A map of the Aegean Sea region, showing the coastlines of Turkey and Greece. The sea is colored blue, and the land is green. Several cities are marked with black dots and labeled: Pergamum, Thyatira, Smyrna, Sardis, Philadelphia, Ephesus, Laodicea, and Patmos. The title "I Am the Alpha and the Omega" is written in large white letters across the map.

"I Am the Alpha and the Omega"

The Revelation to John

Jim Wilsford, Ph.D.

“I Am the Alpha and the Omega”

The Revelation to John

Commentary and Notes

By Jim Wilsford, Ph.D.

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All scriptures are from the American Standard Version (ASV).

Some archaic constructions and words have been exchanged for the modern form of the expressions; such as, *thee, thine, ye, hast, verily, yea*, etc. Otherwise the text of the 1901 AD version is unaltered. The author sought scriptures that were as true and literal a translation of the original as possible in order to eliminate ambiguity in regard to the metaphors and images of the Revelation.

Since the primary strategy was to let scripture explain scripture, knowing that the interpretation belongs to God, the Father, one will find a more liberal quoting of support passages than is usually the case.

The cover, which is the map showing the seven churches of Asia, is in the public domain, so placed there by its author Jonadab (see: [en:Image:Seven-churches-of-asia.svg](#) and [en:User:Jonadab](#))

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to the members of the Orangeburg church of Christ adult Bible class, where the lessons were first taught. The class showed unmatched patience and kindness to me for the thirty seven years of my teaching there. They certainly taught me more than I ever taught them. May we all live with the words of the Lord close to our hearts:

“Yes, I come quickly.”

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Introduction to the Revelation of Jesus Christ*

The Theme: "I am the Alpha and the Omega"

The key to understanding the theme of *Revelation* is in God's statement in Revelation 1:8:

8 I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

God repeated this theme at the end of *Revelation* in Revelation 21:6:

6 And he said unto me, "They are come to pass. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely."

In Rev 22:13-15, Jesus, the Lord, takes the *Alpha and Omega* characteristic unto himself, promising the tree of life and entrance through the heavenly city to the truly *blessed*. The evil and pleasure-seekers remain outside. He said in Revelation 22:13-14:

13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. 14 Blessed are they that wash their robes that they may have the right (to come) to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city.

This theme of Revelation is God's emphatic declaration, supported by the all-powerful images and figures of the book, that He and Jesus, the Lord, the only begotten son, are the Alpha and Omega, and no other. This A to Z imagery, which is the beginning and end and encompasses everything in between and which in a figure describes a oneness explained in John 1:1-4, 14:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made. 4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth.

The book is not a symbolical assertion of the iniquities of the Romans as the oppressors of the early church, although that was bad, indeed. Nor is the book about the destruction of Jerusalem and a coming of the Lord at that time. Nor is it about the Roman Empire, the Roman Catholic Church, the barbaric hordes, or the Muslims. The connection that institutions and governments have to the content of *Revelation* is one

where the people who compose them are defiant, evil, immoral, and rebellious, or submissive, good, moral, and obedient, as the case may be.

This great theme—I am the Alpha and the Omega—centers on the power and eternal nature of an almighty God and His only begotten son as their power is arrayed against the heavenly hosts of wickedness—a theme so powerful that it dwarfs nations, philosophic arguments, and theological speculations. Since there are so many digressions and speculative interpretations from the real theme of *Revelation*, time, and space will not allow their refutation or, indeed, their reiteration. The text that follows may allude to some of these in passing, but the text claims no fairness or justice in the treatment of these many viewpoints. Instead, the text will make the case for an interpretation based on the theme that the Lord God and Jesus, the Lord, are the Alpha and the Omega. A consistency of treatment of the symbolism will emerge, clarifying what many efforts have obscured, as they force The *Revelation* into preconceived notions, ideas, and temporal events and happenings in the history of the past and the future of man. It is with an open mind that we now “hear the words of this prophecy.”

Special and insightful clarifications come from paying close attention to the Apostle Paul’s interaction with the philosophies of the age, especially those that he confronted in Athens, recorded in Acts 17. Paul found Athens full of idols, which was very distressing to him. Paul reasoned with the Jews and God-fearing Gentiles in the synagogue, but also took the gospel to the people in the marketplace. Here, Epicurean and Stoic philosophers challenged Paul, who was fulfilling the Great Commission by preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection to all men. Primarily Paul engaged two groups of philosophers--the Epicureans and Stoics.

The seed bed for the Epicurean and Stoic philosophies was Asia Minor—philosophies that confronted the seven churches of Asia as the members walked their daily lives. These pervasive philosophies confronted the Christians continuously with their persuasion to follow their sinful nature and acts of evil.

The Epicureans

The Epicureans followed the philosophy of Epicurus who was born on the island of Samos in 341 BC, and who taught first in Asia Minor and afterward in Athens till his death in 270 BC. That the philosophy spread widely in Asia Minor makes it influential to the everyday lives of the churches of the seven cities of Asia. Jesus orders John to write to these seven churches in chapters Revelations 1 and 2. (Some notes are from *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Electronic Database Copyright © 1996, 2003 by Biblesoft, Inc.)

Epicurus taught:

“The aim and end of life for every man is his own happiness, and happiness is primarily defined as pleasure. ‘Wherefore we call pleasure the Alpha and Omega of a blessed life [Emphasis added]. Pleasure is our first and kindred good. It is the starting-point of every choice and of every aversion, and to it we come back, inasmuch as we make feeling the rule by which to judge every good thing’”
(Epicurus, Letter to Menoeceus from International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Electronic Database Copyright © 1996, 2003 by Biblsoft, Inc.).

Epicurus used the phrases *Alpha and Omega* and *blessed life* to describe his pleasure-dominated philosophy. These same words become the thesis-setting words of *Revelation*. In chapter 1:3, John uses the word *blessed* of people very different from Epicurus’ pleasure seekers: “Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things that are written therein: for the time is at hand.”

The comparison in language is so stunningly the same that there can be no coincidence. A similarly stunning comparison occurs in the thesis-setting words of Rev 1:8, which follow immediately: “8 I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.” That is to say neither Epicurus and nor the central element of the Epicurean philosophy—pleasure—are the Alpha and Omega. Only the Almighty God and his son Jesus take these words and the preeminence and power that such words convey.

The origin of Epicurus’ philosophy lends even more credence to its being a primary target of *Revelation* and its symbolism. His birth off the coast of Asia Minor on Samos and the spread of his popular, hedonistic philosophy across the region, give great meaning to these phrases as used by Lord God, the Almighty, and Christ, the Lord, in the Revelation. When God said, “8 I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.” An Epicurean audience would know immediately that God was directly attacking their pleasure-dominated philosophy. Blessedness is not in pleasure; it is in the Lord God, the almighty. God repeated the same strong teaching in Revelation 21:6-8 for righteousness and against hedonistic pleasure. Near the completion of His revelation He said:

6 And he said unto me, “They are come to pass. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is thirsty of the fountain of the water of life freely. 7 He that overcomes shall inherit these things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. 8 But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part (shall be) in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone; which is the second death.

God sets the inheritance of the faithful against the tragic second death of pleasure-seekers of every kind. In Revelation 22:13-15, Jesus takes the *alpha and omega* characteristic unto himself, promising the tree of life and entrance through the heavenly

city to the truly *blessed*. Thus, he adds the Godhead to the Alpha and Omega symbol. The evil and pleasure-seekers remain outside:

13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. 14 Blessed are they that wash their robes that they may have the right (to come) to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city. 15 Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and every one that loves and makes a lie.

Revelation also makes clear the truly blessed are not the pleasure-seekers but those who follow the Lord:

Revelation 1:3: Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things that are written therein: for the time is at hand.

Revelation 14:13: And I heard the voice from heaven saying, "Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: 'yes,' says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them."

Revelation 16:15: (Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.)

Revelation 19:9: And he said unto me, "Write, Blessed are they that are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said unto me, "These are true words of God."

Revelation 20:6: Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: over these the second death has no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

Revelation 22:7: And behold, I come quickly. Blessed is he that keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.

Blessedness (a Godlike happiness) is not in pleasure. In the 21st century, efforts to make worship the feel-good province of the praise worshipers have echoes of the problems confronted by the churches of Asia and Greece. Truth comes only from God and those who worship him must worship "in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). It is not the feelings or insights of the worshiper that count, but the pleasure of God. The danger then and now is that the disciples fellowship the unbelievers and fellowship the demons whom these unbelievers worship. Paul stated the case in 1 Corinthians 10:18-22:

Behold Israel after the flesh: have not they that eat the sacrifices communion with the altar? 19 What say I then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? 20 But (I say), that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God: and I would not that you should have communion with demons. 21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of demons: you cannot partake of the table of the Lord, and of the

table of demons. 22 Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

That Paul reiterated the same argument in 2 Corinthians 6:14-17 only emphasizes how critical it is that Christians understand the deceptive and enticing nature of human religions and philosophies surrounding them:

14 Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers: for what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? Or what communion has light with darkness? 15 And what concord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion has a believer with an unbeliever? 16 And what agreement has a temple of God with idols? For we are a temple of the living God; even as God said, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." 17 "Wherefore, come you out from among them, and be you separate," says the Lord, "And touch no unclean thing; And I will receive you. 18 And will be to you a Father, And you shall be to my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

The Stoics

The people of Asia Minor knew very well the other philosophy addressed by Paul in Athens. This group, the Stoics, derived their name, Stoic, from the Stoa Poikile, the painted porch at Athens, where the founders of the school first lectured. This school of Greek philosophy was founded at Athens circa 294 BC by Zeno (circa 336 BC - 264 BC), a native of Citium, a Greek colony in Cyprus. But the Semitic race predominated in Cyprus, and it has been conjectured that Zeno was of Semitic, rather than Hellenic origin. This would have given him close ties to the religions of the Samaritans and Hebrews, both of which looked to the almighty God of the five books of Moses. It is from this background that Paul refers to an unknown god in Acts 16:23. Zeno's Greek critics taunted him with being a Phoenician. It suggests, therefore, that the distinctive moral tone of the system was Semitic and not Hellenic. The centers, among others, were Tarsus and Sidon. Paul, who was formerly Saul of Tarsus, would have known with certainty the Stoic precepts. In the 2nd century B.C., the doctrine came to Rome where it spread widely among the upper classes of Roman society. The philosophy with a center in Tarsus would influence the cities of Asia. Whether from Rome, Athens, or from Taurus, these seven cities were in a crossroads of Stoic influence.

The system acquired its most lasting influence when Rome adopted some of its precepts as the formative factor in the jurisprudence of imperial Rome and Roman law. As the Roman church assimilated aspects of the Romans and Roman law, the philosophy also contributed to the formation of Roman Catholic doctrine and ethics. The main principles of Stoicism may be summarized:

Adherents follow nature.

The law of Nature is reason (logos)--the principle of intelligence in man, and the divine reason imminent in the world.

Their metaphysics inclined to be a materialistic pantheism. On the one side, Nature is the organization of material atoms by the operation of its own uniform and necessary laws. On the other side, it is a living, rational being, subduing all its parts to work out a rational purpose inherent in the whole. As such, it may be called Providence or God.

[These notes on the Stoics are in part from *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, Electronic Database Copyright © 1996, 2003 by Biblesoft, Inc.]

Modern religions reflect the influence of Stoicism, when they seek rational answers from within themselves, their councils, clergy, and conventions, denying the infallibility of the inspired word of God as the only rule of faith and practice. Again the apostle Paul summarized the case against these reason-dominated philosophies in Colossians 2:8-10:

8 Take heed lest there shall be any one that makes spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ: 9 for in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, 10 and in him you are made full, who is the head of all principality and power:

Application

This study will show that the enemy of the church in Asia, and by extension, of all churches for all times, was the two evils generating from the prevailing philosophies in Asia Minor. One philosophy—Epicurean—centered on pleasures with its lust of flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vain glory of life. The other—Stoic—centered on man's own reason as the final arbitrator of faith and doctrine, the very core of boastful and vain glorious man. Of these, John wrote in 1 John 2:15-18:

15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vain glory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17 And the world passes away, and the lust thereof: but he that does the will of God abides forever.

18 Little children, it is the last hour: and as you heard that antichrist cometh, even now have there arisen many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last hour.

Of human wisdom from which both philosophies come, Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 1:18-21:

18 For the word of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And the discernment of the discerning will I bring to naught. 20 Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe.

As *Revelation* unfolds, the wounded beast will reign over some men through their evil lusts and the false prophet will reign over other men through their empty, human reason. Of course, Satan—the serpent, the dragon, the great deceiver—will reign over the wounded beast and the false prophet. These evils and personalities play out within the human experience for mortal and immortal stakes transcending governments, religions, and economies. Those humans who constitute earthly organizations make them evil.

However, God almighty, the Alpha and the Omega, the King of Kings, reigns over all and above all, and with him, reign his son—also called the Alpha and the Omega, the King of Kings—and those who are dressed in white garments, which garments are the righteous acts of the saints in Revelation 19:5-8:

5 And a voice came forth from the throne, saying,

Give praise to our God, all you his servants, you that fear him, the small and the great.

6 And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying,

Hallelujah: for the Lord our God, the Almighty reigns. 7 Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give the glory unto him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. 8 And it was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen, bright (and) pure: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

Reading Figurative Language

Revelation 1:20 explains the mystery and symbolism of the seven stars and the seven golden candlesticks:

20 the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks are seven churches.

Many of the metaphors and figures that follow in the Revelation will be explained in the text. We are not free to speculate in cases where the exact meaning is given. When the meaning is not in the text, we must understand that metaphoric language uses

two or more things that are essentially unlike. Therefore, candlesticks are figuratively like churches, but literally they are unlike. What do they have in common? Churches are a light to the world as a candlestick is a light to a room.

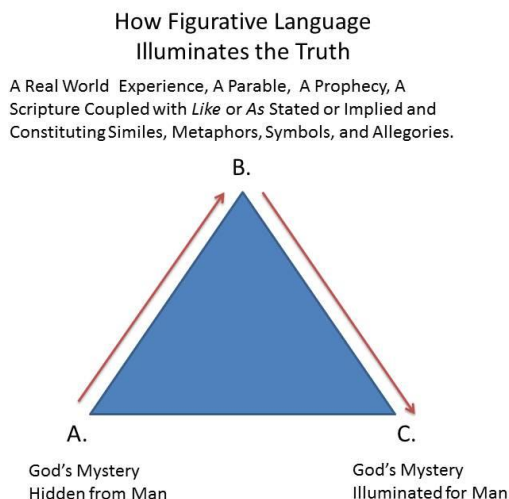
Matthew 5:16: Even so let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

1 Corinthians 4:5: Wherefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall each man have his praise from God.

Ephesians 5:8-10: 8 For you were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord: walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth), 10 proving what is well-pleasing unto the Lord;

If the meaning is not in the text, we must next look to other passages on the subject, making sure there is no contradiction. The figures of speech in the Bible have a meaning provided by the Holy Spirit who searches the spiritual things of God. Man is not free to speculate what the meaning might be. Paul explains this in 1 Corinthians 2:10-13:

10 But unto us God revealed (them) through the Spirit: for the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. 11 For who among men knows the things of a man, save the spirit of the man, which is in him? even so the things of God none knows, save the Spirit of God. 12 But we received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God; that we might know the things that were freely given to us of God. 13 Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Spirit teaches; combining spiritual things with spiritual (words).



It is from these symbols that the Spirit illuminates truth. People have no frame of reference outside their own experiences. These objects and experiences of daily life reveal what was hidden, thus illuminating the spiritual meaning. Since the meaning is from God, we have no right to speculate. The meaning will always be the same to all

people. Mankind is not permitted to speculate in regard to these matters. Revelation reveals God's mystery.

No Scriptures Are of Private Interpretation

Paul revealed the unwavering authority and infallibility of the scriptures in 2 Timothy 3:16-17

16 Every scripture inspired of God (is) also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness. 17 That the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work.

There is only one way to read *furnished completely*; just as there is only one way to read *every scripture*. Peter was equally unequivocal in asserting the standard for interpretation in 2 Peter 1:19-21:

19 And we have the word of prophecy (made) more sure; whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts: 20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation. 21 For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spoke from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit.

One cannot make up interpretations of God's word, for the scriptures are not open to imaginary constructs from the mind of man. One cannot separate the will of God from the Spirit of God, telling what the deep things of God are. It has been this way from the beginning—from Genesis to Revelation. When Pharaoh's butler and cupbearer sought the interpretation of their dreams from Joseph, Joseph revealed an eternal and abiding truth about prophecy in Genesis 40:8:

8 And they said unto him, "We have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it."

And Joseph said unto them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell it to me, I pray you."

How more certain could it be? The interpretations of God's prophecies, dreams, and visions belong to God. Man is not free to render the deep things of God, in his own mind and imaginings. Later, in Genesis 41:8, Pharaoh had difficulty with interpreting his dreams:

8 And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled; and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof: and Pharaoh told them his dream; but there was none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh.

When Pharaoh called on Joseph to help him, Joseph answered forever the question of who holds the deep meanings of God, whether the meaning of visions, dreams, or prophecies. In Genesis 41:15-16, Joseph answered emphatically:

15 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, "I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it: and I have heard of you, that when you hear a dream you can interpret it."

16 And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, "It is not in me: God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace."

Neither is interpretation in modern man, for the answer is in the mind of God. Moses went on to write in Genesis 41:32:

32 And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh, it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.

When He gives visions, dreams, and prophecies, God has firmly decided the meaning. People are not and have never been free to decide the meaning at the pleasure of their human thoughts and imagination, as if it were some romantic novel, some work of science fiction, or some verse from Shakespeare himself.

In another case, Daniel, when confronted with the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, reiterated the teachings of Joseph on the matter of interpretation, teaching that the very same principles apply across the centuries. Our story begins in Daniel 2:19-23:

19 Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a vision of the night. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. 20 Daniel answered and said,

Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever; for wisdom and might are his. 21 And he changes the times and the seasons; he removes kings, and sits up kings; he gives wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that have understanding; 22 he reveals the deep and secret things; he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him. 23 I thank you, and praise you, O God of my fathers, who has given me wisdom and might, and has now made known unto me what we desired of you; for you have made known unto us the king's matter.

When the king questioned Daniel (Daniel 2:26-27), he replied without hesitation that God reveals and interprets his mysteries:

26 The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, "Are you able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof?"

27 Daniel answered before the king, and said, "The secret which the king has demanded can neither wise men, enchanters, magicians, nor soothsayers, show unto the king; 28 but there is a God in heaven that reveals secrets, and he has made known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days."

The dream revealed God's plan for the coming of Christ and his kingdom in Daniel 2:31-35

This study shall make every effort to allow the scripture to illuminate scripture for, truly the Scriptures and the interpretation of Scriptures belong to God. Revelation 10:5-7 teaches:

5 And the angel that I saw standing upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his right hand to heaven, 6 and swore by him that lives for ever and ever, who created the heaven and the things that are therein, and the earth and the things that are therein, and the sea and the things that are therein, that there shall be delay no longer: 7 but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then is finished the mystery of God, according to the good tidings which he declared to his servants the prophets.

The mystery of God is the same for us as it was for the prophets who spoke the mystery; and the interpretation is also the same.

Revelation 1: The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Revelation 1:1-3

1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show unto his servants, (even) the things which must shortly come to pass: and he sent and signified (them) by his angel unto his servant John; 2 who bare witness of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, (even) of all things that he saw. 3 Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things that are written therein: for the time is at hand.

Paul described how revelation occurs in Ephesians 3:2-5:

2 if so be that you have heard of the dispensation of that grace of God which was given me to you-ward; 3 how that by revelation was made known unto me the mystery, as I wrote before in few words, 4 whereby, when you read, you can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ; 5 which in other generation was not made known unto the sons of men, as it has now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit (See 1 Cor 2:6-16).

We can understand the Revelation of John. "What must soon take place" places a time constraint on all who read this writing. The events must soon take place, and in verse 3: "... for the time is near" makes the events of the Revelation imminent to all those who read. Paul placed the limits on time in 2 Tim 1:8-10:

8 Be not ashamed therefore of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but suffer hardship with the gospel according to the power of God; 9 who 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 us in Christ Jesus before times eternal, 10 but has now been manifested by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

Everyone who reads the Revelation confronts the imminence of the events of the book. All readers are inextricably tied to that day about which Paul speaks. The plan under which we live was before the beginning of time. In the meantime, the life we live is "... a vapor, that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away." James 4:14-15. All humankind faces the imminence of the end of time whether by death or by the coming of the Lord. Everyone, from the time of the writing until the end, faces exactly

the same situation. The events of the Revelation are near and must soon take place in all our lives.

The Revelation spells out the major event that is to take place in Revelation 10:6-7:

6 and swore by him that lives for ever and ever, who created the heaven and the things that are therein, and the earth and the things that are therein, and the sea and the things that are therein, that there shall be delay no longer: 7 but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then is finished the mystery of God, according to the good tidings which he declared to his servants the prophets.

In Revelation 11:15, the seventh angel sounded his trumpet and identified the completion of the mystery of God with the establishment of Jesus as king over his kingdom:

15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there followed great voices in heaven, and they said, "The kingdom of the world is become (the kingdom) of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever."

Of course, God resurrected Christ to sit at his right hand as described in Ephesians 1:22-23. Paul also described this event as the event by which he destroyed death. [See 2 Timothy 1:8-12 above.]

Who is the speaker? The angel speaks but he speaks the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. *Angel* is literally a messenger or one who delivers a message. The message in this case is the very word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

To whom is the angel speaking? The angel speaks to the one who reads, the one who hears, and the one who keeps those things that are written.

What is the dramatic situation? The dramatic situation is that God has revealed to us his prophecy and the one who reads, hears, and keeps what is written shall be blessed. Christ's earthly ministry began with a pronouncement of blessings in Matthew 5. Commonly called the beatitudes, these blessings use the word *blessed*, just as here in verse 3. The word, used here and in the beatitudes in Matthew 5, appears seven times: Revelation 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7,14. The uses of *blessed* in the Revelation are so powerful as to track the development of the great single theme of the book:

Revelation 1:3: Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things that are written therein: for the time is at hand.

Revelation 14:13: And I heard the voice from heaven saying, Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them.

Revelation 16:15: (Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.)

Revelation 19:9: And he said unto me, Write, Blessed are they that are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he said unto me, “These are true words of God.”

Revelation 20:6: 6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: over these the second death has no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

Revelation 22:7: And behold, I come quickly. Blessed is he that keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.

Revelation 22:14: Blessed are they that wash their robes that they may have the right (to come) to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city.

The introduction to these notes showed how Epicurus used *blessed* to describe the state of those given to pleasure: “The aim and end of life for every man is his own happiness, and happiness is primarily defined as pleasure. ‘Wherefore we call pleasure the **Alpha and Omega of a blessed life.**’” [Emphasis added]. In truth, the state of blessedness comes only through the Christ and his gospel. The Revelation attacked the decadent pleasure-seeking lives of those caught up by Satan in their own lust of the flesh, lust of eye, and pride of life. The conflict in the Revelation is a conflict between the Godhead of God, almighty, Jesus Christ, the Lord and King, and the Holy spirit of God and the triad of evil composed of the dragon or Satan, the beast, and the false prophet.

The dramatic situation takes added importance as the word prophecy shows us that God is the moving force behind the situation revealed in the Revelation. The apostle Peter explained how the power of God works in men who prophesy in 2 Peter 1:19-21:

19 And we have the word of prophecy (made) more sure; whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts: 20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation. 21 For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spoke from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit.

The Revelation reveals that our eternal reward in Christ Jesus the Lord will soon take place.

Message to the Seven Churches

Revelation 1:4-6

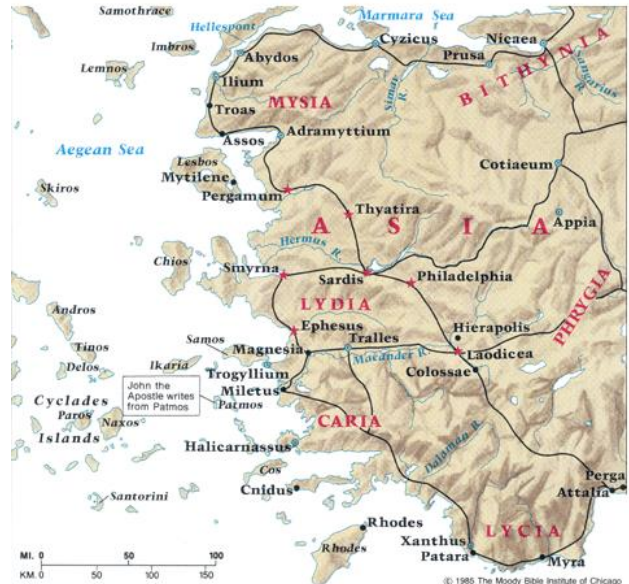
4 John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from him who is and who was and who is to come; and from the seven Spirits that are before his throne; 5 and from Jesus Christ, (who is) the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loves us, and loosed us from our

sins by his blood; 6 and he made us (to be) a kingdom, (to be) priests unto his God and Father; to him (be) the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

John identifies himself as the writer. In Revelation 1:9, he describes himself as . . . your brother and partaker with you in tribulation and kingdom and patience (which are) in Jesus, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.”

[PAT muhs] -- a small rocky island to which the apostle John was banished and where he wrote the Book of Revelation (Rev 1:9). The island, about 16

kilometers (ten miles) long and ten kilometers (six miles) wide, lies off the southwest coast of Asia Minor (modern Turkey). Because of its desolate and barren nature, Patmos was used by the Romans as a place to banish criminals, who were forced to work at hard labor in the mines and quarries of the island. Because Christians were regarded as criminals by the Roman Emperor Domitian (ruled A.D. 81 AD - 96 AD), the apostle John probably suffered from harsh treatment during his exile on Patmos. An early Christian tradition said John was in exile for 18 months.



(From Nelson's illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright (c)1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers).

He is writing to the seven churches of Asia: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.” Rev 1:11. These churches become the recipients of specific messages in chapters two and three. As pointed out in the Introduction, this region was also the initial sphere of the influence of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers.

John begins with a blessing of grace, which is unmerited favor, and peace from God. It includes a harmonious relationship with God and man, plus inner peace that comes through Him who is, and who was. It comes through Christ at ones obeying of His gospel. The blessing is from Him who is eternal: He is now, He was, and He is before the beginning, and He is forever and ever.

Not only is the grace and peace from God, but from the seven spirits before Him and from the throne. The term seven spirits is unique to the Revelation. Appearing here with God, seven spirits makes the seven spirits before his throne have power in

extending such great blessings. The Greek word for seven is *hepta* and implies fullness:

Hepta... corresponds to the Hebrew sheba' (which is akin to saba', signifying "to be full, abundant"), sometimes used as an expression of fullness, e. g., Ruth 4:15: it generally expresses completeness, and is used most frequently in the Apocalypse; it is not found in the Gospel of John, nor between the Acts and the Apocalypse, except in Heb 11:30 (in Rom 11:4 the numeral is heptakischilioi, "seven thousand"); in Matt 22:26 it is translated "seventh" (marg., "seven"). (From Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright (c)1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

Revelation uses the word *seven* over 100 times. It uses the term seven Spirits only four times in the Bible and each use is in Revelation:

Revelation 1:4: John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from him who is and who was and who is to come; and from the seven Spirits that are before his throne;

Revelation 3:1: And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: These things says he that has the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars: I know your works, that you have a name that you live, and you are dead.

Revelation 4:5: And out of the throne proceed lightnings and voices and thunders. And (there were) seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God;

Revelation 5:6: And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth.

The seven spirits of God are sevenfold in the sense of the sevenfold blessing in Ruth. The fullness of the word seven is similar in meaning to the fullness of the spirit given to Christ in John 3:34-35:

34 For he whom God hath sent speaks the words of God: for he gives not the Spirit by measure. 35 The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hand.

Christ has the seven spirits (3:1); the seven spirits are before the throne of God (4:5); the seven spirits are the eyes of the Lamb sent out unto all the earth (5:6). The seven spirits represent the Holy Spirit of God.

Isa 11:1-2 speaks of the Spirit of God metaphorically where the seven parts stand for the whole:

11 And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots shall bear fruit.

2 And the Spirit of Jehovah 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 Jehovah.

Beyond the issue of the lineage of Christ, this passage foretells a pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon the Holy One beyond what has ever happened before or since. There are seven Spirits of God foretold here: the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of understanding, the Spirit of counsel, the Spirit of power, the Spirit of knowledge, and the Spirit of fear (respect) of the Lord. All of these, in their totality comprise the Spirit of God, or as John the Baptist explained in John 3:34-35, how Jesus was endowed with the full measure of the Holy Spirit without limit. Isaiah's prophecy uses the parts for the whole of the unlimited and all-powerful Spirit of God—the Spirit that he gave his son without limit.

Finally, the grace and peace come from the third person of the Godhead, Jesus Christ. He is the firstborn from the dead in Colossians 1:18:

18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

His preeminence extends as ruler over even the kings of the earth in Ephesians 1:19-23:

19 and what the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might 20 which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly (places), 21 far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: 22 and he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him that fills all in all.

Jesus is also the fullness of the godhead (deity) bodily, according to Colossians 2:9-10:

9 for in him all dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, 10 and in him you are made full, who is the head of principality and power:

Christ is now reigning at the right hand of God and all things are under his feet. Any true reading of Revelation must accept that both Christ and the church are

complete in the victory won at the cross and the resurrection of the Lord. The final victory in Jesus will be the resurrection of the saints. 1 Corinthians 15:53-57 reads:

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

55 O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?

56 The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law:

57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus is now "above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come."

John praises him who gave himself for us and made us free from all sin. In Matthew 26:28, Jesus said: "For this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many unto remission of sins." To this the Hebrew writer added in Hebrews 9:14:

How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

We are now a kingdom, and we are now priests. This is not something deferred to the second coming. Revelation repeats this status of the saints throughout the book. In Revelation 5:9-10, they sing a new song:

9 And they sing a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for you were slain, and purchased unto God with your blood (men) of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, 10 and made them (to be) unto our God a kingdom and priests; and they reign upon earth.

The NKJV and the KJV and the Greek Version all read "made us kings and priests. The translators of the later versions—ASV, NASV, NIV—inserted the *to be*. The older version and the Greek Version present us as kings and priests a *fait accompli*, dispensing with the millennial theories forevermore.

There is no idea of a future kingdom yet to come in the entire Bible. In fact, the teaching is emphatic that the one and only kingdom of Christ has already come:

Mark 9:1: And he said unto them, Truly I say unto you, There are some here of them that stand (by), who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power.

Colossians 1:13: Who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love.

Hebrews 12:28-29: Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe: 29 for our God is a consuming fire.

There is no teaching in the Bible about a kingdom yet to come. In fact, nowhere does the Bible say Jesus will ever return to this earth again.

He also made us to be priests to serve his God and father. Peter describe our priestly duties in 1 Peter 2:4-5:

4 unto whom coming, a living stone, rejected indeed of men, but with God elect, precious, 5 you also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

"To him be the glory and power" describes the exalted and empowered savior. Just as the exaltation and empowerment are complete, so is the duration—"forever and ever." Forever and ever is literally into the ages of the ages. The power and glory of the Lord are complete in his resurrection and complete forever and ever.

Revelation 1:7-8

7 Behold, he comes with the clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they that pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over him. Even so, Amen. 8 I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

Christ is coming with the clouds and all shall see him—those who are now living and those who have gone before. Every knee shall bow will then bow and every tongue confess. Philippians 2:9-11 reads:

9 Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; 10 that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of (things) in heaven and (things) on earth and (things) under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

As pointed out, nowhere does the Bible say that Jesus will set foot on the earth again; but 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 teaches that we will meet him in the air and be there forever:

16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; 17 then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

“I am the alpha and omega,” or we would say, “The A and the Z.” This verse is the thematic statement of the book. All that follows demonstrates now and forever that God is truly Almighty: “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.” The dragon, the devil, the beast, the false prophet, and all who follow them will suffer defeat before the power to God, Almighty, and His Lamb.

The Patmos Vision

Revelation 1:9-11

9 I John, your brother and partaker with you in tribulation and kingdom and patience (which are) in Jesus, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. 10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet 11 saying, What you see, write in a book and send (it) to the seven churches: unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamum, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

John identifies himself as a companion in the tribulation and the kingdom. As noted before, the kingdom is present and not to be established at some future time. Some who believe in an earthly kingdom to come call for the tribulation to be a relative short period of time before their rapture. Here we clearly see the tribulation as a period in which John participated with the saints of Asia Minor, just as they all participated in the kingdom—then and there. The word *rapture* does not appear anywhere in the Bible and the word tribulation refers exclusively to the tribulations that all Christians endure. In the Revelation, the word refers exclusively to the trials and persecution and suffering of the Christians. In detail in Revelation 7:14, we will see that those coming out of it are all the faithful:

14 And I say unto him, My lord, you know . . . And he said to me, These are they that come of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

See the note on verse 4 for Patmos, where John was imprisoned because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

The Lord's Day receives significance throughout the New Testament:

Matthew 26:29: But I say unto you, I shall not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

Mark 16:9: Now when he was risen early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons.

John 20:1: Now on the first (day) of the week Mary Magdalene came early, while it was yet dark, unto the tomb, and saw the stone was taken away from the tomb.

Acts 2:1: 2 And when the day of Pentecost was now come, they were all together in one place.

Acts 20:7: And upon the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul discoursed with them, intending to depart on the morrow; and prolonged his speech until midnight.

1 Corinthians 16:1-2: Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I gave order to the churches of Galatia, so also do you. 2 Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come.

Hebrews 10:24-25:24 and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works; 25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting (one another); and so much the more, as you see the day drawing nigh.

The time of John's vision was on the Lord's Day and, by most scholars, around 96AD. This day is not to be confused with the last day when the Lord shall come again and the end is upon us:

Acts 2:20-21: The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the day of the Lord come, That great and notable (day). 21 And it shall be, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

1 Corinthians 5:5: To deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

2 Corinthians 1:14: As also you did acknowledge us in part, that we are your glorying, even as you also are ours, in the day of our Lord Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 5:2-3: For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night.

2 Thessalonians 2:2: To the end that you be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor yet be troubled, either by spirit, or by word, or by epistle as from us, as that the day of the Lord is just at hand;

2 Peter 3:10: But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

John describes himself as in the spirit. The Lord and Paul describe this state as the state of true worship:

John 4:24: God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

Ephesians 6:18: With all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons in the Spirit, and watching thereunto in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints,

Colossians 1:7-9: You learned of Epaphras our beloved fellow-servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, 8 who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit. 9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard (it), do not cease to pray and make request for you, that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

It was during this period of worship that the following visions occurred as illustrated by the subsequent uses of the phrase *in the spirit*:

Revelation 4:2: Straightway I was in the Spirit: and behold, there was a throne set in heaven, and one sitting upon the throne.

Revelation 17:3: And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness: and I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet-colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

Revelation 21:10: 10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.

The great voice *was like a trumpet*, and this phrase introduces figurative language that begins to describe what John heard and saw. *Like* and *as* are the signal words of the simile—a figure of speech that compares two things that are essentially unlike using *like* or *as*. The trumpet and the voice are essentially unlike. The voice is not a literal trumpet, but only has the characteristics of a trumpet: perhaps it was loud and with great clarity as one often thinks of the trumpet sounding. One thing is for sure—the voice was a voice and not a literal trumpet. The voice ordered him to write what he was to see and send the message to the seven churches.

Revelation 1:12-16

12 And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden candlesticks; 3 and in the midst of the candlesticks one like unto a son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle. 14 And his head and his hair were white as white wool, (white) as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; 15 and his feet like unto burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace; and his voice as the voice of many waters. 16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shines in his strength.

Verse 20 identifies the symbolic meaning of the seven golden candlesticks: "the seven candlesticks are the seven churches." "Like the son of man" is a phrase often used in the Old Testament to describe mankind. The phrase is a favorite of Ezekiel. Figuratively, it is used of the Christ:

Psalms 80:17: Let your hand be upon the man of your right hand, upon the son of man whom you made strong for yourself.

Daniel 7:13: I saw in the night-visions, and, behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

Jesus used the term "son of man" of himself many times during his earthly ministry—most likely to indicate his humanity. Phil 2:6-8 tells of his human nature:

5 Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

6 who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; 8 and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient (even) unto death, yes, the death of the cross.

But again, like a son of man is not a son of man. The characteristics of Christ present a human form: he is dressed, he has feet, a chest, a head, hair, eyes, etc. Each specific characteristic receives a metaphoric description of its own, thus the metaphor extends. The extended metaphor of Christ is beauty, power, glory, brilliance. This not the first time that the Bible describes the Christ in glory and beauty beyond ordinary imagination and words:

John 1:1-5: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that has been made. 4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shined in the darkness; and the darkness apprehended it not.

John 1:14: 14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth.

Colossians 1:15-18: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; 16 for in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through him, and unto him; 17 and he is before all things, and in him all things consist.

18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

Hebrews 1:1-4: 1 God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by many portions and in many ways, 2 has at the end of these days spoken unto us in (his) Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds; 3 who being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; 4 having become by so much better than the angels, as he has inherited a more excellent name than they.

Garments and clothes characterize good works. They are used of the saints in Rev 3:4, 18; 16:15 and of Christ in 6:15; 19:13; 19:16. Hair white like wool, white as snow is used of God in Dan 7:9.

9 I beheld till thrones were placed, and one that was ancient of days did sit: his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, (and) the wheels thereof burning fire.

Eyes like blazing fire and feet like bronze repeats in Rev 2:18:

"These are the words of voice was like the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished the sound of bronze."

His voice was the sound of rushing waters. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches (1:20). Out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. The double-edged sword is the word of God:

Hebrews 4:12: 12 For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart.

His countenance was bright as the sun at its brightest: ". . . and his countenance was as the sun shines in his strength."

Revelation 1:17-20

17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as one dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not; I am the first and the last, 18 and the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades. 19 Write therefore the things which you saw, and the things which are, and the things which shall come to pass hereafter; 20 the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks are seven churches.

The influence of seeing the Lord provoked John to sudden worship as he fell at his feet as one dead. The Lord comforted John by describing his victory:

I am the first and the last (alpha and omega).

I am the Living one.

I was dead and I am alive for evermore.

I have the keys to death and Hades.

The resurrection of the Lord gave him keys to death and Hades. He prophesied this in Matthew 16:18-19:

18 And I also say unto you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. 19 I will give unto you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

He fulfilled this prophecy in Acts 2 with the establishment of his church:

Acts 2:24-25: Whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death: because it was not possible that he should be held by its power. 25 For David said concerning him, I beheld the Lord always before my face; For he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved:

Acts 2:33: 33 Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured forth this, which you see and hear.

A major part of the Revelation story is that Christ has overcome death and Hades for all of us who are children of God, and he will put an end to death and Hades:

Revelation 6:7-8: And when he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come." 8 And I saw, and behold, a pale horse: and he that sat upon him, his name was Death; and Hades followed with him. And there was given unto them authority over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with famine, and with death, and by the wild beasts of the earth.

Revelation 20:13-15: 13 And the sea gave up the dead that were in it; and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. 14 And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, (even) the lake of fire. 15 And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire.

Paul describes this final victory 1 Corinthians 15:54-57:

54 But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

55 O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?

56 The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law:

57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

John's charge is to write "the things which are" and "the things which shall come to pass hereafter." For example, the letters to the seven churches of chapters two and three

are immediate, and the end of death and Hades are to take place later. There is no more valuable tool in reading the Revelation than that of correctly identifying what is now and what will take place later. Thus, we have already seen that we now are a kingdom and now priests. No interpretation can change this fundamental principle and say that the kingdom is still to come.

Revelation 2: Warnings against Immorality and False Teaching at Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, and Thyatira

The seven churches receive individual messages via their angels (messengers) in chapters 2 and 3. Just as the seven spirits (or sevenfold spirit) represent the full limit of the Holy Spirit of God, so the seven churches represent the **full nature** of all churches for all time. This is the measure of the Holy Spirit given to Jesus, the Christ in John 3:33-34:

33 He that hath received his witness hath set his seal to (this), that God is true.
34 For he whom God hath sent speaks the words of God: for he gives not the Spirit by measure.

Some version read *without measure* or *without limit*. God's mystery, the seven spirits, the fullness of time, and the seven churches are characteristically the same for all churches of all time. SYNECDOCHE is the figure of speech used here: In this sense the seven churches of Asia are all churches of all time.

syn·ec·do·che: a figure of speech by which a part is put for the whole (as fifty sail for fifty ships), the whole for a part (as society for high society), the species for the genus (as cutthroat for assassin), the genus for the species (a creature for a man), or the name of the material for the thing made (boards for stage).
Merriam Webster Online Dictionary. 2005.

By the very nature of the figure, churches are composites of some or all churches in both their strengths and/or their weaknesses. The meaning for us is clear: we must take to heart the commands of the Lord to these churches as they apply to our own congregations.

To the Church in Ephesus (Revelation 2:1-7)

Revelation 2:1-3

To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These things says he that holds the seven stars in his right hand, he that walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks: 2 I know your works, and your toil and patience, and that you cannot bear evil men, and did try them that call themselves apostles, and they are not, and did find them false; and you have patience and did bear for my name's sake, and have not grown weary.

The first letter is to the messenger of the church of Ephesus. The Lord identifies himself as the speaker by selecting one of the identifying phrases used in the vivid description of him in chapter 1:12-15. For the church of Ephesus, he uses, "These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden candlesticks." He begins, "I know your works." Some of the deeds are good:

Deeds and toil

Perseverance

Intolerance of wicked men

The testing of false apostles

Perseverance and endurance of hardships for my name

Not growing weary

Revelation 2:4-5

4 But I have (this) against you, that you did leave your first love.

5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and repent and do the first works; or else I come to you, and will move your candlestick out of its place, except you repent.

First look provokes, "What a church." How can this not be a sound congregation? Yet, they had forsaken their first love, according to the Lord himself:

John 8:42: Jesus said unto them, "If God were your Father, you would love me: for I came forth and am come from God; for neither have I come of myself, but he sent me."

John 14:15: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments."

John 14:23-24: Jesus answered and said unto him, "If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. 24 He that loves me not keeps not my words: and the word which you hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me.

John explains how we must live in love in 1 John 4:16-17:

16 And we know and have believed the love which God has in us. God is love; and he that abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. 17 Herein is love made perfect with us, that we may have boldness in the Day of Judgment; because as he is, even so are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love: but perfect love casts out fear, because fear has punishment; and he that fears is not made perfect in love.

First love is the love of espousal. The image of the church as the bride of Christ repeats throughout the Revelation:

Revelation 19:7-8: Let us rejoice and be exceedingly glad, and let us give the glory unto him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready. 8 And it was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen, bright (and) pure: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

Revelation 21:2: And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven of God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.

Revelation 21:9: And there came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls, who were laden with the seven last plagues; and he spoke with me, saying, Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.

Revelation 22:17: And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” And he that hears, let him say, “Come.” And he that is thirsty, let him come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely.

Revelation 2:6-7

6 But this you have, that you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. 7 He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him that overcomes, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

The Lord gives them a choice. Repent and do the things that they did from the beginning or he will remove their candlestick from its place. In their favor was their hate of the practices of the Nicolaitans:

NICOLAITANS: (nik-o-la'-i-tanz) Nikolaitai): A sect or party of evil influence in early Christianity, especially in the 7 churches of Asia.

1. The Sect: Their doctrine was similar to that of Balaam, “who taught Balak not to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication” (Rev 2:14-15). Their practices were strongly condemned [the Lord], who praised the church in Ephesus for “hating their works” (Rev 2:6), and blamed the church in Pergamum for accepting in some measure their teaching (Rev 2:15). . . . Reference is probably made to their influence in the church at Thyatira also, where their leader was “the woman Jezebel, who called herself a prophetess” (Rev 2:20; compare verse 14). No further direct information regarding them is given in Scripture.

3. Nicolaitan Controversy: The problem underlying the Nicolaitan controversy . . . concerned the whole relation of Christianity to paganism and its usages. The Nicolaitans disobeyed the command issued to the Gentile churches, by the apostolic council held at Jerusalem in 49 AD – 50 AD, that they should refrain from the eating of “things sacrificed to idols” (Acts 15:29). Such a restriction . . . was yet necessary to prevent a return to a pagan laxity of morals. To this danger the Nicolaitans were themselves a glaring witness, and therefore John was justified in condemning them. In writing to the Corinthians, Paul gives warning against the same evil practices, basing his arguments on consideration for the

weaker brethren (compare 1 Cor 8). *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* from Simcox, "Revelation" in the Cambridge Bible; H. Cowan in Hastings, Dictionary of the Bible (five volumes), article "Nicolaitans"; H.B. Swete, The Apocalypse of St. John, lxx ff, 27, 28, 37. (from International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Electronic Database Copyright ©1996 by Biblesoft).

In Revelation 2:14-15, the teachings of the Nicolaitans are laid out:

14 But I have a few things against you, because you have there some that hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication. 15 So have you also some that hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans in like manner.

In verse seven, the spirit becomes the spokesperson, where before the speaker was clearly the Lord Jesus. The unity of the godhead is evident: John had written in John 1:1-2, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God." Paul added in Ephesians 6:17: "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Thus the Spirit and the Christ speak with one unified voice.

The ones who overcome receive the right to eat from the tree of life which God placed in the middle of the garden in Genesis 2:9, and guarded from man in Genesis 3:22-24. In Revelation, the tree of life becomes central to the Lord's promise to the saved:

Revelation 22:1-2: And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, 2 in the midst of the street thereof. And on this side of the river and on that was the tree of life, bearing twelve (manner of) fruits, yielding its fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

Revelation 22:14: 14 Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have the right (to come) to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city.

Revelation 22:18-19: 18 I testify unto every man that hears the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book; 19 and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book.

Jesus established the meaning of the "water of life as John recorded:

John 4:10: Jesus answered and said unto her, If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, "Give me to drink; You would have asked of him, and he would have given you living water.

John 4:13-14: Jesus answered and said unto her, Every one that drinks of this water shall thirst again; 14 but whosoever drinks of the water that I shall give

him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life.

John 7:38: He that believes on me, as the scripture has said, from within him shall flow rivers of living water.

The Bible uses the word *paradise* three times. Jesus answered the thief on the cross in Luke 23:42:

42 And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingdom."

43 And he said unto him, "Truly, I say unto you, today shall you be with me in Paradise."

Paul described the third heaven as in Paradise in 2 Corinthians 12:1-4:

I must needs glory, though it is not expedient; but I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. 2 I know a man in Christ, fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I know not; or whether out of the body, I know not; God knows), such a one caught up even to the third heaven. 3 And I know such a man (whether in the body, or apart from the body, I know not; God knows), 4 how that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

Hebrews 4:14 similarly describes the ascended savior:

14 Having then a great high priest, who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

In our present text in Revelation 2:7, the Lord said:

7 He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him that overcomes, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

The type or shadow is the Old Testament representation of the antitype in the New Testament. Here the type, for which paradise is the antitype, is the Garden of Eden in Genesis 2:8-9:

8 And Jehovah God planted a garden eastward, in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. 9 And out of the ground made Jehovah God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

To the Church in Smyrna

Revelation 2:8-11

8 And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These things says the first and the last, who was dead, and lived (again):

9 I know your tribulation, and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy of them that say they are Jews, and they are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. 10 Fear not the things which you are about to suffer: behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried; and you shall have tribulation ten days. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. 11 He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He that overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.

The Lord describes himself as the first and the last, who died and came to life again. The main characteristic of this church was their persecution from both afflictions and poverty. Yet they were rich. The reference was to spiritual riches. In chapter 3:17, the church at Laodicea was poor and naked—just the opposite. Their persecution came from “those who say they are Jews and are not.” They were of the synagogue of Satan. Synagogue is an assembly. The phrase repeats in chapter 3:9 to the church in Philadelphia. Satan is a word found most often in Job of the Old Testament and throughout the books of the New Testament. The meaning of the word Satan is made very clear in the Revelation:

Revelation 12:9: And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world; he was cast down to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him.

Revelation 20:1-2: And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. 2 And he laid hold on the dragon, the old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years

John 14:30: I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me. (“No hold over me.” NIV).

Ephesians 6:11-12: Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual (hosts) of wickedness in the heavenly (places).

Satan, devil, dragon, and serpent all refer to the same evil being. In the face of the devil, suffering, and imprisonment, they are not to be afraid but suffer even unto death.

The ten days indicates a limited time for the persecution. Their reward is the crown of life. James 1:12 describes this blessing:

12 Blessed is the man that endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he shall receive the crown of life, which (the Lord) promised to them that love him.

Paul looked forward to the same crown in 2 Timothy 4:8:

8 henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved his appearing.

The crown can be lost as in Revelation 3:11: “I come quickly: hold fast that which you have, that no one take your crown.”

