6)
 - This would be the **bottomless pit** where these **demons** are locked up **until presumably released** in this **first woe** (or **fifth trumpet**)
 - Some say that the **demons which plague us today** are the **spirit-flesh beings** that were **pro-created** by the **illicit union** of the “*sons of God*” with the beautiful “*daughters of men*” (Genesis 6:2-4) which become **disembodied spirits** ever searching for **new bodies to inhabit** when their **current host dies** as “*familiar spirits*”
 3. **Gehenna** or **Everlasting Hell** which will become the **eternal abode** of those dead who **have not accepted Christ as their Savior**
 - This will also be the **eternal dwelling place of Satan** and all his **fallen angels** after the **Great White Throne Judgment** (Rev. 20:11-15)
 - This **stage of hell** does **not yet exist**, but will **begin** when the **beast and false prophet** are cast into the **Lake of Fire**

v2: When the **angel opened the bottomless pit, smoke** arose which **darkened the sun and the air**

- This could refer to **another volcanic eruption** or **symbolize the effects of hordes of demons** since smoke is a **symbol of deception** or **false doctrine**

v3: Then **out of the smoke** came **locusts** with the **power of scorpions**

- These **locusts** are **foreshadowed** in the Biblical accounts of **locust plagues** in Egypt (Exodus 10:12) and in Israel (Joel 1:1-2:11)
 - However, **these locusts are symbolic** of a **plague of demons** from hell which are **intelligent beings** that can **take orders** (as in verse 4)
- They have the **power of scorpions** to **sting human beings** and deliver **excruciating pain**

v4: The **locusts** were **commanded** not to **harm vegetation** or those with the **seal of God on their foreheads**

- These would be either the **144,000 Jews** and/or those **saved during the tribulation**
 - The **locusts are under divine control** and only those with the **mark of the beast** are the **targets**

vv5-6: The **locusts** would be active for **five months** (or, symbolically, a **limited period of time** corresponding to the **life cycle of a locust**)

- Their purpose is to **torment, not kill**
 - However, the **pain and anguish** would be so **severe and frightening**, that people would **seek death** but not be able to find it – they will have the **desire** but apparently **not the means**

Read Revelation 9:7-12

v7: The description of the **locusts** is to be taken **symbolically, not literally**

- Notice how the descriptions are all **qualified** by phrases such as: “**were like... something like**”
 - What is clear, however, is that these are quite literally **demonic forces from hell** such as the world as ever seen
- The **general shape** of the locusts was “*like horses*”
 - Some say that locusts actually **resemble small horses** – in fact, the German word for locusts means “**hay horses**”
- This description is **very similar** to the **prophet Joel’s** apocalyptic vision:
 - Read Joel 2:4-11
- John goes on to say that these **horses** were “*prepared for battle*”
 - They were coming out of the **bottomless pit** to **war against humanity** – “*to hurt men*” (v10)
- On their heads were “*crowns something like gold*”
 - These are the **false, counterfeit crowns** of the devil that **don’t last** but which **deceive many**
- The “*faces like men*” implies that they have **human intelligence and cunning**

v8: John’s further describes the locusts as having “*hair like women’s hair*”

- Some commentators feel this means **unshaven and unkempt**
 - Others point out that **locust’s antennae** could be mistaken for **long hair**
- In addition, their teeth were like “*lion’s teeth*”
 - In other words, they are **ferocious, cruel and deadly**, akin to the description in 1Peter 5:8 – “*Your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour*”

v9: They also had “*breastplates of iron*”

- This is their **armor** – but note that the verse says “*like iron*” which is no match for **God’s armor**
- And, the **sound** of their **wings** was like “*many chariots with many horses*”
 - Those who have experienced an **actual invasion of locusts** say that the **noise is loud and dreadful** – something like a **tornado** or a **roaring freight train**

v10: The locusts also had “*tails like scorpions*” with “*stings in their tails*”

- **Scorpions** use their **tails** to **sting** the enemy – generally there is **not enough poison to kill** an adult
 - However, the **sting** would produce **great pain** and since there are **legions of locusts** we can see why “*men will seek death and will not find it*” (v6)
- According to the **Encarta Encyclopedia**, there are over **1400 species of scorpions** in the world
 - They are **nocturnal** (i.e. night) **creatures** which ties in with verse 2 which says that, “*the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the [bottomless] pit*”
- **Satan** does his work in the **dark** and in **secret**, but the **light of Jesus** shines away the darkness
 - “*For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*”
- As **born-again Christians**, we don’t have to be **afraid of scorpions** (natural or spiritual) because **Jesus Christ** has given us **power over them**

➤ *“Behold, I give you the **authority to trample on serpents and scorpions**, and over **all the power of the enemy**, and **nothing shall by any means hurt you.**” (Luke 10:19)*

- However, at this point **Christians, the Church and the Holy Spirit** have been **taken out of the world**, so this power is no longer available to **combat the scorpion-like locusts**

➤ So, verse 10 says that these **locusts** would *“hurt men five months”* – which is the **lifecycle of a locust**

v11: These **locusts** that were released from the **bottomless pit** had a leader who was *“king over them”*

- This “king” is described as *“**the angel of the bottomless pit**”* who is further identified with the names *“**Abaddon**”* (Hebrew) and *“**Apollyon**”* (Greek) which are both **names of Satan**
 - *“**Abaddon**”* literally means **“destruction”** – *“**Sheol is naked before Him, and Destruction (Abaddon) has no covering.**”* (Job 26:6)
 - *“**Apollyon**”* literally means **“destroyer”** – *“**Nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; ¹⁰nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer (Apollyon).**”* (1Corinthians 10:10)
- However, **Satan** has been **loose in the world** and has not been **locked up in the bottomless pit**
 - So this **particular angel** (i.e. a **fallen angel** or demon) has been **given charge by Satan** over this particular army that has **just been released**

v12: Now John reports that *“one woe is past... still two more woes are coming”*

- These **three woes** correspond to the sounding of the **last three** of the **seven trumpet plagues**, which are **much more dreadful** than the **first four trumpets**

Read Revelation 9:13-21

v13: When the **sixth angel** sounded the trumpet for the **second woe**, John heard a voice *“from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God”*

- In the Old Testament **temple**, the **horns** were **projections** at the four corners of the altar (Exodus 27:2) which were **grasped** by those **seeking mercy** (1Kings 1:50-51)
 - It is this **brazen altar** where **blood sacrifices** were made for the **remission of sins**, reminding us here that **the shedding of blood** is required for **God’s perfect justice** over those who **refuse the substitutionary blood of Jesus Christ**

v14: This voice of **God** says to the **sixth angel** to *“release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates”*

- These **four angels** are said to be those in **charge of the four demonic horsemen**
 - That they were **bound** shows that **God is still in control** of what happens here on earth
- The **river Euphrates** is the **longest river in western Asia** (about 1700 miles long)
 - It has **traditionally** been the **boundary** between **Israel** and her **enemies** (e.g. Assyria, Babylon and the Roman Empire)
 - And, **traditionally**, it has been seen as a **symbolic restraint** against the **forces of evil**
- **Babylon** was built on the **edge of the Euphrates**, so this is also **symbolic for Babylon** which plays a **great role** in the **end-times scenario** (see Rev. 14:8, 16:19, 17:5, 18:2, 18:10, 18:21)
 - Originating way back with **Babel**, the **Babylonian empire** has gone through **many stages** and in the **Tribulation period** it represents **the gathering together** of the **forces of evil** in that **general staging area**

v15: Notice that this verse says the **four angels** had been “*prepared*” for a **precise moment in time**

- **God** is acting on a **specific timetable** that only **He has known** since **before time began**
 - Jesus said: “*But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.*” (Mark 13:32)
- These **four demonic angels** were now released with the specific job “*to kill a third of mankind*”
 - Some commentaries say that **this particular event** literally is a time period equivalent to **one year, one month, one day and one hour** (i.e. 1.086 years or 13.04 months)

v16: The **army** that these **four angels** are in charge of is said to number **two hundred million**

- This may be simply a **symbolic number** to indicate an **incalculable** number of this **demonic calvary**
 - There is some **disagreement** among scholars as to whether this is an army of **real men** or a **spiritual army** (see Rev. 12:7)
- However, the fact that **a third of mankind** is destroyed suggest two things: 1) the **war** is in the **natural**; 2) if a **third** of mankind is to be destroyed, the war must be **worldwide**
 - If it is **worldwide**, this might mean the **use of nuclear missiles**
- It is said that this **vast army** comes from the **north and east** as prophesied by Ezekiel (38:2-6,15)
 - “*Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him, and say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “Behold, I am against you, O Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal. I will turn you around, put hooks into your jaws, and lead you out, with all your army, horses, and horsemen, all splendidly clothed, a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords. Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya are with them, all of them with shield and helmet; Gomer and all its troops; the house of Togarmah from the far north and all its troops—many people are with you... Then you will come from your place out of the far north, you and many peoples with you, all of them riding on horses, a great company and a mighty army.*”
- There are some who have done **extensive research** on these **olden names** to show that these refer to Russia, Middle East, China, etc.
 - **Gog and Magog** are also mentioned in Rev. 20:8 where they are said to **deceive** the “*four corners of the earth*”
- This army is seen as **gathering** for the final **Battle of Armageddon** (Rev. 16:12-16)
 - **Armageddon** means the “**Mount of Megiddo**” in Israel’s Plain of Esdraelon

v17: These **horses** are different than those of the **second woe**: they had “*heads of lions and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and brimstone*”

- John, of course, is trying to describe something for which he had **no context** and so is speaking **allegorically**
 - Some commentators (including Rev. George Cox) believe that these speak of **modern-day tanks** with their **turrets** spitting out **fire and smoke**
- **Brimstone** is an **inflammable mineral substance** found on the shores of the **Dead Sea**
 - **Fire and brimstone** rained down and destroyed **Sodom and Gomorrah** (19:25) and is best translated as “**burning pitch**” (a black sticky substance formed from coal tar)
 - Isaiah 34:8-10 also refers to **brimstone** to indicate great **destruction and devastation** in the end-times

- And later in Revelation, **brimstone** is also used to express the idea of **excruciating torment** (Rev. 14:10, 19:20, 20:10) in which the **Lake of Fire** burns also with **brimstone**
- Those who **sat on the horses** had *“breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue and sulfur yellow”*
 - The **red** represents the **fire** portion of the **fire, smoke and brimstone**
 - The **sulfur yellow** is translated from a word implying **brimstone**
 - There **doesn’t** seem to be any **firm idea** what the **blue** represents, with the Greek word meaning the **hyacinth or jacinth flowers** which are a deep blue

vv18-19: These verse reiterates that a **third of mankind** will be killed by the **fire, smoke and brimstone** that comes out of their **mouths**

- But it also adds that the **“horses”** have **tails like serpents** that have **heads** that can **do harm**
 - Many commentators believe that here the **tail** is the **breech** of a **cannon** where the **projectile or missile** is loaded

vv20-21: Unbelievably, the **remaining two-thirds of mankind** did *“not repent”* despite the tremendous – and well prophesied – **plagues**

- Just as they **acknowledged God’s “Day of Wrath”** in verses 6:15-16 but **prayed to nature** instead, here too **hearts are hardened** and refuse God’s **continuing offer of repentance and salvation**
 - These two references **strongly suggest** that **no one gets saved** in the **second half** of the **Great Tribulation** (i.e. the last 3.5 years)
- If the **Rapture** takes place at this **mid-point**, then **no one is saved after the Rapture**
- If the **Rapture** takes place at the **beginning of the 7-year tribulation period**, then some are **saved during the first 3.5 years**
 - This would account for the **144,000 Jews** (Chapter 7) and the **martyrs** (chapter 6:9-11)
- At this point, the **devil and his demons** are in **such control** that they **continue to deceive** everyone into thinking that they are **the protectors** of those being **attacked by evil**
 - And so people continue to *“worship demons and idols”* and continue in the **lusts of the flesh** (i.e. murders, sorceries, sexual immorality, thefts)
- Of course, this is all possible because there is **no presence of the Holy Spirit in the world**
 - *“He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. ⁸And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. ⁹The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, ¹⁰and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. ¹¹And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, ¹²that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”* (2Thessalonians 2:7-12)
- At some point, **God draws a line in the sands of time** and says **no more chances**
 - *“And the LORD said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh”* (Genesis 6:3)

Chapter 10: The Mighty Angel and the Little Book

Chapters 10 & 11 appear to be **out of chronological sequence** and are also the **most difficult to interpret** – and, therefore, have the most **widely divergent interpretations** of all of Revelation.

Read Revelation 10:1-7

v1: “*Another mighty angel*” is similar in appearance to the “*One like the Son of Man*” in Rev. 1:13-16

- Some say this is **Christ Himself** and this is His **Second Coming**
 - Many times in the Old Testament, an “*angel of the Lord*” is believed to have been a **pre-incarnation visitation by Christ Himself**
 - However, the **context** and **placement** of this chapter (i.e. in the order that it was **given to John**) suggest that this is the **Lord’s representative**, and not the Lord Himself
- This mighty angel is “*clothed with a cloud*” with a “*rainbow was on his head*” and a “*face like the sun*” and “*feet like pillars of fire*”
 - The **rainbow** is the symbol of **God’s promise to never again destroy the world in a flood** (Genesis 9:8-17) and a symbol of **God’s mercy**
 - The “*face like the sun*” does indeed suggest the Lord Jesus who is **depicted as the sun** in many Scriptural references (see Rev. 21:23)
- The “*cloud*” and the “*pillars of fire*” are suggestive of the way in which the **Lord led the Israelites through the wilderness**
 - “*And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light.*” (Exodus 13:21)

v2a: This mighty angel had a “*little book*” (KJV, NKJ) or “*little scroll*” (NIV) in his hand

- Those who think this angel is indeed the **Lord Jesus**, maintain that this “*little scroll*” is the same as the **scroll** which the **Lamb** was found **worthy to open** (Chapter 5)
 - There were **two slightly different Greek words** used here (“*biblion*” for the **full scroll** and “*bibliaridion*” for the **little scroll**)
 - It is possible that this scroll **appeared so much smaller** because the angel was **so large**
- However, Jesus was **not** about to have His “*title deed*” **eaten** by John – that serves **no purpose** either **symbolically or literally**
 - Instead, this **book** is more **reminiscent** of the book that **Daniel** was told to “*seal... until the end of time*” (Daniel 12:4)
 - Here **John too** (verse 4) is told to “*seal up*” whatever **mysteries** remain in this **little book** although it is **now open**

vv2b-3 : This verse also goes on to say that the **mighty angel** put his “*right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land*”