Finally, he who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death of which the *Revelation* speaks:

Revelation 2:11: He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He that overcomes shall not be hurt of the second death.

Revelation 20:6: Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: over these the second death has no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

Revelation 20:14-15: And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, (even) the lake of fire. 15 And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire.

Revelation 21:8: But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part (shall be) in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone; which is the second death.

To the Church in Pergamum

Revelation 2:12-13

12 and to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These things saith he that hath the sharp two-edged sword:

13 I know where you dwell, (even) where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast my name, and did not deny my faith, even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

The Lord describes himself with the figure of “him who has the sharp, double-edged sword. The Hebrew writer used the same analogy in Hebrews 4:12:

12 For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart.

An ancient writer described Pergamum as being “given to idolatry more than all Asia. *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* speaks of the city:

The high hill behind it was adorned with numerous temples, among which was the great temple to Zeus, who was called Soter Theos, the Savior God. Pergamum

was the first city in Asia to erect a temple to Augustus. It was famous for its medical schools; and Asclepius, god of health, symbolized by a serpent, was worshiped there. Ramsay says, "Beyond all cities in Asia Minor, it gives the traveler the impression of being the home of authority. How appropriate, then, that here, as we are told, was Satan's throne. (from, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1962 by Moody Press).

Pergamum had good things to their account:

You remain true to my name.

You did not renounce your faith in me.

They were faithful in spite of persecution that led to the death of the faithful servant Antipas. The city where Satan lives and where Satan has his throne emphasizes the total desecration of the people. This statement places the locus of evil in Asia Minor and not Rome. It was from these cities and temples the underlying principles of the Epicureans and Stoics invaded Rome, sought refuge in the Roman Empire first and then in the Roman Catholic Church, infiltrated the Reformation churches, and traversed the Atlantic Oceans to find a resting place in the churches of latter day revelation and the new age churches of the 20th and 21st centuries. We can only understand the Revelation, if we recognize "where Satan dwells.

Revelation 2:14-15

14 But I have a few things against you, because you have there some that hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication. 15 So have you also some that hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans in like manner.

Their compromising nature is apparent in the things the Lord had against them—things with which they knowingly went along:

You have people who hold the teaching of Balaam (eating food sacrificed to idols and committing immorality. (Numbers 23; 2 Peter 2:15; Jude 17).

You have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

Repent or I will come with the sword of my mouth (the word of God as in Hebrews 4:12 and Revelation 1:16).

Revelation 2:16-17

16 Repent therefore; or else I come to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of my mouth. 17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him that overcomes, to him will I give of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knows but he that receives it.

The Lord promises a reward for overcoming: some of the hidden manna and a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it. The Lord made the hidden manna figure very clear in John 6:31-35:

“31 Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, He gave them bread out of heaven to eat.”

32 Jesus therefore said unto them, “Truly, truly, I say unto you, it was not Moses that gave you the bread out of heaven; but my Father gives you the true bread out of heaven. 33 For the bread of God is that which cometh down out of heaven, and gives life unto the world.”

34 They said therefore unto him, “Lord, evermore give us this bread.”

35 Jesus said unto them, “I am the bread of life: he that comes to me shall not hunger, and he that believes on me shall never thirst.”

Isaiah prophesied about a new name in Isaiah 62:2:

2 And the nations shall see your righteousness, and all kings your glory, and you shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of Jehovah shall name.

The Lord makes specific promises the church of Philadelphia in Revelation 3:12-13:

12 He that overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out from there no more: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God, and my own new name.

Was the new name *Christian* (slave or servant of Christ)? The New Testament uses the word only three times in Acts 11:26, Acts 26:28, and 1 Peter 4:16 (see also Phil. 1:1). By now, *Christian* has lost its specific meaning and finds only general use; i.e., a Christian nation. Religious individuals go by denominational names and not the general name *Christian*. Receiving the name, *Christian* means that we are uncompromising slaves of Christ. Only members of the Lord’s church so faithfully go by this name, Christian. The idea that it was given as a derogatory name is inconsistent with the facts, since neither Jews nor Gentiles would so elevate Jesus as the Christ.

To the Church in Thyatira

Revelation 2:18-23

18 And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These things says the Son of God, who has his eyes like a flame of fire, and his feet are like unto burnished brass:

19 I know your works, and your love and faith and ministry and patience, and that your last works are more than the first. 20 But I have (this) against you, that you suffer the woman

Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess; and she teaches and seduces my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols. 21 And I gave her time that she should repent; and she will not to repent of her fornication. 22 Behold, I cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of her works. 23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he that searches the in most minds and hearts: and I will give unto each one of you according to your works.

The Lord addresses the church in Thyatira with words of the Son of God whose eyes are like a flame of fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze. As in the previous letters, this letter begins with the strengths of the church, recognizing love, faith, service, and perseverance. They are doing more than they did at first. However, they tolerate Jezebel, who like her Old Testament namesake misled the church into sexual immorality and idolatry:

JEZEBEL: In Rev 2:20, we read of Jezebel, "the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess"; . . . as Moffat (Expositor's Greek Testament) aptly renders, "that Jezebel of a woman alleging herself a prophetess." Some members of the church at Thyatira "under the sway of an influential woman refused to separate from the local guilds where moral interests, though not ostensibly defied, were often seriously compromised. Her lax principles or tendencies made for a connection with foreign and compromising associations which evidently exerted a dangerous influence upon some weaker Christians in the city." (From International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Electronic Database Copyright (c)1996 by Biblesoft)

"That woman Jezebel" might be translated "that Jezebel like woman," creating a figurative connection to the Old Testament Jezebel (1 Kings 16-21). Jezebel of the Old Testament killed God's prophets and led the people into idolatry and immorality. Having given this Jezebel like woman and her followers time to repent, the Lord promises to destroy them in Revelation 2:22-23:

22 Behold, I cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of her works. 23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he that searches the in most minds and hearts: and I will give unto each one of you according to your works.

The result of the Lord's actions will be a message to all the churches, illustrating that this and other lessons are to all churches. All the churches now know that the Lord will repay each according to their deeds.

Revelation 2:24-29

24 But to you I say, to the rest that are in Thyatira, as many as have not this teaching, who know not the deep things of Satan, as they are wont to say [like to say]; I cast upon you none other burden. 25 Nevertheless that which you have, hold fast till I come. 26 And he that overcomes, and he that keeps my works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the

nations: 27 and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces; as I also have received of my Father: 28 and I will give him the morning star.

29 He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

There were those in Thyatira who did not hold to Jezebel's teaching. Associated with her teaching are Satan's deep secrets (things). One commentator observed: "Her followers 'prided themselves upon their enlightened liberalism (verse 24).'" Many today still think that they can commune with false religion and immorality and maintain their spiritual connection to the Lord.

He, who overcomes and does the Lord's will, will receive his blessing of authority over nations—an authority described by David in Psalms 2:4-9:

4 He that sits in the heavens will laugh: the Lord will have them in derision.

5 Then will he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure:

6 Yet I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

7 I will tell of the decree: Jehovah said unto me, "You are my son; this day have I begotten you."

8 Ask of me, and I will give (you) the nations for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession.

9 You shall break them with a rod of iron; you shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

The morning star (Christ) actually rises in the hearts of those who overcome as described in 2 Peter 1:19:

19 And we have the word of prophecy (made) more sure; whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts:

This is the promise to the church at Thyatira in Revelation 2:28: "28 and I will give him the morning star." In name and purpose and brilliance, churches that overcome are one with Jesus—the bright and morning star—of Revelation 22:16:

16 I Jesus have sent my angel to testify unto you these things for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright, the morning star.

Revelation 3: Warnings against Immorality and False Teaching at Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea

To the Church in Sardis

Revelation 3:1-2

And to the angel of the church in Sardis write:

These things says he that has the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars: "I know your works that you have a name that you live, and you are dead. 2 Be watchful, and establish the things that remain, which were ready to die: for I have found no works of yours perfected before my God.

The words are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. He knows that their reputation exceeds the reality of their ways. A dead church can put up a righteous front. And so it was with the recipient of this letter—Sardis!

SARDIS: (sar'-dis) (Sardeis): Sardis is of interest to the student of early Christian history as the home of one of the Seven Churches of Rev (Rev 1:11; 3:1 ff). It was moreover one of the oldest and most important cities of Asia Minor, and until 549 BC, the capital of the kingdom of Lydia. . . . At the base flowed the river Pactolus which served as a moat, rendering the city practically impregnable. In 17 AD, when it was destroyed by an earthquake, the Roman emperor Tiberius remitted the taxes of the people and rebuilt the city, and in his honor the citizens of that and of neighboring towns erected a large monument, but Sardis never recovered its former importance (compare Rev 3:12). (from International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Electronic Database Copyright (c)1996 by Biblesoft)

The church at Sardis had a reputation for being alive, but they were dead. The use of “Be watchful!” is interestingly compared to the previous commands to repent. They were ordered to strengthen what remains and were ready to die. Their deeds were not complete in the sight of God

Revelation 3:3

3 Remember therefore how you have received and did hear; and keep (it), and repent. If therefore you shall not watch, I will come as a thief, and you shalt not know what hour I will come upon you.

The message is clear: “Remember what you received and heard. Obey it. Repent. If not, the Lord will come like a thief.”

Revelation 3:4-5

4 But you have a few names in Sardis that did not defile their garments: and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy. 5 He that overcomes shall thus be arrayed in white garments; and I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

A few people had not soiled their clothes. Revelation 19:8 defines the figure of clean, white clothes: “And it was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen, bright (and) pure: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.” Some had not soiled their clothes and they will walk with the Lord. Their names will not be blotted out of the book of life. The *book of life* appears throughout the scriptures:

Psalms 69:28-29: Let them be blotted out of the book of life, and not be written with the righteous.

Philippians 4:2-3: I exhort Euodia, and I exhort Syntyche, to be of the same mind in the Lord. 3 Yes, I beseech you also, true yokefellow, help these women, for they labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Revelation 19:8: And it was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen, bright (and) pure: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

Revelation 13:8: 8 And all that dwell on the earth shall worship him, (every one) whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that has been slain.

Revelation 17:8: The beast that you saw was, and is not; and is about to come up out of the abyss, and to go into perdition. And they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, (they) whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast, how that he was, and is not, and shall come.

Revelation 20:12: And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and books were opened: and another book was opened, which is (the book) of life: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works.

Revelation 20:15: And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire.

Revelation 21:27: And there shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that makes an abomination and a lie: but only they that are written in the Lamb's book of life.

To the Church in Philadelphia

Revelation 3:7

7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These things says he that is holy, he that is true, he that has the key of David, he that opens and none shall shut, and that shuts and none open:

“These things says he that is holy, he that is true” describes the Lord. He “That has the key of David” is spoken of formerly by Isaiah in Isaiah 22:20-23:

22 And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; and he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. 23 And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a throne of glory to his father's house.

The *power to open and shut* expression is similar to the power to bind and loose in Matthew 16:19, where the Lord promises the keys of the kingdom of heaven:

19 I will give unto you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Previously we have seen that the Lord holds the keys of Death and Hades Revelation 1:17-18:

Fear not; I am the first and the last, 18 and the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.

Revelation 3:8:13

8 I know your works (behold, I have set before you a door opened, which none can shut), that you have a little power, and did keep my word, and did not deny my name. 9 Behold, I give of the synagogue of Satan, of them that say they are Jews, and they are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. 10 Because you did keep the word of my patience, I also will keep you from the hour of trial, that (hour) which is to come upon the whole world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

11 I come quickly: hold fast that which you have, that no one take thy crown.

12 He that overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out from there no more: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God, and my own new name.

13 He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

They have little strength, but have kept the Lord's word and not denied his name. The synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not (see notes on Revelation 2:9), are liars:

9 I know your tribulation, and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy of them that say they are Jews, and they are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

They will fall down and acknowledge that the Lord loves these Christians that they have persecuted. Since they have endured patiently, as commanded, the Lord will keep them from the hour of trial to come upon the whole world to test them. The Lord promises that he is coming soon, and commands that they hold on to what they have. No one will take their crown, and him who overcomes will be a pillar in the temple of God:

The faithful Christians were always to be a part of the pillar of the temple of God. 1 Timothy 3:15-16 teaches:

But if I tarry long, that you may know how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

The Lord, while on earth, had promised in Mark 14:58:

58 We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands.

The temple not made with hands is clearly the church. The following scriptures attest to this:

1 Corinthians 3:16-17: 16 Know you not that you are a temple of God, and (that) the Spirit of God dwells in you? 17 If any man destroys the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, and such are you.

2 Corinthians 6:16: And what agreement hath a temple of God with idols? For we are a temple of the living God; even as God said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Ephesians 2:21-22: 21 in whom each several building, fitly framed together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord; 22 in whom you also are built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit.

Revelation 21:22: And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple thereof.

The Lord will write the name of God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, on him that overcomes

The New Jerusalem, just as the temple, is the church. It is the church now and is so described in these scripture:

Hebrews 12:22-24: 22 but you are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24 and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better than (that of) Abel.

Hebrews 12:28-29: 28 Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe: 29 for our God is a consuming fire.

Revelation 21:2-3: 2 And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven of God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, (and be) their God:

To the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:14-22

14 And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These things says the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God: 15 I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot: I would you were cold or hot. 16 So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew you out of my mouth. 17 Because you say, "I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing;" and know not that you are the wretched one and miserable and poor and blind and naked: 18 I counsel you to buy of me gold refined by fire, that you may become rich; and white garments, that you may clothe thyself, and (that) the shame of your nakedness be not made manifest; and eye salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see. 19 As many as I love, I reprove and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. 21 He that overcomes, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne.

22 He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

The Lord describes himself as the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. The letter is to the angel of the church in Laodicea:

LAODICEA: (la-od-i-se'-a) (Laodikia): A city of Asia Minor situated in the Lycos valley in the province of Phrygia, and the home of one of the Seven Churches of Rev (Rev 1:11). . . . It was founded by Antiochus II (261 BC - 246 BC) of Syria, who named it for his wife Laodike, and who populated it with Syrians and with Jews who were transplanted from Babylonia to the cities of Phrygia and Lydia. Though Laodicea stood on the great highway at the junction

of several important routes, it was a place of little consequence until the Roman province of Asia was formed in 190 BC. It then suddenly became a great and wealthy center of industry, famous especially for the fine black wool of its sheep and for the Phrygian powder for the eyes, which was manufactured there (compare Rev 3:18). . . . In the year 60 AD, the city was almost entirely destroyed by an earthquake, but so wealthy were its citizens that they rejected the proffered aid of Rome, and quickly rebuilt it at their own expense (compare Rev 3:17). (from International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Electronic Database Copyright (c)1996 by Biblesoft)

Their deeds, which were not hot or cold but lukewarm, characterized them as an indifferent church. As a result, the Lord said that he would spit them out. They were satisfied with their own riches and wealth and needed nothing. In reality, they were wretched, pitiful, blind, and naked.

To the contrary, they should have followed the admonition of Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:58:

58 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be you steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not vain in the Lord.

They were to buy gold from the Lord to become rich. Peter has described faith as more precious than gold in 1 Peter 1:6-7:

6 Wherein you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been put to grief in manifold trials, 7 that the proof of your faith, (being) more precious than gold that perishes though it is proved by fire, may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

They were to buy white clothes to wear so they could cover their shameful nakedness. Revelation 19:8 defines the figure:

8 And it was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen, bright (and) pure: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

They were to buy salve to put on their eyes, so they could see. The Lord had said in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:8: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

Faith, righteous acts, and pure hearts will overcome indifference. The Lord rebuked those that he loved; and, in turn, they were to be earnest and repent. The Lord is knocking but we must hear his voice and open the door. He will eat with us, and we with him. Those that overcome will sit with him on his throne. Paul describes this inheritance in Romans 8:16-17:

16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit, that we are children of God:
17 and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be
that we suffer with (him), that we may be also glorified with (him).

Revelation 4: Heaven and the Throne of God

The Vision of Heaven

Revelation 4:1

4 After these things I saw, and behold, a door opened in heaven, and the first voice that I heard, (a voice) as of a trumpet speaking with me, one saying, Come up here, and I will show you the things which must come to pass hereafter.

This begins the third main section of the Revelation. John's attention moves away from what is happening in the church as it exists and survives on earth and focuses on heaven and what is and will happen there. The voice that John first heard expresses the purpose of this part of the Revelation: "Come up here, and I will show you the things which must come to pass hereafter." John, at once, is in the spirit—not an attitude or frame of mind but the becoming of an actual part of the vision. The voice commanded, "Come up here." The place where John was going was up. The vision itself unfolds before John. Paul expressed a similar experience for himself or another in 2 Corinthians 12:1-4:

12 I must needs glory, though it is not expedient; but I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. 2 I know a man in Christ, fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I know not; or whether out of the body, I know not; God knows), such a one caught up even to the third heaven. 3 And I know such a man (whether in the body, or apart from the body, I know not; God knows), 4 how that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

"After this" indicates events—the main of which will have their consummation at the revelation of the Lord in the last day. It is not general events in sequence that follow, but rather a series of visions, the events of which parallel one another. For example, the vision turns immediately to a view of heaven and the "Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come. (Revelation 4:8)"

The Throne in Heaven

Revelation 4:2-6

2 Straightway I was in the Spirit: and behold, there was a throne set in heaven, and one sitting upon the throne; 3 and he that sat (was) to look upon like a jasper stone and

a sardius: and (there was) a rainbow round about the throne, like an emerald to look upon. 4 And round about the throne (were) four and twenty thrones: and upon the thrones (I saw) four and twenty elders sitting, arrayed in white garments; and on their heads crowns of gold. 5 And out of the throne proceed lightnings and voices and thunders. And (there were) seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God; 6 and before the throne, as it were a sea of glass like a crystal; and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, four living creatures full of eyes before and behind.

John saw the throne and someone sitting on it. We will arrive at the revelation of the Lord to the sound of a trumpet:

Matthew 24:30-31: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he shall send forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

1 Corinthians 15:52: In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17: For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; 17 then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

At that last trump, the unveiling of the throne in heaven will be upon us. And we too will see that throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. At the end of the previous chapter, the Lord spoke of God's throne in Revelation 3:2:

21 He that overcomes, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne.

The one who sat had the appearance of jasper and sardius (carnelian)—stones that represent the brilliance of God. These stones were the first and last stones of the high priest breastplate (Exodus 39:8-13); however, a clearer understanding is in the description of the bride of the Lamb where the brightness of the gems directly connects to the brilliance of God in Revelation 21:9-11:

9 And there came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls, who were laden with the seven last plagues; and he spoke with me, saying, Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb. 10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, 11 having the glory of God: her light was like unto a stone most precious, as it were a jasper stone, clear as crystal.

A rainbow encircled the throne. The rainbow is used twice in the Bible to describe God and once to describe the Son of God. Ezekiel 1:28 related the rainbow to the likeness of the glory of God:

28 As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of Jehovah. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spoke.

Of the son of God, John wrote, in Revelation 10:1:

And I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, arrayed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire.

The scene is one of beauty, majesty, and power: lightning, rumblings, and thunder. The seven lamps are the sevenfold spirit of God as in Rev 1:4:

4 John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from him who is and who was and who is to come; and from the seven Spirits that are before his throne.

These are not lamps as in *lampstands*. These lamps are blazing. Luke described the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost as tongues of fire in Acts 2:3. In Acts 2:16, Peter related this event directly to the outpouring of the Spirit of God.

Therefore, here we have God on his throne and his Holy Spirit blazing before his throne. Revelation 5:6 will reveal the Lamb in whom dwells the fullness of the Godhead (Col. 2:9):

6 And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth.

The Four Living Creatures

Revelation 4:6-8

6 and before the throne, as it were a sea of glass like a crystal; and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, four living creatures full of eyes before and behind.⁷ And the first creature (was) like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face as of a man, and the fourth creature (was) like a flying eagle.⁸ and the four living creatures, having each one of them six wings, are full of eyes round about and within: and they have no rest day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, (is) the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come.

All of this is set on what looked like a sea of glass. They were covered with eyes and could see all around. Other passages or visions where the Lord appeared confirm the meaning of this expanse, called here the sea of glass:

Exodus 24:9-10: Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel. 10 And they saw the God of Israel; and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and as it were the very heaven for clearness.

Ezekiel 1:22: And over the head of the living creature there was the likeness of a firmament, like the terrible crystal to look upon, stretched forth over their heads above.

Revelation 21:21: And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the several gates was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

In the center around the throne were four living creatures. These living creatures were like a lion, an ox, a man, and an eagle. Jewish secular history alleges that the four leading tribes of Israel each had one of these figures on the standard as they marched forth:

The Jewish writers tell us, that the standard of each tribe of Israel took the color of the stone which represented it in the high priest's breastplate, and that there was worked upon each a particular figure-a lion for Judah, a young ox for Ephraim, a man for Reuben, and an eagle for Dan. (from The Apocalypse: Exposition of the Book of Revelation, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1998 by Biblesoft)

Numbers 2 describes the arrangement of the tribes for battle. In Ezekiel 1:10-11, Ezekiel had a vision in which he saw four living creatures before the throne of God:

10 As for the likeness of their faces, they had the face of a man; and they four had the face of a lion on the right side; and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four had also the face of an eagle. 11 And their faces and their wings were separate above; two (wings) of every one were joined one to another, and two covered their bodies.

In Ezek 10:15-16, Ezekiel clearly identified the living creatures as cherubim:

15 And the cherubim mounted up: this is the living creature that I saw by the river Chebar. 16 And when the cherubim went, the wheels went beside them; and when the cherubim lifted up their wings to mount up from the earth, the wheels also turned not from beside them. 17 When they stood, these stood; and when they mounted up, these mounted up with them: for the spirit of the living creature was in them.

Cherubim are winged, heavenly creatures ordinarily described as worshiping and serving God. In verse 8, they are worshiping God:

The angels of heaven are thus included in the revealing of the Lamb. Our god is their God; our Lord is their Lord. The adverse is also true; their enemy is our enemy. Therefore, they worship our God as Lord God Almighty. The elders lay their crowns aside (humility before the Almighty) and join the worship.

The Twenty-four Elders

Revelation 4:9-11

9 And when the living creatures shall give glory and honor and thanks to him that sits on the throne, to him that lives for ever and ever, 10 the four and twenty elders shall fall down before him that sits on the throne, and shall worship him that lives for ever and ever, and shall cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

11 Worthy are you, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power: for you did create all things, and because of your will they were, and were created.

The twenty-four elders sitting on thrones indicate a responsibility of governance. Jesus promised a throne to his immediate followers in Matt 19:28-29:

28 And Jesus said unto them, “Truly I say unto you, that you who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

The Holy Spirit of God made elders in the church overseers in Acts 20:28-31:

28 Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood. 29 I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. 31 Wherefore watch, remembering that by the space of three years I ceased not to admonish every one night and day with tears.

Paul gave special importance to certain elders in 1 Tim 5:17:

17 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and in teaching.

They were dressed in white, which agrees with the commands to the seven churches in Revelation 3:4:

4 But you have a few names in Sardis that did not defile their garments: and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy. 5 He that overcomes shall thus

be arrayed in white garments; and I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

Also, in Revelation 3:18:

18 I counsel you to buy of me gold refined by fire, that you may become rich; and white garments, that you may clothe yourself, and (that) the shame of your nakedness be not made manifest; and eye salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see.

Peter promised elders crowns when the Chief Shepherd appears in 1 Peter 5:1-4:

5 The elders among you I exhort, who am a fellow-elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, who am also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 2 Tend the flock of God which is among you, exercising the oversight, not of constraint, but willingly, according to (the will of) God; nor yet for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; 3 neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourselves examples to the flock. 4 And when the chief Shepherd shall be manifested, you shall receive the crown of glory that fades not away.

Whoever the elders are, they are by definition older—perhaps the first appointed to serve. Paul described the early church as the first fruits in Romans 8:22-23:

22 For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now. 23 And not only so, but ourselves also, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for (our) adoption, the redemption of our body.

The elders are present as John witnessed the great multitude of the saved from the tribulation (Rev 7:11-12). They were also present at the destruction of Babylon (Rev 19:4-5).

The elders also have been raised at the coming of the Lord, for even the apostles eagerly await that day. From this point forward, we must think of John as an observer of the day of the Lord and not a participant. He will see the elders here and the resurrection there, but they are all a part of the great day of the Lord in Revelation 22:12:

12 Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to render to each man according as his work is.

The elders' song praises the God, Almighty of all creation in verse 11:

Worthy are you, our Lord and our God,
to receive the glory and the honor and the power:
for you did create all things,
and because of your will they were, and were created.

This song repeats the teaching of Paul among the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers of Athens and emphasizes once again the theme of the Revelation: God, Almighty is the alpha and omega, and no other can or will be. Paul taught in Acts 17:24-28:

24 The God that made the world and all things therein, he, being Lord of heaven and earth, dwells not in temples made with hands; 25 neither is he served by men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he himself gives to all life, and breath, and all things; 26 and he made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined (their) appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation; 27 that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us: 28 for in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain even of your own poets have said, "For we are also his offspring."

Thus, John, and we through him, begins to see the wonder and splendor of God revealed to us. The singular nature of this view of God, Almighty, cannot be altered by philosophy or theology or speculative theories.

Revelation 5: The Lamb and the Scroll with Seven Seals

This section introduces the scroll and the Lamb, thus placing the Lamb in the very midst of heaven's glory and power. Now in addition to the Almighty God and the Holy Spirit, the Lamb, the son of God, is on the throne of God. The vision of John now reveals Christ in all his awesome power.

The Scroll with the Seven Seals

Revelation 5:1-5

5 And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the back, close sealed with seven seals. 2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a great voice, "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" 3 And no one in the heaven, or on the earth, or under the earth, was able to open the book, or to look thereon. 4 And I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open the book, or to look thereon: 5 and one of the elders said unto me, "Weep not; behold, the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome to open the book and the seven seals thereof."

The scroll was in the hand of him who sat upon the throne. According to Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, the word here derives from *biblos*, a scroll, or book, a word is used to designate various books of the Bible. In Rev 5:1-9, the scroll represents the revelation of God's purposes and counsels concerning the world. This is also true of the *little scroll* in Revelation 10:2:

. . . and he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left upon the earth.

Although the word is always rendered *little scroll* here in Revelation 10:2, there is no real reason to so render it. This reading occurs in Revelation 10:9-10:

Revelation 10:9-10

9 And I went unto the angel, saying unto him that he should give me the little book. And he said unto me, "Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make your belly bitter, but in your mouth it shall be sweet as honey." 10 And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and when I had eaten it, my belly was made bitter.

John wept because no one was able to open the scroll. Then one of the elders said to him, “Weep not; behold, the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome to open the book and the seven seals thereof.” The Root of David is the Christ as the angel told Mary in Luke 1:32-33:

32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; 33 and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

Isaiah 11:10-11 also reveals this eternal connection:

10 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the root of Jesse, that stands for an ensign of the peoples, unto him shall the nations seek; and his resting-place shall be glorious. 11 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord will set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people,

Paul quotes Isaiah in Rom 15:12:

And again, Isaiah said, “There shall be the root of Jesse, And he that arises to rule over the Gentiles; on him shall the Gentiles hope.”

The triumphant Christ is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.

The Elders Sing a New Song

Revelation 5:6-10

6 And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth. 7 And he came, and he took (it) out of the right hand of him that sat on the throne. 8 And when he had taken the book, the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 9 And they sing a new song, saying,

*Worthy are you to take the book,
and to open the seals thereof:
for you were slain, and did purchase unto God
with your blood (men) of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation,
10 and made them (to be) unto our God a kingdom and priests;
and they reign upon earth.*

Then John saw the Lamb, the sacrificed Son of God. The victory of the Lamb fulfills the expectation of the centuries. John the Baptist recognized the Lamb immediately in John 1:29:

29 On the morrow he saw Jesus coming unto him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world!”

The Ethiopian eunuch was puzzling over this very idea just prior to his conversion by Philip in Acts 8:32:

Now the passage of the Scripture which he was reading was this,

He was led as a sheep to the slaughter;

And as a lamb before his shearer is dumb,

So he opened not his mouth.

Paul emphatically identified Christ as the Lamb in 1 Corinthians 5:7:

7 Purge out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, even as you are unleavened. For our passover also has been sacrificed, (even) Christ:

Peter connected the blood of the Lamb to our redemption in 1 Peter 1:18-19:

Knowing that you were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; 19 but with precious blood, as of a lamb without spot, (even the blood) of Christ:

The Lamb was standing in the center of the throne of God the fulfillment of Paul’s description in Ephesians 1:19-23:

And what the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might 20 which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly (places), 21 far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: 22 and he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him that fills all in all.

The Lamb has the sevenfold spirit of God in his seven eyes, the power of which reaches throughout the world. This an affirmation the angel’s statement in Zechariah 4:10:

For who has despised the day of small things? For these seven shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel; (these are) the eyes of Jehovah, which run to and fro through the whole earth.

John the Baptist describes this power in John 3:34:

34 For he whom God has sent speaks the words of God: for he gives not the Spirit by measure.

The Lamb came and took the scroll, and the four living creatures and the elders fell down before the Lamb. They had harps and golden bowls of incense, which are the

prayers of the saints. We find in Revelation 8:4 that the prayers of the saints go before God.

4 And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand.

The new song tells us that this is the last and notable day of the Lord:

Christ was worthy to open the seals of God's revelation.

Christ was slain, and purchased unto God with his blood (men) of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.

Christ made them (to be) unto our God a kingdom and priests now up on the earth.

All Creation Worships the Lamb

Revelation 5:11-14

11 And I saw, and I heard a voice of many angels round about the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; 12 saying with a great voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might and honor, and glory, and blessing." 13 And every created thing which is in the heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and on the sea, and all things are in them, heard I saying, "Unto him that sits on the throne, and unto the Lamb, (be) the blessing, and the honor, and the glory, and the dominion, for ever and ever.

14 And the four living creatures said, Amen. And the elders fell down and worshipped.

The number of angels heard by John was innumerable. Some versions say that there were myriads of myriads. The millions of angels encircled the throne and the elders and the living creatures and sang their song of praise. To the angels' song were added the voices of the entire creation:

Unto him that sits on the throne, and unto the Lamb, (be) the blessing, and the honor, and the glory, and the dominion, for ever and ever.

14 And the four living creatures said, Amen. And the elders fell down and worshipped.

This is truly the advent of the great and wonderful Day of the Lord. What a fulfillment of Paul's statement in Philippians 2:9-11:

9 Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; 10 that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of (things) in heaven and (things) on earth and (things) under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Revelation 6: The Lamb Opens Six of Seven Seals

In this section, the Lamb opens six of the seven seals. The Lamb reserves seventh seal for chapter 8 where the seventh seal opens and the seven angels prepare to sound seven trumpets. The trumpet soundings open up other sequences of events—some past, some present, and some future.

The Lamb opened the first of the seven seals, and with the opening, one of the living creatures, in a voice like thunder, said, "Come." As a command, "Come" shows that the living creatures control the horsemen. The King James Version and the New King James Version translate this, "Come and see," making John the recipient of the command. However, "and see" is inserted by the translators. The Greek text agrees with the NIV and all American Standard versions. Either "Go!" or "Come!" are acceptable; however the words, "and see," are doubtful, and generally rejected by critics. The living creature, therefore commanded the four horsemen.

Thus, the living creatures have authority over the four horsemen and their symbolic representations. Although God allows the forces of evil and natural calamity to exist across the earth, He still is over all and above all, allowing them to exist only as He wills it. Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:6: "One God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all."

As in chapter 4:1, John immediately saw what was happening before him. As the seals open, notice that the events are parallel. Each proceeds through time until the great and final day of the Lord. The first four scenes will involve horses with riders. The horse is never a beast of burden in the Bible. The Bible used the term *workhorse* in one place. In all, there are 37 references to the word *horse* and 126 references to the word *horses*. It is an animal of war and conquest. Job 39:19-25, in the oldest book of the Bible, describes the might, power, and beauty of the horse:

19 Have you given the horse (his) might? Have you clothed his neck with the quivering mane? 20 Have you made him to leap as a locust? The glory of his snorting is terrible. 21 He paws in the valley, and rejoices in his strength: He goes out to meet the armed men. 22 He mocks at fear, and is not dismayed; neither turns he back from the sword. 23 The quiver rattles against him, the flashing spear and the javelin. 24 He swallows the ground with fierceness and rage; neither believes he that it is the voice of the trumpet. 25 As oft as the trumpet (sounds) he says, "Aha!" And he smells the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting.

Revelation uses the words *horse* and *horses* 16 times making it an important image, and central to the scenes of struggle in God's revelation. The allusion to the horses in Revelation 6 is to Zechariah 1:8-13 and 6:1-8 where it is clear that they are under the control of God who sent them out through the world to serve His purposes.

Zechariah 1:8-13 teaches:

8 I saw in the night, and, behold, a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle-trees that were in the bottom; and behind him there were horses, red, sorrel, and white. 9 Then said I, "O my lord, what are these?" And the angel that talked with me said unto me, "I will show you what these are." 10 And the man that stood among the myrtle-trees answered and said, "These are they whom Jehovah has sent to walk to and fro through the earth.

11 And they answered the angel of Jehovah that stood among the myrtle-trees, and said, "We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all the earth sits still, and is at rest. 12 Then the angel of Jehovah answered and said, "O Jehovah of hosts, how long will you not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which you have had indignation these three score and ten years?

13 And Jehovah answered the angel that talked with me with good words, (even) comfortable words.

Here the angel of the Lord understood that only the Lord has the power to destroy or grant mercy or withhold it. In Zechariah 6:1ff, the angel of the Lord calls the four spirits of the Lord going out to the whole world:

6 And again I lifted up my eyes, and saw, and, behold, there came four chariots out from between two mountains; and the mountains were mountains of brass. 2 In the first chariot were red horses; and in the second chariot black horses; 3 and in the third chariot white horses; and in the fourth chariot grizzled strong horses. 4 Then I answered and said unto the angel that talked with me, "What are these, my lord?"

5 And the angel answered and said unto me, "These are the four winds of heaven, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth 6 (The chariot) wherein are the black horses goes forth toward the north country; and the white went forth after them; and the grizzled went forth toward the south country. 7 And the strong went forth, and sought to go that they might walk to and fro through the earth: and he said, 'Get you hence, walk to and fro through the earth. So they walked to and fro through the earth.'"

8 Then cried he to me, and spoke unto me, saying, "Behold, they that go toward the north country have quieted my spirit in the north country."

The First Seal—Conqueror on White Horse

Revelation 6:1-2

6 And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, "Come." 2 And I saw, and behold, a white horse, and he that sat thereon had a bow; and there was given unto him a crown: and he came forward conquering, and to conquer.

With the opening of the first seal, John sees the white horse and the rider had a bow and crown and rode out bent on conquest. Notice the contrast between this weak imagery of the horseman and the powerful and mighty imagery of the Christ in Revelation 19:11-15:

11 And I saw the heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and he that sat thereon called Faithful and True; and in righteousness he does judge and make war. 12 And his eyes (are) a flame of fire, and upon his head (are) many diadems; and he has a name written which no one knows but he himself. 13 And he (is) arrayed in a garment sprinkled with blood: and his name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies which are in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white (and) pure. 15 And out of his mouth proceeds a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treads the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God, the Almighty.

In this present context of the other horses and horsemen, and in the war-like and conquering symbolism, this horseman on the white horse, like the others, is conquering humankind. What force appears in white, yet assaults the children of God? After all, Revelation uses white in to describe God, the Son of God, and the righteous acts of the saints. The answer is clear.

False prophets are dressed in the white of sheep as Matthew 7:15 teaches:

15 Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves.

In the great deceit of humankind, disguise is an important tool of the evil one in 2 Corinthians 11:13-15:

13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, fashioning themselves into apostles of Christ. 14 And no marvel; for even Satan fashions himself into an angel of light. 15 It is no great thing therefore if his ministers also fashion themselves as ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works.

Not only is evil cloaked in white, but the deeds of evil are also deceitful as told in 2 Thessalonians 2:8-10:

8 And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his mouth, and bring to naught by the manifestation of his

coming; 9 (even he), whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, 10 and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

In the writings, of John this agent of evil upon the earth is the antichrist. The rider on the white horse is the false prophet who along with Satan himself and the beast become a triad of evil as the revelation unfolds.

1 John 2:18: Little children, it is the last hour: and as you heard that antichrist comes, even now have there arisen many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last hour.

1 John 2:21: I have not written unto you because you know not the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. 22 Who is the liar but he that denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, (even) he that denies the Father and the Son.

1 John 4:2-3: Hereby know you the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: 3 and every spirit that confesses not Jesus, is not of God: and this is the (spirit) of the antichrist, whereof you have heard that it comes; and now it is in the world already.

2 John 7: For many deceivers are gone forth into the world, (even) they that confess not that Jesus Christ comes in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.

The deceit of evil is so successful because it mimics the Christ in appearance but not in word and thought. Later, John sees the true Christ.

The Second Seal—War

Revelation 6:3-4

3 And when he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, Come. 4 And another (horse) came forth, a red horse: and to him that sat thereon it was given to take peace from the earth, and that they should slay one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.

At the opening of the second seal, the second living creature, just as the first, said, "Come." The horse is the red horse of war, having been given to take peace from the earth and to make men slay each other. The Lord taught, and our experience agrees, that war will go out across the world in Matthew 24:4-8:

4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man lead you astray. 5 For many shall come in my name, saying, "I am the Christ;" and shall lead many astray. 6 And you shall hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that

you be not troubled: for (these things) must needs come to pass; but the end is not yet. 7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines and earthquakes in divers places. 8 But all these things are the beginning of travail.

This description appears in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Civil peace in this present world is unattainable. Ezekiel described peace as a wall of untempered mortar that falls after the first hard rain in Ezekiel 13:10-11:

10 Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, "Peace;" and there is no peace; and when one builds up a wall, behold, they daub it with untempered (mortar): 11 say unto them that daub it with untempered (mortar), that it shall fall: there shall be an overflowing shower; and 7you, O great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall rend it.

The Lord did not come to abolish war, which God allows to exist, but to bring spiritual peace to us according to Matthew 10: "Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword."

This spiritual peace comes only to the righteous in the Lord: The promise was clear from the prophets on as Isaiah 57:19-21 teaches:

19 I create the fruit of the lips: Peace, peace, to him that is far off and to him that is near, says Jehovah; and I will heal him. 20 But the wicked are like the troubled sea; for it cannot rest, and its waters cast up mire and dirt. 21 There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked.

The red horse illustrates that war will be upon the earth and the true peace is the peace in Christ. Paul describes this true peace in Philippians 4:7:

7 And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.

God's control of war extends to the rulers who serve only by his grace Romans 13:1-3:

3 Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers: for there is no power but of God; and the (powers) that be are ordained of God. 2 Therefore he that resists the power, withstands the ordinance of God: and they that withstand shall receive to themselves judgment. 3 For rulers are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil. And would you have no fear of the power? Do that which is good, and you shall have praise from the same.

The Third Seal—Famine

Revelation 6:5-6

5 And when he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, "Come." And I saw, and behold, a black horse; and he that sat thereon had a balance in his hand. 6 And I heard as it were a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, "A measure of wheat for a shilling, and three measures of barley for a shilling; and the oil and the wine hurt you not."

The rider of the black horse carries a pair of scales. The cost was great. A quart of wheat for a day's wages, and three quarts of barley for a day's wages. There are no luxuries, for famine withholds oil and wine. Our present world has many examples of famine. Starving children abound in places stricken like Africa and refugee run from our many on-going wars—homeless and hungry. There is not even a quart of wheat for those families. Desperate as famine-stricken people may be, they will not necessarily receive relief in this life. However, Jesus promised all the world in Matthew 5:6 that he would fill them spiritually: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

Just as with false religion and war, God allows famine to go throughout the world.

The Fourth Seal—Death

Revelation 6:7-8

7 And when he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come." 8 And I saw, and behold, a pale horse: and he that sat upon him, his name was Death; and Hades followed with him. And there was given unto them authority over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with famine, and with death, and by the wild beasts of the earth.

With war, famine, and disease, there comes Death and Hades. Personified here, Death is the rider of the pale horse. Hades, the realm of the dead follows close behind him. For reasons that are evident in verses 6:9-11, at the death of Christ, he overcame Hades and the righteous dead are no longer there. Vine includes this idea in his definition: "Hades: 'the region of departed spirits of the lost' (but including the blessed dead in periods preceding the ascension of Christ)."

A summary of the uses attributed to Hades by Vine will be helpful to understand what follows:

The word is used four times in the Gospels, and always by the Lord: Matthew 11:23; 16:18; Luke 10:15; 16:23.

It is used with reference to the soul of Christ: Acts 2:27, 31.

Christ declares that He has the keys of it, Revelation 1:18.

In Revelation 6:8 it is personified, with the signification of the temporary destiny of the doomed.

It is to give up those who are therein: Revelation 20:13, and itself is to be cast into the lake of fire, Revelation 20:14.

(From Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright© 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers.)

Death is the more dominant of the two in this passage, and it is the rider of the pale horse. While Christ now holds the keys to Hades, he has yet to overcome Death. In 1 Corinthians 15:25-26, Paul declared:

25 For he must reign, till he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy that shall be abolished is death.

In 1 Corinthians 15:54-57, he added:

54 But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory."

55 O death, where is your victory?

O death, where is your sting?

56 The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law: 57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Man's long struggle against death spans all dispensations with God's promise for redemption in Hosea 13:14:

14 I will ransom them from the power of Sheol; I will redeem them from death: "O death, where are your plagues? O Sheol, where is your destruction?" Repentance shall be hid from my eyes.

Isaiah 25:8 repeats the teaching elaborating on the meaning of redemption and showing that the overcoming of death is one part of the eternal struggle. :

8 He has swallowed up death for ever; and the Lord Jehovah will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the reproach of his people will he take away from off all the earth: for Jehovah has spoken it.

The instruments of physical death are war, famine, plague and disease, and the wild beasts of the earth. God—the alpha and omega—subjects all these to His will, controlling them through the four living creatures. The instrument of spiritual death is

the false prophet, disguised in righteousness, but still controlled by God—the alpha and the omega.

The Fifth Seal—Souls of Those Slain for the Word of God

Revelation 6:9-11

9 And when he opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: 10 and they cried with a great voice, saying, “How long, O Master, the holy and true, do you not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” 11 And there was given them to each one a white robe; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little time, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, who should be killed even as they were, should have fulfilled (their course).

As the four horsemen—the Antichrist, War, Famine, and Death—reveal, while living this earthly life, we must expect the dangers that are inherent in this present world. However, what of the saints who died because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus? The souls of those thus slain are under the altar in the vision of the heavenly scene. This passage indicates that Hades does not keep the dead in Christ. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus said:

18 And I also say unto you, that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

Those dead in this passage are clearly not in Hades. In the state represented by opening of the fifth seal, these dead in Christ are under the altar of God, they are given a white robe, and they are told to wait until the number of all those to be killed was completed. This is a dispensational context, which appears to cover from the beginning of the church until the Lamb is victorious. In context, chapter 7 will become an elaboration of the fate of those who have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

A more traditional thought, based on the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, holds that Abraham's side was a separate place but still a part of Hades in Luke 16:21-24:

And desiring to be fed with the (crumbs) that fell from the rich man's table; yes, even the dogs came and licked his sores. 22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and that he was carried away by the angels into Abraham's bosom: and the rich man also died, and was buried. 23 And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. 24 And he cried and said, “Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame.”

Revelation treats Christians as being in an immediate state of bliss with white robes and in the presence of the Sovereign Lord. The entirety of chapter 7 expands on the status of the Christian dead in Christ.

The question of “Who are the slain?” is important. For this passage to be consistent with the context, *the slain*, just as the *horsemen* must be symbolic. The souls of slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained are all those who have died to sin and raised with Christ. The slaying of all Christians occurs when they put to death the old man and put on Christ. Paul wrote in Galatians 3:26-27:

26 For you are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ.

Paul described this continue condition in 2 Corinthians 6:9-10 where he said:

9 as unknown, and (yet) well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; 10 as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and (yet) possessing all things.

When Christians obey the gospel and hold to the testimony of Jesus, they slay the old man of sin. The figure of one slain is also used of Christ as in Rev 5:6:

6 And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain.

Rev 13:8 also speaks of the slain savior:

8 And all that dwell on the earth shall worship him, (every one) whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that has been slain.

The slaying of all Christians emulates the slaying of the Lord when they obey him. Rom 6:2-4 teaches:

2 God forbid. We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein? 3 Or are you ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him through baptism unto death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life.

This death is a dying in Christ—a slaying just as he was slain. Rom 6:8-10 clearly affirms this point:

8 But if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him; 9 knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dies no more; death no more has dominion over him. 10 For the death that he died, he died unto sin once: but the life that he lives, he lives unto God.

We will study later in the Revelation that the second death has no power over those who are alive in Christ (Revelation 20:5-6).

Our life is a new one in Christ. Paul taught in 2 Cor 5:14-17:

14 For the love of Christ constrains us; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died; 15 and he died for all, that they that live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again. 16 Wherefore we henceforth know no man after the flesh: even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know (him so) no more. 17 Wherefore if any man is in Christ, (he is) a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new.

Further, in Col 2:20-21, the scripture teaches:

20 If you died with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to ordinances?

And even more emphatically, in Col 3:3-4, we learn:

3 For you died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, (who is) our life, shall be manifested, then shall you also with him be manifested in glory.

2 Tim 2:11-13 summarizes the teaching on the death of Christians:

11 Faithful is the saying: For if we died with him, we shall also live with him; 12 if we endure, we shall also reign with him; if we shall deny him, he also will deny us; 13 if we are faithless, he abides faithful; for he cannot deny himself.

The point that all the righteous who hold to the testimony of the Lamb are those slain for the Lamb follows consistently throughout the revelation. This study will return to the subject in Rev 20:4:

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and (I saw) the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and such as worshipped not the beast, neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they lived, and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

For now, this point concludes with Paul's glorious statement in Gal 2:20:

20 I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ living in me: and that (life) which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, (the faith) which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me.

The slain in Christ are not the martyrs strewn through the pages of history during times of persecution. They are the uncountable multitudes of believers who die with Christ to sin every hour of every day throughout all time and for all time.

The Sixth Seal—Terror for the Evil Ones and Sealing for the Servants of God

Revelation 6:12-17

12 And I saw when he opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the whole moon became as blood; 13 and the stars of the heaven fell unto the earth, as a fig tree cast her unripe figs when she is shaken of a great wind. 14 And the heaven was removed as a scroll when it is rolled up; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. 15 And the kings of the earth, and the princes, and the chief captains, and the rich, and the strong, and every bondman and freeman, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains; 6 and they say to the mountains and to the rocks, “Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:

17 for the great day of their wrath is come; and who is able to stand? ”

The vision portrayed under the opening of the sixth seal brings us right up to the great, awesome, and mighty day of the Lord. It is a prelude to that great day revealed in later chapters of Revelation. These images and the terror that they cause are simultaneous events poured out on the wicked:

There was a great earthquake.

The sun turned black.

The whole moon turned to blood.

The stars in the sky fell.

The sky rolled up a scroll.

Every mountain and island were removed.

The scene takes us right up to the destruction of the world with the fervent, final appearance of the wrath of the Lamb. The context indicates that these terrible events will occur for a long enough time for the recipients to discuss their terror and to suffer at its appearance.

Metaphorically all worldly men—the rich, poor, mighty, and weak,—will respond with the same terror, hiding and even calling for the mountains to fall on them: “Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: 17 for the great day of their wrath is come; and who is able to stand?”

This scene is a preamble to what follows for evil people. The passage follows the characteristics and features of the Lord's own prediction in Matthew 24:29-31; 42; 44:

29 But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and

the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: 30 and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he shall send forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

42 Watch therefore: for you know not on what day your Lord comes.

44 Therefore be you also ready; for in an hour that you think not the Son of man comes.

The wrath of God and the Lamb is upon us. Now, the scene shifts to the status of the servants of God during this very event where 144,000 are sealed (7:1-8), and the great multitudes wear white robes (7:9-17). Many view chapter 7 as an interlude; however, we shall consider that chapter as a central part of the whole. In the next chapters, the day approaches, and the Lord deals justly with the godly.

Revelation 7: The 144,000 Sealed and the Great Multitude in White Robes

Although many describe chapter 7 as an interlude, the chapter is actually a continuation of the thought closing chapter 6. The sixth seal opens with a description of events leading up to the great day of the wrath of God and the Lamb and the promise to the righteous in 3:21-22:

21 He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with me on my throne, as I also overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. 22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

It is logical to ask, "What about the righteous? What happens to them prior the great day of the Lord?" The fifth seal had opened to the question of what had happened to the souls of those slain because of the word of God and their testimony. They were given white robes to wear until the number of their fellow servants who were to be killed were completed [See notes on Revelation 6:9-11]. In chapter 7 we find that the great multitude that no one could count wore white robes [See notes to follow on Revelation 7:9 and 14]. Further, these stand before the throne of God in a state opposite to the evil ones of Revelation 6:12-17. Thus, chapter 7 continues the thought that closes chapter 6.

144,000 Sealed

Revelation 7:1

7 After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that no wind should blow on the earth, or on the sea, or upon any tree.

During the events affecting the wicked, a simultaneous set of events occurs among the righteous. Just as the Lord described the events affecting the wicked, he also described the status of his elect in Matthew 24:29 -31:

29 But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: 30 and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 **And he shall send forth his angels with a great sound of a**

trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

These angels and those of Matthew 24:31 seem similar to those of horses and chariots of Ezekiel and the four living creatures, who control the four horsemen in Revelation 6.1ff. That is, the coming of the end and the application of God's will are strictly under His control. He is the Alpha and the Omega. In this case, the angels hold back the four winds in an effort to harm the land and the sea. However, the angel from the east commands them to stop.

Revelation 7:2-3

2 And I saw another angel ascend from the sun's rising, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a great voice to the four angels to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, "3Saying, "Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we shall have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads." 4 And I heard the number of them that were sealed, a hundred and forty and four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the children of Israel:

The command not to harm the land and the sea stays the destruction and harm until they put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of God. Those sealed are clearly stated. They are the servants of our God; they were all from the tribes of Israel; and they are designated as being 144,000. We shall consider these in order.

At the Last Day, God will gather his servants. To these, described as from the tribes of Israel, God adds the great multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language of those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 7:14). This first group is definitely the group of Revelation 14:1:4, where they also are called 144,000. Revelation 14:1 teaches:

14 And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on the mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty and four thousand, having his name, and the name of his Father, written on their foreheads.

They had distinct characteristics:

They had the name of the Lamb and the name of the Father written on their foreheads.

They had been redeemed from the earth.

They kept themselves pure.

They follow the Lamb wherever he goes.

They are first fruits of God and the Lamb.

Chapter 14 calls them first fruits. As first fruits, they are the faithful of the Old Testament period and those first Christians, perhaps even prior to the Gentiles'

conversion of Acts 10, sealed by the Holy Spirit as in Acts 2:38. In Acts 21:20, the number of Jewish Christians in Jerusalem are described as being in the thousands:

20 And they, when they heard it, glorified God; and they said unto him, "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of them that have believed."

Following the first- fruits of the sacrificial laws of the Old Testament (Jeremiah 2:3), the earliest Christians are separated from the huge number of those to follow in verse 16: Therefore, the 144,000 are those earliest Christians who followed the Lamb and accepted the savior, lived pure lives, and followed him without exception. Jerimiah reads:

3 Israel (was) holiness unto Jehovah, the first fruits of his increase: all that devour him shall be held guilty; evil shall come upon them, says Jehovah. (Jeremiah 2:3)

James extends this metaphor to the early Jewish Christians in James 1:1:

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are of the Dispersion, greeting.

James further describes this group, adding to the designation of *twelve tribes* the name first fruits James 1:18:

He chose to give us birth through the word of truth that we might be a kind of first fruits of all he created."

The number 144,000 limits the size of this particular group of the saved to a finite but large number. One should compare this number to the huge number, which no one can count—a number also identified in the group of those sealed in verse 7:16.

Sealing and seals carried special meaning for the Jews. Symbolically, the word and meaning carried forward to the sealing of the servants of God in the New Testament. The sealing of the children of Israel occurred in Exodus 28:21:

21 And the stones shall be according to the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names; like the engravings of a signet (seal), every one according to his name, they shall be for the twelve tribes. [OT: chatham (khaw-tham'); a primitive root; to close up; especially to seal (Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary. Copyright © 1994, 2003, 2006 Biblesoft, Inc. and International Bible Translators, Inc.).

In the New Testament, the seal of God's servants became the very Spirit of God in our hearts. In 2 Corinthians 1:21-22, Paul said:

21 Now he that establishes us with you in Christ, and anointed us, is God; 22 who also sealed us, and gave (us) the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

[EARNEST: originally, "earnest-money" deposited by the purchaser and forfeited if the purchase was not completed. . . . In the NT it is used only of that which is assured by God to believers; it is said of the Holy Spirit as the divine "pledge" of all their future blessedness. (from Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright © 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers.)ASV

We are also marked in him with a seal in Ephesians 1:13; “In whom, having also believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.” Ephesians 4:30 extends this thought: “And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed unto the day of redemption.”

This sealing is an event that is continuous and parallel to the other events characterized by the opening of the seven seals. One can contrast this marking with a seal by the Holy Spirit with that mark of the beast applied to the servants of the Satan discussed in Revelation 13:16-17; 14:9-11; 16:2. As the seal of the Holy Spirit marks the servants of God, so the mark of the beast seals the servants of Satan.

The symbolism is made complete by listing the 12 tribes where the 12,000 is a definite number representing an indefinite by rather small group when compared to the great multitude.

Revelation 7:5-8

5 Of the tribe of Judah (were) sealed twelve thousand:

Of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand;

Of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand;

6 Of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand;

Of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand;

Of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand;

7 Of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand;

Of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand;

Of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand;

8 Of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand;

Of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand;

Of the tribe of Benjamin (were) sealed twelve thousand.

The Great Multitude from the Tribulation:

Revelation 7:9-10

9 After these things I saw, and behold, a great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation and of (all) tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands; 10 and they cry with a great voice, saying,

“Salvation unto our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”

In addition to the first fruits who were sealed, an innumerable multitude was before the throne of God. The white robes are clearly those given to the slain for the word of God in Revelation 6:9:

9 And when he opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:

These would be the worthy ones described in Revelation 3:4-5:

4 But you have a few names in Sardis that did not defile their garments: and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy. 5 He that overcomes shall thus be arrayed in white garments; and I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

This group is broader than the first fruits and of an infinite number. They represent the *whole creation* (Mark 16:15) and *all the nations* (Matthews 28:19) as described in the Lord’s great commission. As they cry out, they recognize that salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb. The praise echoes the meaning of Peter in Acts 4:12: “And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven; that is given among men, wherein we must be saved.”

Revelation 7:11-12

11 And all the angels were standing round about the throne, and (about) the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, 12 saying,

“Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, (be) unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.”

In addition to the innumerable hosts, the angels and the elders still stand before the throne of God. The “amen” is attached to the praise of the multitude of the saved, which is the antecedent of *they*. They were falling down and worshipping God, recognizing Him as all-wise and all-powerful, and worthy of thanks and honor. God exists for ever and ever or into the ages of the ages. The difference in these attributes of God and the idols and philosophers of the world becomes clear.

Revelation 7:13-14

13 And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, “These that are arrayed in white robes, who are they, and from where did they come?” 14 And I said unto him, “My lord,

you know.” And he said to me, “These are they that come of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

An important question comes up. Who are the innumerable hosts? Where did they come from? The two-part answer given by the elders describes them as those who were slain for the word and testimony of the Lamb, discussed above. The innumerable hosts are the servants of God who have come out of the great tribulation. They came out of that tribulation with robes washed white in the blood of the Lamb. John names the specific tribulation in Revelation 1:9: “9 I John, your brother and partaker with you in tribulation and kingdom and patience (which are) in Jesus.” The great tribulation confronts all Christians who war against the flesh and the world.

In Acts 9:15-16, the Lord said of Paul:

15 But the Lord said unto him [Anantas], “Go your way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel, 16 for I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake.”

John himself identified the struggle in Rev 2:10,:

10 Fear not the things which you are about to suffer: behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried; and you shall have tribulation ten days. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Of all Christians, Paul wrote in Rom 8:35-36:

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall **tribulation**, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 Even as it is written,

For your sake we are killed all the day long;

We were accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

The tribulation is upon us and is not some episode of the future as millennial sophistry would say. It is a spiritual struggle and continues in the lives of all Christians according to Paul in Ephesians 6:12:

12 For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual (hosts) of wickedness in the heavenly (places).

Revelation 7:15-17

15 Therefore are they before the throne of God; and they serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sits on the throne shall spread his tabernacle over them. 16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun strike upon

them, nor any heat: 17 for the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life: and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes.

Isaiah spoke of these very same promises in these very same figures in Isaiah 49:10:

10 They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that has mercy on them will lead them, even by springs of water will he guide them.

And in Isaiah 25:8:

8 He has swallowed up death for ever; and the Lord Jehovah will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the reproach of his people will he take away from off all the earth: for Jehovah has spoken it.

This episode of the Revelation ends with the complete victory of God and the Lamb. The servants of God who are sealed are before the throne. Each episode that follows, with its sequence of events, will end with this same victory.

This victory for the saints is the same as that with which the Revelation concludes in Rev 21:1-4:

21 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven of God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, (and be) their God; 4 and he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away.

The opening of the seventh seal in chapter 8 will bring the wicked and righteous right up to the great day of the Lord. Through it all, God is the Alpha and the Omega. Revelation 21:6-8 teaches emphatically:

6 And he said unto me, "They are come to pass. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is thirsty of the fountain of the water of life freely. 7 He that overcomes shall inherit these things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. 8 But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part (shall be) in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone; which is the second death.

Revelation 8: Opening of the Seventh Seal and Seven Angels with Seven Trumpets

Revelation 8:1-2

1 And when he opened the seventh seal, there followed a silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. 2 And I saw the seven angels that stand before God; and there were given unto them seven trumpets.

The preceding chapter ended with a description of what happened to the righteous, including those of the twelve tribes of Israel and the great multitude that no man could count. Against this is set the opening of the seventh and last seal. When he (the Lamb) opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven, indicating a period of readiness for the momentous events to follow. One might say the suspense also increased as all of heaven awaited the final revelation of the Lamb. It is important to remember that what John is about to see, has remained a mystery throughout the ages. The rulers of old did not know, according to 1 Corinthians 2:7-10:

But we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, (even) the (wisdom) that has been hidden, which God foreordained before the worlds unto our glory, 8 which none of the rulers of this world have known: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; 9 but as it is written:

Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not,

And (which) entered not into the heart of man,

Whatsoever things God prepared for them that love him.

10 But unto us God revealed (them) through the Spirit: for the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.

Nor did the prophets know, a situation eloquently described in 1 Peter 1:10-12:

10 Concerning which salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that (should come) unto you: 11 searching what (time) or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them. 12 To whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto you, did they minister these things, which now have been announced unto you through them that preached the gospel unto you by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven; which things angels desire to look into.

As Peter concluded, not even the angels knew what God had prepared.

The silence was deafening, as we might say, as the half an hour was passing. After the half an hour, John saw seven angels, described as the seven angels who stand before God. The description makes them unique in their identity. Who exactly are these seven angels? Two angels in the scriptures stand out as archangels—Gabriel and Michael. In addition, Jewish literature and tradition identify seven such angels. Jesus identified angels who always see the face of the father in Matthew 18:10:

10 See that you despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven.

Gabriel identified himself in Luke 1:19:

And the angel answering said unto him, “I am Gabriel that stands in the presence of God; and I was sent to speak unto you, and to bring you these good tidings.”

Jude names Michael as the archangel in Jude 9:

9 But Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil, disputed about the body of Moses, did not bring against him a railing judgment, but said, “The Lord rebuke you.”

Revelation 12:7 tells this story:

7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels (going forth) to war with the dragon; and the dragon warred and his angels.

Both Gabriel and Michael play a role in the prophecies of Daniel (Daniel 8:16, 9:21, 12:13, 12:1-3). Michael is called one of the chief princes, implying more angels in this category.

In this study, we will only say the seven angels who stand before the throne of God are a class unto themselves, participating here in the final judgment of God. They are angels of presence and power, and each had a trumpet. The term *seven angels* is used only nine times in the Bible and each use of the term is in the Revelation.

Another Angel with a Golden Censer

Revelation 8:3-5

3 And another angel came and stood over the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should add it unto the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. 4 And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand. 5 And the angel took the censer; and he filled it with the fire of the altar, and cast it upon the earth: and there followed thunders, and voices, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

In verse 3, another angel appears at the altar with a golden censer. Perhaps the Old Testament shadow of this event was in the atonement rituals of the Hebrews in Numbers 16:46

46 And Moses said unto Aaron, Take your censer, and put fire in it from off the altar, and lay incense upon it, and carry it quickly unto the congregation, and make atonement for them: for there is wrath gone out from Jehovah; the plague is begun.

With the incense, here in Revelation, were the prayers of the saints. The prayers of the saints were also prevalent when the Lamb took the scroll in Revelation 5:8

And when he had taken the book, the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

Two points need to be noted: A great deal happens in heaven when the saints pray, and the saints' prayers play a large role in the advent of the judgment.

When the saints pray, there is mediation of the highest order in heaven. We have already seen in Revelation 5:8 that when the Lamb took the scroll that the four living creatures and twenty-four elders held our prayers in bowls of incense. Paul taught in 1 Timothy 2:4-7 that Jesus Christ is our mediator:

5 For there is one God, one mediator also between God and men, (himself) man, Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself a ransom for all; the testimony (to be borne) in its own times;

1 John 2:1, John also affirmed that Jesus Christ speaks for us:

2 My little children, these things write I unto you that you may not sin. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: 2 and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world."

To all this power is added the intercessory power of the Holy Spirit in Romans 8:26-27:

26 And in like manner the Spirit also helps our infirmity: for we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself makes intercession for (us) with groanings which cannot be uttered; 27 and he that searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because he makes intercession for the saints according to (the will of) God.

The saints' prayers play a large role in the advent of the judgment. When the prayers went up before the throne of God, judgment followed. The angel hurls fire from the altar of God to the earth and the power of heaven helps us as peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake. As the revelation moves to the

sounding of the trumpets and the final judgment, the saints need not fear for the same power turned to destroy the evil ones, turns to help and protect the victorious saints.

A final note before we listen to the sounding of the trumpets, some say the angel here is the Lamb. They think the angel in this passage is the Christ because the Christ is the mediator between God and man. In addition, it is true, Revelation 10:1 describes a mighty angel in a way only fitting to the Son of God. However, this angel, in reference to the seven angels, is like a priest angel, a description fitting only to the Son of God. This description fits exactly with the teaching in Hebrews:

Hebrews 8:1-2: Now in the things which we are saying the chief point (is this): We have such a high priest, who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, 2 a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man.

Hebrews 6:19-20: Which we have as an anchor of the soul, (a hope) both sure and steadfast and entering into that which is within the veil; 20 where as a forerunner Jesus entered for us, having become a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 5:6: As he said also in another (place,) you are a priest for ever After the order of Melchizedek.

Hebrews 4:14: Having then a great high priest, who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

Hebrews 2:17-18: Wherefore it behooved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18 For in that he himself has suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted.

The angel's work is the fortifying of the saints' prayers in preparation for the destruction and chaos to follow. In this regard, it fits into the context and purpose of the opening of the seals: whatever comes in heaven or on the earth, those sealed are secure in eternity now and for evermore.

Seven Angels and Seven Trumpets (Revelation 8:6-13)

Revelation 8:6

6 And the seven angels that had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

The sounding of the trumpets parallels in meaning the opening of the seals. The opening of the seals demonstrates the protection and victory of the saints during the period of their individual lives whenever they might live. The destruction and chaos, the place of the martyrs, the destiny of the unrighteous, the sealing of the servants of

God—all of these are real to each one who stands facing the temptations and trials of life or facing the end of this life by death or the sudden return of the Lord.

The sounding of the trumpets extends these tumultuous events across all dispensations and epochs of the struggle of good against evil, light against darkness, righteousness against unrighteousness. They are from before time, from in the beginning when the word was with God and the word was God (John 1:1), from the fall of Satan, from the sin and death of humankind, from the Paradise lost. They extend to the son who conquered sin and rose from the dead, and to the redemption of humankind. The soundings herald events before time, during time and lead right up to, but do not include, the final destruction and the restoration of all things in the Lamb and his bride, the church, in chapters 15 through 22.

What happens next is from before the foundations of the world and extends into the ages of the ages. This is not the prophecy of puny oligarchs and transient historical events. This story is the climax of that one told of old: It is of heaven and hell; God Almighty and Satan; Christ and the antichrist; the apostles and prophets and the false prophets; the servants of God and the servants of the dragon; God the Alpha and the Omega and the Accuser.

Traditionally, trumpets are a call to battle. The trumpet sounds themselves are significant in announcing the presence of the Lord as in Exodus 19:16-19:

16 And it came to pass on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of a trumpet exceeding loud; and all the people that were in the camp trembled. 17 And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet God; and they stood at the far part of the mount. 18 And Mount Sinai, the whole of it, smoked, because Jehovah descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. 19 And when the voice of the trumpet waxed louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by a voice.

During the generations of humankind, we have all stood at the edge of horror and chaos. The picture painted at the opening of the seven seals repeats here with the sounding of the trumpets in grand and great proportions. In the first representation, the concluding message was the sealing of the servants of God described in chapter 7. In this representation, with the seven trumpets, the concluding message is to those who, facing the horrible plagues of life on this earth, fail to repent. The sounding of the sixth trumpet contains this pronouncement in Revelation 9:20-21:

20 And the rest of mankind, who were not killed with these plagues, repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and the idols of gold, and of silver, and of brass, and of stone, and of wood; which can neither

see, nor hear, nor walk: 21 and they repented not of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

The sin and death in this present world are horrible beyond imagination, and still some miss the point of repentance.

The First Angel Sounded His Trumpet

Revelation 8:7

And the first sounded, and there followed hail and fire, mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of the earth was burnt up, and the third part of the trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.

The first five soundings of the trumpet represent the absolute devastation unleashed upon the earth and upon humankind at the fall of man. They follow in main the substance of the creation story which adorned the Paradise—the Garden of Eden—with splendor and beauty and immortality. The figures themselves show how devastated a place the earth has become since the fall. The imagery is foreshadowed in the scriptures. In Joel 2:30-31, there is the foretelling:

30 And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. 31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of Jehovah comes.

This same foretelling is included in Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost, where he also quotes Joel 2:32:

32 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be delivered; for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those that escape, as Jehovah hath said, and among the remnant those whom Jehovah does call.

From the beginning, vegetation brought sustenance and beauty to the earth, as described in Genesis 1:11-13:

11 And God said, "Let the earth put forth grass, herbs yielding seed, (and) fruit-trees bearing fruit after their kind, wherein is the seed thereof, upon the earth." And it was so. 12 And the earth brought forth grass, herbs yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit, where in is the seed thereof, after their kind: and God saw that it was good. 13 And there was evening and there was morning, a third day.

God gave this gift of sustenance and beauty to man in Genesis 1:29:

29 And God said, "Behold, I have given you every herb yielding seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for food."

The gift was both pleasing to the eye and good to eat, as described in Genesis 2:9. In addition the Lord God gave them the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil:

9 And out of the ground made Jehovah God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

But because of the sin of Adam and Eve, God cursed the ground and made it hard to grow and made life correspondingly hard in Genesis 3:17-19:

17 And unto Adam he said, "Because you have hearkened unto the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree, of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it:' cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil shall you eat of it all the days of your life; 18 thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to you; and shall eat the herb of the field; 19 in the sweat of your face shall you eat bread, till you return unto the ground; for out of it were you taken: for dust you are, and unto dust shall you return."

Therefore, a third of the earth burned up with the trees and green grass. The destruction of the tidal surges after storms cover the land with salt makes the grass unable to grow. Pestilence remains on the earth until the end. Even in our time of plenty, vast regions and enormous areas cannot grow. People are hungry the world over. The lesson is clear: One would think that those of us who witness and experience this horrible state would repent and turn to the Lord; yet some do not.

The Second Angel Sounded His Trumpet

Revelation 8:8-9

8 And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; 9 and there died the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, (even) they that had life; and the third part of the ships was destroyed.

Once again, that which God created for man fails him in every way after his fall. How different is the destruction following the fall from the glorious plenty of the creation of sea life in Genesis 1:20-21:

20 And God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven." 21 And God created the great sea-monsters, and every living creature that moves, wherewith the waters swarmed, after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind: and God saw that it was good.

In our day, we witness a tsunami, an earthquake, a meteor fall, or an oil spill. Our sustenance departs, and famine reigns. Will man see his plight, sense what is coming, and repent? Many will not repent, according to Revelation 9:20-21.

The Third Angel Sounded His Trumpet

Revelation 8:10-11

10 And the third angel sounded, and there fell from heaven a great star, burning as a torch, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of the waters; 11 and the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.

At the sounding of the third trumpet, a great star—perhaps a meteor—falls, striking the very springs of water. This is different from the waters of the second trumpet sounding which were habitats for a human food source and seaways for commerce.

Here, the star—Wormwood—turns the water bitter and people die from drinking it. The word for wormwood means bitterness and has this meaning in Amos 5:7-9, where it also relates to the stars, Pleiades and Orion, to the water sources of the planet:

7 You who turn justice to wormwood, and cast down righteousness to the earth, 8 (seek him) that makes the Pleiades and Orion, and turns the shadow of death into the morning, and makes the day dark with night; that calls for the waters of the sea, and pours them out upon the face of the earth (Jehovah is his name);

Water, a life-sustaining miracle, is so abundant; yet when withdrawn or poisoned by drought and pollutions or a meteor's crash to earth, brings suffering and pain. Job 5:10 describes the source of water: "Who gives rain upon the earth, and sends waters upon the fields."

Perhaps, this is the very reason that spiritual water takes such a powerful meaning. John wrote in John 4:13-14:

13 Jesus answered and said unto her, "Every one that drinks of this water shall thirst again: 14 but whosoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life.

Jesus added in John 7:37-38:

37 Now on the last day, the great (day) of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. 38 He that believes on me, as the scripture has said, from within him shall flow rivers of living water."

Revelation concluded in Revelation 22:17:

17 And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And he that hears, let him say, "Come." And he that is thirsty, let him come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely.

The analogy is clear and true: physical life needs water without poison; spiritual life needs the water of life without the poison of error.

Our very thirst and need for water should bring us face to face, as it were, with the desperation of man dying, and awaken in us the need to repent. Of all the plagues brought upon man by his fall, can any be worse than the need for and the lack of water? A world in the horror of drought and the sickness of polluted water should wake us to repentance.

The Fourth Angel Sounded His Trumpet

Revelation 8:12

12 And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; that the third part of them should be darkened, and the day should not shine for the third part of it, and the night in like manner.

God's habitat for man included the lights of day and night, described with elegance and beauty by Moses in Genesis 1:14-18:

14 And God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years: 15 and let them be for lights in the firmament of heaven to give light upon the earth," and it was so. 16 And God made the two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: (he made) the stars also. 17 And God set them in the firmament of heaven to give light upon the earth, 18 and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good.

However, with the fall of man, darkness took on the somber and dark cast of evil. So it is that the physical darkness should remind us of the spiritual darkness that finally will become the outer and blackest darkness. This story of man without light unfolds from the fall of man until the end. David poetically describes the inclusion of darkness in the plagues upon the Egyptians in Psalms 105:26-28:

26 He sent Moses his servant, (and) Aaron whom he had chosen. 27 They set among them his signs, and wonders in the land of Ham. 28 He sent darkness, and made it dark; and they rebelled not against his words.

Joel included darkness in his prophecy in Joel 2:31-32:

31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of Jehovah comes. 32 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be delivered.

The Lord himself gave light and dark their symbolic meaning: in Matthew 6:22-23:

22 The lamp of the body is the eye: if therefore your eye be single, your whole body shall be full of light. 23 But if your eye be evil, your whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you be darkness, how great is the darkness!

Not only is there this spiritual darkness present in our lives, but there is also a final fate of the evil ones as the outer darkness, both in the teaching of Jesus and in Jude. Jesus taught in Matthew 25:30 among other places: “And cast you out the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth. Jude describes the end of false teachers in Jude 13: “Wild waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved forever.”

We have all experienced the despair of the dark. The electricity goes off in the nighttime. Dark storm clouds close out light even in midday. Huge sandstorms and snowstorms are known to cover the sun, stars, and moon for days. All of these and more should forewarn us of what we are in for if we do not repent.

The first four trumpets have sounded their warnings straight from the human experience created by God for man in the perfection of the garden, and lost to turn, oftentimes, against man after the fall. They bring us to the edge of desolation in the human experience. They should call us to repentance and obedience.

Before the sounding of the last three trumpets, an eagle shows a difference between the first four trumpets sounding and the last three trumpets sounding.

An Eagle Calls Out in a Loud Voice

Revelation 8:13

13 And I saw, and I heard an eagle, flying in mid heaven, saying with a great voice, Woe, woe, woe, for them that dwell on the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, who are yet to sound.

At the end of the sounding of the fourth trumpet, an eagle flying in midair calls out “Woe!” three times. There are three points of notice.

First, the King James and the New King James versions have *angel* for *eagle*. *Eagle* is clearly the accurate reading according the other translations and the overwhelming weight of scholarly opinion. The Law of Moses lists the eagle among the unclean birds. Perhaps the offensiveness of this vulture-like bird to the Jews kept

the proper translation out of the older English versions. To translate *eagle, angel* misses the point of the figure in this passage. Eagles eat carrion—the flesh of dead animals; dead and putrefying flesh; flesh unfit for food

Second, *woe* is an interjection of denunciation. Jesus used the word 27 times in the Gospels to condemn those not accepting his word. After that, the entire New Testament used the word only twice until Revelation, where the angels used it to pronounce the woes associated with the last three trumpet soundings and to denounce the wicked city of Babylon in Revelation 18. In his teaching, Christ mainly used the word *woe* in denouncing the Pharisees and false teachers (Matthew 23 and Luke 11). The prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, used the word *woe* to denounce the children of Israel for error and various conquerors for their assault against Jehovah.

Third, the entire 13th verse marks a transition between (1) the hardships and misery emanating from those things created by God for man and perverted by the fall (2) to those evil emanations created or allowed to happen for the punishment of man after his fall. Therefore, the first four soundings represented the degeneration of the creation. The last three soundings turn to the horrible happenings following the fall of man that did not exist before the fall: death and Hades, Satan's control of darkness, and the beast and false prophet leading man astray. These were all the results, not of God's creation, but of Satan's success in the fall of man and, perhaps, because of his own fall. All of these brought man to the most horrible circumstances imaginable—circumstances far worse than famine, worse than war, and worse than catastrophic events of nature. Oh yes, they are worse than the imaginary wars and the future events forecast by many.

Now a bird that feasts on carrion calls out these devastating woes!

Revelation 9: The Fifth and Sixth Angel Sound Their Trumpets and Two Woes Pass

As chapter 8 chronicled the effects of man's fall on the destiny of man in the physical world, chapter 9 tells of the destructive nature of lust, sin and death upon man in the spiritual world—all of which occurred because of the fall of man. In addition, an eagle will announce two of three woes.

The Fifth Angel Sounded His Trumpet (Revelation 9:1-11)

Revelation 9:1

9 And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven fallen unto the earth: and there was given to him the key of the pit of the abyss [bottomless pit].

At the sounding of the fifth trumpet, a star had fallen out of heaven. The past participle, *fallen*, shows an event concluded before the time of the past tense *saw*, which is the time of John's vision. Some variously describe the star that had fallen from the sky to the earth as Satan, Martin Luther, and Mohammed, or some other. We shall take a different meaning. The star was given the key to the pit of the Abyss or a better translation in this case is the King James *bottomless pit*. The key allowed this star control over the abyss. What is this abyss? Isaiah in Isaiah 14:9, 15 spoke of it:

9 Sheol [equivalent to Hades; realm of the dead] from beneath is moved for you to meet you at your coming; it stirs up the dead for you, even all the chief ones of the earth; it has raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations.

15 Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the uttermost parts of the pit.

Isaiah called this place the uttermost parts of the pit in verse 15.

In Romans 10:6-7, Paul similarly describes the abyss:

6 But the righteousness which is of faith says this, "Say not in your heart, ;'Who shall ascend into heaven?' (that is, to bring Christ down:) 7 or, 'Who shall descend into the abyss?' (That is, to bring Christ up from the dead.)"

The *where* of the abyss and the pit of the abyss is the darkest world of sin and death contrasted to heaven where there is only righteousness and light. A bottom of the abyss is, therefore, Hades. The *who* of the star or angel is Death. This interpretation agrees with the final words of this sounding trumpet in verse 9:11: "They have over them as king the angel of the abyss: his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek (tongue) he has the name Apollyon." This is not Satan, as some would suppose, but the Destroyer

who is Death. Yes, Death, who rode the pale horse with Hades following in Revelation 6:8, received the key to the abyss.

From whom and when did Death receive this key? At the instigation of the devil, sin and Death came. The Hebrew letter states the case in Hebrews 2:14-15:

14 Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death he might bring to naught him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; 15 and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Again, we turn to the advent of all that inflicts fallen man. After Adam and Eve's so gravely sinned, God allowed Death to reign in Genesis 3:17-19

17 And unto Adam he said, "Because you have hearkened unto the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree, of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it: cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil shall you eat of it all the days of thy life; 18 thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to you; and you shall eat the herb of the field; 19 in the sweat of your face shall you eat bread, till you return unto the ground; for out of it were you taken: for dust you are, and unto dust shall you return.

Paul marked the reign of Death from Adam in Romans 5:14:

Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression, who is a figure of him that was to come.

Hebrews directly connects Death to the devil. Look again at Hebrews 2:14-15

14 Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death he might bring to naught him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; 15 and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

The *when* of Death having the key to the abyss is when Adam and Eve sinned. From then until now, man lives with the certain expectation of death and fear of death. 1 Corinthians 15:21 concludes: "For since by man (came) death, by man (came) also the resurrection of the dead.

The key (*key* and *keys* only appear 10 times in the Bible) to the abyss is significant because death controlled Hades and the gates of Hades. This, in addition to the verb forms previously studied, places the time of this episode before the time of John's writing of the book and before the death of Christ. Working backwards in time, at the time of these visions Christ, the Lamb, held the keys to this very abyss in Revelation 20:1-2:

20 And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. 2 And he laid hold on the dragon, the old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years . . .

During the letters to the churches, the Lamb of God asserted his absolute control over death and Hades in Revelation 3:7:

7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These things says he that is holy, he that is true, he that has the key of David, he that opens and none shall shut, and that shuts and none opens.

This claim is made the more certain by fulfilling the prophecy in Isaiah 22:21-23:

22 And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; and he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.

The Lamb relates this claim directly to his death and resurrection in Revelation 1:18

18 and the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.

Answering, *when* did the Christ gained control of the abyss, the scripture tells us when Death held and lost the key. In Matthew 16:18-19, Jesus promised that the gates of Hades would not prevail against the church:

18 And I also say unto you, that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. 19 I will give unto you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

After the resurrection of the Lord, Peter said in Acts 2:29-33:

29 Brethren, I may say unto you freely of the patriarch David, that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us unto this day. 30 Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins he would set (one) upon his throne; 31 he foreseeing (this) spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that neither was he left unto Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. 32 This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we all are witnesses.

33 Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured forth this, which you see and hear.

From the sin of Adam until the resurrection of the Christ, Death controlled the abyss. Although Christ snatched the key of the abyss from the hand of Death, Death still reigns in the abyss. But we find in 1 Corinthians 15:24-26, the days of Death are numbered:

24 Then (comes) the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power. 25 For he must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy that shall be abolished is death.

Revelation 9:2-6

2 And he opened the pit of the abyss; and there went up a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. 3 And out of the smoke came forth locusts upon the earth; and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power. 4 And it was said unto them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree, but only such men as have not the seal of God on their foreheads. 5 And it was given them that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when it strikes a man. 6 And in those days men shall seek death, and shall in no wise find it; and they shall desire to die, and death flees from them.

Smoke from the abyss darkened the sun and the sky; and out of the smoke, locusts came down upon the earth. They received power *like* that of the scorpion of the earth. This entire episode is an extended metaphor; and as such, it parallels the locust plague on Egypt in Exodus 10:4-6:

4 Else, if you refuse to let my people go, behold, tomorrow will I bring locusts into your border; 5 and they shall cover the face of the earth, so that one shall not be able to see the earth: and they shall eat the residue of that which is escaped, which remains unto you from the hail, and shall eat every tree which grows for you out of the field; 6 and your houses shall be filled, and the houses of all your servants, and the houses of all the Egyptians.

As an extended metaphor the present passage is composed of similes and metaphors. Similes, with the use of *like* and *as*, run through the passage. Metaphors imply without the use of *like* or *as*. With the opening of the abyss, darkness prevailed throughout the creation—a spiritual darkness covering all. From without the darkness came locusts with the power like earthly scorpions—the power to sting. This power of scorpions is made clear in Ezekiel 2:6:

6 And you, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns are with you, and you do dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they are a rebellious house.

The Christ similarly stated in Luke 10:19-20:

19 Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall in any wise hurt you. 20

Nevertheless in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.

That these were not natural locusts is clear because they could not harm vegetation, which is what natural locusts do. Nor could they harm the earth or sea until God's servants were sealed, according to Revelation 7:2-3:

2 And I saw another angel ascend from the sun's rising, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a great voice to the four angels to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, 3 saying, "Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we shall have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads."

They could harm "only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads." Christians, when righteous, are immune to the sting of the omnipresent locusts. The Christ had said that he gave the authority to trample scorpions and overcome all the power of the enemy Luke 10:19:

19 Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall in any wise hurt you.

The sting itself does not kill, but tortures, and that for a limited period—five months, the summer when natural locusts thrive. The agony is like that of the sickness of a person when stung—agony to the point of wishing for death. In this metaphor, the meaning is clear: The destroyer with the key to abyss is Death. The locusts are all that is of the world, as explained in 1 John 2:16:

16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vain glory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

The sting is sin as explained in 1 Corinthians 15:55-57:

55 O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?

56 The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law:

57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Once Adam and Eve succumbed to temptation, the lust of the flesh and the eye and the pride in one's own life was unleashed. As the locust, the evil desires are everywhere, their sting is sin, and fullness of sin is death. James 1:13-15 tells us:

13 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no man; 14 but each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. 15 Then the lust, when it has conceived, bears sin; and the sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

From Adam came physical death and worse spiritual death. Woe heaps upon woe.

Revelation 9:7-11

7 And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared for war; and upon their heads as it were crowns like unto gold, and their faces were as men's faces. 8 And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as (teeth) of lions. 9 And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to war. 10 And they have tails like unto scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men five months. 11 They have over them as king the angel of the abyss: his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek (tongue) he has the name Apollyon.

The metaphor continues with the locust looking like horses prepared for battle. Perhaps their crowns of gold are riches that appeal to the lust of the eye, and their faces like human faces and hair like women make them good to look upon, and their lion's teeth and iron helmets showed the pride of power and might. All of these are a reflection of that statement by John in 1 John 2:16 cited above:

16 For everything in the world — the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does — comes not from the Father but from the world.

The five months of torment of verse 5 limits the duration of the effect of the scorpions, signaling that the locust will pass away as the summer passes.

The destroyer led them. Many believe the destroyer is Satan. Satan, the dragon, the serpent, or the devil, is never identified as the destroyer. The destroyer is central to the death of the first born in Egypt. Yet, it is the Lord who controls that act and permits the destroyer to enter. In Exodus 12:23, Moses wrote:

23 For Jehovah will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he sees the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side-posts, Jehovah will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you.

That the Lord controls the destroyer is repeated twice more. In Exodus 12:12, he said:

23 For Jehovah will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he sees the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side-posts, Jehovah will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you.

In Exodus 12:29, Moses wrote:

29 And it came to pass at midnight, that Jehovah smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the first-born of cattle.

The Bible does not use the Greek word *Apollyon*, except here. The Hebrew, *Abaddon*, which is transliterated here, appears in several passages all of which identify

the destroyer with death. Job put the two together in Job 28:22: “22 Destruction and Death say, ‘We have heard a rumor thereof with our ears.’”

Solomon spoke of the two in such a way to include a dominating Lord in Proverbs 15:11:

11 Sheol and Abaddon are before Jehovah: How much more then the hearts of the children of men!

He also used them together in Proverbs 27:20:

20 Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied; and the eyes of man are never satisfied.

In summary, the Hebrew text is literally *Sheol* and *Adaddon*, which is equivalent to Death and Hades, as frequently used in Revelation. Therefore, the star is the Destroyer, king of the abyss. He was the destroyer who passed through Egypt, and he is Death. The locust hordes of evil desires, the scorpion like sting of every sin, and the spiritual and physical death of all who have lived and will live testify that the Destroyer King is before us. Only the power of God’s seal on our foreheads can save us. Through Christ Jesus, we are free from sin and death. In Romans 8:1-2, Paul wrote:

8 There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death. 3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

All men die a physical death, but to die from the sting of the scorpion is to die everlastingly.

The Sixth Angel Sounded His Trumpet

Revelation 9:12

12 The first Woe is past: behold, there come yet two Woës hereafter.

The first woe is past and we are ready for the second woe. Understanding that the first four trumpet sounds are evil released upon man at his fall taking from man the natural blessings of creation and turning them against him, and that the woes following each of the last three trumpet sounds resulted from changes permitted by God affecting the condition of man. This second woe is worse than the first woe of sin and physical death since it threatens spiritual death for an eternity. We move beyond the certain doom of the bottomless pit for those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads to the everlasting doom of eternal hell fire for those who succumb to the mounted troops of the dragon. The second woe is upon us.

The Release of the Four Angels Who Are Bound at the Great River Euphrates

Revelation 9:13-16

13 And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the horns of the golden altar which is before God, 14 one saying to the sixth angel that had one trumpet, "Loose the four angels that are bound at the great river Euphrates." 15 And the four angels were loosed, that had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, that they should kill the third part of men. 16 And the number of the armies of the horsemen was twice ten thousand times ten thousand: I heard the number of them.

At the sounding of the sixth angel's trumpet, John heard a voice coming from the horns of the altar. The reading *four horns* is not correct, but if it were, it would not seem to change the meaning. Both the altar of the tabernacle and the altar of the temple had four horns. (Exodus 27:2-3; Ezekiel 43:15). Horns are often associated with entities that have the right to govern and the power to command, Zechariah spoke of these in Zechariah 1:18-21:

18 And I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, four horns. 19 And I said unto the angel that talked with me, "What are these?" And he answered me, "These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem." 20 And Jehovah showed me four smiths.

21 Then said I, "What come these to do? And he spoke, saying, "These are the horns which scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head; but these are come to terrify them, to cast down the horns of the nations, which lifted up their horn against the land of Judah to scatter it."

Therefore, *horn* and *horns* are figuratively the strength and power of potentates and ruling entities. In this case, the voice from the horns commands the angel with the sixth trumpet who, in turn has the right to command the angels who were bound at the great river Euphrates. Of the Christ, it was said before his birth by Zechariah, John the Baptist's father, in Luke 1:68-69:

68 Blessed (be) the Lord, the God of Israel; For he has visited and wrought redemption for his people, 69 and has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of his servant David.

We have already studied the image of the lamb who "had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth." Revelation 5:6. Later horns will represent the strength and power of the dragon, the devil, Revelation 12:3; the beast from the sea, Revelation 13:1; and the false prophet, Revelation 13:11.

The four angels bound at the river Euphrates are reserved for a specific time and purpose. God had reserved them for a very hour, day, month, and year. The Euphrates was one of the rivers bordering the Garden of Eden; the river is still with us until this

day. The hour, day, month, and year would seem to be that very time when nature turned against man, and death came to him along with evil desires, and sin. The time is set just this side of Eden when with his fall, man took upon himself sins unto death, spiritual death from the face of the Lord, and a casting out into the outer darkness. At that time, released and charging against mankind, were 200 million mounted troops.

The population of the United States at the time of this writing is approximately 295,734,134. The army in this passage was 2/3 the number of this entire country. Think of almost all of America on the march. These troops had the authority to kill a third of mankind.

The Army of Death, Injury, and Plagues

Revelation 9:17-19

17 And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates (as) of fire and of hyacinth and of brimstone: and the heads of lions; and out of their mouths proceeded fire and smoke and brimstone. 18 By these three plagues was the third part of men killed, by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone, which proceeded out of their mouths. 19 For the power of the horses is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails are like unto serpents, and have heads; and with them they hurt.

Before considering the horror of the horses and riders, let us ask what could be such a horrible and multitudinous army—an army more in number and more deadly, perhaps, than the horde of locusts of the fifth angel’s trumpet sounding? Ephesians 6:11-13, 16 gives the answer:

11 Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, **against the spiritual (hosts) of wickedness in the heavenly (places).** 13 Wherefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand. . . . 16 withal taking up the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil (one).

Therefore, the devil has at his disposal an army of the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. They are rulers, authorities, and powers of this dark world. What they are not here, and elsewhere, are physical human forces. Paul states it plainly, “Our struggle is not against flesh and blood”—not the Romans, not the Muslims, not any earthly government, unless they themselves fall fool to the devil’s deceptions.

However, these forces of wickedness infiltrate the religions, the businesses, and the governments of the present world. Clergymen, world leaders, and corporate leaders are victims of the Devil’s deceit, just as are we all. Satan’s minions go forth across the world. In 2 Corinthians 11:14-15, Paul describes what all humans are up against,

14 And no marvel; for even Satan fashions himself into an angel of light. 15 It is no great thing therefore if his ministers also fashion themselves as ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works.

The deceptive nature and work of Satan displays itself with the coming of the lawless one, the beast, and the false prophet in Revelation and the antichrist in the epistles of John. 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10 describe how Satan will work:

9 (even he), whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, 10 and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

John once again describes his vision in an extended metaphor. The mounted troops, horses with riders, take the color of hell itself—their breastplates were fire and smoke and brimstone. The hottest fire burns a blue flame. The fiery red horse of war appeared in chapter 6:4. John adds fire and smoke. Six references to *brimstone* in the Old Testament relate to the pouring out of the judgment of God. They are all in the manner of God's destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19:24: "24 Then Jehovah rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from Jehovah out of heaven."

However, in seven references in Revelation, three are from this passage and describe this horrible army, and four others describe separately the eternal destruction of the beast and the false prophet (Revelation 19:20), the devil (Revelation 20:10), Death and Hades (Revelation 21:8) and those whose names are not written in the Book of Life.

The three plagues of fire, smoke, and brimstone are the plagues of eternal hell fire coming out of the mouths of the horses, killing a third of mankind. The power of this demoniac army is in their mouths and tails. *Out of their mouths came fire* speaks to the point of attack by trial and tribulation as in Revelation 7:14:

14 And I say unto him, "My lord, you know." And he said to me, "These are they that come of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

This fire of the Satan will try to will burn up the works of the gospel as in 1 Corinthians 3:13-15

13 each man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire; and the fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is. 14 If any man's work shall abide which he built thereon, he shall receive a reward. 15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as through fire.

The power of the locust, revealed with the blowing of the fifth trumpet, was the sting of a scorpion—extremely dangerous but not always deadly. Now the power to inflict injury is in the tail with a head like snakes. Christ forecast this danger and spoke of the safety of those having their names written in heaven. Whether scorpion stings or snakebites, believers are safe. In Luke 10:18-20, he said,

18 And he said unto them, “I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven. 19 Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall in any wise hurt you. 20 Nevertheless in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

The death inflicted here is not the death of the earthly body. This death is the second death, eternal hell fire. Christ said in Matthew 10:28,

“28 Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”

This theme of the second death with all its horror, woven through the Revelation is the result of losing our great struggle against the forces of evil. Early on in the book, the Lord promised the followers of the Lamb in Revelation 2:11: “He that overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.”

In Revelation 20:6, our victory is one over the second death:

6 Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: over these the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

The opposite is also true. Those whose names are not in the book of life receive the second death in Revelation 20:14-15:

And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, (even) the lake of fire. 15 And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire.

Nothing wreaks havoc on mankind like the lives of those caught up in sins that lead to the second death. God warns often of the disastrous results of such overwhelming sin that destroys individuals, families, and nations:

Matthew 12:32: And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in that which is to come.

Hebrews 6:4-6: For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, 6 and (then) fell away, it

is impossible to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

Hebrews 10:26-27: For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more a sacrifice for sins, 27 but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries.

2 Peter 2:20-22: For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the last state is become worse with them than the first. 21 For it were better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered unto them. 22 It has happened unto them according to the true proverb, the dog turning to his own vomit again, and the sow that had washed to wallowing in the mire.

1 John 5:16-17: If any man see his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask, and (God) will give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: not concerning this do I say that he should make request. 17 All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.

From refusing the Holy Spirit to turning our back on the Christ, these devastating situations lead to misery in this life and death in the life to come. Thus, it is so, as Paul said in Romans 6:23, “23 For the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Failure to Repent

Revelation 9:20-21

20 And the rest of mankind, who were not killed with these plagues, repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and the idols of gold, and of silver, and of brass, and of stone, and of wood; which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk: 21 and they repented not of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

After all these horrors, should not all mankind fall before the creator and repent? As eyewitnesses to the pain and suffering—the plagues of sin—in this life, mankind ought to turn away in horror and to the Lord. The phrase, *still did not repent*, shows that the rest of mankind is still in danger. God demands repentance from the evil works of their hands.

Repenting and repentance is central to the gospel message and to the meaning of Revelation. John the Baptist came preaching repentance in Matthew 3:1-2:

3 And in those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, saying, “2 Repent! For the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Jesus also preached in Luke 13:3: “3 I tell you, No! but, except you repent, you shall all in like manner perish.”

Paul preached that even ignorance is no excuse for not repenting in Acts 17:30-31:

30 The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now he commands men that they should all everywhere repent: 31 inasmuch as he has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he has ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he has raised him from the dead.

In our human predicament there is urgency and dire need to repent as Peter writes in 2 Peter 3:9:

9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

The clarion call of the angel with the sixth trumpet is that all mankind must repent to escape this second death. The sins themselves are the most odious, yet off repeated.

Worshiping demons and idols of gold go hand in hand. Paul was clear on this issue in 1 Corinthians 10:20-21:

But (I say), that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God: and I would not that you should have communion with demons. 21 you cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of demons: you cannot partake of the table of the Lord, and of the table of demons.

Idolatry also led to the most horrendous acts which are described fully by Paul in Romans 1:21-32:

21 because that, knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks; but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened. 22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, 23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.

24 Wherefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness, that their bodies should be dishonored among themselves: 25 for that they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile passions: for their women changed the natural use into that which is against nature: 27 and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another,

men with men working unseemliness, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was due.

28 And even as they refused to have God in (their) knowledge, God gave them up unto a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting; 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity; whisperers, 30 backbiters, hateful to God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31 without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, unmerciful: 32 who, knowing the ordinance of God, that they that practice such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but also consent with them that practice them.

Christ set the standard judging murders and murderers. In Matthew 5:21-22, during his sermon on the mount, Christ extended murder to anger:

21 You have heard that it was said to them of old time, “You shall not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment.” 22 But I say unto you, that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, “Raca” [*You good for nothing*], shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say, “You fool,” shall be in danger of the hell of fire.

According to Christ in John 8:44, the father of sinners, the devil, is a murderer from the beginning:

44 You are of (your) father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and stands not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar, and the father thereof.

The purpose of magic arts is to deceive people making them think the sorcerer is someone divine. Satan sent the lawless one to deceive with counterfeit miracles, signs, and wonders, according to 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10:

9 (even he), whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, 10 and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

Simon the sorcerer allowed himself to be thought great as only God is great in Acts 8:10:

10 to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, “This man is that power of God which is called Great.”

True converts refused to participate in sorcery or magic, and as in Acts 19:18-19:

18 Many also of them that had believed came, confessing, and declaring their deeds. 19 And not a few of them that practiced magical arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all; and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.

Sexual immorality, including such acts as fornication, adultery, and homosexuality, are sins against the mind, body, and soul. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 6:15-16:

15 Know you not that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ, and make them members of a harlot? God forbid. 16 Or know you not that he that is joined to a harlot is one body? For, “The twain,” said he, “shall become one flesh.”

Thefts are expressly forbidden. Paul wrote, in Ephesians 4:28:

Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have whereof to give to him that hath need.

In 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Paul taught emphatically against these great and awful sins:

9 Or know you not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men, 10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you: but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.

Near the end of Revelation in Revelation 21:8, John sees the fate of those dead to sin as those who have come to the worst possible condition imaginable—the second death:

8 But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part (shall be) in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone; which is the second death.

Revelation 10: The Angel and the Little Scroll

Many writers treat chapters 10 and 11 and the first 14 verses of chapter 12 as interludes. A careful reading shows the entire passage to be an integral part of the second woe in chapter 9 verse 13 at the sounding of the sixth trumpet where the armies of the dragon, 200 million strong, spread death throughout mankind. While this army wreaks havoc, the rest of mankind did not repent, continuing in their devastating sins. The sounding of the sixth trumpet and the scene opened in chapter 9 verse 13, ends incompletely, lacking either redemption or condemnation for those not repenting and those killed by the terrible army. Reinforcing this reading, chapter 11, verse 14 announces the end of the second woe: “The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming soon.” Therefore, the second woe includes the army of death, injury, and plagues, the failure of the rest to repent, the angel and the scroll (Revelation 10), and the two witnesses (Revelation 11:1-14).