- This would take **tremendous size** and **symbolizes** that this has to do with the **destiny of all creation**
 - As the angel stood **astride the world**, he **cried out** in a **loud voice** like a **roaring lion**
 - **Jesus** is called the “*lion of the tribe of Judah*” in Revelation 5:5 which some feel is a **further indication** that the angel is **Christ Jesus Himself**
- In addition, we’re told that “*seven thunders uttered their voices*” as well

- **Thunder** is used to symbolize the **voice of God** and the **number seven** is indicative of **divine completion in the world**
- **Thunder** is also symbolic of **divine punishment** (e.g. when **Moses** stretched his rod toward Heaven to **proclaim** the **seventh plague on Egypt** in Exodus 9:23-34)
- This mighty angel could also be **Michael** as alluded to in Daniel 12:1
 - *“At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation.”*

v4: What these **seven thunderous voices uttered**, however, will **remain a mystery** until their **actual fulfillment** since here John is told to *“seal up... and do not write”* what was said

- So, while the **Book of Revelation** is an **“unveiling”** to an extent, it is still **not the whole story**
 - *“For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away”* (1Corinthians 13:9-10)
- Those who see this **scenario** as a **picture of the Second Coming** see these **utterances** as what **Christ will speak** after the **battle of Armageddon**

vv5-6: Now the angel *“raised up his hand to heaven”* and *“swore by Him who lives forever”*

- The subsequent **description of “Him”** makes it clear the angel **speaks of God**
 - What he **swears** is that there should be **“delay no longer”** – i.e. no more **waiting** for the **fulfillment** of God’s plan
 - This is perhaps **God’s answer** to the **martyrs** of Chapter 6:9-11 who cried out *“How long, O Lord... until You judge and avenge our blood”*
- Others interpret this as *“there should be time no longer”* (KJV) meaning that this represents **the end of time itself**
 - But it would seem that **time continues** after the **Great Tribulation** and the **Second Coming** because **Christ** is going to *“reign a thousand years”* afterwards

v7: We are told in this verse that when the **seventh angel** sounds the **seventh trumpet**, the *“mystery of God would be finished”*

- Furthermore, this **“mystery”** is said to that which God *“declared to His servants the prophets”*
 - But, since these **mysteries** were **spoken in symbolism**, the **exact meaning remains unclear** until the **time of the end**
- This **correlates** with **Daniel’s vision of seventy weeks** after which **God’s purposes are fulfilled** with respect to **Israel and Jerusalem**
 - *“Seventy weeks are determined for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end to sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.”* (Daniel 9:24-25)
 - Even though **Israel** is promised **deliverance**, she must still **experience judgment and suffering**

Read Revelation 10:8-11

v8: The *“voice from heaven”* (i.e. the *“seven thunders”*) now tells John to go and *“take the little book”* from the hands of the angel who remains **standing on the sea and earth**

- Some interpreters say this **little book** is the **word** that the **two witnesses are to proclaim** in Chapter 11, about which John must *“prophesy again”* (verse 11)

- It is also possible that the **little book** contains what **John** reveals in **Chapters 12-22**
- However, in verse 4 John is told to “*seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered,*” so these must refer to **other mysteries** to be **fully disclosed** at the time of the **Second Coming**

vv9-10: When John goes to the angel and asks for the book, the angel tells him to “*take and eat it*”

- This might be so that these **words** and the **vision** itself become **part of John’s very constitution**, fully **digested** and **grasped from the heart and soul**, not just **via the senses of sight and sound**
 - To “*eat a book*” was a **metaphor** at that time for “**fully consuming**” the contents
 - This is similar to the **instructions given to Ezekiel** who was told to “*eat his scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.*”
- Then the angel tells John that the book will “*make you stomach bitter*” but it will be “*sweet as honey in your mouth*”
 - This might refer to the **grace, love and mercy of the Second Coming** (sweet) which also represents **judgment on those who refuse to accept Him** (bitter)
 - The **gospel message** is always **sweet and bitter** depending on whether one **receives it or not**

v11: After John **ate the book**, the angel said to him, “*You must prophesy again*”

- Some say this refers to the **visions and prophecies** written by John in **Chapters 12-22** following the sounding of the **seventh trumpet**
 - The reference to “*many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings*” is similar to that in Rev. 7:9 who are identified as the “*multitude of all nations, tribes, peoples and tongues*” who had “*come out of the great tribulation*”
 - Perhaps these words are **prophesied and written** so that **some will understand** what’s going on during the **great tribulation** despite the **absence of the Holy Spirit and the Church**

Chapter 11: The Two Witnesses

Perhaps the **greatest diversity of opinion** occurs over the **identity of the two witnesses**:

Read Revelation 11:1-6

v1: First John is “*given a reed like a measuring rod*” or reed (a **bamboo-like cane** that often grows to 20 feet in height and grew in abundance along the river Jordan) – it was **straight and light**

- There are a lot of **parallels** in Revelation to **Ezekiel** and this is another one
 - In Ezekiel 40:5, he sees a vision of a “*measuring reed six cubits long*” with which to measure the **temple of God** (i.e. the one in the **new city** called, “*The Lord Is There*” Ezek. 48:35)
- Here, John was told to “*measure the temple of God, the altar and those who worship there*”
 - Some say this refers to the **body of Christ** now in Heaven
 - Others say this is the **temple in Jerusalem** that the **Jews must soon build** prior to the **Second Coming of Christ**

v2: John is told to **only measure the altar** (i.e. the **most holy** place) and **not** “*the court which is outside the temple*”

- The reason given is that the “*Gentiles... will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months*” (i.e. 3.5 years)

- The **Dispensational Interpretation** says that the **Jews will rebuild the temple** during the first 3.5 years of the **tribulation period** and will **re-institute sacrificial worship**
- However, the **outer courts** will still be in control of the **Gentiles** (i.e. the **New World Order**) who will have made a **“covenant with many”** (Daniel 9:27)
- Then the **“from the time the daily sacrifice is taken away and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days”** (i.e. 3.5 years, the second half of the **Great Tribulation** – Daniel 12:11)
- Other interpretations say this refers back to the **three-plus years of tribulation** suffered by the Jews under **Antiochus Epiphanes** from **168 to 165 BC**

v3: Now the angel tells John that Jesus will **“give power to my two witnesses”**

- Some say that these will be **two actual people** who will **testify of God** during the **Tribulation**
- Others say this refers to **Zerubbabel and Joshua** (see Zechariah 4:7-14), or to **Elijah and Moses** (as powerful witnesses) as well as **Enoch and Elijah** (since neither died but were swept up into heaven)
- Still others say these **represent the two covenants** (Old and New Testaments)
- And some say these are **symbolic** of the **witnessing church, especially amid tribulation and persecution** – assuming the Church is still around
 - Regardless, these **two witnesses** are to **“prophecy one thousand two hundred and sixty days”** or 3.5 years, equivalent to the **second half** of the **Great Tribulation period**
 - And they shall do so in **“sack cloth”** which means they are **in mourning** over what is happening and **calling for repentance**

v4: Now the **two witnesses** are likened to **“two olive trees and two lampstands standing before God”**

Read Zechariah 4:1-14

- The **two olive trees** or the **two anointed ones** are said to represent **Joshua** (religious authority) and **Zerubbabel** (civil authority)
 - As such, they are **archetypes** of the **two witnesses** here in Revelation
 - Olive trees **produce the oil** (Holy Spirit) that keeps the **lampstands burning bright** (i.e. giving **strong testimony of the gospel**)
- Another viewpoint is taken from Romans 11:7 which talks of **Gentiles** being **grafted onto the Olive tree** that represents the **Jews**
 - Thus, some conclude this means **both Jew and Gentile** will witness – or, that **one of the witnesses is a Jew** and the **other a Gentile**

v5: In this verse we see some of the **power** that is given to the **two witnesses**

- If anyone tries to **harm them**, then **“fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies”**
 - Of course this is **symbolic**, but nonetheless, however it is accomplished, the **enemies are killed**
- This might happen as with **Elijah** when he **called down fire from heaven** to **consume** the captain and his fifty men who had been sent by **Ahab** to arrest him (2Kings 1:10)
 - Which is why some think that one of the two witnesses **is Elijah**

v6: In addition, the **two witnesses** have the power to **“shut heaven so that no rain falls”**

- This again is **reminiscent of Elijah** when he **prayed for drought** and then **prayed for rain** (1Kings 17-18)
- Furthermore, the **two witnesses** can **turn waters to blood** and **strike the earth with all plagues** which is **reminiscent of Moses** when he sought to **convince pharaoh** to *“let my people go”* (Exodus 7:19-20)
 - However, the Old Testament often presents **archetypes** that **foreshadow** New Testament **events and persons**

Read Revelation 11:7-13

v7: When the **two witnesses** *“finish their testimony”* the **beast** from the **bottomless pit** comes to *“make war against them, overcome them and kill them”*

- This is the **first mention** in Revelation of the **beast**
 - It is not until **Chapter 13** that the **beast** is **fully addressed**
 - The **accounts** of the **two witnesses** as well as of the **beast** are **not in chronological order**
- Some commentators say that the phrase, *“make war”* is not appropriate toward just **two individuals**, so that this must mean against the **entire church**
 - However, if this occurs in the **second half of the tribulation period**, then the **Church** has presumably been **raptured away** by this time
- Nevertheless, the **two witnesses** are eventually **killed**
 - But only after they have **finished their job** – i.e. finished **testifying of Jesus Christ**

v8: The **bodies** of the **two witnesses** will be left **lying in the streets**

- In Middle Eastern culture, this is the **very worst indignity** that can be **perpetrated on anyone**
 - The Greek word used here for *“dead bodies”* is a singular word (used twice) which some use to **justify their position** that the **two witnesses** are **not two actual people**
 - However, it is hard to **imagine** how this can be **fulfilled symbolically** by other than **two real people** – unless it refers to when **millions of bodies lay scattered around Israel**
- The **dead bodies** will lie in the *“great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt where also our Lord was crucified”*
 - This too creates **diversity of opinion** between being **Jerusalem** (literally) and a **symbolic city**
- **Sodom** symbolizes **immorality** (some say modern Rome) while **Egypt** (some say Babylon) symbolizes **political oppression**
 - Some say the Lord was **symbolically crucified in Rome** but that seems a **stretch**
 - It would appear **more likely** that **Jerusalem is referenced** which by this time has been **overrun by Gentiles under control of the beast**

vv9-10: The **dead bodies** will be left in the streets for **three-and-a-half days** (literally or representing a relatively short period of time)

- People of **all nationalities** (peoples, tribes, tongues and nations) will **see the bodies** (e.g. via **satellite TV**)
 - And, they will all *“rejoice”* about the death of the **two witnesses**, to the extent of declaring it a **holiday** along with the **giving of gifts** (e.g. the *“days of Noah”* referenced by the Lord in Matthew 24:37)

- **Why?** Because these *“two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth”*
 - This is a reference to the **great powers** they had to **control the weather** and **inflict plagues** upon the earth

v11: After the **3.5 days**, God **breathed life back into them** (as at the **creation** and in Ezekiel 37’s **dry bones**)

- The **two witnesses** were **resurrected** and *“stood on their feet”*
 - This, of course, brought **great fear** upon those who had been **rejoicing over their death**

v12: The a *“loud voice from heaven”* calls out to them to, *“Come up here”*

- And they are **seen ascending** *“to heaven in a cloud”*
 - Those who see the **two witnesses** as the **witnessing church** believe that this represents the **rap-ture**
 - However, the *“catching away of the saints”* is done in a *“twinkling of an eye”* (1Cor. 15:52) and would appear to be a **separate event**

v13: In that **same hour**, another **great earthquake** strikes and a *“tenth of the city fell”*

- This earthquake would appear to be **localized in Jerusalem**
 - **Seven thousand were killed** – and the rest were *“afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven”*
- However, this is **not repentance** and **not salvation** similar to the **world’s response** to the **great upheaval** of the **sixth seal** (Rev. 6:12-17)
 - They **acknowledge God** but apparently **view Him as their tormentor, not their savior**

Read Revelation 11:14-19

vv14-15: This marked the end of the **second woe**, with the **third woe** *“coming quickly”*

- And, as if to **symbolize the quickness**, the **seventh angel** sounds the **seventh trumpet** in the very next verse
 - Again, *“loud voices from heaven”* were heard proclaiming that the *“kingdoms of this world”* now belong to the **Lord Jesus Christ** who will **reign forever**
- This sounds as if the **Second Coming comes now** – however, we still have the **seven bowls** (or vials) to go

vv16-18: The **twenty-four elders** now **fall on their faces** again and **worship God**

- This **chorale** speaks of the **Lord’s coming wrath** against the **angry nations**
 - And it speaks of the **rewards for the saints** and the **destruction of those who “destroy the earth”**
 - It also speaks of **judging the dead** which is **carried out in Rev 20:11-15**

v19: The **temple of God** is now *“opened in heaven”* and the *“ark of His covenant was seen”*

- This is the **ark** of acacia wood that **symbolizes the presence of God among His people** (in the Old Testament) and **God’s faithfulness in keeping His covenant** (in the New Testament)
 - It was most likely **destroyed by the Babylonians** – but, of course, God can **reconstruct anything at any time**
 - Some say it is **buried and hidden** under the **Dome of the Rock** in **Jerusalem**

Chapter 12: The Woman, the Child, and the Dragon

In this chapter, we see the **spiritual reality** behind both the **historical and end-time events** that span the entire **Church age**

- These **spiritual “events”** are pictured **symbolically** and **explain** the **struggle for ultimate control** of earth and its **inhabitants**
- This **battle** is not between **nations or peoples**, but rather between the **spiritual forces of good and evil**
- *“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against **principalities**, against **powers**, against the **rulers of the darkness of this age**, against **spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.**”* (Ephesians 6:12)
- And what is the **object of this war?** The **souls of all human beings!**
- **Satan** seeks to **capture** as many **souls** as possible to **join him in Hell** for all eternity

Read Revelation 12:1-6

v1: *“A great sign”* indicates that it **points toward** an **extremely significant reality**

- The **sign** is a **“woman”** which symbolizes **God’s people** – the **faithful remnant** of Old Testament **Israel** through whom the **Messiah** came forth
- So the **woman** represents **both** **Israel** and the **Church** – the true **Bride of Christ**
 - *“Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the **marriage of the Lamb** has come, and **His wife** has made herself ready.”* (Rev. 19:7)
- Others claim the **woman** is the **Virgin Mary** or **just the Church**
- But the **Church** did not give **birth to Christ**, but rather **Christ gave birth to the Church**
- And there are **too many supernatural events** that happen to the **woman**, so that it **cannot represent an individual**
- The **Great Tribulation** primarily concerns the **remaining Jews in Israel** who are given **one last chance to accept Christ** before He comes in judgment
- For the **Church** and the **dead in Christ** are **raptured** out of this world **prior God’s Wrath**

The woman is *“clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet”*

- The **sun** is the **greater light** (i.e. **Jesus Christ**) while the **moon** is the **lesser light** (i.e. the **Jewish dispensation**)
- The **sun** now rules over the **moon**, which gets its light **from the sun** -- at the **rising of the sun** the **night ends** and the **moon** no longer is **needed**
- Thus, the **woman** now **stands on the foundation** of the **Old Covenant** even as she is **now clothed** with the **New Covenant**
- On her head, the woman wears a *“garland of twelve stars”*
- The **twelve stars** represent the **twelve tribes of Israel** as well as the **twelve apostles** who have now **overshadowed the patriarchs** even as the **sun** (Christ) has overshadowed the **moon** (Israel)

v2: The woman was *“with child”*

- Even **before** the **First Coming** of the **Lord Jesus Christ**, the **woman** (i.e. Israel) was **pregnant** with the **redemptive plan of God** which was **enacted through Christ**
- For Christ is, *“the **Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.**”* (Rev. 13:8)

- The woman “*cries out in labor and in pain to give birth*”
 - The **nation of Israel** was constantly being **attacked by pagan nations** as well as being **riddled from sin within**
 - But out of this **pain and travail** sprang forth her **deliverer**
 - “*Be in pain and labor to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in birth pangs.*” (Micah 4:10)
 - This also is **accomplished in accordance** with the **curse of childbirth** that was **declared by God** against **Eve** after the **fall** in the **Garden of Eden**
 - *To the woman He said: “I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children.”* (Genesis 3:16)

v3: Even as the woman was with child, “*another sign appeared in heaven*”

- This was the “*great fiery red dragon*” – **red** symbolizing **danger and bloodshed**
 - This, of course, represents **Satan** – that “*serpent of old, called the Devil*” (v9)
- The **dragon** is seen as having “*seven heads and ten horns and seven diadems*”
 - The explanation of the **seven heads** is given in Rev. 17:9-10 – “*The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits. There are also seven Kings.*”
- **Seven** represents **divine completion on earth** – in this case, by the **counterfeit, unholy trinity** of **Satan** (a counterfeit God), the **beast or Antichrist** (a counterfeit Christ), and the **false prophet** (a counterfeit Holy Spirit).
 - The **heads** adorned by **diadems** (i.e. crowns) represent **rulership or authority over nations** (some think the **seven mountains** of 17:10 represents the **seven hills of Rome** and, therefore, the reconstituted **Roman Empire** taking over the world again)
- We are further told in Rev. 17:10 that of these **seven empires** “*five have fallen, one is and the other has not yet come*”
 - Thus, these **seven heads** represent a **succession** of world **empires** – and, in 90 A.D. the **sixth** one currently in power is the **Roman Empire**
- The **ten horns** represent **ten powers or kings** that will **serve under** the **seventh and final empire**
 - This will be the **reconstituted Roman Empire** probably growing out of the **current European Union** into the so-called **One-World Order** being promulgated by the **United Nations**

v4: In this verse we’re told that **Satan’s** “*tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth.*”

- In the Book of Revelation, **stars represent angels** (see Rev. 1:20)
 - So, when **Satan** fell like “*lightning from heaven*” (Luke 10:18), he took **one-third of the angels** with him
- Satan used his **tail** (as of a **dragon**) to **pull along the angels**
 - The **tail** of a dragon can **stun and displace** but not kill – out of his **mouth** comes the **fire that kills**
- That’s why, thousands of years later, the **dragon** stood with his **head** “*before the woman*” ready to “*devour her Child as soon as it was born*”
 - The **Child**, of course, is the **Messiah** sent to **take the world back** from **Satan** who had gained **legal rights of ownership** through the **fall of Adam & Eve**

v5: This verse quickly summarizes **Christ birth** as the “*male Child who was to rule all the nations*” and His **resurrection** – i.e. “*caught up to God and His throne*”

- This **Child** came into the world with **one sole purpose** – to eventually take **complete control** over the earth and **rule** “*with a rod of iron*”
 - This refers back to Rev. 2:27 which quotes Psalm 2:9, saying: “*He shall rule them with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels.*”
- This **rod** is a symbol of **firm authority** but not **tyranny** – i.e. **tough love** as a **benevolent dictator**
 - Because **ultimately** it is **good** to be **ruled** by such a **shepherd** whose “*rod and staff comfort me*” (Psalm 23:4)

v6: After Christ was resurrected into Heaven, the **woman** “*fled into the wilderness*”

- At this point, the **woman** represents the **converted Jews** of the first century, the **remnant** that would ultimately comprise the **Church**
 - The **wilderness** represents the **spiritual darkness and barrenness of the world** in which the **devil persecutes Jews & Christians**
- But the **woman** (the Church) was **not left alone nor unprotected**, for God the Father had **prepared a place for her**
 - Just as God **cared for and preserved** the children of **Israel** in their journey through the **desert**, so too has **Jesus nurtured and preserved** the Church
 - “*On this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.*” (Matthew 16:18)
 - And, as the children of **Israel** had the “*pillar of cloud... and a pillar of fire*” to lead them through their **wilderness**, so too do we have the **Holy Spirit** to lead and guide us
 - “*Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.*” (John 16:7)
- This verse then says that the **woman** will be **fed there** for “*one thousand two hundred and sixty days*”
 - This is equivalent to **3.5 years** – or, **one half** of the **7-year tribulation period** (i.e. Daniel’s **70th week**)
- So now, with the **Church raptured away**, the woman, in her old age, **reverts back** to representing the **children of Israel** who remain
 - During the **first 3.5 years** of the **tribulation period**, there has been **relative peace** in Israel because of the “*covenant with many*” (Daniel 9:27a) under the leadership of the **supposed “man of peace”** – i.e. the **beast**, or the **Antichrist**
- However, we’re told that “*in the middle of the week*” the **Antichrist** will “*bring an end to sacrifice and offering, and on the wings of abomination shall be one who makes desolate*” (Daniel 9:27b)
 - This is further explained in Matthew 24:15-16 in which Jesus says, “*Therefore, when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place... then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains*”
- So we see here in verse 6 that **even in the midst of the Great Tribulation period** (the second 3.5 years), **God** still has his hand on the **children of Israel**
 - They are given this **one last chance to accept salvation through Jesus Christ** – and, from Revelation chapter 7 we saw that **144,000** (perhaps a **symbolic number**) do so

Read Revelation 12:7-12

v7: Now we find out a little more about the **war** that *“broke out in heaven”*

- Prior to **Satan** being **cast down to the earth**, he and his **fallen angels** fought with **Michael and his angels**
 - **Michael**, according to **Judaic tradition**, is one of **seven archangels** and the **guardian champion of Israel** (see Daniel 12:1)
- This **war** has been **continuing** in the **“atmospheric heaven”** -- not the **“third heaven”** where God resides, but in the **“spiritual realm”**
 - For example, we see **Michael** warring against the **“prince of Persia”** in Daniel 10:13

vv8-9: However, here we see that **Satan** and his fallen angels **lost the war** in the **third heaven**

- They **“did not prevail”** and, as a result, were **banished from heaven**
 - *“And the **angels** who did not keep their **proper domain**, but left their own abode, He has reserved in **everlasting chains under darkness** for the **judgment** of the great day.”* (Jude 1:6)
- In verse 9, we learn the **primary weapon of Satan**
 - He **“rules”** over earth as the **“prince of the power of the air”** (Ephesians 2:2) through **deception** which fools the **“whole world”**

v10: Next, John hears a **“loud voice saying in heaven, Now salvation... and the power of His Christ have come”**

- **“Now”** refers back to verse 5 where **Christ** is born into the world to ultimately **declare on the cross, “It is finished”**
 - Although time and life continue on for awhile, **Satan’s defeat at the cross** meant the **spiritual war on earth** was **essentially over**
 - Time is only given so that **every inhabitant of the earth** is given a **second chance** to **choose eternal life through Christ Jesus**
- Here we also learn **another characteristic of Satan**
 - He is call the **“accuser of our brethren who accused them before our God day and night”**
 - In fact, the name **“Satan”** actually means **“accuser”**
- We see this in action with **Job**, a righteous man who **God** nonetheless **allowed Satan to persecute** as a **test** to see if he would **“curse God”** (Job 1:6-2:10)
 - Likewise, Jesus told **Peter** that God was going to **allow Satan to “sift him as wheat”** (Luke 22:31)
- Satan is **constantly accusing us before God** – but now, unlike Job or Peter, we have an **intermediary in heaven – Jesus Christ**
 - *“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all.”* (1Timothy 2:5)

v11: Here we have the **great prescription for success**

- We can **overcome the devil** by:
 1. The **“blood of the Lamb”** – **Jesus did the work**, now all we have to do is **accept this free gift**
 2. The **“word of their testimony”** – we must **publicly confess our faith** and keep our **testimony pure and holy**

3. And, we must not *“love our lives to the death”* – i.e. we must be **prepared to die for our faith**
- If we do these three things, then we are **guaranteed to overcome the devil and the world**
 - The **corollary** to this **prescription** is: *“Submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee”* (James 4:7)

v12: Therefore, because of **Christ’s victory – and ours in His** – the heavens **rejoice**

- But, *“woe to the inhabitants of the earth”* who do not **appropriate Christ’s victory**
 - For the **devil** continues to **prowl like a “roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour”** (1Peter 5:8), having *“great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time”*
 - This is especially true during the **end-times** as his **sense of urgency increases**

Read Revelation 12:13-17

v13: Now we learn a little more about the **persecution of Jews & Christians** by the **devil**

- When **Satan** (the dragon) realized that he had been **forever banished from heaven** and had been **defeated on earth by Jesus**, he *“persecuted the woman”*
 - And thus has the **devil** continued to **persecute Israel** in Old Testament times as well as the **Church** in New Testament times

v14: But the *“woman was given two wings of a great eagle”*

- This was **evidenced** in the **Lord’s rescue of Israel from the Pharaoh**
 - *“You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself. ⁵Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a **special treasure** to Me above all people.”* (Exodus 19:4-5)
- This **prototype** is **indicative** of how God has **preserved His special people** throughout the ages
 - The verse again refers to that **place in the wilderness** that the Lord has **prepared** (verse 6) where the **woman** (first Israel, then the Church) is **nourished** (i.e. protected and preserved)
- Reference is again made to a **3.5 year period** using the terminology in **Daniel’s vision of the seventy weeks**
 - Symbolically, this refers to **all of time** where the Lord has **preserved His people**
 - Prophetically, it refers to the **second half of the Tribulation**
- In the **second half** of the **Great Tribulation**, we have seen that the **Jews flee into the mountains** -- but we learn in **Zechariah** that only **one-third** of the Jews are **saved**
 - *“And it shall come to pass in all the land,” says the LORD, “That **two-thirds** in it shall be cut off and die, but **one-third shall be left** in it: I will bring the one-third **through the fire**, will refine them as silver is refined, and **test** them as gold is tested. They will **call on My name**, and I will answer them. I will say, *‘This is My people’*; and each one will say, *‘The LORD is my God.’*” (Zechariah 13:8-9)*

v15: Because Satan was **infuriated by God’s protection of His people**, the devil *“spewed water out of his mouth like a flood”*

- We learn in Rev. 17:15 that, *“The waters which you saw, where the **harlot** sits, are **peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues.**”*
 - These **waters** then represent all of the **barbarous nations** and **heathenistic peoples** (including today’s **secular humanists**) who are the **devil’s deceived tools** in **conquering the earth**

v16: However, we learn in this verse that *“the earth helped the woman”*

- The **earth** is, of course, under the **Lord’s dominion** – *“Thus says the LORD: **“Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool.”*** (Isaiah 66:1)
 - So, when the *“earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood”* this was an **act of God**
- The **example and prototype** of this action is seen in Numbers 16:30-33 where those who had **rebelled against Moses were swallowed up by the earth**
 - *“Now it came to pass, as he [Moses] finished speaking all these words, that the **ground split apart under them and the earth swallowed them up.**”* (Numbers 16:31-32)

v17: The **dragon** was so *“enraged with the woman”* that he went to *“make war with the rest of her offspring”*

- When the **devil** realized that **he was defeated by Christ** (the male Child of the woman – verse 5), he didn’t slink off with his **tail between his legs**
 - Instead, he was **enraged** and carries out his **vengeful fury on all believers** – i.e. those who *“keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ”*
 - This results in the **ongoing persecution** that is **perpetrated against both Jew and Christian** throughout the ages

Chapter 13: The Beast From the Sea

Read Revelation 13:1-13

v1: Now John is **transported in the Spirit** to a sandy beach at the **edge of the sea** (in general, this usually refers to the **Mediterranean Sea**)

- And what he sees is *“a beast rising up out of the sea”*
 - In the **first** and only **mention** so far in Revelation we were told in 11:7, that the **beast** who ascended out of the bottomless pit *“will make war against them [the two witnesses], overcome them and kill them.”*
- Now we learn a bit more about this **beast** – namely, that he has *“seven heads and ten horns and on his horns ten crowns”*
 - This is the **same description** used to for **Satan** in Rev. 12:3
 - However, this time it refers to the **Antichrist** whom **Satan** will **raise up** as his **counterfeit Christ**
- The **seven heads** represent the **seven worldly kingdoms** that Satan has raised up to **rule the world** over the course of world history (see Rev. 17:9-11)
 - The **ten horns** refer to the **ten kings** who will serve the **seventh and last empire** (i.e. the **reconstituted Roman Empire** that will come forth through the current **European Union**)
 - The **ten crowns** symbolize the **political authority** that Satan **confers on the kings**
- Additionally, John sees the beast as having *“a blasphemous name”* on each of its seven **heads**
 - **Blasphemy** comes from the Greek word *“blasphemia”* which means to *“speak evil of God”*
 - *“Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men.”* (Matthew 12:31)
 - We do not know for sure what this *“blasphemous name”* is – some have conjectured that it is the use of the word holy in *“Holy Roman Empire”*

v2: John now describes the **appearance of the beast** as being like a **leopard** with the feet of a **bear** and the mouth of a **lion**

- **John’s vision** is quite similar to **Daniel’s vision** of **four different beasts** which rose up out of the *“Great Sea”* (i.e. the Mediterranean Sea) – see Daniel 7:1-8
 - The **first beast** that Daniel saw was *“like a lion with eagle’s wings”* which is believed to represent the **Babylonian Empire**
 - The **second beast** Daniel saw was *“like a bear”* which presumably represents the **Medo-Persian Empire**
 - The **third beast** Daniel saw was *“like a leopard”* which represents the **Grecian Empire**
- So now John sees the **lion, bear and leopard** all combined into **one beast** which represents **Daniel’s fourth beast resurrected**
 - Daniel’s **fourth beast** was *“dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong... it was devouring, breaking in pieces”*
- This **fourth beast** represents the **Roman Empire** which John is told *“was and is not”* (Rev. 17:11)
 - At the time of **John’s vision** (about 90 A.D.) he’s told that of the **seven heads** (i.e. empires) *“five have fallen, one is and the other has not yet come”*

➤ Daniel also alludes to **three other, less powerful kingdoms** when he sees *“another horn, a little one, coming up among them before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots.*

• So, we have a **fourth beast** and a **seventh empire** to come, which together symbolize the **reconstituted Roman Empire** with the **Antichrist** at its head

➤ And, we know that **Satan** is behind this **last empire** and the **Antichrist** because this second verse tells us *“the dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority”*

• Daniel further tells us that this **fourth beast** will be *“different from all other kingdoms”*

➤ It will *“devour the whole earth, trample it and break it in pieces”* (Daniel 7:23)

➤ This is the **first time** that any kingdom or empire will truly **encompass the entire globe**

v3: Now John sees **one of the heads** as if it were *“mortally wounded”* after which it was *“healed”*

• Most commentators see this **head that was killed and resurrected** as representing the **Antichrist** who is heading up the **seventh and last world empire**

➤ This too, then would be a **counterfeit of Christ** – i.e. a **similar resurrection**

➤ Except, **Christ was resurrected unto heaven** whereas the **beast is resurrected only on earth**

• There are, however, some who feel that the *“head”* refers to the **empire** and not to the **Antichrist**

➤ This interpretation suggests that it was the **old Roman Empire** that received a *“fatal wound”* but is **resurrected into power** at the *“time of the end”*

➤ This is somewhat supported by Daniel’s vision of the *“little horn”* representing the **Antichrist** with the **heads** representing the **world empires**

• However, this verse goes on to say that *“the world marveled and followed the beast”*

➤ It seems **unlikely** that **people of today** would truly **marvel** over a **political revival of the Roman Empire** since that is so **esoteric**

➤ Instead, they would **truly marvel** if they saw the **Antichrist killed and then resurrected**

v4: This all causes the peoples of the world to *“worship the dragon”*

• With the **dragon** staying in the **background** and presenting the **beast/Antichrist** as his **visible representative**, how is it that people then **worship Satan**?