Chapter 10 begins with the implied but unasked question of what will happen to the rest who do not repent. Just as God allowed strong forces of evil to be unleashed at the sin of man and the fall of the devil, so also did he unleash His mighty forces of righteousness. Chapters 10 and 11 describe how God’s mighty forces work in revealing His will and striking out against the army of evil. The weapon is the word of God. The righteous warriors are those of Revelation 7:14 who “have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” .

A Mighty Angel

Revelation 10:1-4

10 And I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, arrayed with a cloud; and the rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire; 2 and he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left upon the earth; 3 and he cried with a great voice, as a lion roars: and when he cried, the seven thunders uttered their voices. 4 And when the seven thunders uttered (their voices), I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.”

Still a part of the sounding of the sixth trumpet, John saw a strong angel [messenger] coming down out of heaven. Previous events under the sounding of this

sixth trumpet include a voice from the golden altar commanding the angel to release the four angels bound at the great river Euphrates in Revelation 9:13-16. These four angels, perhaps, were a part of the troops numbering 200 million. The army composed of these troops was one of death, injury, and plagues. This angel in chapter 10 is a strong angel—not like the seven angels sounding the trumpets, not like the angels of the churches, and not like the angels bound at the river Euphrates.

The strong angel (*messenger* by the use of the word in this passage) is the Lamb. An equivalent representation of the Lamb as an angel could be the priest angel offering the prayers of the saints, with incense, on the golden altar before the throne (See notes on chapter 8:3-5). In that case, the result of the angel's action on behalf of the saints was retribution. This *strong angel* has the characteristics of the Lamb in chapter 1 and of the Lord in other passages.

He was arrayed in a cloud is the first descriptive phrase. In Revelation 1:7, John wrote in his introduction:

7 Behold, he comes with the clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they that pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over him. Even so, Amen.

The Lord spoke many times from a cloud in the Old Testament. For example, the Lord led the children of Israel in a pillar of cloud by day in Exodus 13:21-22:

21 And Jehovah went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way, and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light, that they might go by day and by night: 22 the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, departed not from before the people.

When Moses went upon the mountain, the Lord spoke from within a cloud in Exodus 24:16-17:

And the glory of Jehovah abode upon Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud. 17 And the appearance of the glory of Jehovah was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel.

A cloud or the clouds also clothed the divine presence in the New Testament. On the mount of transfiguration in Matthew 17:5, God spoke from a cloud:

While he was yet speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold, a voice out of the cloud, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear him."

In Luke 21:27-28, Jesus said:

27 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 But when these things begin to come to pass, look up, and lift up your heads; because your redemption draws nigh.

With a rainbow above his head is similar to the description in Ezekiel 1:27-28 which refers to an appearance fire and a rainbow:

27 And I saw as it were glowing metal, as the appearance of fire within it round about, from the appearance of his loins and upward; and from the appearance of his loins and downward I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness round about him. 28 As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of Jehovah. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spoke.

In Revelation 4:2-3, a rainbow encircles the throne of God:

2 Straightway I was in the Spirit: and behold, there was a throne set in heaven, and one sitting upon the throne; 3 and he that sat (was) to look upon like a jasper stone and a sardius: and (there was) a rainbow round about the throne, like an emerald to look upon.

His face was as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire are an almost direct representations of the description of the Lamb in Revelation 1:14-15:

14 And his head and his hair were white as white wool, (white) as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; 15 and his feet like unto burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace; and his voice as the voice of many waters.

Again, the evidence seems overwhelming that the strong angel is the Lamb of God.

The scroll that lies open in his hand is not necessarily a little scroll [see the notes on *biblion* in chapter 5]. The scroll, which lies in his hand, seems to be the same scroll of chapter 5—a scroll no one could open except the Lamb of God. In the chapters 6:1 through 8:1, he had opened the seven seals. What is in his hand in the book is the revelation, not all of which has unfolded. The sounding of the seven trumpets concludes at the opening of the seventh seal. The narrative at this point is midway through the sounding of the sixth trumpet, which is the second woe.

The strong angel planted his right foot on the sea and his left on the land. When he spoke, his voice was like a lion. The seven thunders spoke, John started to write, and the voice from heaven ordered John to seal up what the seven thunders said. The word, *thunders*, appears 13 times in the Bible. Each time the word refers to the Lord speaking. Joel speaks in Joel 2:11 of the Lord uttering commands to his forces of great number:

11 And Jehovah uttered his voice before his army; for his camp is very great; for he is strong that executes his word; for the day of Jehovah is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?

John had just witnessed the army of the devil, 200 million strong, and now he hears the seven thunders begin to illustrate the might of the almighty God and His forces beyond number.

The seven thunders teach us that we are coming to the end of God's final revelation to man, but not the end of all there is to know. In fact, some of the things of heaven cannot be uttered. Paul speaks of this in Romans 8:26-27:

26 And in like manner the Spirit also helps our infirmity: for we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself makes intercession for (us) with groanings which cannot be uttered; 27 and he that searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because he makes intercession for the saints according to (the will of) God.

In 2 Corinthians 12:2-4, Paul said that a man "heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."

The Mystery of God to Be Accomplished

Revelation 10:5-7

5 And the angel that I saw standing upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his right hand to heaven, 6 and swore by him that lives for ever and ever, who created the heaven and the things that are therein, and the earth and the things that are therein, and the sea and the things that are therein, that there shall be delay no longer: 7 but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then is finished the mystery of God, according to the good tidings which he declared to his servants the prophets.

Then the strong angel swore by the Almighty God who lives forever and ever and who created all things. *There shall be delay no longer* is the subject of the oath. This does not refer to the end of the world and the coming of the Lamb, for we are now 1,900 years later, and that time that only God knows has not come upon us. The contrasting word, *but*, sets the time and the subject. *But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound*, tells the *when* of this passage. Since we are able to read ahead, we know that this is coming later in the Revelation, and John recorded it. *Then is finished the mystery of God, according to the good tidings which he declared to his servants the prophets* is the *what* of this passage.

The big event is the final and complete revelation of God, revealed here and revealed at start of the book in Revelation 1:1:

1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show unto his servants, (even) the things which must shortly come to pass: and he sent and signified (it) by his angel unto his servant John.

The good tidings is God's revelation in His son.

God held his mystery throughout the ages, revealing it first and partially in the prophets of old, according to 1 Peter 1:10-12:

10 Concerning which salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that (should come) unto you: 11 searching what (time) or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them. 12 To whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto you, did they minister these things, which now have been announced unto you through them that preached the gospel unto you by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven; which things angels desire to look into.

Not only did the Old Testament prophets seek the mystery, but even the angels desired to look into these things. Even the rulers did not know God's mystery, as Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 2:6-10:

6 We speak wisdom, however, among them that are full grown: yet a wisdom not of this world, nor of the rulers of this world, who are coming to naught: 7 but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, (even) the (wisdom) that has been hidden, which God foreordained before the worlds unto our glory: 8 which none of the rulers of this world have known: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory: 9 but as it is written, "Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, And (which) entered not into the heart of man, Whatsoever things God prepared for them that love him."

10 But unto us God revealed (them) through the Spirit: for the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.

The consummation of God's mystery was in Christ; and through Christ, God made his mystery known, according to the Hebrew writer in Hebrews 1:1-2:

1 God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, 2 has at the end of these days spoken unto us in (his) Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds.

In Ephesians 3:2-5, Paul explained the role of the New Testament apostles and prophets:

2 if so be that you have heard of the dispensation of that grace of God which was given me to you-ward; 3 how that by revelation was made known unto me the mystery, as I wrote before in few words, 4 whereby, when you read, you can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ; 5 which in other generation was not made known unto the sons of men, as it hath now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit;

Now, without delay, God will complete the revelation of his mystery to John. The character and nature of the prophecies are important here, and important in understanding the two prophets of chapter 11. We must not think that the focal point of Revelation is the end of the world and the destruction of the dragon, the beast, the false prophet, all those whose names are not written in the Book of Life, and Death and Hades. When the time comes, these are disposed of in little more than a verse each. The focal point is God's mystery fully revealed and spread by innumerable followers of the Lamb, throughout time. Romans 16:25-26 teaches:

25 Now to him that is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal, 26 but now is manifested, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, is made known unto all the nations unto obedience of faith:

The Army of the devil may have fire and sulfur coming out of their mouths and tails that bite like snakes, but the army of the Lord has the sword of the Spirit, the word of God (Ephesians 6:17) and that same sharp double-edged sword is coming out of the mouth of the Lamb in Revelation 1:16. In Isaiah 27:1, Isaiah forecast this same weapon in a struggle against the serpent:

27 In that day Jehovah with his hard and great and strong sword will punish leviathan the swift serpent, and leviathan the crooked serpent; and he will slay the monster that is in the sea.

The Lord told of the impending use of the word of his mouth as a sword in Revelation 2:16:

16 Repent therefore; or else I come to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of my mouth.

The Eating of the Book

Revelation 10:8-10

8 And the voice which I heard from heaven, (I heard it) again speaking with me, and saying, "Go, take the book which is open in the hand of the angel that stands upon the sea and upon the earth." 9 And I went unto the angel, saying unto him that he should give me the little book. And he said unto me, "Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but in thy mouth it shall be sweet as honey."

10 And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and when I had eaten it, my belly was made bitter.

The metaphor used in this passage is not the two-edged sword, but a metaphor of the eating of the book and of how it will taste. The voice told John to take the scroll

(the mystery revealed) from the hand of the strong Angel, and to eat it. In John's mouth, it was sweet as honey but in his stomach, it was bitter. The mystery of God is double-sided—to those who accept it, it is sweet, to those who reject it, it is bitter. To those who follow it, blessings beyond count but also trials and sufferings: in fact, 2 Timothy 3:12 tells us: "Yes, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

Eating is often associated with the word of truth (God's Mystery here). John 6:51 reads:

51 I am the living bread which came down out of heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: yes and the bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world.

That the word is sweet is illustrated by the Psalmist in Psalms 119:103-104:

103 How sweet are your words unto my taste! (Yes, sweeter) than honey to my mouth!

104 Through your precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.

Ezekiel also related the sweetness to eating in Ezekiel 3:3:

3 And he said unto me, Son of man, cause your belly to eat, and fill your bowels with this roll that I give you. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness.

According to Ezekiel 2:10, the word of God, the bread of life, is not all sweetness:

10 And he spread it before me: and it was written within and without; and there were written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe.

Whether false teachers, miss-using the word or Christian turned away from God, the word may be used wickedly and against the Lord. Paul speaks of these enemies whose God is their belly. How more bitter can it be than in Philippians 3:18-19

18 For many walk, of whom I told you often, and now tell you even weeping, (that they are) the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19 whose end is perdition, **whose god is the belly**, and (whose) glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.

Often these are brethren seeking to turn others from the Lord as in Romans 16:17-18:

17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which you learned: and turn away from them. 18 For they that are such serve not our Lord Christ, **but their own belly**; and by their smooth and fair speech they beguile the hearts of the innocent.

Often bitterness comes into the lives of the faithful, themselves, as those righteous who must endure persecution, or those, who in the words of Jesus in Matthew 10:34-36 must leave loved ones:

34 Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. 35 For I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law: 36 and a man's foes (shall be) they of his own household.

One important note: We have a new Passover by the blood of Jesus, according to 1 Corinthians 5:7:

7 Purge out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, even as you are unleavened. For our Passover also has been sacrificed, (even) Christ.

The old Passover include a bitter element also: Exodus 12:7-8 tells about bitter herbs:

7 And they shall take of the blood, and put it on the two side-posts and on the lintel, upon the houses wherein they shall eat it. 8 And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; **with bitter herbs** they shall eat it.

John's Work Is Not Done

Revelation 10:11

11 And they say unto me, "You must prophesy again over many peoples and nations and tongues and kings.

This vision concluded with the voice telling John that he must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings." The revelation of God's mystery is not yet complete. John will continue to prophesy until the end of this book and orally until he dies, and after that, through the inspired written word. Only through the revelation of God do the unrepentant [See chapter 9, verse 21] have any hope. Peter clearly stated their condition in 2 Peter 2:9:

9 the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment unto the Day of Judgment;

However, the Lord wishes all to follow His revelation and do His will. 2 Peter 3:8-9 reads:

8 But forget not this one thing, beloved, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Revelation 11: The Two Witnesses and the Seventh Trumpet

Chapter 11 continues to tell of the happenings at the sounding of the sixth trumpet. In chapter 10, the *little book* contained the revelation of God. Now the two witnesses (prophets) become symbolic of the human vessels through whom that revelation came, as expressed by Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:7-10:

7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God, and not from ourselves; 8 (we are) pressed on every side, yet not straitened; perplexed, yet not unto despair; 9 pursued, yet not forsaken; smitten down, yet not destroyed; 10 always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body.

Measuring the Temple of God and the Altar

Revelation 11:1-2

1 And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and one said, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. 2 And the court which is without the temple leave without, and measure it not; for it hath been given unto the nations: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.

John now continues an active role in the vision. In chapter 10, John learned that the revelation of the mystery of God, the word of God, is the weapon used against those who do not repent and the 200 million deadly troops. Chapter 11 elaborates on the concept by identifying those who will wield this weapon of truth. John already knows that he must continue his work of prophesying. The voice that he had heard from heaven tells him to measure the temple and the altar and count the worshippers there. Before we understand the measuring, we must understand the nature of the temple of God.

The Old Testament temple was a shadow of the true temple of God. Jesus, himself, began teaching about a spiritual temple in Matthew 12:4-6:

4 how he entered into the house of God, and ate the showbread, which it was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them that were with him, but only for the priests? 5 Or have you not read in the law, that on the Sabbath day the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are guiltless? 6 But I say unto you, that **one greater than the temple is here.**

In John 2:19, Jesus spoke of his body as a temple, “Jesus answered and said unto them, ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’” At his death, Jesus removed the symbolic meaning from the Jewish temple in Matthew 27:51-53:

51 And behold, the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake; and the rocks were rent; 52 and the tombs were opened; and many bodies of the saints that had fallen asleep were raised; 53 and coming forth out of the tombs after his resurrection they entered into the holy city and appeared unto many.

The temple of God completed by the Christ made obsolete the Jewish temple. Matthew used the term *holy city*, repeated in in this chapter and in the Revelation as the church, the New Jerusalem, the bride of Christ. The saints are the temple of God as Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3:16-17:

16 Know you not that you are a temple of God, and (that) the Spirit of God dwells in you? 17 If any man destroys the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, and such are you.

Paul compared this temple of the living God with the temple of idols in 2 Corinthians 6:15-16:

15 And what concord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion has a believer with an unbeliever? 16 And what agreement has a temple of God with idols? For we are a temple of the living God; even as God said, “I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

In Christ, we exist as the temple of God according to Ephesians 2:21-22

21 in whom each several building, fitly framed together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord; 22 in whom you also are built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit.

Peter affirms this very teaching in 1 Peter 2:4-8:

4 unto whom coming, a living stone, rejected indeed of men, but with God elect, precious, 5 you also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 Because it is contained in scripture, “Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: And he that believes on him shall not be put to shame.” 7 For you therefore that believe is the preciousness: but for such as disbelieve, the stone which the builders rejected, the same was made the head of the corner; 8 and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence; for they stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

Jesus also taught explicitly in Revelation 3:12:

12 He that overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out from here no more: and I will write upon him the name of my God,

and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God, and my own new name.

The temple of God is a spiritual temple, and therefore, what must be measured and counted are the spiritual dimension of the church here on earth, including those who have already died for the Lord. That number is readily available:

Revelation 4:9-10: And when the living creatures shall give glory and honor and thanks to him that sits on the throne, to him that lives for ever and ever, 10 the four and twenty elders shall fall down before him that sits on the throne, and shall worship him that lives for ever and ever, and shall cast their crowns before the throne.

Revelation 5:11: And I saw, and I heard a voice of many angels round about the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands.

Revelation 7:4: And I heard the number of them that were sealed, a hundred and forty and four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the children of Israel.

Revelation 7:9: After these things I saw, and behold, a great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation and of (all) tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands.

These enumerable hosts of righteousness contrast to the 200 million troops of evil plus the impenitent of chapter 9. These hosts of righteousness are they who wield the spiritual sword, the word of God. The worshippers are a spiritual Israel, as it were, and the temple is a spiritual temple, the church. The word *nations* takes its meaning from the ordinary and general use of the word, not the specific use as in the phrase *Jews and Gentiles*. Vine tells of the first meaning of *ethnos*: “denotes, firstly, ‘a multitude or company’; then, ‘a multitude of people of the same nature or genus, a nation, people.’” (From Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright © 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers.)

The nation or people spoken of here is the nation described at the beginning of the sounding of the sixth trumpet—the troops of the evil and the impenitent of chapter 9. The temple is the church and the court is the world. From the court or the world, they will trample the holy city. Ordinarily we would think Jerusalem. However, all the cities of the Revelation are symbolic. This symbolism continues in Revelation 11:8:

8 And their dead bodies (lie) in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.

In addition, the Revelation itself clearly defines the meaning of the term holy city:

Revelation 21:2: And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven of God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.

Revelation 21:10: And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,

Revelation 22:19: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book.

The holy city is the bride, the church, in heaven, as clearly shown, and on earth—the church now and the church in eternity. That the holy city is the church now is clear; for Hebrews 12 spells out its exact nature. Hebrews 12:22 uses the present tense “*you are come*” *to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the general assembly and church of the firstborn* in Hebrews 12:22-24:

22 but you are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24 and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better than (that of) Abel.

Hebrews 12:28-29 affirms the nature of the church, the kingdom, in the present and not in the future, proving in fact they are one and the same:

Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe: 29 for our God is a consuming fire.

While the temple encompasses those before the throne of God, the holy city describes the church and the suffering it endures as the troops of evil and the impenitent trample it for 42 months. We must view the indefinite *42 months* in the sense of the sweet and sour nature of the revelation in chapter 10. Those who obey the word by eating the bread of life will suffer intermittently while enjoying the blessings of God in this life and the one that is to come. Jesus used this same analogy in John 6:35-40:

35 Jesus said unto them. “I am the bread of life: he that comes to me shall not hunger, and he that believes on me shall never thirst. 36 But I said unto you, that you have seen me, and yet believe not. 37 All that which the Father gives me shall come unto me; and him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out. 38 For I am come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me. 39 And this is the will of him that sent me, that of all that which he has given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. 40 For this is the will of my Father that every one that beholds the Son, and believes on him, should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

The ongoing struggle of good against evil goes on in the outer court against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. This struggle began with the fall

of man and the casting out of the devil. It is in this context that the Lord gave power to his two witnesses in verse 3.

The Two Witnesses

Revelation 11:3-6

3 And I will give unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. 4 These are the two olive trees and the two candlesticks, standing before the Lord of the earth. 5 And if any man desires to hurt them, fire proceeds out of their mouth and devours their enemies; and if any man shall desire to hurt them, in this manner must he be killed. 6 These have the power to shut the heaven that it rain not during the days of their prophecy: and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they shall desire.

The two witnesses' episode is the last part of the sounding of the sixth trumpet, the second woe. In the immediate context, they are empowered by God as witnesses of great abilities to uphold and deliver the revelation against the enemy who are trampling on the holy city. In the broader context, the witnesses have appeared once before in the revelation of Zechariah 4. There they appeared as assurance to Zerubbabel, as lamps with olive trees for oil beside them. When asked what they were, the angel replied in verse 6:

6 Then he answered and spoke unto me, saying, "This is the word of Jehovah unto Zerubbabel, saying, 'Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says Jehovah of hosts.'"

The two witnesses, as those of old, are not empowered by earthly power or earthly might but by the Spirit of the Lord Almighty. The two witnesses, also like those of old are "the two who are anointed to serve the Lord of all the earth."

In summary, the two witnesses serve the Lord of all the earth and serve Him inspired by the spirit of the Lord. After just experiencing the evil troops, 200 million strong and the gentiles tramping the holy city, we now learn that God's weapon is a spiritual one. The weapon of the Almighty is not physical might or military power. Jesus explained the nature and character of the struggle in John 18:36:

36 Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."

In Revelation 5:6, John wrote of the Lamb empowered with complete and full Spirit of God:

6 And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, having seven

horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth.

Revelation 4:5 places the seven Spirits of God before the throne of God:

5 And out of the throne proceed lightnings and voices and thunders. And (there were) seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

The Lamb of God spoke of his having the seven spirits of God to the church at Sardis in Revelation 3:1:

These things says he that has the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars: I know your works, that you have a name that you live, and you are dead.

These selfsame spirits are those before the throne of God in Revelation 5:6. John the Baptist described this power of the Spirit of God in Jesus in John 3:34-35:

34 For he whom God has sent speaks the words of God: for he gives not the Spirit by measure. 35 The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hand.

In addition to the Lamb who had seven eyes and the seven spirits of God, and the seven lights on the lampstands in Zechariah, which were two anointed ones in Zechariah 4:10, 13, 14:

10 For who hath despised the day of small things? For these seven shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel; (these are) **the eyes of Jehovah**, which run to and fro through the whole earth.

13 And he answered me and said, “Know you not what these are?” And I said, “No, my lord.”

14 Then said he, “These are the two anointed ones that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.”

The eyes of the LORD, which range throughout the earth. In these two contexts, we know that the witnesses have the sevenfold spirit of God; they speak the word of God; and they range throughout the world. The power of the witnesses is the power of the word of God—the revelation of His mystery. As the apostle Paul said in Romans 1:16-17:

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

Thus, the witnesses as candlesticks are a symbol of God’s power in the word of their prophecy. We shall assert that one witness personifies the prophecy of the Old Testament and that the other personifies the prophecy of the New Testament. Indeed, chapter 11 verse 10 calls them prophets.

The witnesses are prophets in the sense of forth telling and/or foretelling. God's power in the word comes to bear through the prophets in the figure of the candlesticks and the two witnesses, defining the nature of the battle. In the parable of the sower, the devil comes and takes away the word of God from peoples' hearts, so they may not believe and be saved." Luke 6:12. In John 13:2, the devil had entered the heart of Judas and prompted him to betray the Lord. The opposing force is the word of God in Hebrews 4:12:

12 For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart.

The servants of God take up this sword to fight the troops of evil and the nations who trample on the holy city the church in Ephesians 6:17: "17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

The word of God revealed in the prophets is exactly the subject of John's testimony. John wrote in Revelation 1:1-2:

1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show unto his servants, (even) the things which must shortly come to pass: and he sent and signified (it) by his angel unto his servant John; 2 who bore witness of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, (even) of all things that he saw.

Later in Revelation 19:13-14, John named the Lamb:

13 And he (is) arrayed in a garment sprinkled with blood: and his name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies which are in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white (and) pure.

This same Word was from the beginning as taught in John 1:1-2:

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God.

Three divine characters align themselves against the forces of evil in the Revelation: the Almighty God, the Lamb of God, and now, the sevenfold Spirit of God. These three, with the enumerable, true worshippers, are set against the heavenly hosts of wickedness.

The two witnesses, prophets, in a figure of speech called synecdoche (See notes on Revelation 2:1), stand for all prophets of all time in two classes—the Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles and prophets. The grouping of the prophets in this order agrees with Hebrews 1:1-3:

1 God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, 2 has at the end of these days spoken unto us in (his) Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the

worlds; 3 who being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power.

Chapter 11, verse 6, calls the witnesses “two men.” The Spirit of God works in revealing the word of God through the prophets. 2 Peter 1:19-21 explains the process of all prophetic discourse. Note the use of *lamp* as compared to *lampstand* and *candlestick* used in the various version of the Revelation:

9 And we have the word of prophecy (made) more sure; whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts: 20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation. 21 For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spoke from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit.

Paul summarized this in the expression, *inspired* [Lit. God breathed] in 2 Timothy 3:16-17:

16 Every scripture inspired of God (is) also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness. 17 That the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work.

The two witnesses are great warriors of righteousness across time from the fall of man to the final revelation to consummate at the sounding of the seventh trumpet (Revelation 10:5-7). Even Abel in the very beginning was a prophet (Luke 11:49-51).

The 1,260 days is 42 months and the same as the 42 months (1,260 days) of verse 2. However, verse 2 speaks to the trampling of the holy city, the church. This verse speaks to the time the prophetic word of God protects God’s children—a time soon to come with no delay. The prophets work—oral and written—parallels the assault of evil on the followers of God and will be over when the Lord returns, at the same time that all persecution ends. Notice that God protects the Woman and her child from the dragon, sporadically, for this same 42 month (see Revelation 12:6).

Fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. The Spirit of God empowers the witnesses with the sharp and two-edged sword and with awesome miracles to use against the powers of the prince of the air. As the troops of evil could destroy by fire of trial and persecution, the ultimate power of destruction by fire belongs to the Lord in 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10:

5 (which is) a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God; to the end that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer: 6 if so be that it is righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to them that afflict you, 7 and to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, 8 rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: 9 who shall suffer punishment, (even) eternal destruction from

the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might, 10 when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at in all them that believed (because our testimony unto you was believed) in that day.

The Almighty God spoke directly in these very terms in Jeremiah 5:14:

14 Wherefore thus says Jehovah, the God of hosts, “Because you speak this word, behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them.”

“*If any man desires to hurt them in this manner must he be killed*” shows that just as the troops of evil have the power of sin to kill, the prophets have the power of the Spirit of God by whose judgment, the word of God, will judge and cast those opposed into the lake of fire and brimstone, which is the second death (See Revelation 20:14; 21:8). God gave the witnesses other powers:

Elijah used the power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain. I Kings 17:1; 18:1-45.

Moses used the power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague. Exodus 7:20.

The Beast Overpowers and Kills the Witnesses

Revelation 11:7-14

7 And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss shall make war with them, and overcome them, and kill them. 8 And their dead bodies (lie) in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. 9 And from among the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations do (men) look upon their dead bodies three days and a half, and suffer not their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. 10 And they that dwell on the earth rejoice over them, and make merry; and they shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwell on the earth. 11 And after the three days and a half the breath of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them that beheld them. 12 And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, “Come up here. And they went up into heaven in the cloud; and their enemies beheld them.

13 And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell; and there were killed in the earthquake seven thousand persons: and the rest were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.

14 The second Woe is past: behold, the third Woe comes quickly.

At the point when the witnesses standing for all the apostles and prophets finish their testimony, the beast attacks. Notice the witnesses have finished their testimony.

This is our first introduction to what Paul called “world-rulers of this darkness (Ephesians 6:12).”

Chapter 13 fully describes the beast. For now, we know that the beast is from the Abyss and that it has the might to overpower the witnesses and to kill them. The beast affected the earthly lives of all the prophets as described in Luke 11:48-51:

48 So you are witnesses and consent unto the works of your fathers: for they killed them [the prophets], and you build (their tombs). 49 Therefore also said the wisdom of God, “I will send unto them prophets and apostles; and (some) of them they shall kill and persecute; 50 that the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; 51 from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zachariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary: yes, I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation.

Jesus placed the time of the end of the prophets to a time within the generation to which he was speaking. Speaking retrospectively and prospectively of the plight of the prophets, Jesus included all the prophets and apostles in this group of those killed. Implicit in the language of John and the language of Jesus is the fact that the prophets were killed and their prophecy ended. Paul agreed saying in 1 Corinthians 13:8:

8 Love never fails: but where (there are) prophecies, they shall be done away; where (there are) tongues, they shall cease; where (there is) knowledge, it shall be done away.

Their bodies lie in the streets of the great city, contrasted to the holy city of 11:2. The scripture teaches plainly that the great city is a figure. The great city is Sodom and Egypt, but is also where they crucified the Lord, that is, secular Jerusalem. The phrase great city appears 13 times in the Bible—five times in the Old Testament and the other eight in Revelation. In the Old Testament, it refers to sinful Nineveh four out of five times. In the Revelation, it symbolically includes Babylon throughout chapter 18, where her fall receives a detailed description. In Revelation 17:18, the great city is the woman who sits on the beast and the great city rules over the kings of the world. In Revelation 16:18-19, the great city splits into three parts because of God’s wrath poured out on the earth. The great city, that secular city, contrasts to the holy city, the spiritual city, the New Jerusalem. It is the great city which looked upon the dead bodies of the witnesses in Revelation 11:9-11:

9 And from among the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations do (men) look upon their dead bodies three days and a half, and suffer not their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. 10 And they that dwell on the earth rejoice over them, and make merry; and they shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwell on the earth. 11 And after the three days and a half the

breath of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them that beheld them.

The three and a half days is equivalent to the approximate time Jesus spent on the cross and in the grave. Having been crucified at the third hour of the day, he died about the ninth hour. Luke recorded the time of Jesus death and the prophetic nature of Jesus in Luke 24:19-21:

19 And he said unto them, "What things?" And they said unto him, "The things concerning Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: 20 and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. 21 But we hoped that it was he who should redeem Israel. Yes and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things came to pass."

This being the case, then Christ stands symbolically for the Old Testament and the New Testament prophets. From the cross, he looked back to the revelation from of old. Just as he had said on the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:17: "Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfil." At the point of his death, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom (Mark 15:38).

As the death of Jesus ended the era of the prophetic Old Testament, so his life began the era of the prophetic New Testament. He had told his apostles in John 15:26-27:

26 But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, (even) the Spirit of truth, which proceeds from the Father, he shall bear witness of me: 27 and you also bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.

Their mission, as Christ's mission, ended in persecution and, for most, martyrdom. History documents the tragic end of almost all the apostles. Two vivid examples are Paul and James. In Acts 12:2-3, James, the brother of John, was put to death with the sword, and Peter was seized. Paul understood how much he was to suffer from the beginning as recorded in Acts 9:15-16:

15 But the Lord said unto him, "Go your way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel; 16 for I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake."

The men of the all the earth celebrated and gloated because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth. What appears to be a point of victory suddenly changes: "A breath of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet, and great fear fell upon them that beheld them." The metaphor of Jesus, who stands for all prophets and apostles, past and present, continues as God raised them from the dead

and took them up in a cloud. As the prophets were ending their time on earth, literally dying out, as it were, they become forever alive in the written word. Jesus had foretold this in Matthew 24:34-35:

34 Truly I say unto you, “This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be accomplished. 35 Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.”

Peter quoted the prophet Isaiah in 1 Peter 1:25: “25 But the word of the Lord abides for ever. And this is the word of good tidings which was preached unto you.

The metaphor extends to include the ascension of Christ as it relates to all the prophets, for these two prophets went up to heaven in a cloud. In Acts 1:9 tells us of Jesus: “9 And when he had said these things, as they were looking, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.”

The revelation by the prophets is complete, and it was of this very moment that John spoke in Revelation 10:6-7:

6 and swore by him that lives for ever and ever, who created the heaven and the things that are therein, and the earth and the things that are therein, and the sea and the things that are therein, that there shall be delay no longer: 7 but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then is **finished the mystery of God** [Emphasis added], according to the good tidings which he declared to his servants the prophets.

Heaven’s response to this event was immediately and momentous, but not so momentous as to be taken for the final demonstration of God’s wrath, which is reserved for the last “Woe!”

Revelation 11:13 announces this event:

13 And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell; and there were killed in the earthquake seven thousand persons: and the rest were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.

Summary of the Sounding of the Sixth Trumpet and the Second Woe

The events of the second woe may be summarized: the release of the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates (Revelation 9:13-16); the army of death, injury, and plagues; failure to repent (Revelation 9:20-21); the angel and the little scroll (Revelation 10); measuring the temple of God and the altar (Revelation 11:1-2); the two witnesses (Revelation 11:3-14); and the beast overpowers and kills the witnesses, who are raised from the dead (Revelation 11:7-14).

14 The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming soon.

The Seventh Angel Sounded His Trumpet

Revelation 11:15-19

15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there followed great voices in heaven, and they said, "The kingdom of the world is become (the kingdom) of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever." 16 And the four and twenty elders, who sit before God on their thrones, fell upon their faces and worshipped God, 17 saying:

We give you thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who are and who was; because you have taken your great power, and did reign. 18 And the nations were enraged, and your wrath came, and the time of the dead to be judged, and (the time) to give their reward to your servants the prophets, and to the saints, and to them that fear your name, the small and the great; and to destroy them that destroy the earth.

19 And there was opened the temple of God that is in heaven; and there was seen in his temple the ark of his covenant; and there followed lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail.

At the sounding of the seventh trumpet, the revelation opens with a loud celebration and worship in heaven. In contrast, the sounding of the sixth trumpet opened to a scene of horror as the devil's destructive troops—200 million strong—stormed through the world. The sixth sounding had concluded with God's temple, the holy city and the witnesses enduring in their battle. Now, victory is in air. The kingdom of the world now is the Kingdom of our Lord and his Christ, according to the loud voices in heaven. The temple in heaven and the prophets receive special attention in the worship.

That the kingdom of the world has ended and become the kingdom of the heaven is a central principal of the revelation. John has taught on two occasions that the saints are reigning (present tense) with Christ. In Revelation 1:5-6, we studied:

5 and from Jesus Christ, (who is) the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loves us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood; 6 and he made us (to be) a kingdom, (to be) priests unto his God and Father; to him (be) the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Again, in Revelation 5:9-10, John wrote what the four living creatures and 24 elders sang in their new song,

9 And they sing a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for you were slain, and did purchase unto God with your blood (men) of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, 10 and made them (to be) unto our God a kingdom and priests; and they reign upon earth.

When did they become a kingdom? This question is important since many think it will occur at some future date and last for a literal thousand years. As we have studied, the use of the past tense verb, *made*, is an action in the past preceding the time of the main verb. At John's writing, the Lord had made the saints a kingdom. This is in agreement with the teaching of Jesus, who pinpointed the time of the coming of the kingdom in Mark 9:1:

And he said unto them, "Truly I say unto you, There are some here of them that stand (by), who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power."

In Luke 22:29-30, Jesus used the present tense verb to describe the receiving of the kingdom:

29 and I appoint unto you a kingdom, even as my Father appointed unto me, 30 that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom; and you shall sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Paul also uses the past tense verb—time before the present time of Paul's writing—in Colossians 1:12-14:

12 giving thanks unto the Father, who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; 13 who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love; 14 in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins.

Finally, the Hebrew writer, in Hebrews 12:28-29, used the present participle (an action continuing in the present):

28 Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe: 29 for our God is a consuming fire.

The preceding episode, represented in the sounding of the sixth trumpet, described the temple of God, the holy city, and the prophets of God as they overcame the army of the devil. After that victory, we come to the celebratory statement here in Revelation 11:15:

15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there followed great voices in heaven, and they said, "The kingdom of the world is become (the kingdom) of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever."

See Strong's. (*Lord* is used of God Almighty in verse 17) and of his Christ (anointed, i.e. the Messiah in Hebrew, used of Jesus. See Strong's). The length of the reign is *for ever and ever* or literally, into the ages of the ages. There was no failure or defeat in God's sending his son; and therefore no need for a future earthy struggle. The victory was certain and final in Jesus. Isaiah said and Jesus quoted in Matthew 12:20-21.

20 A bruised reed shall he not break,
And smoking flax shall he not quench,
Until he send forth judgment unto **victory**.

21 And in his name shall the Gentiles hope.

Paul agreed in 1 Corinthians 15:56-57:

56 The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law:

57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the **victory** through our Lord Jesus Christ.

John, in 1 John 5:4-5, taught:

4 For whatsoever is begotten of God overcomes the world: and this is the **victory** that has overcome the world, (even) our faith. 5 And who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

The twenty-four elders, on their thrones before God, fell on their faces worshipping God. Their worship concludes the rescue of a world destroyed by sin and man lost in sin, represented in the sounding of the trumpets. At the sounding of the seventh trumpet, their worship summarizes this victory in Revelation 11:17-19

We give you thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty. God is all might and all powerful.

Who is and who was. God is everlasting

Because you have taken your great power. God has all power.

And did reign. With victory of the Christ and his prophets.

The nations were angry. They thought the holy city was trampled over and the prophets dead.

Your wrath has come. This is the third woe; the first woe was one of sin and death with the reign of the Destroyer; the second woe was one of savage troops which could not overcome the temple of God, the holy city, or the prophets, the word of God.

The time for the dead to be judged. The last enemy to conquer is death

And (the time) to give their reward to your servants the prophets. The valiant Old and New Testament prophets receive their reward.

And to the saints, and to them that fear your name. Those set apart and fear God's name.

The small and the great. There will be no distinction.

And to destroy them that destroy the earth. The end of evil is complete as verse 19 concludes:

19 And there was opened the temple of God that is in heaven; and there was seen in his temple the ark of his covenant; and there followed lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail.

Paul describes his last great judgment in 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10:

6 if so be that it is righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to them that afflict you, 7 and to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, 8 rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: 9 who shall suffer punishment, (even) eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might, 10 when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at in all them that believed (because our testimony unto you was believed) in that day.

There was opened the temple of God. This is the same temple discussed in 11:1; however, we have added to the scene the ark of his (God's) covenant. The covenant, Old and New Testament, was complete with the work of Christ and the prophets. Paul wrote about its completeness in 2 Timothy 3:16-17:

16 Every scripture inspired of God (is) also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness. 17 That the man of God may be **complete, furnished completely** unto every good work.

Jude wrote about its completion in Jude 3:

3 Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for **the faith which was once for all delivered** [Emphasis added] unto the saints.

The covenant complete is the new covenant. Hebrews 9:15 teaches:

15 And for this cause he is the mediator of a **new covenant**, that a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they that have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

The covenant is more excellent and better in every way; the Hebrew writer said in Hebrews 8:6-7:

6 But now has he obtained a **ministry the more excellent**, by so much as he is also the mediator of a better covenant, which hath **been enacted upon better promises**. 7 For if that first (covenant) had been faultless, then would no place have been sought for a second.

Forecasting the judgment of all things, *there followed lightnings, and voices, thunders, an earthquake and great hail.* In summary, the scene is set for the final judgment. The Lamb has instructed the churches, the Lamb has opened the seven seals, and the angels have sounded the seven trumpets. What follows will be the final

episodes in the judgment forecast at the time of the fall of man and the curses upon mankind and the devil and the forces of evil.

The first will be the judgments outstanding between the woman and the dragon, the devil. Next will be the judgments against the beast and false prophet, followed closely by the disposition of Babylon and the prostitute. The serpent and his followers will receive their judgment, and last of all, the Lord will cast judgment on Death and Hades. Those whose names are in the Book of Life, the church, enter into the joys of the Lord.

Revelation 12: The Woman and the Dragon

This episode between the woman and the dragon fulfills and disposes of the curse upon serpent and the enmity between the woman and the serpent because of the fall of man recorded in Genesis 3:13-16:

13 And Jehovah God said unto the woman, "What is this you have done?" And the woman said, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat."

14 And Jehovah God said unto the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon your belly shall you go, and dust shall you eat all the days of your life: 15 and I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed: he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

16 Unto the woman he said, "I will greatly multiply your pain and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; and your desire shall be to your husband, and he shall rule over you."

There are two possible symbolic meanings in the dramatic situation set between woman and the devil. In the literal story, literal man as the seed of woman will step on the serpent and that the serpent will strike the literal heel of man. However, the statement is about enmity. In this view, this symbolic meaning is that the seed of woman, Christ and his church, will crush the head of the devil which he did by resisting temptation and overcoming death. It is clear that the devil was unable to strike the heel of Christ, who rose from the dead sin free and ascended into heaven.

Paul revealed this symbolic meaning to the church at Rome in Romans 16:19-20:

19 For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I rejoyce therefore over you: but I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple unto that which is evil. 20 And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Therefore, the offspring of the woman is the church under whose feet the God will crush Satan. The story that follows is an extension of the metaphor, taking on the characteristics of an allegory. An allegory is a story with two meanings, a literal meaning, and a symbolic meaning. The true offspring of woman are those faithful to God across the ages as identified in last verse of the chapter—Revelation 12:17:

17 And the dragon waxed wroth with the woman, and went away to make war with the rest of her seed, that keep the commandments of God, and hold the testimony of Jesus.

There can never be any doubt about who the seed of the woman are: they keep the commandments and hold the testimony of Jesus

Great and Wondrous Sign—the Radiant Woman

Revelation 12:1-2

Revelation 12:1-2

12 And a great sign was seen in heaven: a woman arrayed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars;2 and she was with child; and she cried out, travailing in birth, and in pain to be delivered.

12 And a great sign was seen in heaven shows that the scene John is viewing is extraordinary, especially as compared to just another sign in verse 3. *A woman arrayed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars* describes the radiant woman with sun as clothing, the moon under her feet, and a crown with twelve stars. She is radiantly arrayed with all the glory and grandeur of God's creation. The crown is a victory crown (stephanos). The crowns in verse 3 of the dragon are diadems or ruling crowns (diadema). The word for the woman's crown is the same as used for the crown of thorns worn by Christ, for the crown of righteousness in 2 Timothy 4:8, and, the crown of glory in 1 Peter 5:4. The twelve stars are the saved of spiritual Israel, the New Jerusalem.

This woman is not the Virgin Mary, as some suppose, nor is she just a symbol of all women. A woman so adorned can only be the bride of Christ. The entire revelation is about Christ and his bride. The conflict between the bride and the devil has existed from the fall of man. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 11:2-3:

2 For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I espoused you to one husband that I might present you (as) a pure virgin to Christ. 3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve in his craftiness, your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ.

Of Christ and the church, Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:25-32:

Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it; 26 that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word, 27 that he might present the church to himself a glorious (church), not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. . . . 29 for no man ever hated his own flesh; but nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ also the

church; 30 because we are members of his body. . . . 32 This mystery is great: but I speak in regard of Christ and of the church.

The woman was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth. By their very nature, the redeemed of all ages constitute the offspring of the beautiful woman. Revelation 7:14 describes them as “they that come of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

The woman—the bride, the pure virgin, the called out—has struggled to bring forth offspring in every generation. Her offspring are the children of God as opposed to children of the devil. In John 8:43-44, Jesus spoke of this fact as it related to the children of devil:

Why do you not understand my speech? (Even) because you cannot hear my word. 44 You are of (your) father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and stands not in the truth, because there is no truth in him.

In our story, the woman is in symbolic travail and anguish. Jeremiah 4:31 captures the sense of the allegory.

31 For I have heard a voice as of a woman in travail, the anguish as of her that brings forth her first child, the voice of the daughter of Zion, that gasps for breath, that spreads her hands, (saying), “Woe is me now! For my soul faints before the murderers.”

Note especially how John and Jeremiah use the words murderer and murderers. The children of God of each generation from Abel to the present suffer travail as they birth the true offspring of God for the next generation.

Another Sign—the Red Dragon

Revelation 12:3-6

3 And there was seen another sign in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his heads seven diadems. 4 And his tail draws the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stands before the woman that is about to be delivered, that when she is delivered he may devour her child. 5 And she was delivered of a son, a man child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and unto his throne. 6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared of God, that there they may nourish her a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

Another sign appeared—an enormous red dragon. Another sign contrast to the great and wondrous sign. Verse 7 explains the dragon figure clearly—that ancient

serpent called the devil, or Satan. The meaning of the word dragon, unknown in modern times, has its root meaning back in Job. In Job 41:1-13, God, through Job, described the leviathan, in a way consistent with what we now think of as dragons. The description offers a fit analogy to explain the devil as dragon:

The dragon had seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. The red dragon contrasts to the woman clothed in the sun. The seven heads, ten horns, and seven crowns describe his dominion and authority. These physical characteristics convey a spiritual meaning of authority (heads) power (horns) and dominion (crowns). Ephesians 6:12 describes fully the sum of the metaphoric meaning:

12 For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual (hosts) of wickedness in the heavenly (places).

This is the power and horror of the dragon. In Daniel 7:6, Daniel says his four-headed beast is one given authority to rule. The horns, the heads, and crowns describe the power and authority the devil, and not Rome or Egypt or any other minor force. Seven is the number of fullness and 10 is the number of completeness. The use of both numbers here does not extend beyond the symbolic meaning. The dragon is an entity of full and complete power over his kingdom—the spiritual host of wickedness.

In the next chapter, the dragon gives power and dominion to the beast. While writing of crowns, heads, and horns, John gives the meaning of the symbols in Revelation 13:2:

2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as (the feet) of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his **power**, and his **throne**, and **great authority**.

The crowns, heads, and horns will always take this meaning: power, throne, and authority. Crown used here is different from the woman's crown—*stephanos*, a crown of victory. The word used here is *diadema* and is always the symbol of kingly or imperial dignity. Revelation 12:3; 13:1; 19:12 use this meaning of crown of the dragon, of the beast, and of the Word of God.

The word, *head*, carries the consistent metaphoric meaning of authority. It is used this way of Christ, husbands, and wives in 1 Corinthians 11:3; of Christ in relation to the church in Ephesians 1:22; and now in relation to the Dragon, the beast, and the false prophet.

Similarly, the horns represent strength as used for the Lamb in Revelation 5:6 and the strength of the dragon and the beast in Revelation 12:3; 13:1, 11; 17:3, 7, 12, 16. Metaphorically, they signify political power and strength. See Psalms 18:2; cf. 1 Samuel 2:10; Lamentations 2:3. The notes on Revelation 9:13-16 discuss further the meaning of horns.

The dragon's tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon's strength and power was such that he could challenge heaven and sweep a third of the stars (angels) out of the sky and down to earth with his tail. Thus the rebellion and war between God and His angels and the devil and his angels started.

The dragon stands before the woman that is about to be delivered, that when she is delivered he may devour her child. The timing of the event is that same as the temptation and fall of man. At the birth of the first children, Cain and Abel, the woman struggled against the dragon, who waited ready to devour the child as soon as he was born.

Verse 5 says that she gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. In lineage, the male child was Christ and all those born again (John 3; 1 Peter 1:22-23). Thus the church is called the church of the first born in Hebrews 12:23: "23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven."

In ancestry, the child was all those true to the Lord from the beginning, bringing Christ to us. The child would rule all nations with an iron scepter. Revelation 2:27 used this phrase of the Lord:

27 and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to shivers; as I also have received of my Father:

Revelation 19:15 expresses the same thought:

15 And out of his mouth proceeds a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treads the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God, the Almighty.

All those of the church will rule with him as stated Luke 22:29-30:

29 and I appoint unto you a kingdom, even as my Father appointed unto me, 30 that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom; and you shall sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne means that the child was taken up by God to his throne, but the woman, the church, stayed. The woman found her refuge as she fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for one thousand two hundred and three score (1,260) days. The 1,260 days is the same time that the holy city was trampled on and the same time that the two witnesses prophesied in Revelation 11:2-3. 42 months and 1260 days are the same. God protected the woman, the bride of Christ, the church, the holy city, and his revelation against the dragon. God sheltered the woman in a prepared place just as he had sheltered the children of Israel described in 1 Corinthians 10:1-4:

For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; 2 and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; 3 and did all eat the same spiritual food; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of a spiritual rock that followed them: and the rock was Christ.

The figure does not mean that the woman will not suffer, for she is in the desert; and some individuals will falter and some will die, as did the children of Israel. The woman, the holy city, will survive.

War in Heaven

Revelation 12:7-9

And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels (going forth) to war with the dragon; and the dragon warred and his angels; 8 and they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. 9 And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world; he was cast down to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him.

At the time of Adam and Eve, the devil in the form of the serpent had already turned against God and seeks then and now to turn man and woman against God. He immediately led their son Cain into false worship and murder. The *and* here links the war in heaven to the struggle against the woman and her offspring. These are parallel events, related to one another, but separate. It links to the vision itself to the events in heaven, which consummate in the limiting of the power of the dragon and his place down in the world and to hell.

Jude refers to Michael as an archangel in Jude 9:

9 But Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing judgment, but said, The Lord rebuke you.

That the dragon was not strong enough to win shows that God can always control the devil. Jesus was present at the fall and described it in Luke 10:18: “18 And he said unto them, ‘I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven.’”

The influence of the dragon and his angels was restricted to the earth. However, even on earth, he was subject to the power of God. For example, he could not move against Job without God’s explicit approval in Job 1-2. In 1 Corinthians 10:13, Paul wrote:

13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will

with the temptation make also the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

The dragon does have the power to lead the whole world astray. There is no wondering about who the dragon is. He is the ancient serpent, the devil, or Satan.

A Loud Voice from Heaven

Revelation 12:10-12

10 And I heard a great voice in heaven, saying, "Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, who accuses them before our God day and night. 11 And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony; and they loved not their life even unto death. 12 Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you that dwell in them. Woe for the earth and for the sea: because the devil is gone down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he has but a short time."