➤ At this point people will believe that the **Antichrist was resurrected by God** and so they will **worship that “god”** who is, in fact, the **devil**

• The **beast/Antichrist** is seen as being **all-powerful** and might quite possibly be **mistaken for the true Christ**

➤ The people/nations feel that there is **no one else “like the beast”** and that it would be **impossible to “make war with him”**

v5: The **beast/Antichrist** will speak *“proud words and blasphemies”* (NIV)

• This **revived Roman Empire** (our so-called **New World Order**) is the **complete opposite of God’s Kingdom**

➤ Therefore it **unknowingly worships Satan over God** and **self over Spirit**

➤ We see this today in the **New Age emphasis** on **self-actualization, self-esteem, etc.**

• Thus, the people easily **fall for the great deception** of the **beast** whose *“proud words”* only reflect the **groundwork Satan has already laid**

- For the “**anti-Christ spirit**” has been **in action for a long time** (meaning **opposed** or **instead**)
- And, the spirit of the “**false prophet**” has been at work since **time began**, though it will not be made **completely manifest** until the **end-times**
- The **beast/Antichrist** will be given “*authority to continue for forty-two months*”
 - This is the **first 3.5 years** of the **7-year tribulation period**

v6: “Then” (i.e. at the **midpoint** of the tribulation period) the **beast/Antichrist** blasphemes “*God... His name... His tabernacle... and those who dwell in heaven*”

- How does the **beast/Antichrist** accomplish such a **profound and far-reaching act**?
 - He **declares himself to be God!!**
 - These are the “*pompous words against the Most High*” that Daniel prophesies (7:25)
 - “*The son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.*” (2Thessalonians 2:4)
- Then he institutes **worship of himself** in the **tabernacle**
 - This is the “*abomination of desolation*” that Daniel prophesies: “*And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days.*” (Daniel 12:11)
 - This occurs at the **mid-point of the tribulation** and ushers in the second 3.5 year period in which the time of **false peace** degenerates into the **Great Tribulation**
- Daniel is saying that the **beast/Antichrist** cancels the **re-instituted Jewish worship** (i.e. the “*daily sacrifices*”) and **replaces it with worship of himself**
 - Jesus also refers to this event: “*Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place... then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.*” (Matthew 24:15)
- That this “*holy place*” is not a **fully-rebuilt temple** is seen in the use of the Greek word translated here as “*tabernacle*” (KJV, NKJ) or as “*His dwelling place*” (NIV) or as “*His abode*” (Amplified)
 - The Jews will only be able to rebuild the **temple building** but **not the outer court** which will be “*given to the Gentiles and they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months*”

vv7-8: These next two verses **further expand** on the **role of the beast** in the **end-time scenario**

- Verse 7 tells us that “*all who dwell on the earth will worship him*”
 - Note that this doesn’t say **many**, or **most**, but rather **all** – i.e. **everyone** in “*every tribe, tongue and nation*”
- This occurs because **believers have already been raptured out of the world**
 - Verse 8 clarifies that this “*all*” only includes those “*whose names have not been written in the Book of Life*”
- And, it was **Christ Himself** who **wrote our names** into the Book of Life because He is the **perfect Lamb** sacrificed by God **for our sins**
 - That this was **God’s plan all along** is seen in the phrase, “*from the foundation of the world*”
- Those who remain are **so deceived** at this point that they **truly believe good is evil** and that the **beast is indeed Christ**

vv9-10: As in several other places in the Book of Revelation, **Jesus says, “If anyone has an ear, let him hear”**

- This says, in effect, that the **words and symbols** contained therein must be **spiritually discerned**
 - *“But the **natural** man does **not receive** the things of the Spirit of God, for they are **foolishness** to him; nor can he know them, **because they are spiritually discerned.**”* (1Corinthians 2:14)
- What the **Lord wants us to hear** is in the next verse
 - Ultimately, the **beast/Antichrist** who **appears to control the whole world**, will himself **become vanquished** and taken **into captivity**
- In addition, just as the **beast/Antichrist kills by the sword** so too must he (and will he) be **defeated by the sword**
 - Except this will be the **two-edged sword** wielded by **Jesus Christ** (Rev. 1:16 & 2:12)
- We must have **patience and faith** even as we see this **scenario unfolding before our eyes**
 - As always, we must **wait on the Lord** and leave to Him all **vengeance and justice**
 - *For we know Him who said, “**Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,** says the Lord. And again, “**The LORD will judge His people.**” It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* (Hebrews 10:30)

Read Revelation 13:11-18

v11: John now sees *“another beast coming up out of the earth”* – the timing of this may be **simultaneous** with the **first beast** or perhaps sometime **later**

- Note that this one comes out of the **earth**, not out of the **sea** like the **first beast/Antichrist**
 - This **beast** is the **False Prophet** spoken of later in Rev. 16:13, 19:20 and 20:10
- The role of the **second beast** (i.e. the **False Prophet**) is different than of the **first beast/Antichrist**
 - That is why the **False Prophet** is seen as coming out of the **earth**, not the sea
 - Between them, however, the **Antichrist** and the **False Prophet** encompass the **whole world** (i.e. all the land and the seas)
- The **False Prophet** has *“two horns like a lamb”* in which the **two horns** represent the **dual nature** of the False Prophet
 - The **False Prophet** attempts to appear **gentle and harmless** and is the **devil’s counterfeit** of the **Holy Spirit**
 - However, we’re further told that he speaks *“like a dragon”* – i.e. he **becomes Satan’s mouth-piece** just as the **Antichrist** is **Satan’s king**

v12: This **second beast** (i.e. the False Prophet) **serves the first beast** (i.e. the Antichrist) – and both are **under the direction of the devil**

- The **primary role** of the **False Prophet** is to make the world *“worship the first beast”*
 - We’ve seen this kind of **power structure** back when **Kings and Cardinals** would **together control a country** (e.g. France)
 - It is the **False Prophet** who will **oversee** the coming **One World Religion** which will be based on both the **current New Age movement** in combination with the so-called **Mystery Religions** dating back to **Egypt** and **Babylon**

v13: The **False Prophet** will also “*perform great signs*”

- This has been **warned about** throughout Scripture:
 - “*If there arises among you a **prophet** or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a **sign or a wonder**, and the sign or the wonder **comes to pass**, of which he spoke to you, saying, ‘**Let us go after other gods**’—which you have not known—‘and let us serve them,’ **you shall not listen** to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the **LORD your God is testing you** to know whether you love the **LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.**” (Deut. 13:1-3)*
 - “*For **false christs and false prophets** will rise and show **great signs and wonders** to deceive, if possible, **even the elect.**” (Matthew 24:24)*
 - “*The coming of the **lawless one** is according to the **working of Satan**, with all **power, signs, and lying wonders**, and with all **unrighteous deception among those who perish**, because they did **not receive the love of the truth**, that they might be saved.” (2Thessalonians 2:9)*
- This **False Prophet** makes “*fire come down from heaven*”
 - This is similar to when **Elijah called down fire from heaven** in a challenge to all the **false prophets** of that era (see 1Kings 18:24-29)

v14: By doing what the **false prophets** in the Old Testament **couldn’t do**, those who **remain on the earth** will be **deceived** into thinking that the **two beasts** are really **Christ and the Holy Spirit** in the flesh

- However, this only represents the **full power of Satan** – which is still **far short** of the **power of the true Holy Trinity**
 - The phrase “*granted to do*” indicates that he **gets his power directly from Satan**
- Based on this **deception**, the **False Prophet** then proceeds to have the people “*make an image to the beast*”
 - This, of course, is in clear **violation** of the **commandment** to “*not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in **heaven above**, or that is in the **earth beneath**, or that is **in the water under the earth**; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them.*” (Exodus 20:4)

v15: The **False Prophet** was then given the power to “*give breath to the image of the beast*” and cause it to both “*speak*” as well as to **kill** those who would not worship the image

- Perhaps **Satan has this much power** – or perhaps our **high-tech industry** would be able to **develop such a thing**
 - **Nebuchadnezzar** set up a **carved image** and vowed to **kill those who would not worship it** – however, he was not able to give it **pseudo-life**

vv16-18: At this point (**timing uncertain**), he (apparently the **False Prophet**), causes **everyone remaining on the earth** to “*receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads*”

- We don’t know exactly the **form** that this **mark** will take, although even now **tiny computer chips** are being developed that can **contain all information about an individual** that can be **implanted under the skin of the hand or forehead** and which can **transmit radio frequencies (RFID)**
 - The KJV translates this as “*in their right hand or in their foreheads*” – which must have seemed like utter nonsense back in the 1600s
- In the past, such **marks** were used for **good purposes**:
 - God placed a **mark on Cain** so that we would be easily **recognized and protected** from those who might wish to kill him (Genesis 4:15)

- God told **Ezekiel** to **mark with an inkhorn** those who **wept and cried** over the **abominations** done by His people which also **protected them from death** (Ezekiel 9:4)
- We have seen that the **144,000 Jews** who are saved **receive** the *“seal of the living God”* on their foreheads (Revelation 7 & 14)
 - Thus, the **False Prophet** will **misuse Scripture** and claim that the **mark is holy** thereby continuing to **deceive the world**
- We’re further told that those who **receive** either the **mark of the beast** or the **name of the beast** or the **number of his name** will be the only ones able to *“buy or sell”*
 - **Buying and selling** is already **largely done electronically** with **credit cards, debit cards, smart cards, etc.**
 - So this **extension of existing technology** is already **possible**
- Note that the Scripture says either the **mark or the name or the number** of the beast, so there may be some **diversity** in what actually gets **stamped or implanted** on each person
 - In v18 we’re told that the **number of the beast** is **666** and that *“him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast”*
- Of course, we all want to **have understanding** so there has been **much speculation** about what this number means
 - Six is the **number of humanity** and three represents **completion**, so three sixes, or **666**, means **humanity in all its fullness**
 - Similarly, seven represents **divine completion in the world** with three the number of the **holy trinity**, so we can view **666** as the **devil’s counterfeit** of **777** – i.e. the **trinity of evil**
- Some Biblical scholars suggest that, since neither the **Hebrew or Greek** possess a **separate numerical system**, the **letters of their alphabet** carried **numeric value**
 - Thus, the **beast’s name** might **equal 666** when the **numeric values of each letter** are **added up**
 - Names such as **Euanthas, Lateinos** and **Nero Caesar** all add up to 666
- Some current commentators have noted that there are **already three sixes** in each and every **UPC barcode** which are used to track **buying and selling**
- Interestingly, the words on the **Pope’s bonnet**, **“VICARIVS FILEII DEL”** are all Roman numerals with assigned values (e.g. V=5)
 - These all add up to 666 which **supports** the position of many that the **Pope himself** will be the **False Prophet**

Chapter 14: Reaping the Harvest

Read Revelation 14:1-5

v1: John now sees the “*Lamb*” who is, of course, Jesus Christ, the “*Lamb slain from the foundation of the earth*” (Rev. 13:8) who was **deemed worthy to open the scroll** (Rev 5)

- John sees Jesus Christ standing on “*Mount Zion*” (“Sion” in the KJV is the Greek word for Zion)
 - In the Old Testament, **Mount Zion** was the hill on which **Jerusalem** was built by **King David** and thus it became known as the “**city of David**”
 - Later, **Zion** came to represent **Jerusalem** in general and sometimes **God’s “chosen people”**
- In the New Testament, it is used sometimes to denote the **Church of God** and sometimes the **heav-
enly city of Jerusalem**
 - “*But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, ²³to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, ²⁴to Je-
sus the Mediator of the new covenant.*” (Hebrews 12:22-24)
 - In this verse, the reference is to the “*heavenly Jerusalem*” that will later come **down to earth
from heaven** (Rev. 21:2)
- With Jesus on Mount Zion are **144,000 saints** who have **God’s name written on their foreheads**
 - These are the **144,000 redeemed Jews** of Chapter 7:1-8 who were “*sealed... on their fore-
heads*” following the **rapture of the saints**
 - The number **144,000** may be **literal** (i.e. exact) or it might be **symbolic** since it is derived from:
 - 12** (the number of **governmental perfection** represented by the **12 tribes** of Israel as well as the **12 apostles**)
 - 12x12=144** (symbolic of the **Spirit-guided life**) times **1,000** (symbolic of the **glory of God**)

v2: Once again, John hears a “*voice from heaven*” that sounds like “*many waters... loud thunder*”

- As we’ve seen earlier, the **many waters** represents a **commanding voice** and one that represents **many different qualities** all in one (or, perhaps, the voices of **many nations and peoples**)
 - And, the **loud thunder** symbolizes the **awesome power and majesty of God**
- John also hears the “*sound of harpists*” which represents the **ongoing worship of God**
 - The **harp** referred to here is not the **large modern version** but rather a **smaller, more portable
stringed instrument** that sounded something like our modern harp

v3: The **144,000** are singing a “*new song before the throne*”

- **No one else** was able to “*learn that song*” which is a song of **redemption**
 - The Greek word here “oudeis” means “**man, woman or thing**”
- Only **born-again believers** could learn this song because it is **spiritual** (and probably in the **spiritual language**)
 - “*The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*” (1Corinthians 2:13)

v4: Throughout the Book of Revelation, **Jesus** is also represented as the **Bridegroom** with **redeemed be-
lievers** constituting His **Bride**

- In addition, throughout both the Old and New Testaments, the Bible uses **defilement** and **virginity** as representing a **spiritual state**
 - Thus, those people or nations who worshipped **pagan Gods** were seen as **harlots**
 - In this case, these **144,000 virgins** represent those **redeemed Jews** who had not **fallen into idolatrous relationships**
- These **saints** now *“follow the Lamb wherever He goes”* in the **heavenlies** much as the **12 disciples** followed Him when He **walked the earth**
 - These 144,000 are also referred to as *“firstfruits to God”* which appears to mean that they are the **first Jews** to be **saved during the Tribulation Period**
 - This suggests that there may be **more to follow**

v5: These **firstfruits of the Jews** also have *“no deceit”* and are *“without fault”*

- No person can live a life with **no deceit and without fault** – however, we can be **sanctified and cleanses** by the **blood of the Lamb**
 - *“Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, ²⁶that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.”* (Ephesians 5:25-27)
- So the **firstfruits** or **firstborn** have been **made holy and kept holy** by the **Lord Jesus Himself**
 - Some scholars believe that this **specifically refers** to those who **refused to worship the beast or take his mark** but rather were **sealed by the Holy Spirit**

Read Revelation 14:6-13

v6: John now sees *“another angel”* (he’s seen quite a few already) who was *“flying in the midst of heaven”* and possessed *“the everlasting gospel”*

- **Angels** are usually **messengers** – and, in this case, the **message is the gospel**
 - The **gospel** is *“everlasting”* – i.e. it has a **beginning**, but no **end** (if it is **eternal** then it has **no beginning or ending**)
- This **everlasting gospel** is entrusted to the **messenger angel** to see that it is **preached to the entire world**
 - This is in **accordance** with **Jesus’ prophecy** that, *“this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.”* (Matthew 24:14)
- Thus, John is seeing a representation of a **process that began on the cross** and not something that’s happening **just within the tribulation period**

v7: The **primary message** of the angel is to *“fear God and give glory to Him”*

- The *“fear of God”* can best be understood as **recognition** of who He is, **respect** for His power to judge the world and condemn souls to hell, and **reverence** (awe) of His holiness and worthiness
 - *“Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”* (Matthew 10:28)
- The Greek has **several words** that we translate into the one English word **“fear”**
 - For example, **“mora”** which means **terror** as in: *“The fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth.”* (Genesis 9:2)
 - Here, the word for **“fear”** is **“phobeo”** which means “to be in awe... to revere”

- This angel then announces that *“the hour of His judgment has come”*
 - Obviously, this speaks of the so-called **last days** or **end-times**, but it is **not clear** whether this is **one specific day or hour** or the **entire Tribulation Period**
- Nevertheless, we know that there will be a **time of judgment**, since that theme runs **throughout both the Old and New Testaments**
 - *“But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.”* (2Peter 3:7)
- Therefore, says the angel, *“worship Him who made heaven and earth”*
 - There is a time coming **at some point during the tribulation** at which **all people will recognize the Creator** – *“Every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.”* (Isaiah 45:23 and Romans 14:11)
 - But there is also a time coming after which it will be **too late to be saved**, so we need to get out the **message**, *“Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand”*

v8: Then **another angel** comes along saying, *“Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city”*

- In the Old Testament, **Babylon** refers to a truly *“great city”* in the **natural sense** since it was the **political, commercial and religious center** of a world empire
 - However, it was also the **center of idolatry**, the **occult** and **immorality**
- In the New Testament, **Babylon** is either a **symbol** of the **Satanic world system** or specifically to **Rome** or to a **reconstituted city of Babylon in Iraq**
 - In the current context, **Babylon** can best be understood as the **the coming one-world government**, the **seventh and last “head”** with the *“ten horns”* (Rev. 12:3, 13:1)
- And why had **Babylon fallen**?
 - Because she **led humanity into drunkenness and fornication** – i.e. becoming drunk on the **idols of money, materialism and power** while **prostituting themselves with pagan gods**

vv9-11: And yet **another angel** appears and proclaims that anyone who *“worships the beast and his image”* and who *“receives his mark on his forehead”* will partake of the *“wrath of God”*

- This coming **wrath** is God’s **judgment and punishment** upon a *“faithless and perverse generation”* (Matthew 17:17)
 - This **wrath** will be poured out *“full strength”* out of His *“cup of indignation”* since all our sins are **ultimately against God and His commandments**
- The **wrath** that pours forth from God is *“fire and brimstone (i.e. burning sulfur)”* that will **torment** those in Hell *“forever and ever”* and they shall *“have no rest day or night”*
 - Moreover, their **torment** will be **vastly increased** because they will be **well aware** of what they missed out on since it will be *“in the presence of the angels... and the Lamb”*

vv12-3: Now the focus changes to the *“patience of the saints”* who *“keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus”*

- The word *“patience”* here is perhaps best translated as **“endurance, constancy”**
 - That is, under the **pressures of the world** as well as the **fiery darts of the Enemy**, the saints nonetheless **keep the commandments and hold fast to their faith**
- Then, according to another *“voice from heaven”* (perhaps Jesus), when the saints *“die in the Lord”* they receive *“rest from their labors”*
 - *“From now on”* is thought to mean from the **moment of the Lamb’s victory on the cross**

- That their *“works follow them”* means that they will receive **rewards in heaven** for their **good works on earth**

Read Revelation 14:14-20

v14: John now sees a picture of the **Final Judgment**, first of **believers** followed immediately by that of **unbelievers**

- **Judgment** is executed by **Jesus** – *“One like the Son of Man”*
 - He has been **crowned in gold** by the Father and given a **sharp sickle** with which to **separate the wheat from the chaff**
 - *“His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”* (Matthew 3:12)

v15: Another **angel** now calls to the **Lord** to *“thrust in Your sickle and reap”*

- The **harvest** is now declared to be *“ripe”* as it was first prophesied in Joel
 - *“Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, go down; for the winepress is full, the vats overflow—for their wickedness is great.”* (Joel 3:13)

v16: **Jesus** now **enacts Judgment** in response to the **command from the throne**

- Jesus had said that *“only the Father knows”* the **exact time of the end**
 - Jesus only does *“what the Father says”* and so, right to the end, is the **perfectly obedient son**
- This is the **separation** of the **wheat from the tares**
 - *“Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, ‘First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn’... He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. ³⁹The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. ⁴⁰Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. ⁴¹The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, ⁴²and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”* (Matt. 13:30, 37-43)

vv17-20: Here we have the **Judgment of the wicked** now that **Jesus had reaped the saved**

- First an **angel comes out with a sickle** and then another angel comes out *“who had power over fire”*
 - These angels do not have to **separate the wheat from the chaff** because the Lord has already **removed the righteous**
- Instead, these two proceed to *“gather the clusters of the vine... for her grapes are fully ripe”*
 - The **fullness of time** has been reached, the **opportunity for all to be saved** has been given – there are **no more chances** and **no more excuses**
- These grapes were **trampled in the winepress** – but **outside the city** so that the **bloodshed would not defile the city** (Exodus 29:14, Leviticus 4:21)
 - Just as Jesus Christ **suffered outside the gate** (Hebrews 13:12)
- The *“one thousand six hundred furlongs”* is approximately the **length of Israel** from north to south
 - This is most likely a **figurative reference** to the **vast amount of blood that will be shed** – meaning that there are a **vast number who chose the beast over the Lamb**

Chapters 15-16: The Seven Bowls of God's Wrath

Chapter 15 is **prelude** to the **pouring out of God's wrath** through the **seven (and last) "bowl" plagues** described in Chapter 16

Read Revelation 15:1-8

v1: Preparation begins for the **final seven judgments of God** against the people of earth

- While the plagues associated with the **seven seals** and the **seven trumpets** were severe, they were only **partial judgments**
 - These **seven bowl plagues** represent the **completion of God's wrath and judgment** which represent the **fulfillment of the seventh trumpet**
- John sees here the **seven angels** who would **execute this judgment** in the next chapter
 - It might be that the **reaping of the harvest** concluded in Chapter 14 **immediately precedes these plagues**, with no time left anymore for **repentance and salvation**

v2: John also sees for a **second time** the so-called "**sea of glass**" (see Rev. 4:6)

- Except this time, the sea of glass is "**mingled with fire**" which some believe represents the **blood of the saints** while others believe it might represent the **deliverance of Israel through the Red Sea** which became **reddened by the pillar of fire**
 - As noted in Rev. 4:6, the **sea of glass** may also represent the **basin in the Heavenly temple** whose **counterpart in the earthly temple** was referred to as the **Sea** (1Kings 7:23-25)
 - There are also some who **theorize** that this **Sea** is where **all souls** go to their **rest** (Hebrews 4:9-11) as they await the **resurrection** (1Thessalonians 4:16-17)
- We also previously saw that this might also be where the **souls of the martyrs** who were slain **during the tribulation** go "**before the throne of God**" (Rev. 6:9)
 - But many commentators believe that now **these saints represent all** of those who have been **redeemed** over the course of time
- However, now the **victorious saints** are **standing** on the sea of glass, **not underneath it**
 - So, at this point, the **resurrection is complete** and souls have been **reunited with their glorified bodies**

vv3-4: All of these saints have **harps** (much smaller than today's harps) with which they sing "**the song of Moses**"

- Moses sang a **song of redemption** after crossing the Red Sea (Exodus 15:1-18) which is now turned into the "**song of the Lamb**"
 - Whereas the **song of Moses** celebrated **escape from the Egyptian army** (foreshadowing of the resurrection), this song celebrates **complete redemption** from Satan and the world

v5: Now John sees the "**temple of the tabernacle of the testimony**" open in Heaven

- The "**tabernacle of the testimony**" literally means "**the tent of witness**"
 - This is the **same wording** used in Greek to describe the **tabernacle** raised up in the wilderness in Exodus 40:34-35 as **God's temporary dwelling place**
 - The **tabernacle** contained the "**two tablets of the Testimony**" brought by Moses from Mount Sinai (see Exodus 32:15)
- Now, the **Testimony of God** has been **completed** and His **final judgments** are about to be enacted

- The **tabernacle** (and indeed all earthly temples) are **temporary**
 - But the **temple of the tabernacle** in Heaven is **permanent** – in fact, the instructions for building the **tabernacle** and **Solomon’s temple** probably **replicated the heavenly temple**

v6: The **seven angels** with the **seven plagues** come out of the **heavenly temple**

- They are “*clothed in pure bright linen*” which represents the **purity, righteousness and holiness** of God
 - The “*golden bands*” girded around their chests symbolizes their **sovereignty** as **delegated** to them by **God Himself**
 - This is how the **priestly garments** were described in Exodus 26:6,8

v7: The **seven angels** now receive **golden vials or bowls** from one of the **four living creatures** which contain the “*wrath of God*”

- These **bowls** will be **poured out upon the earth** as foretold in **2Thessalonians 1:7-9**
 - “*But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath.*” (Romans 2:5)

v8: The **temple** now is filled with smoke “*from the glory of God*”

- **Smoke** symbolizes the **power, glory and judgment of God**
 - Just as **Moses** was not able to **enter the tabernacle** after the **glory of God filled the tabernacle** (Exodus 40:34-35), so too is no one able to **enter the heavenly temple** after it fills with smoke
- This makes the **mercy seat inaccessible** – therefore, there is **no further chance** to seek God’s **mercy and salvation**
 - Then, after the **seven plague judgments are completed**, the saints will be able to re-enter the temple

Read Revelation 16:1-7

v1: A **loud voice** symbolizing **God’s power and authority** now came from the **closed temple** giving the command to **pour forth the bowls** “*of the wrath of God*” upon the earth

- This is **God Himself** commanding the **Final Judgment**
 - The **seven trumpet plagues** only caused **one-third** of the **vegetation, seas, and waters** to be **destroyed** – these were **partial judgments** (see Rev. 8:7-13) which many believe constituted a **final call to repentance**
 - Now, the **seven bowl plagues** cause **complete destruction** – which is why we’ll need that **new heaven and new earth** (Rev. 21:1)
- The first **four bowls** affect the **humans and the environment** – the **last three bowls** affect the **beast and his demons**

v2: First Bowl – Loathsome sores

- The **first angel** poured the **first bowl** upon the **entire earth** causing a “*foul and loathsome sore*” to come upon **anyone who had the mark of the beast** or who **worshipped his image**
 - Some believe that this might be the result of **atomic radiation** following **nuclear war**
 - This plague is also similar to the **sixth plague on Egypt** (see Exodus 9:8-12)

v3: Second Bowl – Sea Turns to Blood

- The **second angel** now pours out the **second bowl** which causes the “*sea*” (meaning all seas) to become “*blood as of a dead man*”
 - This causes “*every living creature in the sea*” to **die** – that is, there is **no life left in any sea**
- With the **second trumpet**, **one-third** of the **sea** turned to **blood** – here the **destruction is completed**
 - This is similar to the **first Egyptian plague** (Exodus 7:17-21)

v4: Third Bowl – Waters Turn to Blood

- The **third angel** pours out the **third bowl** and the “*rivers and springs of water*” turn to blood
 - This causes **all fresh water sources** to be **destroyed** – completing what the **third trumpet** had begun when **one-third** of all fresh water was destroyed

vv5-7: Now we have a **time-out**

- Before advancing to the **fourth bowl plague**, the “*angel of the waters*” now speaks
 - Some believe this angel to be the **angel who has overseen the waters of the earth** since the beginning of time
- This angel pronounces his **agreement with the judgments of the Lord** which have now **destroyed all the waters** that this angel once **protected and nurtured**
 - He says that these judgments are “*righteous... for they (i.e. those who worshipped the beast) have shed the blood of saints and prophets... it is their just due*”
- And then **another voice** came **from the altar** calls out in **affirmation** that the **Lord’s judgments** are “*true and righteous*”
 - Some believe this **voice** to be that of the **martyrs** who represent the **saints and prophets** in verse 6 who **shed their blood for the sake of the gospel**