The previous discussion of the fall of the dragon used the past tense *was*. The following words of instruction and praise are in the present tense. One will have to conclude that, with the victory in heaven, salvation and the power and the kingdom of God was complete. God's victory over the dragon forever predicted the outcome for the dragon. What was to be the outcome for each person who was to live is the central unanswered question. There will be no future coming of the kingdom, for it has come. The New Testament always looked back to this point where Christ was raised to sit over his kingdom and forward only to the salvation of the children of God, whenever they might live upon the earth.

There is a three-fold fulfillment to God's eternal purpose (Ephesians 1).

Salvation has come in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth according to Acts 4:10:

And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven that is given among men, wherein we must be saved.

The power of God has come in Romans 1:16:

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

And the kingdom of our God has come in Colossians 1:13-14:

13 who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love; 14 in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins:

Whatever arguments one might make about when God consummated his plan, it is clear that at the time of this writing it was fully complete. Nothing that follows will predict any changes or any future events not included in his plan at this point.

The authority of his Christ is certain. At the beginning of the Gospel, the devil held authority of all the kingdoms of the world Luke 4:5-7 says:

5 And he led him up, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. 6 And the devil said unto him, "To you will I give all this authority, and the glory of them: for it has been delivered unto me; and to whomever I will I give it. 7 If you therefore will worship before me, it shall all be yours.

By the time of his prayer in John 17:2, Jesus had authority to give eternal life:

2 even as you gave him authority over all flesh, that to all whom you have given him, he should give eternal life.

In Matthew 28:18, just before his ascension Jesus said, "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth." In 1 Corinthians 15:24, Paul speaks to the very end of the matter:

24 Then (comes) the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have abolished **all rule and all authority and power**.

An exact description of the authority of Christ in Ephesians 1:19-23 places the focal point of this authority at his resurrection:

19 and what the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might 20 which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly (places), 21 far above **all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion**, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: 22 and he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him that fills all in all.

Jude 25 offers a fitting conclusion to the subject of the authority of Christ which he had before all ages and now has and will have forevermore:

25 to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, (be) **glory, majesty, dominion and power**, before all time, and now, and for evermore. Amen.

A loud voice from heaven summarizes the status of the devil:

For the accuser of our brother: The word devil means accuser (diabolos), although accuser here is from a different word (kategoros).

Who accuses them before our God day and night: Job is a good example of the devil accusing someone before God in Job 1:6-12:

Now it came to pass on the day when the sons of God came to present themselves before Jehovah that Satan also came among them.

7 And Jehovah said unto Satan, "From where do you come?" Then Satan answered Jehovah, and said, "From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it."

8 And Jehovah said unto Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? For there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that fears God, and turns away from evil.

9 Then Satan answered Jehovah, and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing"?

10 Have not you made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. 11 But put forth your hand now, and touch all that he has, and he will renounce you to your face.

12 And Jehovah said unto Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power; only upon himself put not your hand. So Satan went from the presence of Jehovah.

Has been cast down: The hurling down takes a figurative turn here, as it moves from the result of the struggle in heaven to a struggle for the accused brethren.

They overcame him: The *they* has to be the brethren of Jesus, the followers of the Lamb, for it was by his blood that they overcame the devil.

Because of the blood of the Lamb: In Revelation 7:14-15, there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. There the elder describes the multitude in Revelation 7:14:

These are they that come of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

And because of the word of their testimony. The blood of the Lamb is Christ's part, offered on the cross. The followers' part is the word of their testimony. The church, the called out, individually and collectively, offer this testimony as their part. In Matthew 10:32-34, Jesus placed the good confession (acknowledgment or testimony) as the basis for acknowledgement before the Father. However, conflict resulted:

32 Every one therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven. 34 Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.

Individually and collectively (in the church), we hold to the same testimony as taught in 1 Timothy 3:15:

15 but if I tarry long, that you may know how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

The testimony of the church was to make known the manifold wisdom of God to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 3:10). John himself was exiled to Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus (Revelation 1:9-10).

They loved not their life: We met these brethren before in Revelation 6:9:

9 And when he opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held. [All Christians die to sin in order to live with Christ See Romans 6].

Even unto death: John summarized the brethren's state in Revelation 2:10, "Be you faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life."

12 Therefore rejoice, O heavens. Heaven will rejoice because of this victory of the brethren.

And you that dwell in them! The brethren, past, and the brethren, present, the innumerable multitudes, and all the hosts of heaven are victorious.

Woe for the earth and for the sea: With the dragon cast down, the earth and the sea are his domain.

Because the devil has gone down unto you! The loud voice calls the dragon the devil (accuser). The dragon and his angels have gone down to the earth and sea.

Having great wrath, knowing that he has but a short time: Having lost the struggle in heaven, it is only a matter of time until the devil's finish.

The Enraged Dragon

Revelation 12:13-14

13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast down to the earth, he persecuted the woman that brought forth the man (child). 14 And there were given to the woman the two wings of the great eagle that she might fly into the wilderness unto her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

The struggle now is upon the earth, the dragon filled with fury where he turns his wrath toward the woman, the bride of Christ. Peter describes the dragon as a roaring lion in 1 Peter 5:8, "Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for

someone to devour.” The dragon, who saw that he had been hurled to the earth, pursued the woman who had given birth to the man (child). The dragon continues the attack on the woman and her offspring from Revelation 12:6. Here the translators add *child*, leading to the false interpretation of the child, Jesus and the woman, Mary. When in reality the woman is the congregation of the hosts of believers across the ages and the man is the one who dies to sin.

That the woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent's reach reiterates the security of the woman in the desert. Here the figure of the two wings of a great eagle has a direct antecedent in the escape of the children of Israel in Exodus 19:4-6:

4 You have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. 5 Now therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be my own possession from among all peoples: for all the earth is mine:6 **and you shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.** [Notice the prophecy that they shall be a kingdom and priests. Compare this to Revelation 1:5 and 5:10 in these notes. Compare *holy nation* and *priests* to 1 Peter 2:9.]

The church will always be out of the serpent's reach. Her children may fall but the church will survive all assaults. *A time, and times, and half a time* is time counted by the lunar calendar as the custom of the Hebrews. *A time* is a year; *two times* is two years, and *half time* is a half year. So far, we have seen *42 months, 1,260 days, and a times, times, and half times*, all of which represent the intermittent time of the church's persecution throughout the ages from the fall of man to the victory of the lamb. The intermittent nature of the persecution and the survival of the woman is in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Daniel wrote of it in Daniel 12:7-10:

7 And I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by him that lives for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and a half; and when they have made an end of breaking in pieces the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.

8 And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, “O my lord, what shall be the issue (outcome) of these things?” 9 And he said, “Go your way, Daniel; for the words are shut up and sealed till the time of the end. 10 Many shall purify themselves, and make themselves white, and be refined; but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand; but they that are wise shall understand.

Revelation 12:15-16

“15 Then from his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river, to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the torrent. 16 But the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that the dragon had spewed out of his mouth”.

The prophets used water and rivers to speak of impending attacks by troops. In Jeremiah 46:6-7, Jeremiah used the figure to describe the troops of the Babylonians:

6 Let not the swift flee away, nor the mighty man escape; in the north by the river Euphrates have they stumbled and fallen.

7 Who is this that rises up like the Nile, whose waters toss themselves like the rivers?

A similar figure was used in Jeremiah 47:2:

2 Thus says Jehovah: “Behold, waters rise up out of the north, and shall become an overflowing stream, and shall overflow the land and all that is therein, the city and them that dwell therein; and the men shall cry, and all the inhabitants of the land shall wail.

The troops in this case would be the army of over 200 million in Revelation 9:16 with their mouths of fire, smoke, and sulfur and their tails like snakes. The earth thwarted the dragon by opening its mouth and swallowing the river. The earth has helped the children of God in a similar way in Exodus 15:11-12 when they were fleeing the Egyptians:

11 Who is like unto you, O Jehovah, among the gods? Who is like you, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? 12 You stretched out your right hand, the earth swallowed them.

In Numbers 16:30, 33, the earth responds in testimony to the power of God compared to the sorcerers of Egypt:

30 But if Jehovah make a new thing, and the ground open its mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down alive into Sheol; then you shall understand that these men have despised Jehovah. . . . 33 So they, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into Sheol: and the earth closed upon them, and they perished from among the assembly.

Revelation 12:16

17 And the dragon waxed wroth with the woman, and went away to make war with the rest of her seed that keep the commandments of God, and hold the testimony of Jesus:

The result was that the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring — those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus. The enraged dragon left the woman (the church), whom he would never defeat because of the power of God and the Lamb, and made war against the rest of her offspring (one by one)—those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus. What follows is the revelation of the nature of the attack on those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus. The question of who are the offspring of the woman is here settled forever. **They are those who those keep God's commandments and hold the testimony of Jesus.**

Revelation 13: Warriors of the Dragon—The Beast out of the Sea and the Beast out of the Earth

The war turns away from the woman and her ascended male child. The enraged dragon makes war against her offspring. There is no question as to whom the offspring are. They are those who obey God's commands and hold to the testimony of Jesus Revelation 12:17:

17 And the dragon waxed wroth with the woman, and went away to make war with the rest of her seed, that keep the commandments of God, and hold the testimony of Jesus

In this chapter, the beast coming out of the sea joins the dragon in his evil effort to overcome these offspring.

The Beast out of the Sea

Revelation 13:1-4

13 and he stood upon the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns, and seven heads, and on his horns ten diadems, and upon his heads names of blasphemy. 2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as (the feet) of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and great authority.

This passage reconnects to the status and deposition of the dragon after his challenge in heaven. The loud voice in the previous chapter had said in verse 12

Woe for the earth and for the sea: because the devil is gone down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he has but a short time.

From the two provinces of the devil's influence will come two beasts—one of the sea and one of the earth. Isaiah described the monster out of the sea in Isaiah 27:1:

27 In that day Jehovah with his hard and great and strong sword will punish leviathan the swift serpent, and leviathan the crooked serpent; and he will slay the monster that is in the sea.

From that early time, God promised to punish the monster with His great and powerful sword—the word of God. Because God gave us His complete Revelation, we can see the end of the beast from this vantage point of his beginning. Rev 19:15-16 and 19-21 teach:

15 And out of his mouth proceeds a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treads the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God, the Almighty.

19 And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat upon the horse, and against his army.

20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought the signs in his sight, wherewith he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast and them that worshipped his image: they two were cast alive into the lake of fire that burns with brimstone: 21 and the rest were killed with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, (even the sword) which came forth out of his mouth: and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

In verse two, the heads and the crowns demonstrate the beast's power, throne, and great authority: "The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority." It is important to remember, in reading these very symbolic passages, that in symbols the meaning runs from the concrete (the known) to the abstract (the unknown). Verse 4 says that the dragon gave the beast his great authority. The extent of the power and authority of the beast is in the numbers 7 and 10. Seven represented fullness and 10 represented completeness. The actual numerical value has no meaning in and of itself. Revelation 17 will discuss the nature of the beast and its influence in detail. The beast itself is a total and complete entity or being, just as the devil. Revelation 17 will describe the beast as one who once was, now is not, and will come up out of the abyss to his own destruction, which gives the beast the ability to sustain itself against adversity. The beast of the sea and the beast of the land are here until they are thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur (Revelation 19:20).

The beast resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. His power, throne, and authority came from the dragon. This is an allusion to Daniel's dream where he saw four great beasts, each different from the others, come up out of the sea. (See Daniel 7:2-8:1). Where the Daniel vision has four separate beasts, three of which are represented by a lion, a bear, and leopard, respectively, this beast is a combination of the four. His physical powers complement his delegated power of principality and dominion and great authority. If anything, the beast is a combination of all the Daniel images. If this is true, this beast exceeds any imagination of power and authority of the Daniel beast. Therefore, the beast's kingdom is not one or a series of earthly kingdoms. It is that kingdom spoken of at the sounding of the seventh trumpet—the kingdom of the world in Revelation 19:15-16:

15 And out of his mouth proceeds a sharp sword, that with it he should **smite the nations**: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treads the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God, the Almighty. 16 And he hath on his garment and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

As such, it is all-inclusive of world principality, power, authority, and might. In truth, the beast has all the power, throne, and great authority of the dragon; however, both are subject to the will of God. This power will last until the victory of Jesus, when the Lord, himself, will apply all authority given to him in Matthew 28:18:

18 And Jesus came to them and spoke unto them, saying, “All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth.”

At that time, the Lord will deliver the end to the beast and the false prophet. The dragon’s gives his power to the beast; God gives His to a Lamb.

Revelation 13:3

3 And (I saw) one of his heads as though it had been smitten unto death; and his death-stroke was healed: and the whole earth wondered after the beast;

Fatal wound in one of the heads (represents a principality or domain) stopped the beast at one point. His dominion ended, but the fatal wound had been healed. The past perfect tense makes the action of the wounding begun and completed in the past. The healed or resurrected beast stands to the dragon as the Lamb stands to God. This explains the phrase: the beast as one who once was, now is not, and will come up out of the abyss to his own destruction. The beast clearly has a past, a present (at the time of this writing), and a future. Verses 11-18 will present more facts regarding this fatally wounded but alive beast.

Revelation 13:4

4 and they worshipped the dragon, because he gave his authority unto the beast; and they worshipped the beast, saying, “Who is like unto the beast? And who is able to war with him?”

The scope of this in Ephesians 6:12-13 reveals the scope of the devil’s influence. However, it also shows the scope of the devil’s kingdom by delegation to the beast. Their kingdom is literally the kingdom of the world in Ephesians 6:12:

12 For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual (hosts) of wickedness in the heavenly (places).

One can see the power of the beast from Nimrod’s Babylon and Nineveh to the kingdoms of this present world (See notes on 13:11). The answer to the question of who can make war against the beast, is found in Daniel’s vision in Daniel 7:13-14:

13 I saw in the night-visions, and, behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. 14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him: his

dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

Revelation 11:15 states the fulfillment of this promise:

15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there followed great voices in heaven, and they said, "The kingdom of the world is become (the kingdom) of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever."

The present tense verb placed the occurrence of the kingdom of the Lord at a time preceding John's vision. At the time of John's writing, the kingdom of the Lord was an accomplished fact. The kingdom had come.

Daniel further describes these events in Daniel 7:21-27:

21 I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; 22 until the ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High, and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. 23 Thus he said, "The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all the kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. 24 And as for the ten horns, out of this kingdom shall ten kings arise: and another shall arise after them; and he shall be diverse from the former, and he shall put down three kings. 25 And he shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High; and he shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and half a time.

26 But the judgment shall be set, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. 27 And the kingdom and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High: his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.

Revelation 13:5

5 and there was given to him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and there was given to him authority to continue forty and two months.

The God limited the beast to the intermittent and symbolic time of forty-two months. This is the fifth time this figure has appeared in different forms (Revelation 11:2, Revelation 11:3, Revelation 12:6, Revelation 12:14, Revelation 13:5). Each time it limits the time and influence of the dragon against the followers of the Lord:

Revelation 11:2: And the court which is without the temple leave without, and measure it not; for it hath been given unto the nations: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months."

Revelation 11:3: And I will give unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

Revelation 12:6: And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared of God, that there they may nourish her a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

Revelation 12:14: And there were given to the woman the two wings of the great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness unto her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

Revelation 13:5: 5 and there was given to him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and there was given to him authority to continue forty and two months.

This limitation also exists in Daniel's vision in Daniel 7:24-25 where it is said that this entity, the beast in Revelation will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change God's law and times. He will literally fight for his life and his dominion:

24 And as for the ten horns, out of this kingdom shall ten kings arise: and another shall arise after them; and he shall be diverse from the former, and he shall put down three kings. 25 And he shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High; and he shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and half a time.

Paul also describes the beast and his nature in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-7

3 let no man beguile you in any wise: for (it will not be,) except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, 4 he that opposes and exalts himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he sits in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God. 5 Remember you not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? 6 And now you know that which restrains, to the end that he may be revealed in his own season. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work: only (there is) one that restrains now, until he be taken out of the way.

Paul speaks twice about one holding back the man of lawlessness: "And now you know that which restrains, to the end that he may be revealed in his own season." Paul writes and adds, in 2 Thessalonians 2:7:

7 For the mystery of lawlessness does already work: only (there is) one that restrains now, until he be taken out of the way.

At the point that the lawless one is revealed, Paul explains in 2 Thessalonians 2:8-10:

8 And then shall be revealed the lawless one (the second beast, AKA the false prophet) whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his mouth, and bring to naught by the manifestation of his coming; 9 (even he), whose coming is

according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, 10 and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

The full manifestation of the beast will be revealed fully when Lord Jesus comes. The Revelation reiterates this passage by Paul in Revelation 19:20-21, almost exactly at the time of the destruction of the beast and the false prophet (man of lawlessness): “

20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought the signs in his sight, wherewith he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast and them that worshipped his image: they two were cast alive into the lake of fire that burns with brimstone: 21 and the rest were killed with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, (even the sword) which came forth out of his mouth:

The false prophet of this passage is the second beast of Revelation 13. He is the one to whom the dragon delegated the power of lying miracles, signs, and wonders in 2 Thessalonians 2:9:12:

9 (even he), whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, 10 and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11 And for this cause God sends them a working of error, that they should believe a lie: 12 that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

The power of the second beast (the false prophet) is the first beast (the man of lawlessness), and the power of the first beast is the dragon (the serpent, the devil, Satan). This reveals a triad of evil and destruction. Paul stated twice that the man of lawlessness was held back. Indeed, the Revelation speaks of binding even Satan for a period (Revelation 20:1-2). Of this, Christ prayed in John 17:11-12:

11 And I am no more in the world, and these are in the world, and I come to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we (are). 12 While I was with them, I kept them in your name which you have given me: and I guarded them, and not one of them perished, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.

Revelation 13:6-8

6 And he opened his mouth for blasphemies against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, (even) them that dwell in the heaven. 7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and there was given to him authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation. 8 And all that dwell on the earth shall worship him, (every one) whose name hath not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that hath been slain.

The beast directed his verbal attack against heaven and God. The power, authority, and influence of the beast was unlimited. He not only could make war against the saints, but he could conquer them.

The beast won the battle for the most of the inhabitants of the earth—all whose names have not been written in the book of life—leaving only the saints with hope. Even though people worship the beast now, they do not fully understand the horror to which they have committed themselves. They will be shocked when they find out as recorded in Revelation 17:8:

8 The beast that you saw was, and is not; and is about to come up out of the abyss, and to go into perdition. And they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, (they) whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast, how that he was, and is not, and shall come.

The expression, the book of life, becomes a central figure, used 6 times in Revelation. Those whose names are written in the book of life may know that whatever the assault by the beast, they will be victorious.

Revelation 3:5: He that overcomes shall thus be arrayed in white garments; and I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

Revelation 17:8: The beast that you saw was, and is not; and is about to come up out of the abyss, and to go into perdition. And they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, (they) whose name have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast, how that he was, and is not, and shall come.

Revelation 20:12: 12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and books were opened: and another book was opened, which is (the book) of life: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works.

Revelation 20:15: 15 And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire.

Revelation 21:27: And there shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that makes an abomination and a lie: but only they that are written in the Lamb's book of life.

That the book of life belongs to the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world shows that God's eternal purpose was complete in the Lord's sacrifice on the cross. God determined it that way, and it happened that way. At the time of John's writing, Jesus had laid down his life for the whole world. John summarizes in his letter at 1 John 5:18-20:

18 We know that whosoever is begotten of God sins not; but he that was begotten of God keeps himself, and the evil one touches him not. 19 We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the evil one. 20 And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, (even) in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

Revelation 13:9-10

9 If any man hath an ear, let him hear.

10 If any man (is) for captivity, into captivity he goes: if any man shall kill with the sword, with the sword must he be killed. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

We have just seen that the lamb was slain from the creation of the world and that the inhabitants' names were or were not written in the book of life from the creation of the world. God determined His plan before the foundation of the world, and the Lamb fulfilled it upon the cross. God also determined His plan for man before the foundation of the world, and men fulfill it by dressing in white and not soiling their clothes (Revelation 3:4-5). The choice to hear or not hear is the basis of the free moral agency of man and also the path to salvation. Paul addressed this issue in Ephesians 1:11-14:

11 in whom also we were made a heritage, having been foreordained according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his will; 12 to the end that we should be unto the praise of his glory, we who had before hoped in Christ: 13 in whom you also, **having heard the word** of the truth, the gospel of your salvation, — in whom, having also believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 which is an earnest of our inheritance, unto the redemption of (God's) own possession, unto the praise of his glory.

To hear the beast and follow the path of the beast is to be captive made by it. Nothing will help. To struggle with the beast requires endurance and faithfulness. We must be patient as the Lord's eternal purpose in Christ unfolds. John has previously written in Revelation 2:10,

10 Fear not the things which you are about to suffer: behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried; and you shall have tribulation ten days. Be you faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.

The rest of the chapter will introduce a second beast out of the earth. We have two beasts, one from the sea and one from the earth. They are both entities and beings of immense proportions. The second beast, who later will be called the false prophet (Revelation 16:13), receives the power and authority of the first beast. Their influence and purpose display totally, fully, and single-mindedly against the Christ, the lamb. Yet, they work in two different ways.

In ascertaining who or what these beasts are, consider these parallel passages of John:

1 John 2:18: Little children, it is the last hour: and as you heard that antichrist comes, even now have there arisen many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last hour.

1 John 2:22: Who is the liar but he that denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, (even) he that denies the Father and the Son.

1 John 4:1-3: Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world. 2 Hereby know you the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: 3 and every spirit that confesses not Jesus is not of God: and this is the (spirit) of the antichrist, whereof you have heard that it comes; and now it is in the world already.

2 John 7: For many deceivers are gone forth into the world, (even) they that confess not that Jesus Christ comes in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.

By the time of John's first letter, the spirit of the antichrist was underway. The second beast, the false prophet, played a crucial role.

The Beast out of the Earth

This part of the Revelation explains how the first beast received his wound and what happened after that. Also described for us is the influence of the dragon through the second beast. From the time shortly after the flood, the armies of men and paganism marched in lock step across the world. The Old Testament is the story of a small remnant of Jews who held together against all odds until the Messiah came. The devil's influence was great and the first beast was in almost complete control. Government and idolatry worked hand in hand. Hence, the ten horns, seven heads, and ten crowns of the first beast. As we have seen, it held the power, throne, and great authority of the dragon, so great was its fullness and completeness. It was a world without redemption.

The beginning of the account of this influence appears in the genealogy of Noah in Genesis 10:8-12:

8 Cush was the father of Nimrod, who grew to be a mighty warrior on the earth. 9 He was a mighty hunter before the Lord; that is why it is said, "Like Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the Lord." 10 The first centers of his kingdom were Babylon, Erech, Akkad and Calneh, in Shinar. 11 From that land he went to Assyria, where he built Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir, Calah 12 and Resen, which is between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city.

As Nimrod's kingdom spread, so did the influence of the Babylonian Sun-god, which is now considered to be Baal of the Old Testament.

The Babylonian Bel-Merodach was a Sun-god, and so too was the Canaanite Baal whose full title was Baal-Shemaim, "lord of heaven." The Phoenician writer Sanchuniathon (Philo Byblius, Fragmenta II) accordingly says that the children of the first generation of mankind "in time of drought stretched forth their hands to heaven toward the sun; for they regarded him as the sole Lord of heaven, and called him Beel-samen, which means 'Lord of Heaven' in the Phoenician language and is equivalent to Zeus in Greek." Baal-Shemaim had a temple at Umm el-Awamid between Acre and Tyre, and his name is found in inscriptions from the Phoenician colonies of Sardinia and Carthage. (from International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Electronic Database Copyright © 1996, 2003 by Biblesoft, Inc. All rights reserved.)

2 Kings 17:7-20 summarizes the influence of Baal, and therefore the beast, on Israel:

And it was so, because the children of Israel had sinned against Jehovah their God, who brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods, 8 and walked in the statutes of the nations, whom Jehovah cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they made. 9 And the children of Israel did secretly things that were not right against Jehovah their God: and they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the fortified city; 10 and they set them up pillars and Asherim [The asherim were cult objects related to the worship of the fertility goddess Asherah, the consort of either Ba'al or, as inscriptions from Kuntillet 'Ajrud and Khirbet el-Qom attest, Yahweh.] 3 upon every high hill, and under every green tree; 11 and there they burnt incense in all the high places, as did the nations whom Jehovah carried away before them; and they wrought wicked things to provoke Jehovah to anger; 12 and they served idols, whereof Jehovah had said unto them, "You shall not do this thing." 13 Yet Jehovah testified unto Israel, and unto Judah, by every prophet, and every seer, saying, "Turn you from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets." 14 Notwithstanding, they would not hear, but hardened their neck, like to the neck of their fathers, who believed not in Jehovah their God. 15 And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified unto them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and (went) after the nations that were round about them, concerning whom Jehovah had charged them that they should not do like them. 16 And they forsook all the commandments of Jehovah their God, and made them molten images, even two calves, and made an Asherah, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. 17 And they caused their

sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, to provoke him to anger. 18 Therefore Jehovah was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only.

19 Also Judah kept not the commandments of Jehovah their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made. 20 And Jehovah rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, until he had cast them out of his sight.

The Lord's answer, in Zephaniah 1:2-2:1, prophesies the end of Baal and therefore the influence of the beast:

"2 I will utterly consume all things from off the face of the ground," says Jehovah. 3 "I will consume man and beast; I will consume the birds of the heavens, and the fishes of the sea, and the stumbling blocks with the wicked; and I will cut off man from off the face of the ground," says Jehovah. 4 "And I will stretch out my hand upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, (and) the name of the Chemarim [Black, therefore the black or idolatrous priests] with the priests; 5 and them that worship the host of heaven upon the housetops; and them that worship, that swear to Jehovah and swear by Malcam; 6 and them that are turned back from following Jehovah; and those that have not sought Jehovah, nor inquired after him. 7 Hold your peace at the presence of the Lord Jehovah; for the day of Jehovah is at hand: for Jehovah has prepared a sacrifice, he has consecrated his guests. 8 And it shall come to pass in the day of Jehovah's sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, and the king's sons, and all such as are clothed with foreign apparel. 9 And in that day I will punish all those that leap over the threshold that fill their master's house with violence and deceit.

What follows in Zephaniah 1:10ff is an almost exact description of the destruction of Babylon found in Revelation 18. This passage is also the last time, of 80 times, that Baal is mentioned in the old Testament; and it is mentioned only once in the New Testament (Romans 11:4) and that in reference to the 7,000 who did not turn to Baal in 1 Kings 19:18.

Therefore, the first beast influenced the growth and spread of idolatry and paganism in the world from the flood until the Christ. It was only after the victory of Christ on the cross that the influence of paganism diminished. Christ executed the wounding of the beast out of the sea and binding of the dragon that ancient serpent who is the devil or Satan (Revelation 20:1-2). At the time of Jesus' coming, the devil, and by extension, the first beast controlled the entire world. Even Israel had departed from the ways of God. Jesus pronounced his woes upon the Jews in Matthew 23. When Satan confronted Christ, he had authority over all nations in Luke 4:5-6:

5 And he led him up, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. 6 And the devil said unto him, "To you will I give all this authority, and the glory of them: for it hath been delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it."

However, by the time Paul wrote Romans 13:1-3:

Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers: for there is no power but of God; and the (powers) that be are ordained of God. 2 Therefore he that resists the power, withstands the ordinance of God: and they that withstand shall receive to themselves judgment. 3 For rulers are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil. And would you have no fear of the power? Do that which is good, and you shall have praise from the same: 4 for he is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do that which is evil, be afraid; for he bears not the sword in vain: for he is a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that does evil.

The wounding of the first beast had occurred by the time of Paul's writing.

Revelation 13:11

11 And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like unto a lamb, and he spoke as a dragon.

Turning now to the second beast out of the earth, we find one, who in contrast to the first beast, has only two horns. His power and authority rests on deceit and not might. Therefore, he has two horns like a lamb, but he speaks the words of the dragon. Of course, the Revelation has already revealed the true Lamb of God. Jesus warned us about this imposter and his ilk in the Sermon on the Mount at the beginning of his ministry in Matthew 7:15:

15 Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves. 16 By their fruits you shall know them. Do (men) gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

Of these wolves, Paul told the elders at Ephesus in Acts 20:28-31:

28 Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood. 29 I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.

Paul also spoke of the deceitful nature of what was to come in 1 Timothy 4:1-2:

But the Spirit says expressly, that in later times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies, branded in their own conscience as with a hot iron;

We cannot doubt that this deceit is the work of the dragon. In 2 Corinthians 11:13-15, Paul describes the nature of the deceit confronting the faithful:

13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, fashioning themselves into apostles of Christ. 14 And no marvel; for even Satan fashions himself into an angel of light. 15 It is no great thing therefore if his ministers also fashion themselves as ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works.

Revelation 13:12-13

12 And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his sight. And he makes the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose death-stroke was healed. 13 And he does great signs that he should even make fire to come down out of heaven upon the earth in the sight of men.

When the first beast was wounded, the dragon's authority did not diminish. It was given to the second beast to exercise on behalf of the first beast. Using his deceit, the second beast made the earth and the inhabitants worship the first beast. This was a straight trip back to paganism and idolatry.

Verse 14 will tell us that the first beast was wounded by sword. The sword must be the one that comes out of the mouth of the Lamb of God. It is clear in Revelation and entire New Testament that the word of God is the instrument of this warfare against the dragon and the second beast. In his very nature, the Lamb was the word of God. John wrote in John 1:11:1:

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God.

The Hebrew writer describes this word in Hebrews 4:12:

12 For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart.

The Revelation speaks clearly:

Revelation 2:12: And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These things says he that hath the sharp two-edged sword:

Revelation 1:16: And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shines in his strength.

Revelation 19:15: 15 And out of his mouth proceeds a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treads the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God, the Almighty.

Revelation 19:21: and the rest were killed with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, (even the sword) which came forth out of his mouth: and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

John the Baptist teaches that Jesus received the unlimited spirit of God in John 3:34-35:

34 For he whom God hath sent speaks the words of God: for he gives not the Spirit by measure. 35 The Father loves the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.

Jesus, while on the earth had power over demons, nature, sin, and death. Jesus could even command the dragon, the tempter. In Matthew 4:4, Jesus commanded the tempter with scripture when he said:

4 But he answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'"

And again in Matthew 4:7, he said:

7 Jesus said unto him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not make trial of the Lord your God.'"

However, in Matthew 4:10, Jesus commanded Satan, showing his authority, when he said,

"Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"

Later, when talking to Peter in Mark 8:33, Jesus commanded Satan:

33 But he turning about, and seeing his disciples, rebuked Peter, and said, "Get you behind me, Satan; for you mind not the things of God, but the things of men.

Jesus wounded the first beast by the sword out of mouth, the word of God. Thus Jesus limited the power of Satan and the beast.

2 Thessalonians 2:9-10 describes the great and miraculous signs of the second beast:

8 And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his mouth, and bring to naught by the manifestation of his coming; 9 (even he), whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, 10 and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

Revelation 13:14

14 And he deceived them that dwell on the earth by reason of the signs which it was given him to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast who has the stroke of the sword and lived.

The second beast used the signs and wonders to deceive the people. The main sphere of the first beast's influence was direct; now he is served through the second beast and worshippers commanded by the second beast. Christ described the image of the beast in all its wickedness and in its representation of a new idolatry covered by the cloak of religion that influenced the world beyond the paganism of old Babylon. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught against the extreme opposite of God and personified Money (mammon) as an idol in Matthew 6:24:

No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon [money].

Paul called covetousness, idolatry in Colossians 3:5. Peter prophesied of a coming religion advanced by false teachers in 2 Peter 2:12: "And in covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you," he wrote. After describing them thoroughly and conclusively, Peter connects them to the beast:

12 But these, as creatures without reason, born mere animals to be taken and destroyed, railing in matters whereof they are ignorant, shall in their destroying surely be destroyed,

Peter concludes with a description of the aims and purpose of these followers of the beast:

13 suffering wrong as the hire of wrong-doing; (men) that count it pleasure to revel in the day-time, spots and blemishes, reveling in their deceivings while they feast with you; 14 having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; enticing unsteadfast souls; having a heart exercised in covetousness; children of cursing; 15 forsaking the right way, they went astray, having followed the way of Balaam the (son) of Beor, who loved the hire of wrong-doing; 16 but he was rebuked for his own transgression: a dumb ass spoke with man's voice and stayed the madness of the prophet. 17 These are springs without water, and mists driven by a storm; for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved. 18 For, uttering great swelling (words) of vanity, they entice in the lusts of the flesh, by lasciviousness, those who are just escaping from them that live in error; 19 promising them liberty, while they themselves are bondservants of corruption; for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he also brought into bondage.

Revelation 13:15

15 And it was given (unto him) to give breath to it, (even) to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as should not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

The influence of the image of the beast is world-wide with the power to kill those who do not follow.

Revelation 13:16-17

16 And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free and the bond, that there be given them a mark on their right hand, or upon their forehead; 17 and that no man should be able to buy or to sell, save he that hath the mark, (even) the name of the beast or the number of his name.

The mark—the name of the beast is a slave mark—identifies the slave with the master. We have just studied where Peter called them all “slaves of depravity (2 Peter 2:19).” Paul described these slaves in Romans 6:15-17:

15 What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under law, but under grace? God forbid. 16 Know you not, that to whom you present yourselves (as) servants unto obedience, his servants you are whom you obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

Peter called them, bond servants of corruption in 2 Peter 2:18-19:

18 For, uttering great swelling (words) of vanity, they entice in the lusts of the flesh, by lasciviousness, those who are just escaping from them that live in error; 19 promising them liberty, while they themselves are bondservants of corruption; for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he also brought into bondage.

The idea of a mark on sinners originated as early as with Cain in Genesis 4:15:

15 And Jehovah said unto him, “Therefore whosoever slays Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And Jehovah appointed a sign [mark] for Cain, lest any finding him should smite him.

The Lord used a mark on the forehead to designate the righteous in Ezekiel 9:3-6:

3 And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon it was, to the threshold of the house: and he called to the man clothed in linen, who had the writer's inkhorn by his side. 4 And Jehovah said unto him, “Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry over all the abominations that are done in the midst thereof.” 5 And to the others he said in my hearing, “Go you through the city after him, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have you pity; 6 slay utterly the old man, the young man and the virgin, and little children

and women; but come not near any man upon whom is the mark: and begin at my sanctuary.” Then they began at the old men that were before the house.

Revelation 13:18

18 Here is wisdom. He that has understanding, let him count the number of the beast; for it is the number of a man: and his number is Six hundred and sixty and six.

It is man's number speaks to the imperfection of the number six. Seven was thought to be the perfect number of fullness, as used of the seven-fold spirit of God, seven churches, seven stars, etc. Six is an imperfect number, and therefore, the number of man. The number 666 aptly describes the triad of evil: the dragon—who is the serpent, the devil, Satan—the first beast—who is the man of sin, the antichrist—and the second beast—who is the false prophet.

From the time of Nimrod to Jesus, the first beast worked through the kings to allow paganism to control the kingdom of the world. After Jesus received all authority—a death blow to the first beast—the second beast (the false prophet) worked through religions to control the kings and the kingdoms of world. However, just as with the first beast, the second beast's influence will be short lived. Indeed, at the sounding of the seventh trumpet, loud voices in heaven declared in Revelation 11:15:

15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there followed great voices in heaven, and they said, “The kingdom of the world is become (the kingdom) of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever.”

Revelation 14: The Lamb, the Three Angels, and the Harvest

From the devil and his two beasts, the vision turns toward the beginning of the consummation of the revelation. The vision shows the Lamb with the first fruits purchased from among men, the three angels forecast the events about to transpire in the revelation, and the Lord oversees the reapers.

The Lamb and the First Fruits Purchased from among Men

Revelation 14:1

14 And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on the mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty and four thousand, having his name, and the name of his Father, written on their foreheads.

John sees the Lamb standing on Mount Zion. In the Old Testament, Zion was first a fortress and then the city of David. The account in 2 Samuel 5:7-9 tells of the transition:

Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion; the same is the city of David. 8 And David said on that day, "Whosoever smites the Jebusites, let him get up to the watercourse, and (smite) the lame and the blind, that are hated of David's soul." Wherefore they say, "There are the blind and the lame; he cannot come into the house."

9 And David dwelt in the stronghold, and called it the city of David. And David built round about from Millo and inward.

The prophets used Zion in a symbolic way to refer to the coming city of God. Micah wrote in Micah 4:6-7:

"6 In that day," says Jehovah, "Will I assemble that which is lame, and I will gather that which is driven away, and that which I have afflicted; 7 and I will make that which was lame a remnant, and that which was cast far off a strong nation: and Jehovah will reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth even for ever.

That it is the holy city still to come is clear, for it will last for ever. In the New Testament, Zion becomes synonymous with the holy city, the New Jerusalem. Peter connected Zion to the holy city of the New Testament in Acts 2. As he began his sermon in Acts 2:16-21, he preached,

16 but this is that which hath been spoken through the prophet Joel: "17 And it shall be in the last days," says God, "I will pour forth of my Spirit upon all flesh: And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, And your young men shall see visions, And your old men shall dream dreams: 18 Yes and on my servants and on my handmaidens in those days will I pour forth of my Spirit; and they shall

prophesy. 19 And I will show wonders in the heaven above, And signs on the earth beneath; Blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke: 20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the day of the Lord come, That great and notable (day).

21 And it shall be, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

In Joel 2:32, the deliverance was to be “on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem:

32 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be delivered; for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those that escape, as Jehovah hath said, and among the remnant those whom Jehovah doth call.

The Hebrew writer explained exactly what the spiritual Zion is in Hebrews 12:22-24:

22 but you are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24 and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better than (that of) Abel.

This 144,000 must be same as those sealed in Revelation 7:4. Paul explains how all Christians are sealed with the Holy Spirit in Ephesians 1:13-14:

13 in whom you also, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation, — in whom, having also believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 which is an earnest of our inheritance, unto the redemption of (God's) own possession, unto the praise of his glory.

To this, in 2 Timothy 2:19, Paul tells the exact words of the sealing:

19 Howbeit [nevertheless] the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, “The Lord knows them that are his.” and, “Let every one that names the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness.”

The name of the Father is in direct contrast with the mark of the beast (Revelation 13.16-17) which is the name of the beast. In neither case are these literal marks, but figuratively, they describe whose servants we are in Romans 6:17-18:

17 But thanks be to God, that, whereas you were servants of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto you were delivered; 18 and being made free from sin, you became servants of righteousness.

The term *his name* has as its antecedent the Lamb. The name of the Lamb and the name of the Father tell us the ownership of the 144,000. As discussed in chapter 13, in Ezekiel's vision (Ezekiel 9:3-6), the Lord had a mark put on the foreheads of those who “grieve and lament over all the detestable things that are done in” Jerusalem. When the

judgment came, the order was given: “but come not near any man upon whom is the mark.”

Revelation 14:2

2 And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and the voice which I heard (was) as (the voice) of harpers harping with their harps:

The metaphors, expressing the nature of the sound John heard, describe the power and the suddenness and the beauty of this heavenly sound. They occur elsewhere in Revelation:

Revelation 1:15: The voice of Christ was like the voice of many waters.

Revelation 19:6: And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters

Revelation 6:1-2: And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, “Come.”

Revelation 15:2-3:2 standing by the sea of glass, having harps of God. 3 And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, “Great and marvelous are your works, O Lord God, the Almighty; righteous and true are your ways, you, King of the ages.”

Revelation 14:3

3 and they sing as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures and the elders: and no man could learn the song save the hundred and forty and four thousand, (even) they that had been purchased out of the earth.

This is not the first time a new song appears in the text. In Revelation 5:8-10, the elders and the four living creatures sang a new song when the lamb took the scroll with the seven seals. However, in this former passage, the words of the song appear right in the text. There is no doubt about the meaning of the first new song. In the present passage, no one except the 144,000 could learn the new song. We learn specifically that the 144,000 singers are the redeemed of the earth.

Revelation 14:4-5

4 These are they that were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These (are) they that follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These were purchased from among men, (to be) the firstfruits unto God and unto the Lamb.5 And in their mouth was found no lie: they are without blemish.

Verse four and verse five offer further descriptions of who the 144,000 are. The use of the present tense places the 144,000 in the here and now. That they did not defile themselves with women and that they kept themselves pure describes their moral and spiritual faithfulness to the Lamb. The church, the bride of Christ, is to be presented in Ephesians 5:27: “a glorious (church), not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

In 2 Corinthians 11:2-3, she is to be “a pure virgin to Christ” with “the simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ.”

They follow the Lamb wherever he goes alludes to the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 16:24-25:

24 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. 25 For whosoever would save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it.

The Christian's service, as we follow the Lamb, will require that we follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness (1 Timothy 6:11). The losing one's life is losing the fleshly existence and being raised to walk in newness of life (Rom 3:3-6).

These were purchased from among men, (to be) the firstfruits unto God and unto the Lamb.

Both God and the Lamb receive the firstfruits of the harvest (Exodus 23:16). The offering of firstfruits is continuous, with the fruit of the harvest offered year after year. The 144,000 are a continuing and reoccurring group of followers still on earth offered up to God and the Lamb. These are the same firstfruits as those sealed in Revelation 7. James 1:18 identifies the followers as a kind of the firstfruits: "18 Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures."

Jeremiah gives exact meaning to the symbolic use of the word in Jeremiah 2:2-3:

2 Go, and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, "Thus says Jehovah, 'I remember for you the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals; how you went after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. 3 Israel (was) holiness unto Jehovah, the first-fruits of his increase: all that devour him shall be held guilty; evil shall come upon them, says Jehovah.'"

The 144,000 are those still in the desert and are the woman, the church, still in the desert of chapter 12. They continually offer themselves as a sacrifice in the war against the dragon.

And in their mouth was found no lie: they are without blemish tells that the truth is the defining characteristic.

In the struggle between the church and the dragon, the truth is a differentiating element. From the beginning, "You will not surely die." To the man of sin, truth and lie separate good from evil. The very work of the man of sin is a lie described in 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12:

11 And for this cause God sends them a working of error, that they should believe a lie: 12 that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

In 1 John 2:21-23, John was more specific in describing the antichrist pinpointing the fact that religious lies are his work:

21 I have not written unto you because you know not the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. 22 Who is the liar but he that denies

that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, (even) he that denies the Father and the Son.

Lying is one of those willful sins that leads one to the fiery lake of fire and brimstone in Revelation 21:8:

8 But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part (shall be) in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone; which is the second death.

The firstfruits cannot be liars, but the children of the devil are liars in John 8:44:

44 You are of (your) father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and stands not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: **for he is a liar, and the father thereof.**

Three Angels Forecasting the Events about to Transpire in the Revelation

Revelation 14:6

6 And I saw another angel flying in mid heaven, having eternal good tidings to proclaim unto them that dwell on the earth, and unto every nation and tribe and tongue and people;

In the first five verses, the firstfruits, the 144,000, stood with the Lamb on Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem. Now the vision turns toward the disposition of the enemy. The angel had the eternal good tidings (gospel) to proclaim. The announcement of these good tidings were forecast in Revelation 10:7:

7 but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then is finished the mystery of God, according to the good tidings which he declared to his servants the prophets.

The seventh angel sounded and the kingdom of men became the kingdom of God in Revelation 11:15:

15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there followed great voices in heaven, and they said, "The kingdom of the world is become (the kingdom) of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever."

However, the announcement here, with the addition of the words, *eternal good tidings*, is more in keeping with the proclamation of the angels at the birth of Christ, although in Luke 2:10, the verb form is used by the angel issuing a proclamation of the birth of Christ:

10 And the angel said unto them, "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you **good tidings** of great joy which shall be to all the people: 11 for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

The phrase, *to all the people*, is similar to the phrase in our text, to every nation, tribe, language and people.

Revelaton14:7

7 and he said with a great voice, "Fear God, and give him glory; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made the heaven and the earth and sea and fountains of waters."

God's judgment is come! By the angel's pronouncement, the eternal gospel receives its meaning: fear God, give him glory, and worship him. The first, *fear God*, is reminiscent of Solomon's final word as the teacher in Ecclesiastes 12:13-14:

13 (This is) the end of the matter; all has been heard: fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole (duty) of man. 14 For God will bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

Both angel and Solomon connect their commands to the hour of the last judgment. Peter, in 1 Peter 1:17, likewise connects fear and the judgment of God:

17 And if you call on him as Father, who without respect of persons judges according to each man's work, pass the time of your sojourning in fear.

Give him glory expresses the second part of the angel's pronouncement. Paul places this glory in the context of Christ and the church in Ephesians 3:21:

21 unto him (be) the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen.

Worship him is the final phase of obligation in this angel's proclamation. The angel describes God as having made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and the springs of water, all of which are evident of his everlasting power and divinity. Paul wrote in Romans 1:20:

20 For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, (even) his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse:

All of us are able to comprehend the Lord God through the things that he has made and thus to worship him.

Revelation 14:8

8 And another, a second angel, followed, saying, Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, that has made all the nations to drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

Just as the first angel announced the eternal gospel, the second angel announces the fall of Babylon the Great. All of six mentions of Babylon in Revelation designate it the great city or Babylon the great. In Revelation, there are eight mentions of the great city with six of those tying directly to Babylon. The first mention of the great city in Revelation 11:8 illustrates its metaphoric use:

8 And their dead bodies (lie) in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.

Babylon, the great city, stands in marked contrast to the holy city, the New Jerusalem (Revelation 11:2; 21:2; 21:10; 22:19). The great and evil nature of this universal but metaphoric city shows in the city's ability to make all nations drink her wine. Later, in Revelation 18:2-3, the city's influence extends to the nations, the kings, and the merchants of the earth:

2 And he cried with a mighty voice, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, and is become a habitation of demons, and a hold of every unclean spirit, and a hold of every unclean and hateful bird. **3 For by the wine of the wrath of her fornication all the nations are fallen; and the kings of the earth committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth waxed rich by the power of her wantonness.**"

Pervasive is the great city's influence, but she is already fallen by the pronouncement of God's judgment by his angel.

Revelation 14:9-11

9 And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a great voice, "If any man worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead, or upon his hand, 10 he also shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is prepared unmixed in the cup of his anger; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: 11 and the smoke of their torment goes up for ever and ever; and they have no rest day and night, they that worship the beast and his image, and who receives the mark of his name."

There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who *receives the mark of his name*. The third angel pronounced God's judgment on anyone who worships the beast, his image, and receives his mark on the forehead or hand. These are they who drink the maddening wine of her adulteries (14:8; 18:2-3). Now they must drink the wine of God's fury, poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. *Cup* here has the sense that the Christ prayed in Matthew 26:39: "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will".

The holy angels and the Lamb will witness their torment with fire and brimstone. The duration will be for ever and ever (into the ages of the ages) and day and night. There is no rest for those who receive the mark of the name of the beast.

Revelation 14:12

12 Here is the patience of the saints, they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

The pronouncements of the angels make the disposition of the faithful, of Babylon, and of those that receive the mark of the name of the beast, certain. However, the pronouncement does not mean it has come, and therefore, the saints must patiently endure in God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus. Because the Lord has pronounced these things, according to Isaiah 46:9-10 they will be:

Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; (I am) God, and there is none like me; 10 declaring the end from the beginning, and

from ancient times things that are not (yet) done; saying, “My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.”

And further in Isaiah 48:2-3:

2 (for they call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel; Jehovah of hosts is his name): 3 I have declared the former things from of old; yes, they went forth out of my mouth, and I showed them: suddenly I did them, and they came to pass.

Revelation 14:13

13 And I heard the voice from heaven saying, “Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: yes, says the Spirit that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them.”

The Lord Overseeing the Reapers

Revelation 14:14-16

14 And I saw, and behold, a white cloud; and on the cloud (I saw) one sitting like unto a son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. 15 And another angel came out from the temple, crying with a great voice to him that sat on the cloud, “Send forth your sickle, and reap: for the hour to reap is come; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.” 16 And he that sat on the cloud cast his sickle upon the earth; and the earth was reaped.

The one seated on the cloud, like the son of man, and with a crown of gold is the Lamb (See notes on Revelation 1:9-18; 10:1-3). He now has a sharp sickle in hand fulfilling, as it were, the prophecy of Joel 3:12-13:

12 Let the nations bestir themselves, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat; for there will I sit to judge all the nations round about. 13 Put you in the sickle; for the harvest is ripe: come, tread; for the winepress is full, the vats overflow; for their wickedness is great.

The harvest that is about to occur is that one spoken of in the parable of the sower of Matthew 13:37-39

37 And he answered and said, “He that sows the good seed is the Son of man; 38 and the field is the world; and the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil (one); 39 and the enemy that sowed them is the devil: and the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are angels.

The Lord swung his sickle to harvest the earth.