Read Revelation 16:8-16

vv8-9: Fourth Bowl – All Humans Scorched

- The **fourth angel** poured out the **fourth bowl plague** on the **sun** – and all men were **scorched as with fire**
 - This **great heat** caused men not to repent but to **blaspheme God** and they **did not repent and give Him glory**
 - Like **Pharoah**, their **hearts are hard, cold and defiant**

vv10-11: Fifth Bowl Plague – Beast and His Kingdom Plunged into Darkness and Pain

- The **fifth angel** poured out the **fifth bowl plague** on the “*throne of the beast*”
 - This caused **all of the beast’s kingdom** to become “*full of darkness*” (i.e. **confusion, dismay and distress**)
 - In addition, it causes them to **gnaw their tongues** because the **pain was so bad** (probably due to the previous **sores** and being **scorched**)
 - Despite it all, they continued to **blaspheme God** and **did not repent**

vv12-14: Sixth Bowl Plague – Euphrates Dried Up and Unclean Spirits Come Out

- The **sixth angel** poured out the **sixth bowl plague** on the “*great river Euphrates*” causing it to **completely dry up**

- This will probably be seen as a **blessing** to the **beast** because it **clears the way** for **armies from the east** to **invade the holy land**
- However, what the **beast doesn't know** is that **God is arranging the pieces** for the **final battle between good and evil**
 - As with the **sixth trumpet** (Rev. 9:13-21), the **Euphrates** was a **formidable, natural barrier** that protected **Israel** , but here represents a **symbolic restraint** that is now **taken away**
- Then, **three unclean spirits** then come out of the **dragon** (i.e. the devil), the **beast** and the **false prophet**
 - These spirits are **"like frogs"** (e.g. little dragons) which are **"spirits of demons"** (v14) which perform **signs and wonders** which **continue to deceive** (i.e. calling what is **good, evil** and what is **evil, good**)
- In the name of the **beast** , they go out and **gather up all the kings of the earth** for this last **battle**
 - They are to **command an army of 200 million** (see Rev. 9:16) in what may be a **spiritual battle** not just a **literal battle**
- As stated in verse 16, these **armies** are to be **gathered** at the place called **"Armageddon"** or **"Harmegiddon"** which literally means **"Mount of Megiddo"**
 - This refers to the actual **Mount of Megiddo** at the upper entrance to the **Plain of Esdraelon** (the Greek form of the Hebrew **"Jezreel"**), which was Israel's **primary battlefield** in **Old Testament times**

v15: Here we have a **parenthetical warning from Jesus** who **reiterates** that He is coming like **"a thief"**

- He warns that those who are **saved** need to **hold onto their salvation** (i.e. keep their garments) lest they wind up **naked and ashamed** (i.e. lose their salvation?)
 - This would appear to support the belief that **there will still be saints** at this point (i.e. those who **"come through the tribulation"** as suggested in Rev. 7:14)

Read Revelation 16:17-21

v17: Now the **seventh angel** pours out the **seventh and last plague** into the **air** – which is what we **breathe** and which gives us **life**

- So, with the complete destruction of both **water and air** it is **impossible for humans to exist**
 - This causes **God** (i.e. the **"loud voice"** from the **"temple of heaven"**) to declare that **"It is done"**
- Just as Jesus declared, **"It is finished"** when He completed His work on the **cross** , so too does **God the Father** now pronounce an **end to the world as we know it**

v18: This pronouncement is **underscored** by **"noises and thunderings and lightnings"** as well as by a **"great earthquake"** – even greater than that of the **sixth seal** (Rev. 6:12) as well as those in Rev. 8:5, 11:13 and 11:19

- This great quaking of the earth will occur when **Christ Jesus sets His feet upon the Mount of Olives** as foretold in Zechariah 14:3-5

v19: Then the **"great city"** (reconstituted Babylon) was **split into three parts** and **all the cities fell**

- But God reserved the **"fierceness of His wrath"** just for **Babylon**

vv20-21: **Every island disappeared and every mountain was flattened**

- **Great hail** the size of a **talent** (i.e. 100-125 pounds) fell from heaven and people continued in the **final death throes to blaspheme God** (interestingly, the Law required blasphemers to be **stoned to death** (Lev. 24:16))

Chapter 17 – The Great Harlot

Read Revelation 17:1-6

v1: After pouring out the **seven bowl judgments** (the **final** judgments), one of those seven angels comes to talk directly to John

- What the angel shows John is a **more detailed vision** of the **judgment** that fell upon **Babylon** (see Rev. 16:19)
 - As we're told in v18, the **harlot** (the **woman** sitting on the **scarlet beast** – v5) represents "**that great city**" (i.e. **Babylon**)
- Some say that **Babylon** represents the **sequential seats of power** that have ruled over the world (e.g. Babylon, Assyria, Rome, etc.) under **idolatrous influences**
 - Others feel that **Babylon** represents **false religions** (often called the "**mystery religions**" dating back to Egypt), with **idolatry** frequently referred to as **harlotry** in Scripture
 - More specifically, there are some who feel the **harlot** is the **Catholic Church** created by Emperor Constantine in combination with **pagan worship** in the early 300s
- This "**great harlot**" is seen sitting "**on many waters**"
 - This represents **all the peoples and nations** of the world

v2: The viewpoint of **Babylon** representing **false religion** are bolstered by this verse which shows the "**kings of the earth**" committing "**fornication**" with her – another term for **worshiping false gods**

- The word "**fornication**" is translated from the Hebrew word "**porneuo**" from which we get the word **pornography**
 - Strong's dictionary defines this word to mean: "to *act* the *harlot*, that is, (literally) **indulge unlawful lust** (of either sex), or (figuratively) **practice idolatry**"
- Many Old Testament prophecies were made about **this harlot** or **whore** with whom the world **commits idolatrous adultery**
 - "**Because of the multitude of harlotries of the seductive harlot, the mistress of sorceries, who sells nations through her harlotries, and families through her sorceries.**" (Nahum 3:4)
- The "trickle down" effect of her **harlotry** with the **kings**, has been make the "**inhabitants of the earth... drunk with the wine of her fornication**"
 - When **government** is based on **godless or idolatrous** belief systems, **evil is bound to result**

v3: John is now carried away "**in the Spirit into the wilderness**"

- This marks the beginning of the **third vision** given to John
 - The **wilderness** represents either the **desolate state of the earth** following all these **horrific judgments** or the **dry state of the church** at this point in time
- Now he actually **sees the harlot woman** sitting on the **scarlet beast**
 - This is the **same beast** of Rev. 13:1-2 which rose up out of the sea with the **seven heads** (i.e. seats of great authority) and **ten horns** (kings or powers)

v4: The woman was dressed in **purple and scarlet**

- **Purple** represents her role of **high priestess of the false religion**
 - **Red** represents the **blood** that has been shed in **her name**

- The **gold, precious stones and pearls** represent the **wealth** through which the **kings and peoples** of the world are **seduced**
 - The **golden cup**, however, is full of “*abominations and the filthiness of her fornications*” which is the **end result** of such **idolatrous relationships**

v5: The **harlot** has a **name** that is **written** on her **forehead**

- Just as **Roman prostitutes** were **required** to wear a **label on their foreheads** containing their **names**, so too is the “**great harlot**” required to do so by God Himself
 - In this case, she represents the **religious apostasy** of the **last days** in which **all the false religious systems** will be **combined** into a **one-world religion**
 - This is why she is called the **Mother of Harlots** because she has **given birth** to so many **false religions** (not just those like **Islam, Buddhism, New Age** and the like, but also **corrupted Christian-based religions** such as Mormonism, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Freemasonry, etc)
- It is labeled a **Mystery** because at that time, **none of the signs** of the end times had been fulfilled
- It is only now that we can **begin to understand** these mysteries just as Daniel was told by God: “*But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end*” (Daniel 12:4)

v6: The woman was “*drunk with the blood of the saints... and the martyrs*”

- Many have already **died for Christ** and **many more will follow**
 - John “*marveled with great amazement*” (NKJ) or “*wondered with great admiration*” (KJV) or was “*greatly astonished*” (NIV) or “*utterly amazed and wondered greatly*” (Amplified)
 - Obviously the translators struggled with this odd sense of “**admiration**” that John exhibited, but it was most likely “**amazement**” or “**astonishment**” which best captures John’s reaction

Read Revelation 17:7-18

v7: Here the angel **gently admonishes** John for his **amazement**

- The angel then proceeds to explain the “*mystery of the woman and of the beast*” for both John’s and **our benefit**

v8: The angel described the **beast’s existence** over time as “*was, and is not and will ascend out of the bottomless pit*”

- The **seven heads** representing **historical and future world empires** (e.g. Babylonian, Assyrian, Roman, etc.)
 - In **John’s time**, the angel is saying that the **current Roman empire** will soon **disappear** (is not) but will be **reconstituted** in the **end days**, coming straight out of hell
- The angel further notes that the **unsaved will also marvel** at the **beast and the woman**, which implies that the **saints are no longer around at this time**

vv9-10: The angel now adds **further clarification**

- The **seven heads** are **seven mountains** on which the **woman sits**
 - Many commentators feel that this represents the **seven hills of Rome**
- However, **mountains** can also be taken **symbolically** for **power or authority**, so these can also represent the **seven sequential world empires**
 - Thus, in verse 10, we see that there are also **seven kings**, with **five having already fallen** (with the first four delineated by Daniel in chapter 7)

- The one that “*is*” is the **Roman Empire** with the **last world empire** still to come (for both John and us, with the so-called **New World Order** being the **reconstituted Roman Empire**)
 - This one will only exist a “*short time*” which is the **7-year tribulation period**

v11: The angel now goes on to say that the **beast** will be the **eighth king**

- This is the “*little horn*” that Daniel says will spring up among the **ten horns** – i.e. the **Antichrist** taking over this **New World Order** (Daniel 8:9)

v12: The **ten horns** are then explained as representing **ten kings** who have not yet **received their kingdom** (i.e. this is a future event)

- These are the **ten kingdoms** of the **reconstituted Roman Empire** which will come out of our current **European Union**
 - They will only rule for “*one hour*” – again, representing the short, **7-year tribulation period**

v13: This is a **key verse** which unlocks the **mystery** of the **extent of the beast’s control**

- The **ten kings** representing control over the **world’s governments** are of “*one mind*”
 - This is when the **devil’s deceit** becomes **fully accepted worldwide** – and its banner will be **New Age Religion** coupled with **One-World Government**
- These will be seen as **good, not evil** – and anyone who stands opposed (i.e. Christians) will be seen as **evil**
 - However, this will be an **alliance and reliance on self** to the **exclusion of God**, so what “*seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death*”

v14: Then, with all worldly powers **of one accord**, they will **combine their forces** and make war against “*the Lamb*”

- But the **Lamb is victorious** and He will lead his “*chosen and faithful*” ones to **life everlasting** while the **devil, the beast, the false prophet and their followers** will be cast into the **Lake of Fire** (Rev. 20:10-15)

v15: Here the angel explains that the “*many waters*” which John saw represent the “*peoples, multitudes, nations and tongues*”

- That is, **all people, everywhere** – there is **none excluded** from the **end-day scenario**

vv16-17: Now, in a **plot twist** which the **devil specializes in**, the **ten horns** (i.e. ten kings) will **turn on the harlot**

- They will “*make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire*”
 - This reveals the **true plan** of the **devil** – he wants to **be God** and will do anything to **get there**
 - “*Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, ⁴who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.*” (2Thessalonians 2:3-4)
- This is when the **Antichrist** commits the “*abomination of desolation*” and **declares himself to be God** right in the **Holy of Holies** in the reconstructed temple
 - However, **nothing the devil does** is without **God’s permission or direction** – and, just as **God** used **Pharaoh** and **Nebuchadnezzar**, so too is He **allowing the devil** to finish the **separation of the sheep and the goats** for the final **harvest**

Chapter 18 – The Fall of Babylon

This chapter represents an **amplification** of what happens to “*that great city*” **Babylon** which we’re told in 17:18 “*reigns over the kings of the earth*”

- It is **unlikely** that a **single city** will rule over all the earth
 - However, there are **three scenarios** which can explain this situation
 1. As mentioned earlier, **Babylon** represents the **One-World Order** created by **Satan** through the **beast** (i.e. the Antichrist) and the **false prophet**
 2. Or, that **city is Rome** and the **Pope is the Harlot** – a view **held by many**, especially given the **historical relationship** between the various **Popes and Roman Emperors**
 3. Or, the devil **rebuilds** the **ancient city of Babylon** in **Iraq** (currently desolate, but which **Sa-daam Hussein** was already at work **rebuilding it**).

Read Revelation 18:1-8

vv1-2: Regardless of how we define **Babylon**, John now sees another **angel** coming down from heaven with “*great authority*”

- This is the **same angel** mentioned in 14:8 declaring that “*Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen*”
 - **Babylon** has become a “*dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit and a cage for every unclean and hated bird*” -- literally **hell on earth**

v3: Here we see that the **path to hell** is paved with “*the abundance of her luxury*”

- The **false gods** of this **end-day era** are **self** and **materialism** (greed)
 - This results in the “*wrath of her fornication*” from which the **whole world drinks**

vv4-5: Another **voice from heaven** now **calls to the saints** who still **remain on the earth**

- It is **not clear** what the **timing is here** – it could be **pre-tribulation** or it could be somewhere **during the tribulation**
 - Nevertheless, it is a **call from the Lord Himself** for **His people** to “*come out*” of this **perverted world system** “*lest you share in her sins and... receive her plagues*”
 - “*But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.*” (John 4:23)
- This is the true meaning of being “*set apart*” for God wherein we **do not participate** in the **worldly perversions**
 - The **temptations of wealth and pleasure** will cause many to “*fall away*” into these sins which “*have reached heaven*”
 - The statement that “*God has remembered her iniquities*” means that He has now **turned His full attention to dealing with them**

vv6-7: Here God is saying that **for every sin she (Babylon) has sown**, she will **reap a double portion of judgment**

- To the extent that **Babylon** “*glorified herself and lived in luxury,*” in the **same measure** will she now be **tormented**
 - In her **heart, Babylon** has the attitude that she is “*queen*” and impervious to God’s judgment – the **type of boast** that brings even **greater judgment**

v8: Thus, says God, **her plagues** will all come *“in one day”* (i.e. quickly and suddenly) bringing *“death and mourning and famine”*

- And she will be *“utterly burned with fire”* – the **final judgment of God**

Read Revelation 18:9-20

vv9-10: Now we see a scene which makes it seem as if **Babylon** is representing a **single city**

- For the *“kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously... will weep and lament”*
 - They will be *“standing at a distance”* when they see the *“smoke of her burning”* seeing that *“in one hour”* her judgment had come – eerily **similar** to the **World Trade Center bombings**
 - However, this is **symbolic** of her **final judgment** so that the **9-11 tragedy** may simply be a **foreshadowing** of what’s to come

vv11-13: Not just the kings will **mourn**, but also the *“merchants of the earth”* who **manufacture and sell the merchandise that creates the god of materialism**