Revelation 14:17-20

17 Another angel came out from the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. 18 And another angel came out from the altar, he that had power over fire; and he called with a great voice to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, “Send forth your sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes

are fully ripe.” 19 And the angel cast his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vintage of the earth, and cast it into the winepress, the great (winepress), of the wrath of God. 20 And the winepress was trodden without the city, and there came out blood from the winepress, even unto the bridles of the horses, as far as a thousand and six hundred furlongs [220 yards].

The first harvest appears to have been a harvest of the faithful since those harvested received no consequences. In this passage, the angel in charge of fire called to the Lord that grapes from the earth’s vine were ripe. The grapes went into the wine press of God’s wrath and the grapes were trampled (compare Revelation 14:10). That grapes went in and blood flowed out shows the metaphoric nature of the passage. We know from the pronouncement of the first angel the judgment is upon those who received the mark of the name of the beast. Therefore, the grapes are the people who serve the beast. As the juice separates from its grape, their blood—the source of life itself—will separate from their flesh. Enough blood to rise as high as the horse’s bridle and spread for 1,600 furlongs, shows the completeness and fullness of God’s judgment.

The timing of these two harvests is evident in 1 Cor 15:20-26:

20 But now has Christ been raised from the dead, the first fruits of them that are asleep. 21 For since by man (came) death, by man (came) also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits; then they that are Christ's, at his coming. 24 Then (comes) the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power. 25 For he must reign, till he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy that shall be abolished is death.

Revelation 15: God's Wrath Completed with the Seven Last Plagues

Revelation 15:1

15 And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having seven plagues, (which are) the last, for in them is finished the wrath of God.

John saw another great and marvelous sign. *Another* links this sign with the one previously so described, that of the beautifully adorned woman, the church, in chapter 12. That chapter dealt with the security and victory of the church over the dragon. Chapter 15 begins dealing with the seven last plagues, which complete the wrath of God. John is also nearing the end of the completed revelation of God. Revelation 10:7 has said:

7 but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then is finished the mystery of God, according to the good tidings which he declared to his servants the prophets.

When that seventh trumpet sounded, loud voices in heaven declared the final accomplishment in Revelation 11:15:

15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there followed great voices in heaven, and they said, "The kingdom of the world is become (the kingdom) of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever."

Chapter 15 forecasts the completion of God's wrath and the harvest. The seven plagues are the last and with them God's wrath is complete along with his revelation and kingdom. Now John will see the fulfillment of all thing in great specificity. In the following chapters, the seven angels will pour out their seven bowls of God's wrath. Next, a certain one of the angels will show John the fall of Babylon, the eternal destruction of the beast and the false prophet, the end of the dragon, the devil, the destruction of the wicked, the final destiny of death and Hades, the victory of the church, and the reward of the righteous.

Seven Angels with Seven Last Plagues

Revelation 15:2

2 And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire; and them that come off victorious from the beast, and from his image, and from the number of his name, standing by the sea of glass, having harps of God.

Chapter 14 contained an opening vision of those offered as firstfruits. Now we see those who had been victorious over the beast, his image, and the number of his name. They stand before a beautiful sea of glass mixed with fire. The scene appears to be like that one before the throne of God in Revelation 4:6: “and before the throne, as it were a sea of glass like a crystal.”

Revelation 15:2b-3

. . . having harps of God. 3 And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, “Great and marvelous are your works, O Lord God, the Almighty; righteous and true are your ways, you, King of the ages.

They had harps of God and in verse 3 and sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb: The allusion here is to the victory song that Moses wrote for the Israelites after their escape in Deuteronomy 31:19 beginning and recited fully in Deuteronomy 32:

19 Now therefore write you this song for you, and teach it the children of Israel: put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel.

Harps, as used here, are symbolic of the *sound like harps* of Revelation 14:2:

2 And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and the voice which I heard (was) as (the voice) of harpers harping with their harps:

In the church, the instrument with strings is the heart in Ephesians 5:18-20:

18 And be not drunken with wine, wherein is riot, but be filled with the Spirit; 19 speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; 20 giving thanks always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father.

The song begins with holy and reverent praise of God’s name by combining the phrases *Lord God the Almighty* and *King of the ages*—a two-fold expression of the great glory of God. *King of the ages* carries special significance since *ages* indicates eternal as in “*life eternal*,” in John 17:3. John uses this same word commonly in the phrase *eis ton aiona* which does mean literally “unto the age” but in English *for ever*.

More important to this song is the connection of the King of the ages to the final statement of victory in Revelation 11:15:

The kingdom of the world is become (the kingdom) of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever.

The Triumphant God

Our victory song continues as one of triumph for God and victory for the church.

Revelation 15:4

4 Who shall not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you only are holy; for all the nations shall come and worship before you; for your righteous acts have been made manifest.

The clause—*who shall not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name?*—reflects the degree to which the God Almighty has won this victory. Revelation 14:6-7 predicted this fear and glory to God:

6 And I saw another angel flying in mid heaven, having eternal good tidings to proclaim unto them that dwell on the earth, and unto every nation and tribe and tongue and people; 7 and he said with a great voice, “Fear God, and give him glory; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made the heaven and the earth and sea and fountains of waters.”

In the preceding chapter, the first of the three angels, who had the eternal gospel to proclaim, said, “Fear God and give him the glory, because the hour of his judgment has come.” Later in Revelation 19:5, during the hallelujah section, fear again returns as a theme:

5 And a voice came forth from the throne, saying, “Give praise to our God, all you his servants, you that fear him, the small and the great.

Paul had used similar language in Ephesians 3:20-21,

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, 21 unto him (be) the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen.

That all nations shall come before God and worship him shows the totality of God’s victory when final judgment comes. Indeed, Paul writes that every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Christ is Lord to the glory of the father Philippians 2:9-11:

9 Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; 10 that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of (things) in heaven and (things) on earth and (things) under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The Tabernacle of the Testimony

Revelation 15:5-6

5 And after these things I saw, and the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: 6 and there came out from the temple the seven angels that had the seven plagues, arrayed with (precious) stone, pure (and) bright, and girt about their breasts with golden girdles.

The tabernacle of the testimony and the temple in heaven are one and the same. In Revelation 11:19, at the conclusion of the experience with the two witnesses, upon whose testimony the word of God is secure, the ark of God's covenant was within his temple:

19 Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant.

That it is *the* testimony makes the testimony specific to God's purposes. Later, in Revelation 19:10, the angel tells John:

And I fell down before his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, "See that you do it not: I am a fellow-servant with you and with your brethren that hold the testimony of Jesus: worship God; for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

God will base his judgment on the testimony of his witnesses, the prophets, as it exists in his covenant. Paul confirmed this in Romans 2:15-16:

15 in that they show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness therewith, and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing (them) 16 in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, according to my gospel, by Jesus Christ.

In this passage (Romans 2:16), the original reads: "according to the gospel of my Christ Jesus" or "the gospel of my messiah, Jesus."

The book of Revelation itself begins and ends with statements concerning the testimony. The first use of the word connects it to the word of God in Revelation 1:2:

2 who bore witness of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, (even) of all things that he saw.

At the end of the book in Revelation 22:16 Jesus says,

16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright, the morning star.

Bowls Filled with God's Wrath

Revelation 15:7-8

7 And one of the four living creatures gave unto the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who lives for ever and ever. 8 And the temple was filled

with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and none was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels should be finished.

Each of seven angels receives a golden bowl filled with the wrath of God. In the preceding chapter, we learned that the wicked must drink the wine of God's wrath poured into the cup of his fury (14:10). Isaiah 46:9-10 and Isaiah 48:3 teach that God knows the end from the beginning, and that his purpose will always stand:

9 Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; (I am) God, and there is none like me; 10 declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not (yet) done; saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.

3 I have declared the former things from of old; yes, they went forth out of my mouth, and I showed them: suddenly I did them, and they came to pass

The entire New Testament speaks of God's wrath as an accomplished fact. In Romans 1:18, Paul wrote:

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hinder the truth in unrighteousness;

Again, in Colossians 3:5-6, he said:

5 Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry; 6 for which things' sake cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience.

In 1 Thessalonians 2:15-16, Paul writes in the past tense, but using the present tense to show that God's wrath has already begun. He said,

15 who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove out us, and pleased not God, and are contrary to all men; 16 forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved; to fill up their sins always: but the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.

The seven plagues of the seven angels are to begin and finish in chapter 16 as they pour out the seven bowls of God's wrath upon the earth. However, the wrath of God was a fact established by the victory of the Lamb and the church forever, and as God foreknew according to his eternal purpose.

Revelation 16: The Seven Bowls of God's Wrath

The seven plagues of the seven angels are to begin and finish in chapter 16 as they pour out the seven bowls of God's wrath upon the earth. However, the wrath of God was a fact established by the victory of the Lamb and the church forever and as God foreknew according to his eternal purpose.

Revelation 16:1

6 And I heard a great voice out of the temple, saying to the seven angels, "Go, and pour out the seven bowls of the wrath of God into the earth."

Although, no one could enter the temple, John heard a loud voice from the temple. Chapter 15 verse 1 calls the seven bowls of God's wrath, "(which are) the last, for in them is finished the wrath of God." With these plagues, God's wrath is completed. Before visiting the specific plagues, it is important to note that they extend to all who do not keep the words of the Revelation as expressed in Revelation 22:18:

18 I testify unto every man that hears the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book.

These plagues differ from those announced by the sounding of the trumpets in chapters 8 and 9 where the plagues are intermittent and partial (one-third appears to place a limit on the devastation). In chapter 16, God's wrath is full, complete, and overwhelming. Here, also, those who have the mark of the beast and worship his image will refuse to repent (16:11). Although these plagues are horrible in extent and degree, they are nothing like the final act of God's wrath—the lake of fire, the second death (20:15; 21:8). These seven wraths have a single unifying principle: the angels pour out their bowls to the complete destruction of man's habitat: the land, the sea, the springs of water, the sun, the light, the great river Euphrates—the very region of Eden, and the earth itself. In the next several verses, God's wrath reverses his physical creation of the world, fully and completely. The events do not seem to be chronological, but parallel, as illustrated by verse 12-14 and 16, where the kings of the earth are gathered for battle. Also, the final acts of God's judgment—the destruction in the lake of fire—is reserved until later in the Revelation.

The First Bowl of God's Wrath

Revelation 16:2

2 And the first went, and poured out his bowl into the earth; and it became a noisome and grievous sore upon the men that had the mark of the beast, and that worshipped his image.

In Revelation 16:2, the plagues begin with the infliction of pain to the mortal bodies. The ugly and painful sores are reminiscent of the sores of Job in Job 2:7-8:

7 So Satan went forth from the presence of Jehovah, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown. 8 And he took him a potsherd [pottery fragment] to scrape himself therewith; and he sat among the ashes.

So horrible was Job's misery that he said in Job 3:11, "Why died I not from the womb? Why did I not give up the ghost when my mother bare me?" Of course, what Job experienced could barely approach the experience of the completed wrath of God. The target of God's wrath is the people who had the mark of the beast and worshipped his image.

The Second Bowl of God's Wrath

Revelation 16:3

3 And the second poured out his bowl into the sea; and it became blood as of a dead man; and every living soul died, (even) the things that were in the sea.

At the sounding of the trumpets in chapters 8 and 9, we saw afflictions upon the earth that should lead one to repentance. The interim afflictions of chapter 8 were partial; i.e. a third of the living creatures in the sea died. Now the plague of the second bowl of God's wrath killed everything in the sea. *Blood as of a dead man* illustrates the horror and stink of decay. This plague is reminiscent of the blood plague against Egypt in Exodus 7:19. Here the consequences of God's wrath are not to warn as in Egypt but to punish. In chapter 14:19-20, blood flowed out of the winepress of God's wrath:

And the angel cast his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vintage of the earth, and cast it into the winepress, the great (winepress), of the wrath of God. 20 And the winepress was trodden without the city, and there came out blood from the winepress, even unto the bridles of the horses, as far as a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

The blood figure demonstrates God's denial of life to these evil people. The Lord had said in Leviticus 17:14:

14 For as to the life of all flesh, the blood thereof is (all one) with the life thereof: therefore I said unto the children of Israel: "You shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh; for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof: whosoever eats it shall be cut off."

The Third Bowl of God's Wrath

Revelation 16:4-7

4 And the third poured out his bowl into the rivers and the fountains of the waters; and it became blood. 5 And I heard the angel of the waters saying, "You are righteous, who are and who was, Holy One, because you did thus judge: 6 for they poured out the blood of the saints and the prophets, and blood have you given them to drink: they are

worthy [deserve it].” 7 And I heard the altar saying, Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are your judgments.

The third angel poured out his bowl into the very source of drinking water, and this water, too, became blood. We learn from the angel in charge of the waters that God is just in his judgment. Symbolically, the blood resulting from God’s wrath is in juxtaposition to the shed blood of the saints and prophets. The wrath is upon the people who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image. Of these, the angel said that they receive just as they deserved. The altar responded that judgments of the Lord God Almighty are just and true. It is common for people to argue against the judgment of God by saying that God in his goodness would not do wrathful acts toward man. God’s judgments are true and just, and man has every opportunity to be righteous. The burden is upon man to turn from the beast and his image. The invitation to turn from this evil is open to all according to 2 Peter 3:9:

9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

God provides a way out of idolatry and other sins, according to 1 Corinthians 10:13:

There has no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

The Fourth Bowl of God’s Wrath

Revelation 16:8-9

And the fourth poured out his bowl upon the sun; and it was given unto it to scorch men with fire. 9 And men were scorched with great heat: and they blasphemed the name of God who hath the power over these plagues; and they repented not to give him glory.

Not even with scorching by the sun, would these hardhearted followers of the beast repent. They cursed the name of God and refused. Nor would they glorify him even though he had the control over the plagues. The sun so necessary for light and life scorched the people who cursed God. In spite of the severe punishment, they refused to repent and glorify God.

The Fifth Bowl of God’s Wrath

Revelation 16:10-11

10 And the fifth poured out his bowl upon the throne of the beast; and his kingdom was darkened; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, 11 and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they repented not of their works.

The fifth angel poured God’s wrath directly on the throne of the beast. The kingdom of the beast is that kingdom of the world. At the sound of the seventh trumpet in Rev 11:15, a great voices had announced:

The kingdom of the world is become (the kingdom) of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever.

God plunges the beast and his kingdom into darkness, denying light. Christ spoke of the outer darkness (KJV) to which the unfaithful are destined. In Matthew 8:12, the Lord said,

But the sons of the kingdom shall be cast forth into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.

Matthew 22:13 and Matthew 25:29-30 further describe this state of darkest of darkness.

The Sixth Bowl of God's Wrath

Revelation 16:12-14

12 The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East. 13 Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. 14 They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty.

The sixth woe takes us back to Babel and the river Euphrates. As Nimrod and Baal spread the kingdom of the beast, once again evil is on the march. The actors who play out this final dramatic scene are together: Evil spirits, spirits of demons, one each out of the mouths of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet, go up to deceive the kings of the whole world.

The war forecasted is to be a spiritual one. The weaponry is that of miraculous signs used to deceive the kings of the earth. The last rally of the forces of evil rely on deceit as they use these miraculous signs—lying wonders described in 2 Thessalonians 2—to gather the kings of the whole world to battle God Almighty. Paul spoke of this same time in 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12:

8 And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his mouth, and bring to nothing by the manifestation of his coming; 9 (even he), whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, 10 and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11 And for this cause God sends them a working of error, that they should believe a lie: 12 that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

In 1 Timothy 4:1-2, Paul spoke of this time when he said:

4 But the Spirit says expressly, that in later times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies, branded in their own conscience as with a hot iron;

The gathering here is specific to the spiritual battle and the spiritual battle is specific to the great day of the Lord.

The great and glorious day of the Lord was to happen after the events on the day Pentecost when the church was established in Acts 2:20-21:

20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the day of the Lord come, that great and notable (day). 21 And it shall be, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night (1 Thessalonians 5:2-3). It will come after the man of lawlessness is revealed (2 Thessalonians 2:1-4). The lost angels will be kept in darkness, bound by chains, until the judgment on the great day (Jude 6) The earth will be destroyed at the coming of the day of the Lord in 2 Peter 3:10:

10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

The Lord describe the great day of their wrath in Revelation 6:16-17:

15 Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. 16 They called to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! 17 For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"

Revelation 16:15

15 "Behold, I come like a thief!, Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed."

This quotation of the Lord appears to move back to the present time. In spite of the fact that the revelation reveals God's wrath in detail, the coming will still be as a thief, unexpected in its coming. *Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him* speaks to the preparation of the saints. In Revelation 19:7-8, clothes are a direct metaphor for the righteous acts of the saints:

7 Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give the glory unto him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. 8 And it was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen, bright (and) pure: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

The figure was previously used in Revelation 3:18:

18 I counsel you to buy of me gold refined by fire, that you may become rich; and white garments, that you may cloth yourself, and (that) the shame of your nakedness be not made manifest; and eyesalve to anoint your eyes, that you may see.

The Lord purposefully leaves the exact time of his coming undisclosed. This has always been the case. No one knows except the father. In Matthew 24:36-42, Jesus had fully taught this principle:

36 But of that day and hour knows no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only. . . . 42 Watch therefore: for you know not on what day your Lord comes. . . . 44 Therefore be also ready; for in an hour that you think not the Son of man cometh.

Revelation 16:16

16 And they gathered them together into the place which is called in Hebrew Har-Magedon.

Some versions read Armageddon. The name is only here in the Revelation. The allusion is to the Old Testament and Mount of Megiddo where great kings were at battle:

(Harmagedon from Hebrew *har meghiddo*, "Mount of Megiddo"; the King James Version Armageddon: This name is found only in Revelation 16:16. From International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Electronic Database Copyright © 1996, 2003 by Biblesoft, Inc.)

The Old Testament tells the same story of the battle twice; the first being in 2 Kings 23:29-30:

29 In his days Pharaoh-necoh king of Egypt went up against the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates: and king Josiah went against him; and (Pharaoh-necoh) slew him at Megiddo, when he had seen him. 30 And his servants carried him in a chariot dead from Megiddo, and brought him to Jerusalem, and buried him in his own sepulcher.

2 Chronicles 35:20-21 records the same event:

20 After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Neco king of Egypt went up to fight against Carchemish by the Euphrates: and Josiah went out against him. 21 But he sent ambassadors to him, saying, "What have I to do with you, you king of Judah? (I come) not against you this day, but against the house wherewith I have war; and God has commanded me to make haste: forbear you from (meddling with) God, who is with me, that he destroy you not."

Other than the place name and the great kings battling, this story of old has little to do with the present passage and impending battle. Revelation 19:19-21 describes the battle where the Lord and the armies of heaven destroy the armies of the east, the beast, and the false prophet.

The spiritual allusion here is to the battle that the armies of heaven fight daily, as described by Paul and previously noted in this writing in Ephesians 6:10-18:

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual (hosts) of wickedness in the heavenly (places). 13 Wherefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done

all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 withal taking up the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil (one). 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: 18 with all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons in the Spirit, and watching thereunto in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.

To make Armageddon a physical and literal battle on earth, as some do, requires one to deny the metaphoric nature of all John's vision. For example, the dragon is a literal dragon, not the devil; the mouths of the devil, the beast and the false prophet are literal mouths, etc.

The Seventh Bowl of God's Wrath

Revelation 16:17-21

17 And the seventh poured out his bowl upon the air; and there came forth a great voice out of the temple, from the throne, saying, "It is done." 18 And there were lightnings, and voices, and thunders; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since there were men upon the earth, so great an earthquake, so mighty. 19 And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and Babylon the great was remembered in the sight of God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. 20 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. 21 And great hail, (every stone) about the weight of a talent, come down out of heaven upon men: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof is exceeding great.

The last bowl of God's wrath decimates the habitat of man. This bowl deals with the end of that habitat. The specific judgment upon the souls of men comes in chapters 20-21 and the lake of fire, the second death. Imagine the worst earthquake, and beyond, to one that the earth has never seen. The great city—the city of evil—the direct opposite to the heavenly city, the holy city, splits into three parts. This city of the wicked is the city of that triad of evil, the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. The great city, Babylon the Great, receives special attention to its destruction in chapters 17 and 18. The victory of the Lamb and his bride, the holy city, will follow in chapters 19, 21, and 22. Babylon the great receives the full fury of the wine of God's wrath. The plagues were so terrible that they cursed God.

"It is done," signals the consummation of God's wrath. The phrase echoes that one made by Christ on the cross in John 19:28-30:

28 After this Jesus, knowing that all things are **now finished**, that the scripture might be accomplished, said, "I thirst." 29 There was set there a vessel full of vinegar: so they put a sponge full of the vinegar upon hyssop, and brought it to his mouth. 30 When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, "It is finished;": and he bowed his head, and gave up his spirit.

John began his description of the death of Jesus by stating that Jesus knew that all was now complete. The study of chapter 14 showed that God's pronouncements establish the happening as taught in Isaiah 46:9-10:

9 Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; (I am) God, and there is none like me; 10 declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not (yet) done; saying, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."

Although this bowl of wrath shows the events of the destruction of the earth, the Lord's coming is still as a thief. Parallel to this description of this final wrath is one by Peter in 2 Peter 3:7-13:

7 but the heavens that now are, and the earth, by the same word have been stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. 8 But forget not this one thing, beloved, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

11 Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in (all) holy living and godliness, 12 looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God, by reason of which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? 13 But, according to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness.

The great day of the Lord will see the end of the physical world and the end of the spiritual struggle also. We have already studied Revelation 6:15-17:

15 And the kings of the earth, and the princes, and the chief captains, and the rich, and the strong, and every bondman and freeman, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains; 16 and they say to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: 17 for the great day of their wrath is come; and who is able to stand?"

The events of the verses 12-21 parallel the events described by Christ in Matthew 24. In Matthew 24 Jesus and his disciples were walking away from the temple. In verse 2, Jesus said, speaking of the temple,

2 But he answered and said unto them, "See you not all these things? Truly, I say unto you, 'There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.'"

In verse 3, the disciples responded by asking him two questions,

3 And as he sat on the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, "Tell us, when shall these things be? And what (shall be) the sign of your coming, and of the end of the world?"

The Lord answers the two questions.

Verses 3-25 answers the first question which is, *when will this happen* (the destruction of the temple). Jesus said that even though many would come claiming to be Christ, though there would be wars and rumors of wars, and though kingdom would rise against kingdom, the end is still to come. He said that you will be persecuted, put to death, and hated; and that many would turn away from the faith, and that many false prophets will appear. Those who stand firm, Jesus said that they would be saved. And the gospel of the kingdom would be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations. Then he said that the end would come. These are the same events that led up to and include the situation in Revelation 16. The tabernacle of testimony is open (Revelation 15:5).

In this context, the Lord answers the first question: *when will this happen*—the destruction of the physical temple in Jerusalem. The Lord said that it would be when they saw standing in the holy place (the temple) the abomination that causes desolation, referred to three times by Daniel

Daniel 9:27: And he shall make a firm covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease; and upon the wing of abominations (shall come) one that makes desolate; and even unto the full end, and that determined, shall (wrath) be poured out upon the desolate.

Daniel 11:31: And forces shall stand on his part, and they shall profane the sanctuary, even the fortress, and shall take away the continual (burnt-offering), and they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate.

Daniel 12:11: And from the time that the continual (burnt-offering) shall be taken away, and the abomination that makes desolate set up, there shall be a thousand and two hundred and ninety days.

The *it* in the question is the destruction of the temple as Daniel prophesied. Jesus told them that, if at this time, anyone said that there he is. Do not believe because false Christs and false prophets would appear and do great signs and miracles to deceive. This is also what Revelation 16:14 said.

Verse 26-35 answers the second question: *what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age*. Jesus said that if any one said that he is here or he is there, do not believe it. Jesus said that after the distress of those days, including but certainly not limited to the destruction of the temple: "The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken." This also is what is prophesied in Revelation 16:17-21.

At that time, after the distress of these days, Matthew 24:30-31 teaches:

30 and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the

clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he shall send forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Jesus concludes with the same teaching as Revelation 16:15, which reads: Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watches, and keeps his garments, unless he walk naked, and they see his shame.”

In Matthew 24:42-44, Jesus said,

42 Watch therefore: for you know not on what day your Lord comes. 43 But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken through. 44 Therefore be you also ready; for in an hour that you think not the Son of man comes.

Revelation 17: The Woman on the Beast

The completion of God's wrath, begun in chapter 15:1, moves from the destruction of man's habitat to the destruction of the evil ones. Revelation 17 and 18 tell of the fall of the great city, Babylon, the prostitute. The text clearly explains many of the following figures and images.

The Punishment of the Great Prostitute

Revelation 17:1-2

17 And there came one of the seven angels that had the seven bowls, and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot that sits upon many waters; 2 with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and they that dwell in the earth were made drunken with the wine of her fornication."

One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls of God's wrath is now escorting John through the vision, connecting these chapters clearly to the completion of God's wrath and not to some new-age theme or latter day revelation. The subject here is the punishment of the great prostitute who sits on many waters. The angel clearly defined the waters in verse 15, saying, "And he said unto me, "The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues."

This is the same multitude over whom the beast is said to have authority in Revelation 13:7-8:

7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and there was given to him authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation. 8 And all that dwell on the earth shall worship him, (every one) whose name hath not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that hath been slain.

The woman sits on top of the multitude of the world. Verse 18 tells specifically, "The woman whom you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth."

The great city—set opposite to the holy city, the heavenly Jerusalem—is the Babylon and Nineveh founded by Nimrod (Genesis 10:12), the Nineveh of Jonah (Jonah 1:2; 3:2), Sodom and Egypt (Revelation 11:8), and the Jerusalem of the Lord's crucifixion and Jeremiah's lament (Revelation 11:8; Jeremiah 22:8). The great city is

these kings, but more, the great city is *all the kings of the earth* of verse 18. That all the kings of the earth had committed adultery with the prostitute and that the inhabitants were drunk with her adulteries show the degree of her influence in defiling mankind with sin.

The Prostitute and the Scarlet Beast

Revelation 17:3-6

3 And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness: and I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet-colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. 4 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stone and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations, even the unclean things of her fornication, 5 and upon her forehead a name written, "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH."

6 And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I wondered with a great wonder.

When the angel carried John in the spirit into the wilderness, John saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast. The beast, met in detail in chapter 13, has the fullness and completeness of evil, represented by the heads and horns. (See notes on chapter 13). The beast, which has the authority of the dragon, the devil, united with the woman. The beast stands to the adulterous woman, Babylon, as Christ stands to the pure bride, the church, the New Jerusalem—evil with evil and righteousness with righteousness. The scarlet of the beast contrasts to the white of the bride of the Lamb.

The woman's dress of purple and scarlet, gold, and precious stones demands two comparisons. The first is to the wonder and purity of the dress of the woman, the bride, the church in chapter 12. That woman is clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and crown of twelve stars on her head—magnificent and wondrous. The difference is between a prostitute and a pure virgin. The second contrast to this great prostitute is the description of just such a woman in Jeremiah 4:30:

30 And you, when you are made desolate, what will you do? Though you clothe yourself with scarlet, though you deck yourself with ornaments of gold, though you enlarge your eyes with paint, in vain do you make yourself fair; (your) lovers despise you, they seek your life.

This description is immediately followed immediately by a description of the pure virgin of Christ in Jeremiah 4:31:

31 For I have heard a voice as of a woman in travail, the anguish as of her that brings forth her first child, the voice of the daughter of Zion, that gasps for

breath, that spreads her hands, (saying), “Woe is me now! For my soul faints before the murderers.”

Perhaps more interesting than the evil woman’s dress is her cup filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries. In contrast, Paul taught of the church that she is the pure virgin of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2). The one—the holy city, the church, the virgin—is a pure bride to Christ; the other—the great city, those of the world (17:15, 18)—is the prostitute of the beast. The prostitute’s cup, metaphorically standing for the contents, contains filth and abominable things. The church’s cup contains Christ’s blood of the new covenant in Matthew 26:28-29:

28 for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many unto remission of sins. 29 But I say unto you, I shall not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

In his comparison of the two cups, Paul made this distinction in 1 Corinthians 10:18-22:

18 Behold Israel after the flesh: have not they that eat the sacrifices communion with the altar? 19 What say I then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? 20 But (I say), that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God: and I would not that you should have communion with demons. 21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of demons: you cannot partake of the table of the Lord, and of the table of demons. 22 Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

In verse 5, John learns from the title written on the prostitute’s forehead who she is. The word, MYSTERY, places the prostitute and her meaning within the specifics of God’s mystery as revelation where it means something that was once hidden but is now made known. In Revelation 10:6-7, the revelation of God’s mystery was to occur at the sounding of the seventh trumpet; and it is still under the sounding of that trumpet that the mystery of the woman on the beast is made known:

John had written, “But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then is finished the mystery of God, according to the good tidings which he declared to his servants the prophets.

The mystery of God’s eternal purpose included the destiny of the saints and the sinners alike. The revelation of the mystery of the great city was part of its great antithesis, the holy city. That the prostitute’s fate should be sealed in this final revelation accentuates the victory and triumph of the pure bride of Christ. The scriptures assure repeatedly that all that was hidden is revealed. Paul wrote in Romans 16:25-27:

25 Now to him that is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal, 26 but now is manifested, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, is made known unto all the nations unto obedience of faith: 27 to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory for ever. Amen.

The phrase *all nations* in this passage includes those identified in verse 15 as the waters upon which the prostitute sits: people multitudes, nations, and language. The revelation of the eternal God seals their fate. The revelation, including the fate of the prostitute, the great city, was put in effect in Ephesians 1:9-10:

9 making known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in him 10 unto a dispensation of the fullness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth; in him, (I say,)

In chapter 15 verse 1, John learned that with the last seven plagues, God's wrath was completed. The phrase *was completed* is past tense, and therefore, a fact accomplished. In addition, as the seventh angel poured out the last bowl of God's wrath in chapter 16:17, a loud voice from the throne said, "It is done." Among the resulting happenings were that the great city split into three parts, and that the cities of all the nations collapse, and that God remembered Babylon and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath. Since the woman is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth (17:18), God now completes his revelation of that part of the mystery which was once hidden, but is now made known.

BABYLON THE GREAT is used to describe the great city that rules over the cities of the nations. Synonymously, the woman is the great city (17:18), and the great city, Babylon. Chapter 18 calls Babylon the *great city* three times in 18:2-3, 10, and 21, and implies the name many times over. The second angel announcing the impending doom had forecast in Revelation 14:8:

8 And another, a second angel, followed, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, that has made all the nations to drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication."

Chapter 18 will describe the doom of Babylon the great in detail. As the New Jerusalem, the holy city, stands for the church, so Babylon, the great city stands for the called out multitudes that followed the paganism of the Old Testament and the multitudes that followed the second beast, the false prophet of this revelation of God. The connection is to the beast out of the sea that marched across the world with his armies of Baal, from the flood, to Babel, to ancient Babylon, Nineveh, and throughout the world. This is the same beast, who was fatally wounded by Christ and his victory, but who rose again with the beast out of the earth, deceiving once again the multitude

of mankind by his image and the false prophet (See notes of chapter 13). Other metaphors for the great city are in Revelation 11:8-9:

8 And their dead bodies (lie) in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.

THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH figuratively describes the iniquitous nature of the woman, in contrast to the purity of the bride of Christ, the pure virgin. In chapters 17 and 18, *adulteries* is used four times; *adultery*, three times, illustrating the immorality of the woman. Infidelity to God led to the fall at Eden, to the destruction by the flood, to the ruin of Israel by the worship of Baal and the practice of his pagan immorality, and to the rejection and crucifixion of the Christ, the lamb.

The Mystery of the Woman and the Beast (Revelation 17:6-8)

Revelation 17:6-7

6 And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I wondered with a great wonder. 7 And the angel said unto me, "Wherefore do you wonder? I will tell you the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns."

John saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints—those set apart and those who bore the testimony of Jesus. *Blood* here is not to be taken as literal blood, as in physical persecution, for Christ himself told us in Matthew 10:28:

28 And be not afraid of them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

The saints and those who bear the testimony of Jesus are new creatures, born again of the water and the spirit. In John 3:5, Jesus answered:

I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.

As Christ shed his earth blood on the cross, Christians shed their blood symbolically when they are buried with Christ in baptism—the likeness of his death, burial, and resurrection. The description of this new birth to a new life is explained in detail in Romans 6:3-7:

3 Or are *you* ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him through baptism unto death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have become united with (him) in the likeness of his death, we shall be also (in the likeness) of his resurrection; 6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with (him), that

the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin; 7 for he that has died is justified from sin.

It is these new creatures that the dragon, the beast, and the prostitute are after to kill once again spiritually. To understand the following chapters, one must understand that the battle is spiritual and the very souls of the saints are in jeopardy and not just their physical bodies and blood. In Revelation 13:6-7, John learned of the beast:

And he opened his mouth for blasphemies against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, (even) them that dwell in the heaven. 7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and there was given to him authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation.

God's wrath is upon these minions of evil and upon those who follow them according to Revelation 16:6:

6 for they poured out the blood of the saints and the prophets, and blood you have given them to drink: they are worthy. [they deserve]

In this spiritual battle there is a physical consequence to the saints and those who stand for the testimony of Jesus—they often lose their physical lives.

Revelation 6:9 teaches:

9 And when he opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:

The angel sees that John was greatly astonished when he saw the woman and tells him that he is going to explain the mystery of woman and the beast she rides. The beast is the seven horned and ten horned beast met in chapter 13 (See notes on entire chapter). The numbers represent the fullness and completeness of the beast's capacity to accomplish his purposes.

In Revelation 13:2, John learned that "the dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and great authority." The beast stands to the dragon as Christ stands to the Lord God Almighty.

The Beast upon Whom the Woman Rides

Revelation 17:8

8 The beast that you saw was, and is not; and is about to come up out of the abyss, and to go into perdition. And they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, (they) whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast, how that he was, and is not, and shall come.

John has seen this beast before come up out of the abyss in Revelation 11:7:

7 And when they shall have finished their *testimony*, *the beast that comes* up out of the abyss shall make war with them, and overcome them, and kill them.

The *they* of this quotation are the witnesses of chapter 11. He did not return from the abyss until they had finished their testimony. There are other references to the containment of the beast and the dragon. One regards the man of lawlessness in 2 Thessalonians 2:2-12, beginning in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4:

3 let no man beguile you in any wise: for (it will not be,) except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, 4 he that opposes and exalts himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he sits in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God.

This is an apt description of the second beast, the false prophet who has the power of the first beast (see chapter 13). Paul continues in verses 5-8:

5 Remember you not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? 6 And now you know that which restrains, to the end that he may be revealed in his own season. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness does already work: only (there is) one that restrains now, until he be taken out of the way. 8 And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his mouth, and bring to naught by the manifestation of his coming;

Continuing in verses 9-12, the work and the coming of the lawless one is according to the work of Satan who is the dragon:

9 (even he), whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, 10 and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11 And for this cause God sends them a working of error, that they should believe a lie: 12 that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

John finds the dragon similarly confined in Revelation 20:1-3:

And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. 2 And he laid hold on the dragon, the old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, 3 and cast him into the abyss, and shut (it), and sealed (it) over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years should be finished: after this he must be loosed for a little time.

Jesus described to his apostles who would do the binding and holding back of these evil forces in John 14:16-17:

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may be with you for ever, 17 (even) the Spirit of truth: whom the world cannot

receive; for it beholds him not, neither knows him: *you* know him; for he abides with you, and shall be in you.

The Holy Spirit—Spirit of Truth—constrained the triad of evil until the witnesses had completed their work and the revelation was complete. In context, this will happen shortly, for at the conclusion of John's writing, the revelation will be complete. In the present context, John sees the same beast who once was, now is not, and will come up out of the Abyss and go to his destruction and whom he had seen before in Revelation 13:2-3:

And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as (the feet) of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and great authority. 3 And (I saw) one of his heads as though it had been smitten unto death; and his death-stroke was healed: and the whole earth wondered after the beast;

The phrase *now is not* also follows what John saw in Revelation 13:11-13:

And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like unto a lamb, and he spoke as a dragon. 12 And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his sight. And he makes the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose death-stroke was healed. 13 And he does great signs that he should even make fire to come down out of heaven upon the earth in the sight of men.

And *will come up out of the earth* describes the second beast's future status to John, but his present status to us. When the spiritual gifts were taken away releasing the man of lawlessness, the false prophet, and second beast, and when the apostles and prophets had completed the revelation, the beast would reemerge, but with power limited to the deceit of the false prophet, the second beast, and power of his image of the first beast, created by the false prophet. False religion and mammon [money] will reign. (See notes on chapter 13).

What John sees is effectively what Jesus and Paul describe about the restraining power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit remained containing the dragon and the beast until that which is perfect had come. Jesus had taught in John 14:25-26:

These things have I spoken unto you, while (yet) abiding with you. 26 But the Comforter, (even) the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you.

Paul taught that the spiritual gifts would cease when that which was perfect had come in 1 Corinthians 13:8-10:

8 Love never fails: but whether (there be) prophecies, they shall be done away; whether (there be) tongues, they shall cease; whether (there be) knowledge, it

shall be done away. 9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; 10 but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away.

James identifies God's law as that perfection in James 1:25:

25 But he that looks into the perfect law, the (law) of liberty, and (so) continues, being not a hearer that forgets but a doer that works, this man shall be blessed in his doing.

The force that constrains and binds the devil and the beast is God's complete Revelation of his will and word—first through the apostles and prophets and now through his written word. When the beast comes up out of the abyss, he goes to his destruction. The followers of the beast—those whose names are not in the book of life—will be astonished when they see the beast because he once was, now is not, and yet will come. One only needs to view the present world of false religion, decadent sin, and the rampant materialism in service to mammon to understand the horror and success of the beast. However successful that the beast seems, he is on his way to destruction.

The Angel Explains the Vision of the Beast

Revelation 17:9-11

9 Here is the mind that has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sits: 10 and they are seven kings; the five are fallen, the one is, the other is not yet come; and when he comes, he must continue a little while. 11 And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also an eighth, and is of the seven; and he goes into perdition.

The mind that has wisdom signifies the difficulty of the passage. Many interpretations are given, yet one is true. Seven heads is given two metaphoric comparisons—hills and kings. The analogy is like saying that two plus two is four and one plus three is four. The commonality is four. The commonality in this passage is government (nations). Hills as seats of power have consistently represented government, and kings are consistently those who govern. The prophets used mountains and hills in this metaphoric sense: as in Isaiah 2:2, which uses both mountains and hills in the metaphor:

2 And it shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

In Jeremiah 51:24-25, Babylon is addressed:

“24 And I will render unto Babylon and to all the inhabitants of Chaldea all their evil that they have done in Zion in your sight,” says Jehovah. 25 “Behold, I am against you, O destroying mountain,” says Jehovah, “Which destroys all the

earth; and I will stretch out my hand upon *you*, and roll *you* down from the rocks, and will make *you* a burnt mountain.”

Seven represented fullness and 10 represented completeness as studied in chapter 13. The governments spoken of here are full in their power and authority. It is also upon these governments that the woman sits. There are also seven kings. Seven fully powerful kings are controlled by the wanton woman, who sits over the kingdoms. Five of the seven kings have fallen. There are only five such kingdoms, all of which fit the description given. Micah 7:11-13 points to the places where one must look:

A day for building *your* walls! in that day shall the decree be far removed. 12 In that day shall they come unto *you* from Assyria and the cities of Egypt, and from Egypt even to the River, and from sea to sea, and (from) mountain to mountain. 13 Yet shall the land be desolate because of them that dwell therein, for the fruit of their doings.

From Egypt to the Romans, from the flood and Nimrod to John’s revelation, there are only five such kingdoms: Egypt, Assyria, Persia, Babylon, and Greece. In Daniel 2, Daniel claimed four kingdoms until the kingdom of the Lord should come out of the mountains—four and not five, because Daniel began counting from his day forward in Daniel 2:44-45, thus excluding Egypt:

44 And in the days **of those kings** shall the God of heaven set up **a kingdom** which shall never be destroyed, nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people; but it shall break in pieces and consume **all these kingdoms**, and it shall stand for ever. 45 Forasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God has made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.

Notice that Daniel also describes how the beast—the kingdoms of the world—will be destroyed by the kingdom of God that will never be destroyed. The five kingdoms, then, have fallen, and one is. Of course, the one, which is, is the Roman kingdom—the kingdom in existence at the time that John was writing. However, there is one that is to come, and that kingdom will remain for a while. This final king represents the Holy Roman Emperors that followed the Roman Empire. The Holy Roman Empire was the last kingdom of this class of kingdoms. These kings are all of a class and all controlled by the prostitute who sits atop them. Of course, the undeniable connection is between the Holy Roman Empire and the Roman Catholic Church—the domain of the second beast, the false prophet.

The beast is an eighth king. The word, *an*, indicates a king but not one of the previous class. All these seven governments, from the flood until fragmentation of governments, were controlled by a king, the beast of seven heads (full in authority) and

ten horns (complete in his might and power). The dragon had given “the beast his power, his throne, and great authority (Revelation 13:2).”

Revelation 17:12-14

12 And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings, who have received no kingdom as yet; but they receive authority as kings, with the beast, for one hour. 13 These have one mind, and they give their power and authority unto the beast. 14 These shall war against the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they (also shall overcome) that are with him, called and chosen and faithful.

The ten horns are also ten kings, but kings and kingdoms of a different class from the seven in the preceding verses. They are complete, as the number, ten, indicates; and, therefore, apparently they will fulfill the rest of time until the end of the earth. Ten is not to be taken as literal here since there is no indication in the text, as with the seven kings, who are actually counted out. That they have not yet come means that they will receive kingdoms during the course of time. They give their power and authority to the beast who is now represented by the second beast, the false prophet, with his working and delusion of error (2 Thessalonians 2). They and their subjects worship the image of the first beast in Revelation 13:11-17:

11 And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like unto a lamb, and he spoke as a dragon. 12 And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his sight. And he makes the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose death-stroke was healed. 13 And he does great signs that he should even make fire to come down out of heaven upon the earth in the sight of men. 14 And he deceives them that dwell on the earth by reason of the signs which it was given him to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast who has the stroke of the sword and lived. 15 And it was given (unto him) to give breath to it, (even) to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as should not worship the image of the beast should be killed. 16 And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free and the bond, that there be given them a mark on their right hand, or upon their forehead; 17 and that no man should be able to buy or to sell, save he that has the mark, (even) the name of the beast or the number of his name.

All the kingdoms of the earth make war against the Lamb. The true religion of Jesus has a history of repression. The persecution of the saints, the wars of religion and greed, the pervasive immorality, the spread of communism and other atheistic influences, religious terrorism and extremism, unconstrained materialism—all of these and more make for the war of wars against the Lamb. The end of that war will be victory for the Lord of lords, the King of kings, and his called, chosen, and faithful

followers. This is the very same conclusion reached by Paul in discussing the outcome of the influence of the man of lawlessness in 2 Thessalonians 2:13-15:

13 But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, for that God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: 14 whereunto he called you through our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 15 So then, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word, or by epistle of ours.

The Beast and the Ten Horns Turn against the Prostitute

Revelation 17:15-18

15 Then the angel said to me, "The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages. 16 The beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire. 17 For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to give the beast their power to rule, until God's words are fulfilled. 18 The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth."

In verse one, John saw the prostitute sitting on many waters. Here the angel tells John that the waters are people, multitudes, nations, and languages. The province of influence for this evil woman is worldwide for all time. That the beast and the ten horns hate the prostitute seems contrary to the last part of the passage where the woman—the great city, Babylon, the prostitute—rules over these very same kings of the earth. This paradox is easily resolved.

The beast and the ten horns hate the prostitute so badly they bring her to ruin. They figuratively eat her flesh and burn her with fire. The crux of the matter is that God put this in their hearts, but in so doing they allowed the beast to rule with their power. Since the woman rides the beast, they both wage the war against the Lamb and his followers, but to their destruction and according to the purpose of God. A few illustrating points are in order. Communistic governments, in theory and practice, fight immorality, a province of the prostitute. Yet, religion is discouraged or even outlawed, immorality is pervasive, and sin prevails. In our country, government activity exudes a religious air, maintaining a public appearance that is against sin and evil. Yet, prostitution thrives, gambling is government supported, media is overwhelming in its mindless violence, unbridled materialism, and permissive sex. Advertisements depend on the attractions of the lust of the flesh and eye, and the vainglory of life—power, ambition, and earthly wisdom. Religious extremists who reject immorality in eating, drinking, and dressing wage their religious wars around the world. The beast rules, and the prostitute that great city rides atop him.

Chapter 17 forecasted the end of the beast and of this prostitute, the great city, Babylon. Chapter 18 will see the fall of Babylon and chapter 19 will see the beast and the false prophet captured and thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur.

Revelation 18: The Fall of Babylon

Chapter 17 provided a chain of metaphors that identified Babylon. In chapter 17, verse 18, the woman on the beast is the great city, and in verse 5, she is Babylon the great. Leading up to chapter 18, in Revelation 14:8, where the three angels announce the coming wrath of God, John saw the second angel who said:

8 And another, a second angel, followed, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, that has made all the nations to drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.”

As the wrath of God, in the seventh bowl, poured out in Revelation 16:19, John wrote,

19 And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and Babylon the great was remembered in the sight of God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.

Chapter 18 goes into a great and detailed lament over the end of Babylon, the great city where it contrasts with chapter 21 where the glories and beauties of the New Jerusalem, the bride of Christ, the heavenly city, shines with the glory of God. Babylon with its citizens of the world versus the New Jerusalem with its saints, made perfect, tell the story of the redeemed and lost in these final chapters of God’s Revelation. After chapter 18, the terms *Babylon* and *great city* do not appear again in Revelation. Their retribution in this chapter is the very end of them. Verse 21 announces this fate:

“With such great violence, the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again.”

Fallen! Fallen! Is Babylon the Great

Revelation 18:1-3

8 After these things I saw another angel coming down out of heaven, having great authority; and the earth was lightened with his glory. 2 And he cried with a mighty voice, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, and is become a habitation of demons, and a hold of every unclean spirit, and a hold of every unclean and hateful bird. 3 For by the wine of the wrath of her fornication all the nations are fallen; and the kings of the earth committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth waxed rich by the power of her wantonness.”

An angel declares the first episode of chapter 18—one of three voices and angels who speak during this lament over Babylon. John describes this angel in some detail. The angel has authority; his splendor illuminated the earth; and he shouted with a mighty voice, all of which would indicate that he is the Christ. Since an authority is one whose will must be obeyed, the pronouncement of the angel establishes the very certainty of the events that he describes. The word, *fallen*, is in the past tense, showing the established fact that Babylon is finished. Although time will run its course, Christ with his victory sealed the fate of Babylon.

Babylon the great was a city of unbridled pleasure, sexual immoralities, and rampant materialism. Now it is a place for demons and evil spirits. Unclean and detestable birds are vulture-like carrion eaters, feeding on flesh. Implicated in her sin and woe are the merchants and kings of the earth. *3 For by the wine of the wrath of her fornication all the nations are fallen* shows her former control and influence. The extent of her evil influence reached to the kings of the earth who committed spiritual adultery with her and to the merchants who grew rich by their material relationship with her. Immorality and mammon combine to seduce the citizens of this great and worldly city, but no more shall this be the case.

The Fate of Babylon Is Announced to the People of God

Revelation 18:4-10

4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, "Come forth, my people, out of her, that you have no fellowship with her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues: 5 for her sins have reached even unto heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.

6 Render unto her even as she rendered, and double (unto her) the double according to her works: in the cup which she mingled, mingle unto her double. 7 How much so ever she glorified herself, and waxed wanton, so much give her of torment and mourning: for she said in her heart, "I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall in no wise see mourning." 8 Therefore in one day shall her plagues come, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire; for strong is the Lord God who judged her.

9 And the kings of the earth, who committed fornication and lived wantonly with her, shall weep and wail over her, when they look upon the smoke of her burning, 10 standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, "Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour is your judgment come."

Another voice from heaven, which is not the mighty angel of verses 1-2, addresses God's people as *my people*, making the voice the voice of the Lord God Almighty. The appeal to God's people to come out of the world is the same call that Christ and his

apostles and prophets issued. Jesus taught from the beginning that we cannot serve God and Money: In the Sermon on the Mount, he taught in Matthew 6:19-24:

19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal: 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust does consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: 21 for where thy treasure is, there will your heart be also. . . .

24 No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon [NIV money].

Paul taught in 2 Corinthians 6:14-16 that the people of God are to have no fellowship with the evil of the great city:

14 Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers: for what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? or what communion has light with darkness? 15 And what concord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion has a believer with an unbeliever? 16 And what agreement has a temple of God with idols? For we are a temple of the living God; even as God said, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."

The clauses in verse 4 are cause and effect:

5 for her sins have reached even unto heaven,
and God has remembered her iniquities.

There is no way around the conclusion that if we share in Babylon's sin, we will receive her plagues. This statement becomes an eternal principle, which abides from the victory of Jesus on the cross until the last great day. It is true for all people for the rest of time. The clauses—*for her sins have reached even unto heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities*—show the certainty of God's retribution for the great city and for those who do not come out. Hebrews 2:1-3 teaches:

Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away (from them). 2 For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; 3 how shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation? Which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard.

One might think that because the time since the Lord died is long past and that evil runs rampant and unchecked, that there might be no accounting for iniquity. The voice from heavens assures otherwise: "*For her sins have reached even unto heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.*"

A consistent theme, woven throughout the New Testament, is that the saints will judge with God and the Lord, Jesus Christ. In Matthew 19:28 Matthew wrote,

28 And Jesus said unto them, “Truly I say unto you, that you who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

Paul taught this same principle in 1 Corinthians 6:1-3:

Dare any of you, having a matter against his neighbor, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? 2 Or know you not that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world is judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? 3 Know you not that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?

The understood *you* of current text teaches, also, that saints will judge: “Render unto her even as she rendered, and double (unto her) the double according to her works: in the cup which she mingled, mingle unto her double.”

The arrogance of her worldliness leads Babylon to boast. She is queen to the beast; she is the bride of the beast. However, the beast will be thrown down (19:20), she will be a widow, and she will mourn. In one day—the great day of the Lord—death, mourning, and famine will overtake her. The tables turn, as it were. Fire will consume her. The mighty Lord God will judge her. This is the end of the prostitute, the great city, Babylon. What follows are the laments of her lost people, those who put their faith and trust in her iniquities. The church is victorious. The worldly and ungodly people lament the fate of Babylon.

The First Lament: the Kings of the Earth

Revelation 18:9-10

9 And the kings of the earth, who committed fornication and lived wantonly with her, shall weep and wail over her, when they look upon the smoke of her burning, 10 standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, “Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour is your judgment come.”

Much of Revelation and much of the Bible is about the failure of the kings of the earth to recognize the proper place of God and the lamb. Beginning in Revelation 1:5, there is recognition of Jesus Christ as the true ruler of the kings of the earth:

5 and from Jesus Christ, (who is) the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and **the ruler of the kings of the earth**. Unto him that loves us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood;

It is at the end of the Revelation that these kings of the earth are humbled before Christ—the King of kings and the Lord of lords. In Revelation 21:22-24, John wrote:

And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple thereof. 23 And the city has no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it: for the glory of God did light it, and the lamp thereof (is) the Lamb. 24 And the nations shall walk amid the light thereof: and the kings of the earth bring their glory into it.

Much of the Revelation story is about how these kings of the earth would receive a just reward for their adulterous relationship with the prostitute, Babylon. Revelation 6:15-17 forecasts their doom:

15 And the kings of the earth, and the princes, and the chief captains, and the rich, and the strong, and every bondman and freeman, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains; 16 and they say to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: 17 for the great day of their wrath is come; and who is able to stand?"

Now their adulteries and their intoxication have come the full course in Revelation 17:1-2:

2 with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and they that dwell in the earth were made drunken with the wine of her fornication.

Because they cast their lot with the wrong city, Babylon, and the wrong woman, the prostitute, they weep and mourn, terrified at her torment. They stand afar off and cry:

Woe, woe, the great city,
Babylon, the strong city!
For in one hour is your judgment come."

Chapter 18 marks the end of Babylon, but the kings of the earth reappear in Revelation 19:19 where John saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army.

The Second Lament: The Merchants of the Earth

Revelation 18:11-17

11 And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, for no man buys their merchandise anymore; 12 merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stone, and pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet; and all thyine wood, and every vessel of ivory, and every vessel made of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble; 13 and cinnamon, and spice, and incense, and ointment, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and cattle, and sheep; and (merchandise) of horses and chariots and slaves; and souls of men.

14 And the fruits which your soul lusted after are gone from you, and all things that were dainty and sumptuous are perished from you, and (men) shall find them no more at all. 15 The merchants of these things, who were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning; 16 saying, "Woe, woe, the great city, she that was arrayed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stone and pearl!"

17 For in an hour so great riches is made desolate. And every shipmaster, and every one that sails anywhere, and mariners, and as many as gain their living by sea, stood afar off, 18 and cried out as they looked upon the smoke of her burning, saying, "What (city) is like the great city?"

In addition to the kings of the world, merchants will lament the doom of Babylon. With Babylon gone, they cannot buy their cargoes. In our day, one might say goods and services. Their avenue to riches is gone. The catalog of products is interesting as it illustrates the vast array of worldly products—metals, textiles, articles of every kind, spices and oils and grains and animals. The list is all inclusive of the material world. Finally and most horribly, the list of traded items ends tragically with the bodies and souls of men. With but a few changes in items of commerce, this passage describes the very world we live in.

The result of the fall of Babylon on the merchants of the world is just as bad as what befell the kings of the earth. The fruit is gone; the riches and splendor have vanished; the merchants stand far off, terrified at her torment; they weep and mourn.

The beauty and wonder of the revelation is how writers, apostles and prophets, could speak such similar words, though separated by so much time and space. James writes an eloquent passage in James 5:1-6, which stands in perfect agreement with John:

5 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you. 2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. 3 Your gold and your silver are rusted; and their rust shall be for a testimony against you, and shall eat your flesh as fire. You have laid up your treasure in the last days. 4 Behold, the hire of the laborers who mowed your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, cries out: and the cries of them that reaped have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabbath. 5 You have lived delicately on the earth, and taken your pleasure; you have nourished your hearts in a day of slaughter.

6 You have condemned, you have killed the righteous (one); he does not resist you.

Jesus had forecast this same teaching, recorded in Matthew 6:24:

24 No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon [NIV money].

Jesus also spoke of the uselessness of placing our hope in worldly treasures in Matthew 6:19-21:

19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal: 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: 21 for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Paul also focused his writing on the fleeting nature of worldly wealth in 1 Timothy 6:17:

Charge them that are rich in this present world, that they be not high-minded, nor have their hope set on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy; 18 that they do good, that they be rich in good works, that they be ready to distribute, willing to communicate; 19 laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on the life which is (life) indeed.

It is not that saints are rich in the present world that condemns them, but it is that the saints with earthly wealth must put their hope in God and not mammon (money). The merchants who placed their hope in mammon will be in extreme circumstances when Babylon falls: the fruit they longed for will be gone; their riches and splendor will have vanished; never to be recovered; they stand far off, terrified at her torment; and they will weep and mourn and cry out.

Their lament describes the great city in the very same terms that John used to describe the great prostitute in chapter 17, verse 4. The lament reads in Revelation 18:16-17,

Woe, woe, the great city, she that was arrayed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stone and pearl! 17 for in an hour so great riches is made desolate.

The description of the great prostitute reads in Revelation 17:4:

4 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stone and pearls,

The great city and the woman are one and the same. God will bring to ruin the wealth of the whole world in one hour.

The Third Lament: All Who Earn Their Living from the Sea

Revelation 18:17-20

And every shipmaster, and every one that sails anywhere, and mariners, and as many as gain their living by sea, stood afar off, 18 and cried out as they looked upon the smoke of her burning, saying, What (city) is like the great city? 19 And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and mourning, saying, “Woe, woe, the great city, wherein all that had their ships in the sea were made rich by reason of her costliness! For in one hour is she made desolate.”

20 Rejoice over her, you heaven, and you saints, and you apostles, and you prophets; for God has judged your judgment on her.

Every sea captain, all who travel by sea, and all who earn their living by the sea grieve over the destruction of Babylon. The modern day corollary to this ancient metaphor includes the flight crews, all those millions who fly every day for pleasure and business, and all those involved in the commerce of our day, which depends on air freight and air traffic, as well as sea traffic. These modern day travelers and business people are even called “road warriors”.

Their sorrow is evident: throwing dust on their heads, with weeping and mourning, they cry out their lament. The laments have progressed in their conclusions. The first lament concluded that in one hour, Babylon’s doom had come. The second lament concluded that in one hour Babylon’s great wealth had come to ruin. The third lament concluded that heaven and the saints, apostles, and prophets rejoice because God has judged Babylon. Doom, ruin, and judgment have come to Babylon.

Babylon Thrown Down

Revelation 18:21-24

21 And a strong angel took up a stone as it were a great millstone and cast it into the sea, saying, “Thus with a mighty fall shall Babylon, the great city, be cast down, and shall be found no more at all.” 22 And the voice of harpers and minstrels and flute-players and trumpeters shall be heard no more at all in you; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft, shall be found any more at all in you; and the voice of a mill shall be heard no more at all in you; 23 and the light of a lamp shall shine no more at all in you; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in you: for your merchants were the princes of the earth; for with your sorcery were all the nations deceived.

24 And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all that have been slain upon the earth.

Violently, God will throw down Babylon to be found never again. No musicians, no workmen, no sounds of millstones, no light of lamp, no voice of a bridegroom and

bride—none of these will ever be again in Babylon. The indictment is clear: she led astray the nations; she shed the blood of the prophets and of the saints, and of all who lived on the earth. The multitudes of the world owe their spiritual death to the enticements of the great city.

Chapter 18 marks the end of the great city, the great prostitute. Chapter 19 will see the end of the beast and the false prophet. Where chapter 18 focused on the woe and destruction of Babylon, chapter 19 will focus on the four-fold hallelujahs and the victory of the Lamb.

Revelation 19: Four-fold Hallelujah and the Rider on the White Horse

Chapter 19 has three parts: a four-fold hallelujah, the arrival of the King of kings and the Lord of lords, and the victory over the armies of the beast and false prophet. This chapter is the climatic chapter of the Revelation. Victory upon victory follow for the King and Lord of all. God destroys the minions of evil and glorifies the Lamb and his bride, the church.

Four-fold Hallelujah

At the condemnation of the prostitute, the great city, John hears the great multitude in heaven shouting a fourfold hallelujah. The word, *hallelujah*, means, “Praise you the Lord.” The *h* is pronounced. It is sometimes a short song of praise or thanksgiving as it is so used here.

The first hallelujah

Revelation 19:1-2

19 After these things I heard as it were a great voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, “Hallelujah; Salvation, and glory, and power, belong to our God: 2 for true and righteous are his judgments; for he has judged the great harlot, her that corrupted the earth with her fornication, and he has avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.”

A great multitude celebrates the victory over the great prostitute, Babylon. The overcoming and destruction of the great prostitute show that salvation, glory and power belong to God. The prostitute got exactly what she deserved; God’s judgments are true and just. Through her adulteries, she had corrupted the earth and led man into spiritual death. Now God has avenged the blood of his servants. Paul described the matter in 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10:

5 (which is) a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God; to the end that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer: 6 if so be that it is righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to them that afflict you, 7 and to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, 8 rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of

our Lord Jesus: 9 who shall suffer punishment, (even) eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might, 10 when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at in all them that believed (because our testimony unto you was believed) in that day.

The second hallelujah

Revelation 19:3

3 And a second time they say, "Hallelujah. And her smoke goes up for ever and ever."

When they again shouted, "Hallelujah," her smoke went up forever and ever. The duration of the prostitute's judgment is so pronounced. Literally, for ever and ever is into the ages of the ages and indicates no end to her punishment. The destruction rendered by God has no relief from a certain end. The devil, the beast, and the false prophet also receive this torment without end in Revelation 20:10:

10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

The third hallelujah

Revelation 19:4-5

4 And the four and twenty elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God that sits on the throne, saying, "Amen; Hallelujah." 5 And a voice came forth from the throne, saying, "Give praise to our God, all you his servants, you that fear him, the small and the great.

The elders and the four living creatures join in the worship. At this point, there is a response from the throne (perhaps the Lord, himself). All God's servants, great and small, are to fear him. The first hallelujah dealt with the duration of God's punishment; this hallelujah deals with the all-inclusive nature of those who worship him.

The fourth hallelujah

Revelation 19:6-8

6 And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, "Hallelujah: for the Lord our God, the Almighty reigns. 7 Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give the glory unto him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." 8 And it was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen, bright (and) pure: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints."

John hears the sound like the roar of rushing waters and loud peals of thunder. Here, John heard, “As it were of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of many thunders.” This is the fifth time John has heard this overwhelming sound. The sound is from the throne (4:5; 16:18), the temple (11:19), and in response to the censer from the altar being poured out (8:5). The shouting that John heard has the force, power, and majesty of heaven and the throne of God.

This hallelujah announces that the wedding of the lamb to his wife has come. The contrast is clearly to the destruction of the great prostitute of the first hallelujah. Preparations are over; the wife has made herself ready. She, the church, the heavenly city, receives fine linen to wear. Since fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints, the saints’ righteous acts adorn the bride. The saints give their lives to this adornment.

This is the first time that the word, *wife*, appears, used in this manner, to designate the marriage between Christ and the church. Now with the wedding announced, the idea of the bride becomes a central theme of the closing chapters beginning in Revelation 21:1-2:

21 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven of God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.

John sees the bride in Revelation 21:9-10:

9 And there came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls, who were laden with the seven last plagues; and he spoke with me, saying, “Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb. 10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.

By the time that the Revelation closes in the last verse, the bride joins equally with the Spirit to call people to the Lamb in Revelation 22:17:

17 And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” And he that hears, let him say, “Come.” And he that is athirst, let him come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely.

Paul concurs with John in this matter in 2 Corinthians 11:2,

2 For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I espoused you to one husband, that I might present you (as) a pure virgin to Christ.

The bride adorned with the righteous acts of the saints describes the necessity of the sufferings, trials, and perseverance of the saints. Their righteous lives make the wedding to the Lamb of God possible. Through hardship and travail, the righteous

stand firm. From their baptism to the grave, the saints of God put on Christ, through baptism initially, and through their righteous works as they live as Christians. Paul described this first act in Galatians 3:26-28:

Or you are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ. 28 There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for you all are one (man) in Christ Jesus.

The Lamb's message to the churches was that they were to so dress:

Revelation 3:4: But you have a few names in Sardis that did not defile their garments: and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy.

Revelation 3:17-18: Because you say, "I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing;" and know you not that you are the wretched one and miserable and poor and blind and naked: 18 I counsel you to buy of me gold refined by fire, that you may become rich; and white garments, that you may clothe yourself, and (that) the shame of your nakedness be not made manifest; and eye salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see.

Revelation 16:15:15 (Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watches, and keeps his garments, unless he walk naked, and they see his shame.)

John Directed by the Angel

Revelation 19:9-10

9 And he said unto me, "Write, 'Blessed are they that are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he said unto me, *"These are true words of God."*

10 And I fell down before his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, "See you do it not: I am a fellow-servant with you and with your brethren that hold the testimony of Jesus: worship God; for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

The angel of verse 9 appears to be the angel of 17:1, who was one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls of God's wrath and invited John to see the punishment of the great prostitute. The only other angel in context is the angel of 18:1, who apparently was an angel of a special class—having great authority, illuminating the earth by his splendor, and having a mighty voice. The angel, in this context, instructs John. God blesses those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb:

Makarios [blessed] is used in the beatitudes in Matthew 5 and Luke 6, is especially frequent in the Gospel of Luke, and is found seven times in Revelation, 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7,14. It is said of God twice, 1 Timothy 1:11; 6:15. In the beatitudes, the Lord indicates not only the characters that are "blessed," but the nature of that which is the highest good. (from Vine's

The notes on Revelation 1 spoke about how the word, *blessed*, marks the single overarching theme of the Book of Revelation. The development of that theme reaches its climax with the wedding of the bride and the Lamb of God. The passages bear repeating in this present context:

Revelation 1:3: Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things that are written therein: for the time is at hand.

Revelation 14:13: And I heard the voice from heaven saying, "Write, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: 'yes,' says the Spirit, 'That they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them.'"

Revelation 16:15-16: 15 (Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watches, and keeps his garments, unless he walk naked, and they see his shame.) 16 And they gathered them together into the place which is called in Hebrew Har-Magedon.

Revelation 19:9: And he said unto me, "Write, 'Blessed are they that are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he said unto me, "These are true words of God."

Revelation 20:6: Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: over these the second death has no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

Revelation 22:7: And behold, I come quickly. Blessed is he that keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.

Revelation 22:14: Blessed are they that wash their robes that they may have the right (to come) to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city.

Even in the parables, Jesus had taught the importance of the coming of the bridegroom and the need to be prepared (See Matthew 9:15 and 25:6-10). The beauty, celebration, and glory of the wedding supper of the Lamb and the bride are in direct contrast to the fate of the great prostitute, Babylon in Revelation 18:23:

23 and the light of a lamp shall shine no more at all in you; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in you: for your merchants were the princes of the earth; for with your sorcery were all the nations deceived.

These are the true words of God connects the joining of the bride and bridegroom to the revelation of God. In John 14:10-11, Jesus taught:

10 Believe you not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I say unto you I speak not from myself: but the Father abiding in me does his

works. 11 Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.

He later included in his prayer the relationship of the word of God and the truth in John 17:17, “Sanctify them in the truth: your word is truth.

At this point in the revelation, John is getting to **the heart of the matter**.

So taken was he by the events, John fell down to worship the angel. However, the angel describes himself as a fellow servant of God with John and all those who hold to the testimony of Jesus. The angel’s simple command, “Worship God!” is so plain, so emphatic, that one cannot miss the point of to whom we owe allegiance, homage, awe, and reverence. Not the angels in heaven, not religious clerics, not temples made with hands, not relics or statues, or any such persons or things. **Worship God!**

The angel states what appears to be an eternal principle: “For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” The New Testament is replete with this connection between our testimony and God’s prophecy through the apostles and prophets. Three examples will suffice. Peter wrote in 1 Peter 4:11, “11 if any man speaks, (speaking) as it were oracles of God.” Jude wrote of contending for the faith entrusted to the saints in Jude 3-4: “I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.” This spirit of prophecy and our testimony of Jesus perfects the church. Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:11-13:

11 And he gave some (to be) apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ: 13 till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:

A Majestic Christ Appears

This part of chapter 19 picks up where events paused in Revelation 16:12-16 where John learned that the beast and the false prophet gathered the kings of the whole world together for battle on the great day of God Almighty:

12 And the sixth poured out his bowl upon the great river, the (river) Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way might be made ready for the kings that (come) from the sun rising. 13 And I saw (coming) out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits, as it were frogs: 14 for they are spirits of demons, working signs; which go forth unto the kings of the whole world, to gather them together unto the war of the great day of God, the Almighty.

The pause in the events of the great battle allowed the angel to show John the fate of the great prostitute, the great city Babylon. With the fate of the prostitute concluded

with the four-fold hallelujahs, the narrative returns to the great battle and the final disposition of the beast and the false prophet.

Revelation 19:11-16

11 And I saw the heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and he that sat thereon called Faithful and True; and in righteousness he does judge and make war. 12 And his eyes (are) a flame of fire, and upon his head (are) many diadems; and he has a name written which no one knows but he himself. 13 And he (is) arrayed in a garment sprinkled with blood: and his name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies which are in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white (and) pure. 15 And out of his mouth proceeds a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treads the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God, the Almighty.

16 And he has on his garment and on his thigh a name written,

KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

John sees heaven standing open. These very first words of this episode establish the place of the battle as in heaven, making it wholly and totally a spiritual battle. Not only is the place of impending battle in heaven, but the armies of the Lord are also the armies of heaven (19:14). Plain and true, the battle of Armageddon (16:16) is a spiritual battle setting the beast, the false prophet, and kings of the whole world (16:12-14 and 19:19-21) against the church the bride of Christ. There is no evidence that Armageddon is a physical battle on this earth. The evidence is to the contrary, the rider on the white horse is already KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

The rider of the horse is called *Faithful and True*. In the letter of the church of Laodicea, Jesus called himself faithful and true. John recorded in Revelation 3:14,

14 And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: "These things says the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God."

Once again, the text is certain. The Lord is now the ruler of God's creation. There will be no future kingdoms on this earth. He is **now** KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. And we are **now** a kingdom and priests with him, according to Revelation 1:5-6:

5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood; 6 and he made us a kingdom, priests unto his God and Father; to him (be) the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

The NKJV and the KJV and the Greek Version all read “made us kings and priests. The translators of the later versions—ASV, NASV, NIV—inserted the *to be*. The older version and the Greek Version present us as kings and priests a *fait accompli*, dispensing with the millennial theories forevermore.

The purpose of the Lord is to judge and make war. His description here is similar to the one in the first chapter: eyes like blazing fire, many crowns upon his head, and dressed in a robe dipped in blood. On the one hand, he has a name written on him that no one knows but himself; on the other hand, his name is the word of God. This name, the word of God, is reminiscent of John 1:1:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God.

The armies of heaven were following him; they too are riding white horses. The phrase, *they are dressed in fine linen, white and clean*, shows that the army of heaven is clothed with the righteous acts of the saints as in Revelation 19:8: “(Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)” The dress is figurative of the righteousness of the saints, during this spiritual war. This spiritual army, so amassed, is the army spoken by Paul in Ephesians 6:10-13:

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual (hosts) of wickedness in the heavenly (places). 13 Wherefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand.

Every day, Christians fight the spiritual war against the beast and the false prophet. Indeed, even the armor of this warfare is spiritual armor as described in Ephesians 6:14-17:

14 Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 withal taking up the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil (one). 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

In this passage by Paul, the weapon is the sword of the Spirit, the word of God. In John’s vision the Lamb is so equipped also in verse 15:

15 And out of his mouth proceeds a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treads the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God, the Almighty.

Christ gave the same the description of himself in Revelation 1:16,

16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shines in his strength.

In the letter to the church at Pergamum in Revelation 2:12, the sword is sharp, double-edged. In the same passage the Lord tells how he will use the sword, “

16 Repent therefore; or else I come to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of my mouth.

The writer of the Hebrew letter describes the full nature of the sword as the word of God in Hebrews 4:12-13:

12 For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. 13 And there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

In summary, the war is in heaven, the armies of the Lord are spiritual armies of heaven, and the sword is a spiritual sword, the word of God. The Lord himself is the Word of God. There is no room in this passage for the sectarian materialism, which calls for a physical, material war in this present, material earth. The battle of Armageddon is a spiritual battle fought between the armies of heaven and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

The phrase, *he will rule them with an iron scepter*, is from a prophecy in the second Psalm, verse 9. In the letter to the church at Thyatira (Revelation 2:26-27), the Lord quoted the prophecy and applied it to himself and to his followers:

26 And he that overcomes, and he that keeps my works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations: 27 and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to shivers; as I also have received of my Father:

In Revelation 12:5, the phrase specifically describes the Christ child:

5 And she was delivered of a son, a man child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and unto his throne.

Thus, the Lord of this context is a reigning Lord. He has written on his robe, dripped in blood, and on his thigh, “KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORD’S. He is the one who treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. The reference here to the winepress connects us once again to the harvest of the earth of Revelation 14:19-21:

And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat upon the horse, and against his army.

20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought the signs in his sight, wherewith he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast and them that worshipped his image: they two were cast alive into the lake of fire that burns with brimstone: 21 and the rest were killed with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, (even the sword) which came forth out of his mouth: and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

The end of the harvest is the end of flesh and all things worldly in verses 17-18.

The End of Flesh

Revelation 19:17-18

17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in mid heaven, "Come (and) be gathered together unto the great supper of God; 18 that you may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses and of them that sit thereon, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, and small and great."

With the all-inclusive harvest of the last day, flesh and blood will be no more. God's wrath is upon all flesh, small and great, mighty and weak, free and slave. The events that follow will bring a just end to flesh and fleshly matters. The beast and false prophet, the dragon, and all those whose name is not written in the Book of Life receive their righteous judgment.

The Fate of the Beast and the False Prophet

Revelation 19:19-21

And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat upon the horse, and against his army. 20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought the signs in his sight, wherewith he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast and them that worshipped his image: they two were cast alive into the lake of fire that burns with brimstone: 21 and the rest were killed with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, (even the sword) which came forth out of his mouth: and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

Suddenly the war is over for the kings, the beast, the false prophet, and the rest of them. Only the dragon remains, however, his fate, too, is sealed. From Eden to the flood, from Babel to the cross, from the cross to this great day of God Almighty, the battle waged across time is over. The sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse has slain the enemy. Those who stood for the testimony of Jesus—clothed in the linen of their righteous acts—and the Word of God are victorious. In just three

verses, the Lord defeats the beast and the false prophet. They are thrown alive in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. Flesh is no more, but the punishment is forever.

The fate of the beast and the false prophet was the lake of fire that burns with brimstone. In the next chapter, the dragon, Satan himself, will receive the same fate.

Revelation 20: Judgment: The End of Satan, Death, and Hades

Revelation 20 generates the most contentious discussion of any of the chapters in Revelation. The chapter becomes a main proof text for those proponents of a 1,000-year reign of Christ on this earth. Indeed, there is no mention in the Bible of Christ ever returning to the earth. 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18 clearly asserts that those alive and those raised will be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, where they will be with the Lord forever:

14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; 17 then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

The New Testament and, in fact, the entire Bible explicitly exclude an earthly and material reign of the Lord, and the text of chapter 20 does not mention a return to earth or a material kingdom on earth. Therefore, one must look to the text of chapter 20 for the meaning of the thousand years as it relates to a spiritual reign of Christ and the binding of the dragon. The thousand years covers a time period from the binding of the dragon until he is loosed for a little while (20:1, 3b). The period also covers the time from the beginning of Christ's kingdom until the end of that kingdom (20:4b). That these times are the same becomes apparent in a careful reading of the text of chapter 20.

The very nature of the use of the term, *one thousand years*, emphasizes its indefinite meaning. The term is used only two other times in the Bible, and in both times, it is used in the same figurative way that it is used in chapter 20. The first time was by David in Psalms 90:4-6:

4 For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. 5 You carry them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which grows up. 6 In the morning it flourishes, and grows up; in the evening it is cut down, and withers.

The *thousand years as one day* metaphor reoccurs in 2 Peter 3:7-9:

7 but the heavens that now are, and the earth, by the same word have been stored up for fire, being reserved against the Day of Judgment and destruction of ungodly men. 8 But forget not this one thing, beloved, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Peter and John, speaking the same thing on the same subject, solidify the view that the thousand years of chapter 20 is a long but indefinite period. It is the period from the binding of Satan until his loosing and from the beginning of Christ's kingdom until its end. Both of these will receive more attention as they occur in the text.

The Binding of the Dragon

Revelation 20:1-3

20 And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. 2 And he laid hold on the dragon, the old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, 3 and cast him into the abyss, and shut (it), and sealed (it) over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years should be finished: after this he must be loosed for a little time.

The angel that John saw coming down out of heaven with the key to the abyss, he had seen before. The angel had opened the abyss in chapter 9 and allowed locusts with the power to sting like scorpions of the earth (See notes on chapter 9). Now the angel once again uses the key—this time, to bind the dragon with a great chain. The locking and sealing the abyss metaphorically restrains the dragon from deceiving the nations any more. The issue at question--when did the thousand years begin?—is answered by another question—when was the dragon bound?

From the beginning of his earthly ministry, Christ showed power over the devil—a power that eventually led to his victory over death and his sending of the Holy Spirit to aid the disciples. During his temptation by the devil, Jesus rebuked him with a command, showing that the dragon's power was on the wane, in Matthew 4:10-11:

10 Then said Jesus unto him, "Get away from here, Satan: for it is written, 'you shalt worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.'"

11 Then the devil left him; and behold, angels came and ministered unto him.

Later, while speaking to Peter in Mark 8:33, Jesus commanded:

33 But he turning about, and seeing his disciples, rebuked Peter, and said, "Get you behind me, Satan; for you mind not the things of God, but the things of men."

Not only was Jesus able to command and rebuke the devil, but he also established power over the kingdom of the devil—evil lusts, sin, and demons. He extended this power to his disciples in Luke 10:18-20:

18 And he said unto them, “I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven. 19 Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall in any wise hurt you. 20 Nevertheless in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven. [See chapter 9 for a discussion of scorpions and snakes as evil lusts and sin, the weapons of the dragon.]

The devil continued to be bound after Christ ascended. The church, his kingdom, received protection during this long, but indefinite time, called here, a thousand years. John has written in his gospel in John 14:16-18:

16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may be with you for ever, 17 (even) the Spirit of truth: whom the world cannot receive; for it beholds him not, neither knows him: you know him; for he abides with you, and shall be in you. 18 I will not leave you desolate: I come unto you.

Chapter 11 has already chronicled the way the word of the apostles and prophets and later that word in the testimony of Jesus thwarted the evil and strikes terror in the hearts of those who see the witnesses. The chain that binds the devil is the word of God, written by the apostles and prophets and testified to by the saints. In Revelation 19:10, the preceding chapter, John attempts to worship the angel:

10 And I fell down before his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, “See you do it not: I am a fellow-servant with you and with your brethren that hold **the testimony of Jesus**: worship God; for the **testimony of Jesus** is the **spirit of prophecy**.

It is the testimony of Jesus, the spirit of prophecy, which keeps the dragon from deceiving the nations anymore. The truth is there for all to know. Not even the gates of Hades shall overcome the Lord’s church (Matthew 16:16-19).

The First Resurrection and Reigning with Christ

Revelation 20:4-6

4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and (I saw) the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and such as worshipped not the beast, neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they lived, and reigned with Christ a thousand years. 5 The rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years should be finished. This is the first resurrection.

6 Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: over these the second death has no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

At the same time as the binding of the dragon by the power of a resurrected Christ, the kingdom of Christ came into existence. These two events—the binding of the devil and the beginning of the kingdom of Christ mark the beginning of the metaphoric thousand years. It is during this time that those given authority to judge sit upon the thrones. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 6:2-3:

2 Or know you not that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world is judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? 3 Know you not that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?

Jesus, while yet living in this world, promised his disciples in Matthew 19:28:

28 And Jesus said unto them, “Truly I say unto you, that you who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

John next saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. John had met these souls at the opening of the seals in Revelation 6:9-11:

9 And when he opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: 10 and they cried with a great voice, saying, “How long, O Master, the holy and true, do you not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” 11 And there was given them to each one a white robe; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little time, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, who should be killed even as they were, should have fulfilled (their course).

The time of their vindication is near. Previously, these notes discussed the symbolism of dying for the word of God. All Christians experience this death when they die to sin. Paul describes, in detail, the death of Christians to sin and the resurrection to a new life, called here “the first resurrection.” In Romans 6:5-11, Paul explains the first resurrection:

5 For if we have become united with (him) in the likeness of his death, we shall be also (in the likeness) of his resurrection; 6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with (him), that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin; 7 for he that hath died is justified from sin. 8 But if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him; 9 knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dies no more; death no more hath dominion over him. 10 For the death that he died, he died unto sin once: but the

life that he lives, he lives unto God. 11 Even so reckon you also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus.

For souls to obey Christ and rise with him to walk in newness of life is the new birth spoken of by Jesus to Nicodemus John 3:3-7:

3 Jesus answered and said unto him, “Truly, truly, I say unto you, except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

4 Nicodemus said unto him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born?”

5 Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say unto you, ‘except one be born of water and the Spirit,’ he cannot enter into the kingdom of God! 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Marvel not that I said unto you, ‘you must be born anew.’”

That they should not worship the beast nor receive the mark of the beast is critical to those raised with Christ. The import of the letters to the seven churches (See notes on chapters 2 and 3) was to keep the saints secure from Satan. Christ through John enjoined the church in Revelation 2:10,

Fear not the things which you are about to suffer: behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried; and you shall have tribulation ten days. Be you faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Peter warned about the ever presence of the devil in 1 Peter 5:8-9,

8 Be sober, be watchful: your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour, 9 whom withstand steadfast in your faith, knowing that the same sufferings are accomplished in your brethren who are in the world.

These Christians will come to life—the first resurrection is when they are raised from baptism to walk in newness of life. These same Christians will reign with Christ for the thousand years. The beginning of the thousand years started when these Christians entered the kingdom. Jesus said, while on earth, in Mark 9:1:

9 And he said unto them, “Truly I say unto you, ‘There are some here of them that stand (by), who shall in no wise taste of death, until they see the kingdom of God come with power.’”

Paul showed that Christians were brought into the kingdom in Colossians 1:12-14:

12 giving thanks unto the Father, who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; 13 who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love; 14 in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins:

Christ's kingdom has been on the earth from the time God first brought saints into it on the day of Pentecost after Christ's death. The thousand years and this kingdom on earth, the church, began at the same time. John has witnessed this principle repeatedly in the revelation. Two examples will suffice: Revelation 1:5-6 states:

5 and from Jesus Christ, (who is) the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loves us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood; 6 and he made us a kingdom, priests unto his God and Father; to him (be) the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

The past tense verb, *made*, (an action begun in the past and continued to the present) shows us in a kingdom from that first day, continuing forever. The praise of the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders affirmed this very principle in Revelation 5:9-10:

9 And they sing a new song, saying, Worthy are you to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for you were slain, and did purchase unto God with your blood (men) of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, 10 and made them unto our God a kingdom and priests; and they reign upon earth.

[Previous notes have shown that *to be* in these verses in some translation were added by the translators, which when left out makes the present existence of the kingdom, then and now, impossible to misunderstand. Only false teachers look for a kingdom yet to come.]

How long this kingdom, now upon the earth, the church, will continue marks the end of the thousand years when the Lord returns. Jesus taught that the exact day of his return no one knows in Matthew 24:36-37;

36 But of that day and hour knows no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only. 37 And as (were) the days of Noah, so shall be the coming of the Son of man.

In 2 Peter 3:8, 10, Peter taught the same indefinite time when the day of the Lord comes:

8 But forget not this one thing, beloved, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. . . .10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

Although Paul does not give a specific day for the end to come, he does give an unmistakable sequence of happenings, including the end. In 1 Corinthians 15:22-24, he wrote:

22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; then they that are Christ's, at his coming.

24 Then (comes) the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power.

Therefore, the thousand years is continuing, the Dragon is bound by the spirit of prophecy and the testimony of Jesus, and the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, joint-heirs with Jesus (See Romans 8:8-16-17).

The first resurrection is the resurrection from baptism into the death of Jesus that we might walk in newness of life. We are born anew, according to John's writing in verse 20:

6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: over these the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

Just as the kingdom and the thousand years began with those first Christians and continues to our time, so does the priesthood, which is composed of these same Christians. Peter wrote of Christians in 1 Peter 2:9-10:

9 But you are a elect race, a **royal priesthood**, a holy nation, a people for (God's) own possession, that you may show forth the excellences of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: 10 who in time past were no people, but now are the people of God: who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

The second death has no power over Christians who have washed away their sins and been raised to walk in newness of life (the first resurrection). Yes, the second death has no power over them. Paul described the first death as a spiritual death in Ephesians 2:1-5:

2 And you (did he make alive,) when you were dead through your trespasses and sins, 2 wherein you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the powers of the air, of the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience; 3 among whom we also all once lived in the lust of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest: 4 but God, being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace have you been saved)

To this first and spiritual death, Paul added the first resurrection in Colossians 3:1-4:

If then you were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. 3 For you died, and your

life is hid with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, (who is) our life, shall be manifested, then shall you also with him be manifested in glory.

The Revelation clearly explains the second death. In Revelation 2:11, Christians learn how to escape it:

11 He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He that overcomes shall not be hurt of the second death.

In Revelation 21:8, the groups of all those who will so die is revealed along with their fate:

8 But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part (shall be) in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone; which is the second death.

The Devil's Doom

Revelation 20:7-9

7 And when the thousand years are finished, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, 8 and shall come forth to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to the war: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. 9 And they went up over the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down out of heaven, and devoured them.

10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Gog, the king, and Magog, the kingdom, from a prophecy of Ezekiel represent the spiritual battle between the dragon and the church. *The camp of god's people, the city he loves* is the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, the church. Nelson describes that ancient event:

The leader of a confederacy of armies that attacked the land of Israel. Described as "the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal," Gog is also depicted as being "of the land of Magog" (Ezekiel 38:2-3), a "place out of the far north" of Israel. Ezekiel prophetically describes Gog and his allies striking at Israel with a fierce and sudden invasion (Ezekiel 38-39). According to Ezekiel's prophecy, Gog will be crushed on the mountains of Israel in a slaughter so great it will take seven months to bury the dead (Ezekiel 39:12). (from Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright © 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

There is little evidence that Ezekiel's prophecy historically happened, indicating that the Israel of that prophecy was the spiritual Israel, the church, and the battle was a

spiritually battle against those who wear white garments and hold to the testimony of Jesus. Therefore, this passage in Revelation 20 has the same meaning as the battle of Armageddon in Revelation 16:16, the final battle with the beast and the false prophet against the saints in Revelation 19:19-21.

Satan will go first to his doom and Death and Hades will quickly follow in verses 20:14-15. All of Satan's resources, gathered from all over the world, could not overcome the church, the camp of God's people, the city that he loves. Fire devoured the followers of Satan, and Satan, the devil, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, just like the beast and the false prophet before him.

At the end of the thousand years is the time when Jesus will deliver the kingdom to the father. It will occur when Jesus has overcome all his adversaries. 1 Corinthians 15:24-26 records these events:

24 Then (comes) the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power. 25 For he must reign, until he hath put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy that shall be abolished is death.

The Judgment of the Dead

Revelation 20:11-15

11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and books were opened: and another book was opened, which is (the book) of life: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works. 13 And the sea gave up the dead that were in it; and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. 14 And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, (even) the lake of fire. 15 And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire.

John once again sees the throne of God (See notes on 4:1-6). This time all mankind appears, the great and small. In Daniel 7:9-10, Daniel tells of a similar vision:

9 I beheld till thrones were placed, and one that was ancient of days did sit: his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, (and) the wheels thereof burning fire. 10 A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousands of thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.

The dead were judged by what was written in the books. Paul had presented the nature of this judgment in 2 Corinthians 5:10:

10 For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things (done) in the body, according to what he has done, whether (it be) good or bad.

In the letter to the church at Ephesus, the Lord had said in Revelation 3:5:

5 He that overcomes shall thus be arrayed in white garments; and I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

Paul referred to certain Christians as having their names written in the book of life (Philippians 4:3). David spoke of the removal of names from the book of life in Psalms 69:27-28:

27 Add iniquity unto their iniquity; and let them not come into thy righteousness.
28 Let them be blotted out of the book of life, and not be written with the righteous.

Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire, which is the second death. Thus, came to pass the completion of the revelation as it affected the end of the good and bad. Paul had written that the last enemy was death. In 1 Corinthians 15:53-57, he wrote,

54 But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

55 O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?

56 The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law:

57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

If anyone's name was not written in the book of life, he too was thrown in the lake of fire.

Revelation 21: The Completion of the Revelation of God

The beast and the false prophet, the great city Babylon, the dragon, Death and Hades, and all those whose names were not written in the book of Life have found their fate. John's vision turns to the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, the bride of Christ. The readers of John's revelation learn about the tree of life, the river of life, and the invitation of the Lord.

The Holy City, the New Jerusalem

Revelation 21:1-2

21 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven of God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.

John's vision turns to one of a "new heaven and new earth." New heavens and new earth are also spoken of by Peter in 2 Peter 3:13:

13 But, according to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness. 14 Wherefore, beloved, seeing that you look for these things, give diligence that you may be found in peace, without spot and blameless in his sight.

Peter calls the new heavens and new earth a place wherein dwells righteousness. The Hebrew writer made very clear that the new earth is a heavenly one and that God also prepared a city for them in Hebrews 11:13-16:

13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For they that say such things make it manifest that they are seeking after a country of their own. 15 And if indeed they had been mindful of that (country) from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But now they desire a better (country), that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God; for he has prepared for them a city.

In keeping with the images of the entire revelation, John describes the new heaven and new earth as the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. Revelation 19:8, taught that the righteous acts of the saints

adorn the bride. The “home of righteousness” and “righteous acts of the saints” fitly describe the church. Paul had called the church a pure virgin in 2 Corinthians 11:2-3:

2 For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I espoused you to one husband that I might present you (as) a pure virgin to Christ. 3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve in his craftiness, your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ.

In Ephesians 5:25-32, Paul also speaks of the church as wife of Christ.

Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it; 26 that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word, 27 that he might present the church to himself a glorious (church), not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. . . .32 This mystery is great: but I speak in regard of Christ and of the church.

There can be no mistaking the fact that the church is the bride; and if the bride, then, the New Jerusalem, the Holy City, and the new heaven and the new earth. The spiritual nature of Christians and the church transcend the physical earth and the physical heavens that pass away. The saints are not of that physical world. Jesus prayed in John 17:14-17:

14 I have given them your word; and the world hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15 I pray not that you should take them from the world, but that you should keep them from the evil (one). 16 They are not of the world even as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them in the truth: your word is truth.

In 2 Peter 1:3-4, Peter concurred with this transcending nature of Christians and the church:

3 seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue; 4 whereby he has granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises; that through these you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world by lust.

The extended metaphor of this present passage (Revelation 21) finds its exact counterpart in Hebrews 12:22-29:

22 but you are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24 and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better than (that of) Abel.

Once again, the metaphoric chain is taut: the church of the firstborn (Christ), is the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and Mount Zion. The new heaven and the new earth is the church, the bride of Christ, when John wrote, now when we live, and forever and forever. The church, the bride of Christ, exists now and in all eternity.

Revelation 21:3-4

3 And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, (and be) their God: 4 and he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away.

In this passage, the vision appears in the past tense. The loud voice from the throne (who is God in verse 7) speaks in the present tense. The present nature of the statements reflects a condition existing as the voice speaks. Therefore, it is the bride, the church, as she exists on earth, of whom the voice speaks. The church in the passages that follows will have a present, yet transcending nature. The voice speaks of the church now and forever.

This transcending nature of Christians and the church receives emphasis from the great voice. That the dwelling of God is with men and that He will live with them repeats the last promise of the savior while on earth. In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus said:

18 And Jesus came to them and spoke unto them, saying, "All authority has been given unto me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go you therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: 20 teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

It is interesting that the dwelling of God is with men, for mankind has generally thought the opposite: that we are going up to heaven to live there with God. The teaching of the gospel is extensive and comprehensive, leaving no doubt that God lives with us and in us now and forever. In Romans 8:9, Paul wrote:

9 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

He repeated the principle—God lives in us—repeatedly.

1 Corinthians 3:16-17: Know you not that you are a temple of God, and (that) the Spirit of God dwells in you? 17 If any man destroys the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, and such are you.

2 Timothy 1:14: That good thing which was committed unto (you) guard through the Holy Spirit which dwells in us.

1 John 4:12-13: 12 No man has beheld God at any time: if we love one another, God abides in us, and his love is perfected in us: 13 hereby we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

1 John 4:15-16: 15 Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. 16 And we know and have believed the love which God has in us. God is love; and he that abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

That he will *wipe away every tear* also speaks of the church in its present but also its transcendent form. Even now when earthly troubles overwhelm the saints, they rejoice. Peter wrote in 1 Peter 1:6-7:

6 Wherein you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been put to grief in manifold trials, 7 that the proof of your faith, (being) more precious than gold that perishes though it is proved by fire, may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ:

A few verses later in 1 Peter 1:8-9, he concluded:

8 whom not having seen you love; on whom, though now you see him not, yet believing, you rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory: 9 receiving the end of your faith, (even) the salvation of (your) souls.

Paul also wrote, in Romans 8:37-39:

37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. 38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In Ephesians 3:16-19, Paul describes how the love of God equips and strengthens us:

16 that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, that you may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man; 17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; to the end that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge that you may be filled unto all the fullness of God.

Christians and the church transcend death itself because of the victory of Jesus over death and the abolition of death as his last enemy. As in Revelation 20:6, Christians also overcome death:

6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: over these the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

The New Order

Revelation 21:5-8

5 And he that sits on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And he said, "Write: for these words are faithful and true." 6 And he said unto me, "They are come to pass. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is thirsty of the fountain of the water of life freely. 7 He that overcomes shall inherit these things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

8 But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part (shall be) in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone; which is the second death.

The statement that the old order of things has passed away leads directly into the next statement by one seated on the throne, "I make all things new!" The previous verses show that the new heaven and new earth—spiritual in nature—replace the physical earth and heaven—material in nature. The Holy City replaced the great city, and the heavenly Jerusalem replaced Babylon. The King of kings, the Lord of lords, replaced the beast, the testimony of Jesus, the spirit of prophecy replaced the false prophet. The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ in Revelation 11:15:

15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there followed great voices in heaven, and they said, "The kingdom of the world is become (the kingdom) of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever."

The Lord God Almighty destroyed the dragon. These are the changes made in universal detail in the course of the revelation. That God is so able to clothe the earth is clear from Hebrews 1:10-12:

10 And, You, Lord, in the beginning did lay the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the works of your hands: 11 They shall perish; but you continue: And they all shall wax old as doth a garment; 12 And as a mantle shall you roll them up as a garment, and they shall be changed: But you are the same, And your years shall not fail.

The one seated on the throne, commanded John, "Write: for these words are faithful and true." The phrase, these words are faithful and true," also appears in chapter 22:6 where it directly relates to the impending end of the revelation which is said to be soon taking place:

6 And he said unto me, “These words are faithful and true: and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angels to show unto his servants the things which must shortly come to pass.”

In the very next verse (21:6), the one seated on the throne says in the present tense, “They are come to pass.” That he is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, echoes Revelation 1:8:

“8 I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “Who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”

“They are come to pass,” refers to the completion of God’s revelation and the accomplishment of his eternal purpose in Jesus. Accordingly, Ephesians 1:9-10 taught:

9 making known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in him 10 unto a dispensation of the fullness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth; in him, (I say,)

So it was that Jesus said, as the old order passed, on the cross, in John 19:29-30:

29 There was set there a vessel full of vinegar: so they put a sponge full of the vinegar upon hyssop, and brought it to his mouth. 30 When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, “**It is finished**,” and he bowed his head, and gave up his spirit.

John had heard similar words to *it is finished*—before in Revelation 16:17:

17 And the seventh poured out his bowl upon the air; and there came forth a great voice out of the temple, from the throne, saying, “**It is done**.”

This occurrence of this statement followed the prediction in Revelation 10:7, which said:

7 but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then **is finished** the mystery of God, according to the good tidings which he declared to his servants the prophets.

Thus, what is done here and what must soon come to pass is the final, complete revelation of God’s mystery to be written by John, the last of the apostles and prophets. The concluding event of that great mystery was His Christ’s victory on the cross, chronicled and described throughout these pages by John.

The message from the voice from the throne sets the great, concluding dichotomy of the revelation of God—they who overcome will receive God’s great reward, and they who fail receive God’s condemnation. For the righteousness, there is the spring of the water of life. They will be children of God. The fate of the unrighteous needs no explication other than Revelation 21:8:

8 But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part (shall be) in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone; which is the second death.

Nor does this list of ungodly acts need elaboration, for in it are all those sins that lead inexorably to the mark of the beast and the fiery lake of burning sulfur.

The Bride, the Wife of the Lamb

Revelation 21:9-14

9 And there came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls, who were laden with the seven last plagues; and he spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."

10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, 11 having the glory of God: her light was like unto a stone most precious, as it were a jasper stone, clear as crystal: 12 having a wall great and high; having twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names written thereon, which are (the names) of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: 13 on the east were three gates; and on the north three gates; and on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. 14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

Previously, in chapter 17, one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came to John to reveal the fate of the great prostitute, the great city, Babylon. Now we have one of those same angels coming to John and saying he would show him the bride, the wife of the lamb, which is in verse 10 is the heavenly Jerusalem, the Holy City. This study has already concluded repeatedly that the bride, the wife, the Holy City, and the New Jerusalem are one and the same. That these terms all refer to the church, now and forevermore, is evident in this passage. Once again, the Holy City comes down out of heaven; it is not earthly, for heaven and earth pass away. Although John describes what he sees in material terms, the terms represent something essentially unlike their material nature. This is the very meaning of metaphor and symbolic language.

The first statement in the description is a clear non-symbolic plain language statement, it "had the glory of God." Insight comes from Hebrews 1:3-4:

3 who being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 having become by so much better than the angels, as he hath inherited a more excellent than they.

When one looks to the bride, the wife of the lamb, one finds this same glory of God. Jesus said in John 14:9-10:

9 Jesus said unto him, "Have I been so long time with you, and do you not know me, Philip? He that has seen me has seen the Father; how say you, 'Show us the Father?'" 10 Believe you not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I say unto you I speak not from myself: but the Father abiding in me does his works."

Just as Christ reflected God's glory so does the bride. What men should see is not flesh and blood, but the divine nature, as explained in 2 Peter 1:3-4:

3 seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue; 4 whereby he hath granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises; that through these you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world by lust.