- Most such **goods and services** now are **not necessities**, but rather the **luxuries** which **God derides** back in verse 7

vv14-16: These *“fruits”* of **luxury** that people *“longed for”* are now **taken away by God**

- Thus the **rich merchants** will *“stand at a distance for fear of her torment”*
 - And they will **weep** over their **losses** not realizing that they had **long before lost something far more precious – life everlasting**
 - *“For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?”* (Matthew 16:26)

vv17-20: Much like the **shipmasters and sailors** in **New York Harbor**, these **merchants** see that *“in one hour”* all that they had built was **brought to naught**

- While this cause them to **mourn**, God tells His saints to *“Rejoice over her... for God has avenged you on her”*

Read Revelation 18:21-24

v21: Now, a *“mighty angel”* (presumably the one with **great authority** in verse 1) takes up a *“great millstone”* and **tosses it in the sea**

- This is a **symbolic gesture** showing how **quickly and completely Babylon will be destroyed**
 - *“Now it shall be, when you have finished reading this book, that you shall tie a stone to it and throw it out into the Euphrates.”*⁶⁴ *Then you shall say, ‘Thus Babylon shall sink and not rise from the catastrophe that I will bring upon her.’* (Jeremiah 51:63-64)

vv22-23: The **destruction** will be **so complete** that there will be **no more music or crafts** – i.e. anything **joyful or pleasurable**

- Nor will the *“light of a lamp”* (i.e. the Spirit of God) **shine anymore**
 - And there will be **no more weddings** – because **Christ has removed His bride from the earth**
- Why? Because she *“deceived the nations”* with her *“sorcery”*

v24: All this **judgment** falls on **Babylon** because she has the *“blood of prophets and saints”* on her hands

Chapter 19: Celebration, Marriage and Conquest

Read Revelation 19:1-10

v1: “*After these things*” means **after John saw the preceding vision**

- It **doesn't** mean that **in the future fulfillment** of this prophecy that things will **occur in this order**
- It is **impossible** for us to put the events of this chapter in **chronological order** with the events in preceding chapters
 - We must remember that **eternity is timeless** and in eternity everything happens **outside of our dimension of time**
- The **voice** that John hears now is of a “*great multitude*” – presumably that same “**multitude**” referred to back in Chapter 7 – or, perhaps, the **entire Body of Christ**
 - “*These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.* (Revelation 7:14)
 - They begin a chorus of **praise** signifying that in all “*these things*” all the **salvation, glory, honor and power** belong to the **Lord**
- The exclamation “*alleluia*” (or **Hallelujah**) occurs **four times** (the number of the world) in these **first six verses** (the number of man) – the **only times** this word occurs in the entire Bible
 - The word is derived from **two Hebrew words** which mean “**Praise the Lord**”

vv2-4: The chorus of praise continues with the **acknowledgement** that the **judgments on Babylon** were not frivolous but rather “*true and righteous*”

- Further, these judgments **avenge the “blood of His servants”** that was **shed by “the great harlot who corrupted the earth”**
 - They conclude the **celebratory chorus** that was **declared in Rev. 18:20** by noting that **Babylon's “smoke rises up forever and ever”**
- The **twenty-four elders** and the **four living creatures** (cherubim) also **join in and worship God**

vv5-7: Then a “*voice came from the throne*”

- Ordinarily we would think that this was **God's voice**, but perhaps not because the voice **commands praise to God** from “*all you His servants... both great and small*”
 - Then the **multitude** concludes the chorus with the “*sound of many waters and... and mighty thunderings*”
- Now they **announce** that the “*marriage of the Lamb has come and His wife has made herself ready*”
 - **All believers** make up the “**bride of Christ**” – “*the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding.*” (Matthew 25:10)
 - “*The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king (God) who arranged a marriage for his son.*” (Matthew 22:2)
 - “*I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.*” (2Corinthians 11:2-3)
 - “*Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,* ²⁶*that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,* ²⁷*that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.*” (Ephesians 5:25-27)

- In the Old Testament, it is all of **Israel** that is called the **wife**; in the NT it represents the **Church**

v8: The **Bride** is then “*granted*” the right to be “*arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright*”

- We cannot **earn** this right, it must be **granted** based on “*grace through faith*” (Ephesians 2:8)
 - The “*fine linen*” represents the “*righteous acts of the saints*” which was **wrought in us** through the **Holy Spirit** (i.e. the **fruit of the Spirit**)

v9: The “*marriage supper*” represents the **fulfillment** of our **personal relationship** with the Lord that was **foreshadowed** by the **Lord’s Supper** and our ritual of **communion**

- The **fourth of seven beatitudes** in the Book of Revelation is then **pronounced**: “*Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb*”
 - The other **beatitudes** are in **Rev. 1:3, 14:13, 16:15, 20:6, 22:7, and 22:14**)

v10: John then **falls at the Angel’s feet**, but is quickly **admonished**

- The Scriptures are **very clear** that we are **not to worship anything other than God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit**
 - The **angel** calls himself “*your fellow servant*” which also implies that the **angels are not our direct servants** but rather **minister to us** at the **direction of God**
- The angel then **declares** that the “*testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*”
 - Adam Clarke’s commentary says: “The **spirit of prophecy** is a **general testimony** concerning **Jesus**, for **He is the scope and design of the whole Scripture**; to him gave all the **prophets** witness. Take Jesus, his grace, Spirit, and religion out of the Bible, and it has neither scope, design, object, nor end.”
 - The **Scriptures** themselves say that Jesus is the “*Faithful and True Witness*” (Rev. 3:14, 19:11 and 22:6) and **all prophecy is ultimately about Him**

Read Revelation 19:11-16

v11: Now **Jesus comes out of heaven** riding a **white horse** which symbolizes both **victory and purity**

- This is the **Lion of Judah** coming to “*make war*” and to **judge the world in righteousness**
 - And to **overcome** the **Antichrist** who also **rode out** into the world on a **white horse** (Rev. 6:2) – **Satan always counterfeits the things of God**
- Jesus is again referred to as **Faithful and True** because He has always done **only what the Father tells Him to do** and He **only speaks the Truth**
 - This war is the final battle of Armageddon (Rev. 16:16) where Jesus defeats the armies of the world (and of the Devil) once and for all

v12: **Jesus’ eyes** were like a “*flame of fire*”

- This reminds us of Jesus being described as a “*consuming fire*” in Hebrews 12:29 and denote His **omniscience** and all-penetrating Divine **knowledge**
 - It is the fire of His eyes that **judges** our works when we are risen into heaven
 - “*Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,* ¹³*each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. ¹⁴If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.*” (1Corinthians 3:12-15)

- He is also described as wearing “*many crowns*” to denote the **multitude of his conquests**, and the **extent of his dominion**
 - Jesus will **not** be wearing a “*crown of thorns*” this time (see Matthew 27:29)
 - And he will be wearing **many more crowns** than the **ten crowns of the Antichrist** (Rev. 13:1)
- Jesus also “*had a name written that no one knew except Himself*”
 - This is akin to the **new name** that believers receive **in heaven** which “*no one knows except him who receives it*” (Rev. 2:17)
 - This may also be the **new name** that Jesus will write **on the overcomers** (Rev. 3:12)
- **God** also proclaimed to **Moses** that His name could not be known: “*And God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.”*”
 - Adam Clarke says: “This is a reference to what the rabbins call the *shem hammephorash*, or tetragrammaton, יהוה Yhvh; or what we call **Jehovah**. This name the Jews **never attempt to pronounce**: when they meet with it in the Bible, they read אדוני Adonai for it; but, to a man, they all declare that no man can pronounce it; and that the true pronounciation has been lost, at least since the Babylonish captivity; and that God alone knows its true interpretation and pronounciation. This, therefore, is the name which no man knew but he himself.

v13: Jesus is further described as wearing a “*robe dipped in blood*”

- Some say that this is His **atoning blood**, not the blood of His enemies since the **final battle has not yet taken place**
 - However, Isaiah 63:2 would imply otherwise:

3 Why *is* Your **apparel red**, and Your **garments** like one who treads in the winepress?
“*I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with Me.*
For **I have trodden them in My anger**, and trampled them in My fury;
Their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, and **I have stained all My robes.**
4 For **the day of vengeance is in My heart**, and **the year of My redeemed has come.**”
- And here Jesus is also **identified** once again as the “*Word of God*”
 - It is John who first referred to **Jesus as the Word** (see John 1:1,14 and 1John 5:7)
 - This is **not referring** to the name which **no one knows except Jesus**

v14: Coming with Jesus are the “*armies in heaven*” who also are on **white horses** and are wearing **clean, fine linen** to represent their having been made **holy, pure and righteous** by the **blood of the Lamb**

- This **army** is made up of both **angels and saints**
 - “*Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints,* ¹⁵*to execute judgment on all.*” (Jude 14-15)
 - “*The Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels,* ⁸*in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” (2Thessalonians 1:7-8)

v15: As we’ve seen several times before in the Book of Revelation, Jesus has a “*sharp sword*” coming “*out of His mouth*” with which to “*strike the nations*”

- The **sword** is, of course, the “*sword of the Spirit which is the word of God*” (Ephesians 6:17)
 - “*For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*” (Hebrews 4:12)

- And, as previously prophesied, Jesus will **“rule them with a rod of iron”**
 - **“You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.”** (Psalm 2:9)
 - **“She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron.”** (Revelation 12:5)
- And, again, the notion of Jesus **“treading the winepress”** was also previously prophesied (see Isaiah 63:2-3 on the previous page)

v16: Jesus had yet **another name** written on **His robe** and on **His thigh**: **“KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS”**

- Paul used this title to describe the Lord’s coming: **“He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords,¹⁶ who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power.”** (1Timothy 6:15-16)
 - Jesus earned this title **on the cross** and now is **coming back** to **consummate His victory** over the devil and the world

Read Revelation 19:17-21

vv17-18: Here we have a **great contrast** between the **Marriage Supper of the Lamb** and the **supper of the great God**

- This **supper** is represented by the **“birds of heaven”** feasting on the **“flesh of kings... captains... mighty men... horses... and of all people”**
 - *And as for you, son of man, thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Speak to every sort of bird and to every beast of the field:
Assemble yourselves and come; Gather together from all sides to My sacrificial meal
Which I am sacrificing for you, A great sacrificial meal on the mountains of Israel,
That you may eat flesh and drink blood.
You shall eat the flesh of the mighty, drink the blood of the princes of the earth,
Of rams and lambs, of goats and bulls, all of them fatlings of Bashan.’* (Ezek. 39:17-18)

vv19-21: Now the **final battle of Armageddon** is depicted in just a **few, succinct verses** – very **anticlimactic**

- This might be to **show that this battle is over almost before it’s begun**
 - That’s **how easily** Jesus Christ **defeats the “beast, the kings of the earth and their armies”**
- The **beast and the false prophet** are **“cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone”**
 - This does not **kill them** though, because we see that they are **still alive** a thousand years later when **Satan** is also **cast into the Lake of Fire**
 - **“The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone wherethe beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”** (Rev. 20:10)
 - **“And the rest were killed with the sword”** which proceeded from the mouth of Jesus
- As we saw in Rev. 16:12-15, it is **the Lord** who causes the **“kings of the whole earth... to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty”**
 - These armies **gather** but they do not **initiate the final battle**; instead, they **believe they are preparing to take Jerusalem**, but instead the **Lord and His army** comes to the rescue

Chapter 20: Satan Bound and the Great White Throne

Read Revelation 20:1-6

v1: Now our **attention turns to the devil** who has been **behind the Antichrist and False Prophet all along the way**

- An **angel** comes down from heaven *“having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain”*
 - This might be the same **“fifth trumpet”** angel who released the **demons** from the **bottomless pit** in Rev. 9:1-11

vv2-3: It is **just one single angel** who *“lays hold of the dragon... and bound him for a thousand years and cast him into the bottomless pit”*

- The **devil** is not only cast **back into the bottomless pit** but he is also **bound** so that he **cannot function anymore** – he is left there **powerless**
 - Notice that it is *“deception”* that is the **primary weapon of the devil**
 - We’re also told here that the **devil will be released for “a little while”** after the **thousand years is up**
- This initiates the **thousand year reign of Christ on earth** which we call the **Millennium**
 - We too are to **rule and reign with Him**: *“If we endure, we shall also reign with Him.”* (2Timothy 2:12)
- This **thousand year period** may be taken **literally or figuratively for a long, undetermined period of time**
 - *“He will be great, and will be called the **Son of the Highest**; and the **Lord God** will give Him the **throne of His father David**.³³ And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.”* (Luke 1:32-33)

v4: The only time the **plural thrones** is used in Revelation it refers to the thrones upon which the **twenty four elders sit and judgment** was *“committed to them”* as **representatives of the Church** both in heaven and on earth

- Then John saw the *“souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness”*
 - These are the **martyrs under the throne** in Rev. 6:9-11 who then *“lived and reigned with Christ”* for those thousand years

v5: This verse causes a lot of **disagreement and confusion** over who the *“rest of the dead”* are and what the *“first resurrection”* means

- Some say these are **everyone except the martyrs** but this would **presuppose no rapture**
- Others say these are the **wicked dead** who will be **judged later**
- The **Dispensational Interpretation** (which we have largely followed with some exceptions) says: *“The **first resurrection** includes the resurrection of **Jesus Christ**, the **dead OT saints** (see Matthew 27:52), the **dead believers of the Church Age**, the **rapture of living believers**, and the **martyrs of the Great Tribulation**”*

v6: This **fifth beatitude** of Revelation essentially says that **all those** who are part of the **first resurrection** do not have to fear the **second death** (i.e. being cast into the **Lake of Fire**)

- Instead, they shall be *“priests of Christ”* who will *“reign with Him a thousand years”*

Read Revelation 20:7-10

vv7-8: When **Satan is released after a thousand years**, he immediately goes right back to work to **“deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth”**

- Once again, he **“gathers them together to battle”** in **great numbers**
 - Who are these? The very ones who have **ruled and reigned with Christ!**
- However, the **world has not been cleansed of all sin** and those who are **born during this thousand year period** must also be **given a choice between good and evil**
 - It is only in the **New Earth** in Chapter 21 that our world is **recreated without sin**
- In Ezekiel 38-39, **Gog** is the **prince of the land of Magog** which represent the peoples who **side with Satan in one last rebellion against God**

vv9-10: But as they gathered for battle, **“fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them”**

- Now the **devil** is **“cast into the lake of fire and brimstone”**
 - There, he and the **beast** and the **false prophet** will be **tormented day and night forever**

Read Revelation 20:11-15

v11: Now John sees the **“great white throne”** upon which **Jesus sits in Final Judgment** – the **Great White Throne Judgment**

- The symbolism of the **“earth and heaven fled away”** means that **time and history** are over – to be replaced with the **New Heaven, New Earth and New Jerusalem** (Rev. 21)
 - Now there is **no place to hide** for anyone – they must all appear **before the throne**

vv12-15: **All the dead** now stand before God and **“the books were opened”** – the **Bible**, the record of **everyone’s deeds and works**, and the **Book of Life**

- Some say that these are not the **“dead in Christ”** whose names are still written in the **“Lamb’s book of life”** – they say, instead, that these are those who are **spiritually dead** – i.e. they were **not born again**
- Those whose names are **not written in the Book of Life** are **judged according to their works** and the **books of the law**
 - God would **not judge them without a standard** – and it is the **Bible** by which their **deeds will be judged** and, of course, **found wanting**
- That’s why we need to be **“saved by grace through faith”** (Ephesians 2:8)
 - **“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.”** (Romans 8:2)
- **Everyone not found in the Book of Life** was **cast into the lake of fire** along with **Death and Hades**
 - Now **nothing remains** of the **world** as we now know it
- Everyone whose name **is in the Book of Life** then goes on to a **second judgment** – the so-called **Bema Judgment** where our **works are judged** (but not our salvation)
 - **“Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. ¹⁴If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.”** (1Corinthians 3:12-15)

Chapter 21: New Heaven, New Earth, New Jerusalem

Read Revelation 21:1-8

v1: Now that the **Great White Throne Judgment** is over, it is time to **start over again** – everything will be made **brand new**

- Those whose names were **not** written in the **Book of Life** have been cast into the **Lake of Fire**
- And those whose names **are** written in the **Book of Life** are now set to **rule and reign with Christ**
 - *“They shall be **priests of God and of Christ**, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.”*
(Revelation 20:6)

However, Christ and these **saints** will **not** rule over the **old heaven and earth** which has largely been **destroyed** by the various **seal, trumpet and bowl plagues**

- Rather they will **rule over a “new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away”**
- This too was foretold in Scripture:
 - *“For behold, I create **new heavens and a new earth**; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind.”* (Isaiah 65:17)
 - *“Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for **new heavens and a new earth** in which **righteousness dwells**.”* (2Peter 3:13)
 - This **new heaven** is the **first heaven** or **firmament** – i.e. the **atmosphere** around earth
- But note here that there will be **“no more sea”**
 - This **doesn’t mean** that there is **no more water**, but rather that there are **no more seas** separating the continents from one another
 - In fact, we’re told in Rev. 22:1 that there will be a **“pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God”**

v2: In addition to the new heaven and new earth, John also sees **“the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God”**

- The old Jerusalem had been split asunder by wars and earthquakes
 - This **New Jerusalem** was **“prepared as a bride adorned for her husband”**
- The **Holy City** now becomes the **Bride of Christ**, containing the **saints** who had been **joined with Christ** at the **“marriage supper of the Lamb”** (Rev. 19:9)
 - The **New Jerusalem** combines **aspects** of the **old Jerusalem**, the **temple** and the **Garden of Eden**

v3: John now hears a **“loud voice from heaven”** proclaiming that the **“tabernacle of God is with men”**

- But **this new tabernacle** is **of God** not of men – it is **not a building**, but rather it **is God and the Lamb**
 - Note that the next phrase here referring to the tabernacle says, **“He will dwell with them... God Himself will be with them.”**
 - Also, verse 22 says, **“I saw no temple in it; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.”**
- What a **glorious time** – we get to **dwell with God!!**

v4: At that time God promises that He will *“wipe away every tear from their eyes”* and that there will be *“no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying... or pain”* – the *“sting of death”* is gone!!

- This fulfills the prophecy in Isaiah 25:8 – *“He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces.”*
- And this **recreates conditions** in the **Garden of Eden** all over again, with **eternal life free from the curses God placed over the old earth**
 - This is because those *“former things have passed away”*

vv5-6: This has all happened because *“He who sat on the throne”* said that *“I will make all things new”*

- And then declared, *“It is done”*
 - The *“Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End”* have now **gone full circle** with the **end bringing us back to the beginning**
 - However, **this time God is on the throne of the earth** and the **devil is locked up in Hell**

vv7-8: Those who *“overcome”* will *“inherit all [these] things”*

- And we will **re-enter** into that **personal relationship** that God wanted from the beginning where **He will fellowship with us as His sons [children]**
 - But those who **did not overcome** (i.e. the **unbelieving** who **did not accept Christ as their Savior**) fell **victim to their sins** and now suffer the **second death** in the **Lake of Fire**

Read Revelation 21:9-21

vv9-10: Now one of the **angels** of the **seven bowl plagues** takes John away *“in the Spirit to a great high mountain”* presumably on the **new earth** – marking the **fourth major vision** of John

- Perhaps this is the **mountain** that **Isaiah** saw when he was **in the Spirit**:
 - *“Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills.”* (Isaiah 2:2)
- From there John sees the *“holy Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God”*

vv11-21: John now **describes** this **holy city** that he sees **descending from heaven**

- First he notes that *“her light was like a most precious stone”* (i.e. the **jasper** stone which is **probably a diamond**, and therefore **crystal clear**)
 - In verse 23 we learn that *“the Lamb is its light”*
- Just as the **city of old**, this **new Jerusalem** has *“a great and high wall”*
 - It has *“twelve gates and twelve angels at the gates”* (three on each of the four sides) with the **names of the twelve tribes of Israel** written on them
 - Note that there are **four sides** (representing the **four directions** of the earth) and **three gates per side** (representing the **holy trinity**)
 - The wall also has *“twelve foundations”* (perhaps the sections between the twelve gates) that had the **names of the twelve apostles** written on them
 - This fulfills the words of Paul in Ephesians 2:19-20 – *“Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone”*

- The **twelve tribes of Israel** and the **twelve apostles** symbolize the **merging of the Old and New Testament covenants**
 - The number **twelve** means “**governmental perfection**”
- The angel had a “**gold reed to measure the city**” which enabled John to give the **measurements** of the “**city, its gates, and its wall**”
 - The city is “**laid out as a square**” (i.e. **foursquare** – KJV) with each side **twelve furlongs** (i.e. **1,500 miles per side**, or the equivalent of Maine to Florida north to south, and Maine to South Dakota, east to west)
- Although the Scripture indicates that the **height** was equal to the **length and breadth**, none of the commentaries believe that the wall was **1,500 miles high**
 - Instead, they take verse 17 to mean that the wall was **144 cubits high (twelve times twelve)** or about **210 feet** – although one commentary says this is the **thickness of the wall**
- The **wall** was also made of **jasper** (i.e. **diamond**) so it too was **crystal clear**
 - And the **city itself** was **constructed of pure gold** which is also described as “**clear glass**”
- The **twelve foundations** were each **adorned** with one of **twelve different gem stones**
 - Matthew Henry says: “These stones are **nearly the same** with those on the **breastplate of the high priest**, Exodus 28:17, etc., and probably were intended to express the meaning of the Hebrew words there used.”
 - The NIV study Bible says, “The **precise identification** of some of these precious stones is **uncertain.**”
- The **twelve gates** were **twelve pearls**
 - And the **streets were paved with gold** – gold so pure that it was like “**transparent glass**”

Read Revelation 21:22-27

v22: Here we learn that **there is no temple** in New Jerusalem, because “**God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple**”

- There is no need for a **tabernacle or temple to contain God’s glory**, because now He **permanently dwells** in the city
 - The **object of our worship** is there so we can **worship Him directly**

v23: Nor is there any need for the **sun or the moon**, because now “**the Lamb is its light**”

- Jesus always said that he was “**the light of the world**” (John 8:12)
 - Adam Clarke’s commentary says, “This is also one of the **traditions of the ancient Jews**, that “in the **world to come** the Israelites shall have **no need of the sun by day, nor the moon by night.**”—Yalcut Rubeni, fol. 7, 3. **God’s light** shines in this city, and in the Lamb that light is concentrated, and from him everywhere diffused.”

vv24-26: The **people** of the nations and the **kings** of the earth “**who are saved**” will walk in the **Lamb’s light** in New Jerusalem

- It’s **gates** will be **open all the time** – for there is **no day or night**, but **eternal light**
 - Presumably we **won’t need to sleep!!**
- The **people and kings** will bring the “**glory and honor of the nations**” into the Holy City
 - That it, **there riches** will be **given to the Lamb in honor of Him**

v27: Here John reiterates that **only the saved** will be allowed to **enter the City**

- **Nothing that defiles** (i.e. that pollutes or makes unclean) will be allowed **inside its gates**
 - This implies that there are still **unsaved people and unclean things** remaining on the earth
- Isaiah 66:22 says, *“For as the **new heavens** and the **new earth** which I will make shall remain before Me,” says the LORD, “So shall your descendants and your name remain.”*
 - That is, the **children of Israel**
- Other commentators say that this verse means that **“neither the new earth or the new city will ever be contaminated again by any kind of sin”**

Chapter 22: River of Life and the Tree of Life

Read Revelation 22:1-5

v1: John now sees a *“pure river of water of life, clear as a crystal”* which symbolizes God blessings with water representing the Spirit

- This **pure water** is the *“water of life”* that flows *“the throne of God and of the Lamb”*
 - One commentator states that this **one river** will divide into **twelve rivers** and flow **out of each gate** to the **four corners of the world**

v2: The New Jerusalem also contains the **tree of life** which was *“in the middle of its street”* and *“on either side of the river”*

- This is the same **tree of life** that was also located in the **Garden of Eden** and represents **eternal life**
 - This description of being **both sides of the river** means symbolically that it is **all sufficient to meet our needs**
- One commentator notes that the words translated as *“tree... street... river”* are translated in the **plural many times** in the New Testament
 - So this would mean that there are **many trees, many streets, many rivers** – which would make sense in a city that is 2,250,000 square miles
- *“Each tree”* bears **twelve fruits**, *“yielding its fruit every month* – perhaps **one** for each of the **twelve months**
 - And the **leaves of the tree** are for the *“healing of the nations”* – i.e. the **nations and peoples** who **come into the City of Jerusalem** as mentioned in Rev. 21:24-26

v3: The **curse** that God placed on **mankind and the earth** in Genesis are now **removed** for the **Lamb paid the penalty for our sins on the cross**

- *“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree” (Galatians 3:13)*
 - Because of His **victory on the cross**, He was **deemed worthy** to **open the scroll** and to **rule and reign on earth** and *“His servants shall serve Him.”*

v4: We shall *“see His face”* and *“His name shall be on [our] foreheads”*

- This means that we can now **fellowship with Christ** on a **face-to-face** basis
 - This is the **name** promised to the **overcomers** of the **Philadelphia church** (Rev. 3:12)

v5: Again, it is noted that *“there shall be no night there”*

- And, by implication, **no darkness of any kind** – a state that will exist *“forever and ever”*

Read Revelation 22:6-11

Note in the following verses that there are **seven confirming witnesses** attesting to the **truth and validity** of the **words of Revelation**

v6: The angel now reiterates to John that **“these words”** (i.e. all of the Book of Revelation) are **“faithful and true”** (also one of Christ’s descriptions)

- The angel then reminds John that he was sent by the first witness **“the Lord God of the holy prophets”** to **“show His servants”** (i.e. us) **“the things which must shortly take place”**
 - That is, the **events** of the **end-times**

v7: Now **Jesus Himself speaks**, and reminds us that He is **“coming quickly”** (but recall that, with the Lord, **“one day is as a thousand years”**)

- As we discussed earlier, the Greek word translated **“quickly”** can also be translated **“suddenly”** meaning that it **might not be soon** but it will be **“like a thief in the night”**
 - And then **Jesus pronounces** the **sixth blessing** of Revelation for **“he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book”**

vv8-9: John (the second witness in this chapter) now **witnesses again** that this book is what he **saw** and **heard**

- But once again, John **makes the mistake** of **worshipping the angel** and is again **quickly admonished**

v10: Unlike **Daniel** (12:4) some **six hundred years earlier**, John is told by the angel (the third witness) **“Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand”**

- Although this sounds like **the end-times would come soon**, it really refers to the fact that **Jesus completed His work on the cross and declared, “It is finished”**
 - The Greek here suggests that **this work was completed** and **its implications would continue on into the future**
 - **In eternity, the end has already happened** – on earth, we still have to **play out the hand**

v11: This verse addresses the **eternity of the soul**

- Once **judgment is over**, there is **no further opportunity** to change what was
 - So, the **unjust is still unjust** and the **righteous is still righteous**

Read Revelation 22:12-17

vv12-13: **Jesus** (the fourth witness) **speaks** again, and once again states that He is **“coming quickly”** and reiterates that He is **“the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last”**

- But this time He adds that His **“reward is with Me to give to every one according to His work”**
 - The **Great White Throne Judgment** in Chapter 20 has **separated out the saints** who, according to 1Corinthians 3:12-15 **receive rewards** based on their **works**

v14: The **seventh and last beatitude** is now given which states that **“blessed are those who do His commandments”**

- Their **reward** is that they have the right to **“the tree of life and may enter through the gates into the city”**
 - What greater reward could there be than to **rule and reign with Christ** in the **New Jerusalem**

v15: **Outside** the city of Jerusalem are those who remain **unsaved** and who continue a life of **evil**

- This **doesn't necessarily mean** that they are **right outside** – but rather that they are **not allowed inside**

v16: **Jesus now confirms** that it was indeed **He who sent the angel** to John to *“testify to you these things in the churches”*

- **Jesus** wants the **churches** (i.e. the Body of Christ) to **know what to expect**
 - Having declared the **beginning from the end**, Jesus now reminds us that He is the **prophesied “Root and Offspring of David”** (2Samuel 7:13-16)
 - And Jesus also calls Himself *“the Bright Morning Star”* signifying the **dawn of a new age** (Numbers 24:17)

v17: The **free gift of salvation** is emphasized here by the **final three witnesses** – the **Holy Spirit**, the **church** and **believers**

- It is **available** to anyone who *“thirsts”* or *“desires”* – they may *“take the water of life freely”*
 - Note that this **invitation to salvation** is to be extended by the **Holy Spirit** (it is the Spirit who convicts and draws men unto Christ) and by **all believers** (i.e. *“him who hears”*)
 - We are all called to uphold the **Great Commission** of Matthew 28:18 and Mark 16:15-18

Read Revelation 22:18-21

vv18-19: John now delivers a **stern warning** to not **add anything or take away anything** from the *“words of the book of this prophecy”*

- To do so will bring the **plagues of Revelation** and **removal from the Book of Life** – severe punishment indeed

vv20-21: Once again, **Jesus warns** that He is *“coming quickly”*

- With which **John concurs** – *“Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!”*