The next statement, *her light was like unto a stone most precious, as it were a jasper stone, clear as crystal*, is a simile. Once again, the bride reflects the bridegroom. John had written in Revelation 1:16:

16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shines in his strength.

The city had a high wall with twelve gates. The names of twelve tribes of Israel were written on the gates, where stood twelve angels. The symbolism relates the heavenly city to those saints under the Old Testament law who brought the world to Christ. Israel of the world brought the world to the spiritual Israel. The metaphor begins with David who wrote in Psalms 24:7-10:

7 Lift up your heads, O you gates; and be you lifted up, you everlasting doors: and the King of glory will come in. 8 Who is the King of glory? Jehovah strong and mighty, Jehovah mighty in battle. 9 Lift up your heads, O you gates; yes, lift them up, you everlasting doors: and the King of glory will come in. 10 Who is this King of glory? Jehovah of hosts, He is the King of glory. (Selah)

Among others, Isaiah also spoke of the gates of the heavenly city in Isaiah 54:11-14:

Isaiah 54:11-14

11 O you afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will set your stones in fair colors, and lay your foundations with sapphires. 12 And I will make your pinnacles of rubies, your gates of carbuncles, and all your border of precious stones. 13 And all your children shall be taught of Jehovah; and great shall be the peace of your children. 14 In righteousness shall you be established:

you shall be far from oppression, for you shall not fear; and from terror, for it shall not come near you.

In a figure, Israel and the law brought us to Christ. In Galatians 3:23-24, Paul wrote:

23 But before faith came, we were kept in ward under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. 24 So that the law is become our tutor (to bring us) unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

And again in Romans 10:4, he said: "For Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness to everyone that believes."

Therefore, through Israel of the flesh all men had opportunity to become this spiritual Israel. In Romans 9:6-8, Paul wrote:

6 But (it is) not as though the word of God has come to nothing. For they are not all Israel that are of Israel: 7 neither, because they are Abraham's seed, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall your seed be called. 8 That is, it is not the children of the flesh that are children of God; but **the children of the promise are reckoned for a seed.**

The city also had twelve foundations and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. Since there are twelve apostles with names on the gates, one might ask which twelve are they, and what of Matthias and Paul. Common in the gospel was the designation twelve apostles or twelve disciples. Paul designated the apostles and prophets as the foundation of God's household in Ephesians 2:19-21:

19 So then you are no more strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, 20 being built upon the **foundation of the apostles and prophets**, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone; 21 in whom each several building, fitly framed together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord; 22 in whom you also are built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit.

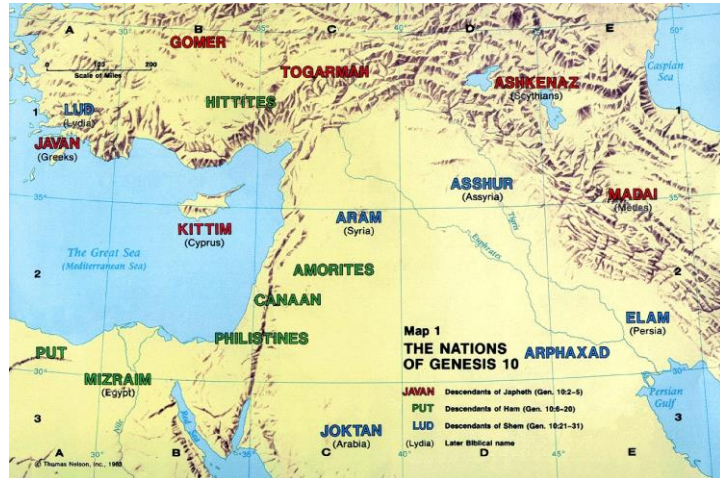
Measuring the City

Revelation 21:15-21

15 And he that spoke with me had for a measure a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. 16 And the city lies foursquare, and the length thereof is as great as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs: the length and the breadth and the height thereof are equal. 17 And he measured the wall thereof, a hundred and forty and four cubits, (according to) the measure of a man, that is, of an angel. 18 And the building of the wall thereof was jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto pure glass. 19 The foundations of the wall

of the city were adorned with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; 20 the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. 21 And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the several gates was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

This is the second time for a measuring of the Holy City. The first occurred in Revelation 11:1-2 and excluded the outer court because the persecution of the Holy City, still going on. However, the temple of God, the altar, and worshippers were measured. In the current passage, the trails and temptations are over; the bride, the wife of the Lamb is complete. It is finished. The angel will measure the Holy City in its entirety. [The Nations of Genesis 10 map is from Nelson's Bible Dictionary, Copyright © 1986, Thomas Nelson publishers.]



The angel measures the city, its gates, and its walls in an extended metaphor that speaks to the city's overwhelming greatness and beauty. The measurements are with man's measure, which illustrates the city's overwhelming proportions. The size of the city is magnified by the large numbers, when it is so measured. The city is a cube of equal width, length, and height: 1,400 miles each way. Each part of the city is laid with the most beautiful stones and metals. Peter reveals the mystery of this beautiful description in 1 Peter 2:4-10:

4 unto whom coming, a living stone, rejected indeed of men, but with God elect, precious, 5 you also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 Because it is contained in scripture,

“Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious:

And he that believes on him shall not be put to shame.” [Isaiah 28:16]

7 For you therefore that believe is the preciousness: but for such as disbelieve,

The stone which the builders rejected,

the same was made the head of the corner; [Psalms 118:22]

8 and,

A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence; [Isaiah 8:14]

For they stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. 9 But you are a elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for (God's) own possession, that you may show forth the excellences of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: 10 who in time past were no people, but now are the people of God: who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

The very size of the city reflects a magnificence and munificence beyond comprehension. 1,400 miles cubed is approximately the size of the land mass settled by the descendants of Noah in Genesis 10. One must imagine that size cubed, as high as it is long and wide. The transparency of the street is the same image used for the surround, before the throne in heaven, in Revelation 4:6:

6 and before the throne, as it were a sea of glass like a crystal; and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, four living creatures full of eyes before and behind.

The Temple: the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb

Revelation 21:22-27

22 And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple thereof. 23 And the city has no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it: for the glory of God did light it, and the lamp thereof (is) the Lamb. 24 And the nations shall walk amidst the light thereof: and the kings of the earth bring their glory into it. 25 And the gates thereof shall in no wise be shut by day (for there shall be no night there): 26 and they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it: 27 and there shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that makes an abomination and a lie: but only they that are written in the Lamb's book of life.

That John did not see a temple confirms the spiritual nature of the Holy City. The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of this spiritual city. The spiritual nature of the Holy City is such that there need be no sun or moon for the glory of God gives it light. An earthly kingdom or city would need the sun and the moon. Verse 11 has already taught that the Holy City shone with the glory of God. Through gates that will never be closed, the glory and honor that once belonged to the nations will be brought into it. Finally, nothing impure will enter into it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful. Those who enter the beautiful city will be those whose names are written in the lamb's book of life.

The church, the bride of Christ, is now the transcending and the eternal Holy City, the New Jerusalem.

Revelation 22: The Invitation of the Lamb

Revelation 22:1-5

22 And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, 2 in the midst of the street thereof. And on this side of the river and on that was the tree of life, bearing twelve (manner of) fruits, yielding its fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3 And there shall be no curse any more: and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein: and his servants shall serve him; 4 and they shall see his face; and his name (shall be) on their foreheads. 5 And there shall be night no more; and they need no light of lamp, neither light of sun; for the Lord God shall give them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

The river of the water of life flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb. Jesus used this imagery during his earthly ministry, where he presented it as a promise to those who followed him. In John 4:10-14, Jesus encountered the woman at the well, and during the conversation, the woman asked a question that focuses on the origin of living water, and Jesus answered her in John 4:10-14:

10 Jesus answered and said unto her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, 'Give me to drink;' you would have asked of him, and he would have given you living water."

11 The woman said unto him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: when then have you that living water? 12 Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his sons, and his cattle?"

13 Jesus answered and said unto her, "Every one that drinks of this water shall thirst again: 14 but whosoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life.

Therefore, the river of the water of life is the metaphoric equivalent to eternal life. Jesus spoke once again on the subject in John 7:37-38:

37 Now on the last day, the great (day) of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. 38 He that believes on me, as the scripture has said, from within him shall flow rivers of living water."

The metaphor not only confirms eternal life but also makes the water of eternal life flow from within the true believers. John concluded in verse 39:

39 But this spoke he of the Spirit, which they that believed on him were to receive: for the Spirit was not yet (given); because Jesus was not yet glorified.

The very spirit of God flows from within Christians.

That the river flows down the middle of the great street of the city illustrates centrality of eternal life to the very nature of the Holy City. On each side of the river grows the tree of life, a metaphor for eternal life from the beginning where Moses recorded in Genesis 2:9:

9 And out of the ground made Jehovah God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The tree was lost and eternal life with it, when man sinned. Genesis 3:22-24 records:

22 And Jehovah God said, "Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil; and now, unless he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: 23 therefore Jehovah God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. 24 So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the Garden of Eden the Cherubim, and the flame of a sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

The story of man has come full circle; the tree and with it eternal life are his once more. In writing to the church at Ephesus in Revelation 2:7, the Lord called the tree of life, the paradise of God:

7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him that overcomes, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

God has restored the paradise of the Garden of Eden in the Holy City, the bride, the wife, the church of the Lord. The tree bears fruit continuously, making it always available. The leaves heal the wounds of the nations. *No longer will be any curse* refers to the curse placed on man and woman when they sinned Genesis 3:16-24.

The servants of God will serve him before his throne in the city. They will see his face and his name will be on their foreheads. God will give them light. And they will reign with him for ever and ever.

With these words of the angel, the purpose for which the angel came was complete. The words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophecy had sent his angel to provide the revelation. The completion of the revelation of God

must soon take place. This verse reiterates the statement of Revelation 1:1-2 and signifies that when John is finished there will be no other revelation:

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show unto his servants, (even) the things which must shortly come to pass: and he sent and signified (it) by his angel unto his servant John; 2 who bore witness of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, (even) of all things that he saw.

The last episode of the Lord's revelation is the Lord's promise to come again.

The Coming of Jesus

Revelation 22:7-14

7 And behold, I come quickly. Blessed is he that keeps the words of the prophecy of this book. 8 And I John am he that heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel that showed me these things. 9 And he said unto me, "See that you do it not: I am a fellow-servant with you and with your brethren the prophets, and with them that keep the words of this book: worship God." 10 And he said unto me, "Seal not up the words of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand. 11 He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness still: and he that is filthy, let him be made filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him do righteousness still: and he that is holy, let him be made holy still. 12 Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to render to each man according as his work is. 13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. 14 Blessed are they that wash their robes that they may have the right (to come) to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city.

Great controversy surrounds this passage. Some say it is the Lord coming to reign a thousand years on this physical earth; some say it is speaking of his coming at the destruction of Jerusalem. These notes have resisted these notions in favor of dealing straightforwardly with the text and the context. There is not energy enough, nor time enough, to deal with contrary and imaginary points of view.

As Jesus speaks, he begins with the exclamatory, "Behold!" The Lord repeats the statement in verse 12. This passage begins a predictive prophecy of his return. Up to this point, the revelation has been speaking forth to reveal God's mystery, hidden from the foundation of the world. However, in many cases, the disciples and later Christians struggled to understand the when and how of the Lord's return. In all cases, it is impending, and it remains so to all who live this short life on earth—a life described in James 4:14:

14 whereas you know not what shall be on the morrow. What is your life? For you are a vapor, that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away.

The Lord's disciples raised the question of when he would come in Matthew 24:2:

2 But he answered and said unto them: "See you not all these things? Truly, I say unto you, 'There shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.'"

In response, they asked the Lord two questions in Matthew 24:3:

3 And as he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, "Tell us, when shall these things be? And what (shall be) the sign of your coming, and of the end of the world?"

Christ answered the first question about the destruction of the temple, and then in verse 30 began the answer to the second question, what (shall be) the sign of your coming, and of the end of the world?

In answer to this second question that described the event in verses 30-31:

30 and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he shall send forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

In verse 36-39, he described the uncertain but impending nature of his coming:

36 But of that day and hour knows no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only. 37 And as (were) the days of Noah, so shall be the coming of the Son of man. 38 For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, 39 and they knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall be the coming of the Son of man.

In verses 42-44, he made this impending nature of his coming eminent for all who should ever live:

2 Watch therefore: for you know not on what day your Lord comes. 43 But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken through. 44 Therefore be you also ready; for in an hour that you think not the Son of man comes.

In this context, it does not seem unusual that the Lord said at the end of the revelation, "Behold, I come quickly!" A central theme of the revelation is to have your garments clean and be ready. Other passages that deal with the second coming are just as urgent. In 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18, Paul wrote:

15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen

asleep. 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; 17 then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Paul again portrayed the Lord's coming in 1 Corinthians 15:51-54 with an unmistakable suddenness that makes it eminent to all:

51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We all shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

If the Lord is coming soon, how much more so ought we to keep the words of the prophecy in this book.

Once again, John is so startled that he falls down to worship the angel (See notes on Revelation 19:10). Again, John is told that the angel is a like-servant with John, his brothers, and the prophets. "Worship God!" is the angels command.

The angel told John that he was not to seal up the words of the prophecy of the book even though the revelation is complete because the time is near. The condition of man is to continue until the Lord comes, as illustrated by the statement in Revelation 22:11-12:

11 He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness still: and he that is filthy, let him be made filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him do righteousness still: and he that is holy, let him be made holy still.

12 Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to render to each man according as his work is.

The Lord exclaims for the second time, "Behold! I come quickly!" When the Lord does come, his reward is with him, and all will receive according to what they have done. Paul had written almost these same words in 2 Corinthians 5:10:

10 For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things (done) in the body, according to what he has done, whether (it be) good or bad.

His power to judge is certain for he is Alpha and Omega, the First and Last, the Beginning and End. These are all phrases that he used of himself in the first three chapters of the Revelation.

Those that have washed their clothes will have the right to the tree of life and entrance through the gates of the city. Clean clothes, as we have studied, stand for righteous acts of the saints.

Revelation 22:15-16

15 Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and every one that loves and makes a lie. 16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright, the morning star.

Outside the city are dogs who are the sorcerers, and the fornicators, the murderers, the idolaters, and every one that loves and makes a lie. Jesus concludes with his authenticity and genealogy. He is the offspring of David, the bright, the morning star. His testimony is for the churches.

The Invitation and Warning

Revelation 22:17-21

17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And he that hears, let him say, Come. And he that is thirsty, let him come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely. 18 I testify unto every man that hears the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book: 19 and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book.

20 He who testifies these things says, "Yes,: I come quickly" Amen: come, Lord Jesus.

21 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with the saints. Amen.

The spirit and the bride extend the invitation. The spirit with the word of God, his sword and the bride, the church, with her testimony of Jesus say, "Come!" Let those who hear the gospel say, "Come!" Let whoever is thirsty take the free gift of the water of life. This fitting conclusion to Christ's invitation reflects Paul's inspired truth written in Romans 6:20-23:

For when you were servants of sin, you were free in regard of righteousness. 21 What fruit then had you at that time in the things whereof you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. 22 But now being made free from sin and becoming servants to God, you have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end eternal life. 23 For the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The warning in verses 18 and 19 may be only of this book, commonly thought of as John's Revelation, or they may be of the entire revelation of God from the beginning to the end. The context favors John's book. However, the Bible is replete with warnings against adding to or taking away from any of the scriptures. Paul wrote in Galatians 1:6-9:

6 I marvel that you are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel; 7 which is not another (gospel) only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema. 9 As we have said before, so say I now again, if any man preaches unto you any gospel other than that which you received, let him be anathema.

If anyone adds, to him will be added the plagues of this book. If anyone takes away, God will take away his share of the tree of life and in the holy city. John's revelation ends with the most awe-inspiring and elegant words imaginable.

"Yes, I come quickly."

"Amen. Come, Lord Jesus."

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with the saints. Amen.

Appendices

Appendix I: Glossary as Scriptures Define Scriptures in the Revelation

Revelation 22:18-19: 18 I testify unto every man that hears the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book: 19 and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book.

God, Almighty

Revelation 1:8: 8 I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

Revelation 11:17-19: 17 saying, We give you thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who is and who was; because you have taken your great power, and did reign. 18 And the nations were wroth, and your wrath came, and the time of the dead to be judged, and (the time) to give their reward to your servants, the prophets, and to the saints, and to them that fear your name, the small and the great; and to destroy them that destroy the earth. 19 And there was opened the temple of God that is in heaven; and there was seen in his temple the ark of his covenant; and there followed lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail.

Revelation 21:22: 22 And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple thereof.

The Devil, Satan, Serpent, Dragon

Revelation 12:9: 9 And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world; he was cast down to the earth, and his angels were cast down with him.

Revelation 2:10: 10 Fear not the things which you are about to suffer: behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried; and you shall have tribulation ten days. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Revelation 20:2-3: 2 And he laid hold on the dragon, the old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years,

Revelation 20:10: 10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Jesus Christ, the Lamb

Revelation 1:5-7: 5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loves us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood; 6 and he made us a kingdom, priests unto his God and Father; to him the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen. 7 Behold, he comes with the clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they that pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over him. Even so, Amen.

Revelation 1:2-3: 2 who bore witness of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, of all things that he saw. 3 Blessed is he that reads, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things that are written therein: for the time is at hand.

Revelation 12:17: 17 And the dragon waxed wroth with the woman, and went away to make war with the rest of her seed, that keep the commandments of God, and hold the testimony of Jesus.

Revelation 14:12: 12 Here is the patience of the saints, they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

Revelation 20:4: 4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and (I saw) the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and such as worshipped not the beast, neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand.

Revelation 12:10: 10 And I heard a great voice in heaven, saying, "Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, who accuses them before our God day and night."

11 And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony; and they loved not their life even unto death. 12 Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you that dwell in them. Woe for the earth and for the sea: because the devil is gone down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he has but a short time.

Revelation 17:14: 14 These shall war against the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they (also shall overcome) that are with him, called and chosen and faithful.

The Beast and the Wounded Beast

Revelation 11:7-8: 7 And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss shall make war with them, and overcome them, and kill them. 8 And their dead bodies (lie) in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.

Revelation 13:1-2: 13 and he stood upon the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns, and seven heads, and on his horns ten diadems, and upon his heads names of blasphemy. 2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as (the feet) of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and great authority.

Revelation 13:3-4: 3 And (I saw) one of his heads as though it had been smitten unto death; and his death-stroke was healed: and the whole earth wondered after the beast; 4 and they worshipped the dragon, because he gave his authority unto the beast; and they worshipped the beast, saying, "Who is like unto the beast? And who is able to war with him?"

Revelation 13:7-8: 7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and there was given to him authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation. 8 And all that dwell on the earth shall worship him, (every one) whose name hath not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that hath been slain.

Revelation 14:9-12: 9 And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a great voice, If any man worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead, or upon his hand, 10 he also shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is prepared unmixed in the cup of his anger; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: 11 and the smoke of their torment goes up for ever and ever; and they have no rest day and night, they that worship the beast and his image, and whoso receives the mark of his name. 12 Here is the patience of the saints, they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

Revelation 16:13-14: 13 And I saw (coming) out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits, as it were frogs: 14 for they are spirits of demons, working signs; which go forth

unto the kings of the whole world, to gather them together unto the war of the great day of God, the Almighty.

Revelation 19:20: 20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought the signs in his sight, wherewith he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast and them that worshipped his image: they two were cast alive into the lake of fire that burns with brimstone:

The Holy Spirit

Revelation 2:7: 7 He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him that overcomes, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

Revelation 2:11: 11 He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He that overcomes shall not be hurt of the second death.

Revelation 2:17: He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him that overcomes, to him will I give of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knows but he who receives it.

Revelation 2:28-29: 28 and I will give him the morning star. 29 He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Revelation 3:12-13: 12 He that overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out there no more: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God, and mine own new name. 13 He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Revelation 3:21-22: 21 He that overcomes, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne. 22 He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Revelation 14:13: 13 And I heard the voice from heaven saying, "Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on: yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them."

Revelation 22:17: 17 And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And he who hears, let him say, "Come." And he that is thirsty, let him come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely.

Revelation 1:4-5: 4 John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from him who is and who was and who is to come; and from the seven Spirits that are before his throne; 5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of

the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loves us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood.

The Second Beast, the False Prophet

Revelation 13:11-17: 11 And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like unto a lamb, and he spoke as a dragon. 12 And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his sight. And he makes the earth and them that dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose death-stroke was healed. 13 And he does great signs, that he should even make fire come down out of heaven upon the earth in the sight of men. 14 And he deceives them that dwell on the earth by reason of the signs which was given him to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast who has the stroke of the sword and lived. 15 And it was given (unto him) to give breath to it, (even) to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as should not worship the image of the beast should be killed. 16 And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free and the bond, that there be given them a mark on their right hand, or upon their forehead; 17 and that no man should be able to buy or to sell, unless he that has the mark, (even) the name of the beast or the number of his name.

Holy City, New Jerusalem, the Bride of Christ

Revelation 11:2-3: 2 And the court which is without the temple leave without, and measure it not; for it has been given unto the nations: and shall they tread the holy city under foot forty and two months. 3 And I will give unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

Revelation 21:1-4:21 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven of God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, (and be) their God. 4 and he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away."

Revelation 21:10-11: 10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, 11 having the glory of God: her light was like unto a stone most precious, as it were a jasper stone, clear as crystal:

Revelation 22:19: 19 and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book.

Revelation 3:12: 12 He that overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out from there no more: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God, and my own new name.

The Great City, the Evil City, Babylon, Egypt, Sodom

Revelation 11:7-8: 7 And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss shall make war with them, and overcome them, and kill them. 8 And their dead bodies (lie) in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.

Revelation 16:19: 19 And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and Babylon the great was remembered in the sight of God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.

Revelation 17:17-18: 17 For God did put in their hearts to do his mind, and to come to one mind, and to give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God should be accomplished. 18 And the woman whom you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth.

Revelation 18:21-24: 21 And a strong angel took up a stone as it were a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "Thus with a mighty fall shall Babylon, the great city, be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all." 22 And the voice of harpers and minstrels and flute-players and trumpeters shall be heard no more at all in you; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft, shall be found any more at all in you; and the voice of a mill shall be heard no more at all in you; 23 and the light of a lamp shall shine no more at all in you; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in you: for your merchants were the princes of the earth; for with your sorcery were all the nations deceived. 24 And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all that have been slain upon the earth.

Kingdom of God

Revelation 1:5-6: 5 and from Jesus Christ, (who is) the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loves us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood; 6 and he made us a kingdom, priests unto his God and Father; to him (be) the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Revelation 1:9: 9 I John, your brother and partaker with you in tribulation and kingdom and patience (which are) in Jesus, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

Revelation 5:9-10: 9 And they sing a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the book, and to open the seals there: for you were slain, and did purchase unto God with your blood (men) of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, 10 and made them unto our God a kingdom and priests; and they reign upon earth.

Revelation 12:10: 10 And I heard a great voice in heaven, saying, “Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is hurled down, who accuses them before our God day and night.

Kingdom of the world

Revelation 11:15: 15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there followed great voices in heaven, and they said, “The kingdom of the world is become (the kingdom) of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever.”

Revelation 16:10-11: 10 And the fifth poured out his bowl upon the throne of the beast; and his kingdom was darkened; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, 11 and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they repented not of their works.

Revelation 17:12-14: 12 And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings, who have received no kingdom as yet; but they receive authority as kings, with the beast, for one hour. 13 These have one mind, and they give their power and authority unto the beast. 14 These shall war against the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they (also shall overcome) that are with him, called and chosen and faithful.

Temple of God

Revelation 3:12: 12 He that overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out from there no more: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God, and my own new name.

Revelation 11:19: 19 And there was opened the temple of God that is in heaven; and there was seen in his temple the ark of his covenant; and there followed lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail.

Revelation 15:8: 8 And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and none was able to enter into the temple, until the seven plagues of the seven angels should be finished.

Revelation 16:17: 17 And the seventh poured out his bowl upon the air; and there came forth a great voice out of the temple, from the throne, saying, "It is done."

Revelation 21:22-27: 22 And I saw no temple in the city: for the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb, are its temple. 23 And the city has no need of the sun, or of the moon, to shine upon it: for the glory of God lights it, and its lamp (is) the Lamb. 24 And the nations shall walk amidst the light of it: and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. 25 And its gates shall in no wise be shut by day for there shall be no night there. 26 And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it: 27 and there shall not enter into it anything unclean, or he that makes an abomination and a lie: but only they that are written in the Lamb's book of life.

The Abyss

Revelation 9:1-3: 9 And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven fallen unto the earth: and there was given to him the key of the pit of the abyss. 2 And he opened the pit of the abyss; and there went up a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. 3 And out of the smoke came forth locusts upon the earth; and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power.

Revelation 9:10-11: 10 And they have tails like unto scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men five months. 11 They have over them as king the angel of the abyss: his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek (tongue) he has the name Apollyon.

Revelation 11:7: 7 And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss shall make war with them, and overcome them, and kill them.

Revelation 17:7-8: 7 And the angel said unto me, "Wherefore did you wonder? I will tell you the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns. 8 The beast that you saw was, and is not; and is about to come up out of the abyss, and to go into perdition. And they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, (they) whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast, how that he was, and is not, and shall come.

Revelation 20:1-3: And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. 2 And he laid hold on the dragon, the old

serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, 3 and cast him into the abyss, and shut (it), and sealed (it) over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years should be finished: after this he must be loosed for a little time.

The Bride of Christ

Revelation 19:7-8: 7 Let us rejoice and be exceeding glad, and let us give the glory unto him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready. 8 And it was given unto her that she should array herself in fine linen, bright (and) pure: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

Revelation 21:2-4: 2 And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven of God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, (and be) their God: 4 and he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away."

Revelation 21:9-10: 9 And there came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls, who were laden with the seven last plagues; and he spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." 10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,

Revelation 22:17: 17 And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come". And he that hears, let him say, "Come." And he that is thirsty, let him come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely.

The Harlot

Revelation 17:4-6: 4 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stone and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations, even the unclean things of her fornication, 5 and upon her forehead a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. 6 And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I wondered with a great astonishment.

Revelation 18:9-10: 9 And the kings of the earth, who committed fornication and lived wantonly with her, shall weep and wail over her, when they look upon the smoke

of her burning, 10 standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, “Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour is your judgment come.”

The Water of Life

Revelation 21:6: 6 And he said unto me, “They are come to pass. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is thirsty of the fountain of the water of life freely.”

Revelation 22:1-3: 22 And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, 2 in the middle of the street. And on this side of the river and on that was the tree of life, bearing twelve (manner of) fruits, yielding its fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3 And there shall be no curse any more: and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be inside: and his servants shall serve him.

Revelation 22:17: 17 And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” And he that hears, let him say, “Come.” And he that is thirsty, let him come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely.

The Fiery Lake

Revelation 19:20: 20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that preformed the signs in his sight, wherewith he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast and them that worshipped his image: they both were cast alive into the lake of fire that burns with brimstone:

Revelation 20:12-15: 12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and books were opened: and another book was opened, which is (the book) of life: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works. 13 And the sea gave up the dead that were in it; and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. 14 And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, (even) the lake of fire. 15 And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire.

Revelation 21:8: 8 But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part (shall be) in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone; which is the second death.

Sealed

Revelation 7:3: 3 saying, "Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, until we shall have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.

Revelation 7:4-10: 4 And I heard the number of them that were sealed, a hundred and forty and four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the children of Israel: 5 Of the tribe of Judah (were) sealed twelve thousand: Of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand; Of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand; 6 Of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand; Of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand; Of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand; 7 Of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand; Of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand; Of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand; 8 Of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand; Of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand; Of the tribe of Benjamin (were) sealed twelve thousand.

9 After these things I saw, and behold, a great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation and of (all) tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands; 10 and they cry with a great voice, saying, "Salvation unto our God who sits on the throne, and unto the Lamb."

Mark of the Beast

Revelation 13:16-17: 16 And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free and the bond, that there be given them a mark on their right hand, or upon their forehead; 17 and that no man should be able to buy or to sell, save he that hath the mark, (even) the name of the beast or the number of his name.

The Godhead: God, Almighty; Jesus Christ, the Lamb: the Sevenfold Spirit of God

Revelation 1:4-8: 4 John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from him who is and who was and who is to come; and from the seven Spirits that are before his throne; 5 and from Jesus Christ, (who is) the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loves us and loosed us from our sins by his blood; 6 and he made us a kingdom, priests unto his God and Father; to him (be) the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

7 Behold, he comes with the clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they that pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over him. Even so, Amen.

"8 I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

The Triad of Evil: The Dragon, the Beast, the False Prophet

Revelation 13:18: 18 Here is wisdom. He that has understanding let him count the number of the beast; for it is the number of a man: and his number is six hundred and sixty and six.

Appendix II: What about the Rapture

Religious people often accept the doctrine of premillennialism. The doctrine teaches that when Jesus returns, he will establish His earthly kingdom and reign for 1,000 years in the city of Jerusalem.

One aspect of this theory is “the rapture”. The theory states that immediately prior to the return of Christ to begin his thousand-year reign, he will immediately take his saints out of the world for a period of seven years. According to the theory, this seven-year period is “the rapture.” While the saints are in heaven for these seven years, a great tribulation will fall upon the people who are left on earth. At the end of the seven-year period, Christ will return to the earth, establish his kingdom, and rule over this earthly kingdom. Does the Bible teach this? An investigation will show that the word of God does not teach a single element of “the rapture” theory.

Proponents of this theory use 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18 as proof that the saints will “be caught away.” But there is no mention of a seven year period. Nor is there a mention of “the rapture.” The saints will be “caught up in the clouds,” not for seven years but to “ever be with the Lord.” When Paul wrote, “Even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with Him (1 Thessalonians 4:14),” he was teaching the same thing that he taught in 1 Corinthians 15:52:

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”

God will raise the dead in Christ and change the living, and all will ascend to meet the Lord when he comes. This passage speaks of the same final resurrection spoken of in 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10 and in 1 Corinthians 15. After this coming of Christ, Paul writes, “Then comes the end (1 Corinthians 15:24).” There will be no other resurrection.

Neither in 1 Thessalonians 4 nor elsewhere, does the Bible teach that there will be a either a secret or public rapture for seven years. 1 Thessalonians 4 shows that Christ will never actually put his feet upon the earth again. Paul says that he will come in the clouds and we will be caught up to ever be with the Lord.

There will be no earth from the time of the catching away of the saints because it will be burning up (2 Peter 3:12):

10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up. 11 Seeing that

these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in (all) holy living and godliness.

When Christ returns, instead of beginning his reign and establishing an earthy kingdom, he will end his reign and deliver up his Kingdom to the Father (1 Corinthians 23:26).

Appendix III: What about Christ's Thousand-Year Reign?

Many religious people believe that Jesus is coming soon to set up an earthy kingdom and reign on earth for a thousand years. What about it? Does the Bible teach and uphold this doctrine?

The theory is based on Revelation 20:6, which says:

Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: over these the second death has no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him *a thousand years*.

A close look at this passage shows that it says nothing about a reign of Christ on earth, over all people, in their bodies, and at the end of this age. There is absolutely nothing said in Revelation 20 or anywhere else in the scriptures about our Lord reigning a thousand years any time, any place.

An analysis of Revelation 20:6 shows the premillennial theory to be false. Look closely at the grammatical construction of Revelation 20:6. The main sentence is “They. . . shall reign with him a thousand years.” To find the antecedent of the pronoun *they*, look at verse 4 and to the word *souls*. These were the people who had been beheaded because they were Christians. Clearly, this is the group who *shall reign* with Christ *a thousand years*. *They*, not *Christ*, is the subject of the verb *shall reign*, whose object is *a thousand years*.

It is important to see that *souls* were those who were to reign for a thousand years—not *Christ*. There is nothing said in Revelation 20 or anywhere else in the Bible about Christ reigning for a thousand years on this earth. Christ is reigning now over his kingdom. Consider that Christ taught his kingdom was immediate and not something yet to come according to Mark 9:1:

And he said to them, “I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power.”

See also Matthew 16:28. Christ taught that his kingdom would not be of this world in John 18:36:

Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight.”

Paul taught that we are now in his kingdom: “Who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love (Col. 1:13).” He further taught: “To the end that you should walk worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory (1 Thessalonians 2:12). John taught in the Revelation 1:6: “He made us a kingdom, priests unto his God and Father.”

A thousand-year reign of Christ on earth is not in the Bible.

Appendix IV: Jesus Christ: Priest upon His Throne

Does the Bible teach that Jesus is yet to come to establish an earthly kingdom and reign over it in Jerusalem for a thousand years?

Zechariah, God's inspired spokesman, wrote about the work of the Messiah. In Zechariah 6:12-13, through His prophet Zechariah God struck a deathblow to the doctrine of premillennialism. This doctrine holds that Christ is yet to come to reign over his kingdom on earth for the one thousand years. Zechariah wrote in Zechariah 6:12-13:

And speak unto him, saying, "Thus speaks Jehovah of hosts," saying, "Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: and he shall grow up out of his place; and he shall build the temple of Jehovah; even he shall build the temple of Jehovah; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both."

Premillennialists teach that Christ functions as a priest now, as Heb. 4:15 clearly shows, but that he is not reigning as king now. They say that Christ will begin his reign as king when he returns. But Zechariah said, "*He shall be a priest upon his throne.*" At the same time Christ serves as high priest, he sits upon his throne. If Christ is high priest now, he is king now. If he is king now, his kingdom *exists now* here upon the earth and *now* in heaven.

God told Zechariah to place two crowns on the head of Joshua, the high priest (Zechariah 6:10-11). Joshua, with the two crowns was a type of the Branch—the Christ. The two crowns represent the two positions filled by the true Branch. The two-tiered crown represents the simultaneous kingship and high priesthood of Christ.

The angel Gabriel spoke to Mary in Luke 1:32-33:

He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

Peter said God's prophecy was fulfilled when Christ was raised to sit on David's throne in Acts 2:29-33:

. . . God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins He would set (one) upon his [David's] throne . . . neither was he [Christ] left unto Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus did God raise up."

Christ now sits on his throne and reigns over his kingdom into which God translates us, who are his according to Col. 1:13:

12 giving thanks unto the Father, who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; 13 who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and **translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love**; 14 in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins.

Appendix V: The Church the Bride of Christ

The New Testament uses many figures of speech in its teaching about the church. By comparing the church to things that we already know about, the Bible makes known the significance and importance of the church. In Ephesians 5:22-32, Paul compares the relationship of a husband and wife to the relationship between Christ and the church. This passage emphasizes several important truths.

First, Christians are married to Christ. When we become dead to the law of sin and death, we are joined to (marry) Christ in Romans 7:4:

Wherefore, my brethren, you also were made dead to the law through the body of Christ; that you should be joined to another, (even) to him who was raised from the dead, that we might bring forth fruit unto God.

Second, as a husband, Christ loved the church. Using the example of husband and wives, Paul wrote in Ephesian 5:25-27:

Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it; that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself a glorious *church*, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Third, as the husband, Christ is head over the church in Ephesians 5:23.

For the husband is the head of the wife, and Christ also is the head of the church, *being* himself the savior of the body.

Fourth, the church is subject to Christ, the head in Ephesians 5:24:

Wives, (be in subjection) unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. But as the church is subject to Christ, so (let) the wives also (be) to their husbands in everything

Fifth, Christ and the church join as one in Ephesians 5:30-32

. . . Because we are members of his body. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great: but I speak in regard of Christ and of the church.

Sixth, the bride of Christ is the New Jerusalem, the heavenly city in Revelation 21:2:

“I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven of God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.

Finally, in Revelation 22:17, as one, Christ and the church act together to call us home:

And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” And he that hears, let him say,
“Come.” And he that is thirsty, let him come: he that will, let him take the water
of life freely.

Appendix VI: The New Earth

Some religious people speculate about what will occur when the world ends and Jesus returns. The apostle Peter gives a vivid description of this event in 2 Peter 3:8-13. He concludes with verse 13: “But, according to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness.” What is the new earth of which Peter speaks? Is it a literal, material planet inhabited by flesh and blood creatures? Is it a physical place where people live after this age ends? What does the Bible teach?

First, the new earth of which Peter speaks is a figurative description of heaven, the present abode of God. Heaven is described as a house (2 Corinthians 5:1), a city (Revelation 22:14; Hebrews 11:14), a country (Hebrews 11:14-16), and a planet (2 Peter 3:13). Jesus spoke of the eternal abode of God as a house, and in that house, he spoke of many mansions. Clearly, city, house, and country refer to the same state, heaven. As city, house, and country refer to the same state, also earth, a planet, refers to that state. The new earth is not a literal planet, as some teach, but rather the new earth is one of many figures used to communicate the reality of an eternal dwelling place.

Second, Christians do not center their hope on this earth. God’s people “desire a better (country), that is, a heavenly (Hebrews 11:16).” Paul said, “Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth (Colossians 3:2).”

Third, Jesus made it very clear that our reward is in heaven. He said, “Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in heaven (Matthew 5:12).” Not only is our reward in heaven, but God is in heaven. We are told, “Glorify your Father who is in heaven (Matthew 5:16).” In agreement with this, Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians:

If the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens:

Therefore, the eternal dwelling place of the redeemed is not on a literal planet earth.

The Bible teaches that God’s throne is eternal in the heavens. John recorded, “Straightway I was in the Spirit: and behold, there was a throne set in heaven, and one sitting upon the throne (Revelation 4:2).” His saints will surround that throne forever in Revelation 7:15-17

Therefore are they before the throne of God; and they serve him day and night in his temple: . . . They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun strike upon them, nor any heat: for the Lamb . . . shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life: and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes.

Appendix VII: The Church, Christ's Kingdom

Some make a distinction between the church and the kingdom. One theological system maintains that the church is an interim institution that will continue until Christ returns to reign on earth for a thousand years. Accordingly, when Christ returns to earth, he will establish his kingdom. Does the Bible teach that the church and the kingdom are separate institutions?

First, Daniel predicted that God would one day establish a kingdom that would never be destroyed (Daniel 2:44; 7:14). He also specified the period of history when this would take place (Daniel 2:31-46). The kingdom was to come in the time of the Roman Empire.

Second, Zachariah predicted that the promised Branch, who the Messiah was. Zachariah said that this Branch, the seed of David, would “sit and rule upon his throne (Zachariah 6:13).” Christ served as priest during the first century; therefore, he occupied the throne of David and began to rule over his kingdom in the first century.

Third, Jesus used *church* and *kingdom* interchangeably, showing them to refer to the same group of people and the same institution, in Matthew 16:18-19:

18 And I also say unto you, that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my *church*; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. 19 I will give unto you the keys of the *kingdom* of heaven. . . .

Fourth, the language of the Hebrew writer proves that the church and kingdom are the same (Hebrews. 12:22-28). He says that we have come to the church of the firstborn (Christ) in Hebrews 12:22-23:

22 but you are come. . . 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all. . .

And we have received a kingdom that cannot be shaken in Hebrews 12:28:

28 Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe:

Fifth, when we are born of the water and the spirit, we enter the Lord's kingdom established on the Day of Pentecost after Christ's resurrection (John 3:1-5; Acts 2). At the same time and by the same process, the Lord adds us to his church (Acts 2:37-47).

Finally, prior to this Pentecost, the Bible speaks of the church and the kingdom in yet to come. Christ taught, “There are some here . . . who shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power (Mark 9:1).” He also said, “Upon this rock I *will* build my church (Matthew 16:18).” Following this Pentecost, the Bible

speaks of the kingdom and the church as being in existence. The Bible says that he “translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love (Colossians 1:13);” we receive “a kingdom that cannot be shaken (Hebrews 12:28);” and he “made us a kingdom (Revelations 1:6).

Appendix VIII: Millennial Theories and Matthew 24

Most “end times” and millennial theories look to Matthew 24 to support their erroneous positions. In most cases, they fail to handle accurately the word of God as commanded in 2 Timothy 2:15:

15 Give diligence to present yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.

They fail to realize that Jesus was answering three different questions posed by his disciples. By lumping the three answers together as if they were one, confusing millennial theories emerge. However, by looking carefully at the questions and their answers the truth emerges.

Jesus Foretells the Destruction of the Temple: Matthew 24:1-2

The questions of the disciples emerged after Jesus foretold the destruction of the temple in Matthew 24:1-2:

And Jesus went out from the temple, and was going on his way; and his disciples came to him to show him the buildings of the temple. 2 But he answered and said unto them, “See you not all these things? Truly, I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.”

This statement by Jesus provoked the disciples to ask the questions in verses 3 and 4.

The Disciples Ask Three Questions: Matthew 24:3

The disciples’ questions about Jesus statement concerning the temple comes in Matthew 24:3:

3 And as he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, “Tell us, when shall these things be? And what (shall be) the sign of your coming, and of the end of the world?”

The antecedent of *these things* in verse three must be the destruction of the temple in verse two: “there shall not be left here one stone upon the other.” This grammatical construct makes the first question evident: when will the temple be destroyed.

The second question is “what (shall be) the sign of your coming?” The *shall be* is inserted by the translators making this question in the coming of the Lord parallel to the third question: What will be the sign of the end of the age? Therefore the three questions asked are evident:

When will be the temple be destroyed?

What will be the sign of your coming?

What will be the sign of the end of the age?

It is the failure to keep the answers to these questions in context of the three questions themselves that leads to false teaching. By jumbling up the answers and failing to keep the facts of each straight, false teachers twist the truth to suit their preconceived doctrine—jumping about as it were from here to there through the chapter with no consideration of context.

The Throwing Down of the Stones of the Temple and Jerusalem: Matthew 24:4-8

Preceding the answer, Christ gives firm warning that there will be many false teachers and deceivers forecasting and even claiming his coming

The Beginning of Birth Pains will be wars and wars and rumors of wars, famines and earthquakes. Even in our lives we have seen this prophecy fulfilled: the Gulf War of the early 90's and the tsunami in Indonesia are but two example of when many of the false forecasts were spread abroad. Jesus warning in Matthew 24:4-8 still holds true today

4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, “**Watch out** that no man lead you astray. 5 For many shall come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ;’ and shall lead many astray. 6 And you shall hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that **you** be not troubled: for (these things) must needs come to pass; but the end is not yet. 7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines and earthquakes in different places.”8 But all these things are the beginning of travail.

The Gospel Will Be Preached to Whole World until the End: Matthew 24:9-19

The gospel was not about the second coming and our reward. The gospel is about Jesus Christ and his sacrifice; according Matt 24:9-14, it is about preaching the gospel to the whole world and standing firm to the end:

9 Then shall they deliver you up unto tribulation, and shall kill you: and you shall be hated of all the nations for my name's sake.10 And then shall many stumble, and shall deliver up one another, and shall hate one another. 11 And many false prophets shall arise, and shall lead many astray. 12 And because iniquity shall be multiplied, the love of the many shall wax cold. 13 But he that endures to the end, the same shall be saved. 14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations; and then shall the end come.

The gospel shall be preached to the end. The scriptures leave no doubt as to what the gospel is in 1 Corinthians 15:1-5

15 Now I make known unto you brethren, the gospel which I preached unto you, which also you received, wherein also ye stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached unto you, except you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4 and that he was buried; and that he has been raised on the third day according to the scriptures; 5 and that he appeared to Cephas; then to the twelve; . . .

Therefore the gospel preached then, now, and until the end of the world is the death, burial, resurrection, and empirical evidence proving this gospel. The scriptures tell us also when the end shall come in 1 Corinthians 15:22-26:

22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits; then they that are Christ's, at his coming. **24 Then the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God**, even the Father; when he shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power. **25** For he must reign, till he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy that shall be abolished is death.

The *tribulation*, so often taught as a special time of special persecution, signaling the end times of millennialism, is here taught as beginning with those to whom Jesus was speaking. Jesus said in verse 9: “9 Then shall they deliver *you* up unto tribulation.”

The Abomination of Desolation Is Not the Coming of the Lord: Matthew 24:15-25

Matthew 24:15-25 is not about the end times or the coming of the Lord. This passage is Jesus answer to the first question: when will the temple be destroyed with every stone cast down, in Matthew 24:15-26:

15 When therefore you see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let him that reads understand), 16 then let them that are in Judaea flee unto the mountains: 17 let him that is on the housetop not go down to take out things that are in his house: 18 and let him that is in the field not return back to take his cloak. 19 But woe unto them that are with child and to them that give suck in those days! 20 And pray you that your flight be not in the winter, neither on a Sabbath: 21 for then shall be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, nor ever shall be. 22 And except those days had been shortened, no flesh would have been saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. 23 Then if any man shall say unto you, “Look, here is the Christ,” or, “Here;” believe (it) not. 24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets,

and shall show great signs and wonders; so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect.

25 Behold, I have told you beforehand. 26 If therefore they shall say unto you, “Behold, he is in the wilderness;” go not forth: “Behold, he is in the inner chambers;” believe (it) not.

The tribulation of this passage coincides with the abomination of desolation which the Lord describes as a tribulation the likes of which has never been seen nor ever shall be seen. Therefore, if the abomination of desolation is the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem which occur in 70 AD, they rule out any connection to millennial theories. Daniel describes the time of the destruction of the temple which Jesus himself identifies the abomination of desolation in Dan 9:26-27:

26 And after the sixty-two weeks shall the anointed one be cut off, and shall have nothing: and the people of the prince that shall come **shall destroy the city and the sanctuary**; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and even unto the end shall be war; desolations are determined. 27 And he shall make a firm covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week **he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease**; and upon the wing of **abominations** (shall come) one that makes **desolate**; and even unto the full end, and that determined, shall (wrath) be poured out upon the **desolate**.

Daniel further describes an act that only the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem fit perfectly in all history. Daniel wrote in Dan 11:31-32:

31 "His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation. 32 With flattery he will corrupt those who have violated the covenant, but the people who know their God will firmly resist him.

Jesus said this abomination of desolation would occur in the lifetimes of those to whom he spoke in verse 24: 15:

When therefore you see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let him that reads understand) . . .

This is not the coming of the lord as Christ clearly stated in this very context in Matt 24:25-28:

25 Behold, I have told you beforehand. 26 If therefore they shall say unto you, “Behold, he is in the wilderness;” go not forth: “Behold, he is in the inner chambers; believe (it) not.” 27 For as the lightning comes from the east, and is seen even unto the west; so shall be the coming of the Son of man.

None of the verses through 24:26 apply to the Lords coming. Christ now turns to the other two questions: What will be the sign of your coming? What will be the sign of the end of the age?

The Coming of the Lord Will Be the Very Next Event

The Lord turns immediately to the next event—his coming. After the tribulation of the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem will be the coming of the Lord—the final event prophesied by the Lord in Matt 24:29-30:

29 But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: 30 and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he shall send forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Immediately is *at once* or *soon* in the Greek, indicates the next event, which is the coming of the Son of man on clouds. This passage agrees completely the other passages on his coming. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 there is no tribulation which passed in 70 AD, no rapture (not mentioned in the Bible), and no 1,000 year reign by Christ in an earthly kingdom:

13 But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep; that you sorrow not, even as the rest, who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; 17 then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

There is not a word in the bible about Christ stepping foot on this earth ever again. Not only is this passage indisputable in its meaning but it agrees perfectly with 1 Corinthians 15:50-54 where once again there is no tribulation, no rapture, and no 1,000 year reign of Christ in an earthly kingdom:

50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We all shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this

corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

54 But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

Of course, death is the last enemy for Christ to overcome, as we have already seen in 1 Corinthians 15:22-26. 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10 is another passage that spells out the specifics of the Lord's coming: again there is no tribulation, no rapture, and no 1,000 year reign of Christ in an earthly kingdom:

6 if so be that it is righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to them that afflict you, 7 and to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, 8 rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: 9 who shall suffer punishment, (even) eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might, 10 when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at in all them that believed (because our testimony unto you was believed) in that day.

Again there is no tribulation, no rapture, and no 1,000 year reign of Christ in an earthly kingdom:

Christ Returns to the Discussion of the Destruction of Temple and Jerusalem

We know this passage returns to the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem, which were laid waste by the Romans in 70AD because the Lord says that this generation to whom he is speaking shall not pass away until all these things happen. One contemporary observer said that after the destruction it was as if the city had never been there. This passage cannot be the second coming of Christ since, as we shall see, only God knows when that shall happen. In Matt 24:32-35, the certainty of the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem are emphatically stated:

32 "Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. 33 Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. 34 I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. 35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

His words are certain and true and will never pass away.

Christ Returns to the Discussion of the Coming of Christ and the End of Time

Matt 24:36-44, no one knows the day and hours of his coming; it will be like the days of Noah that the Son of Man comes; he will come when we do not expect him:

36 "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 37 As it was in the days of Noah, so **it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.** 38 For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; 39 and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. **That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.** 40 Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. 41 Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left. 42 "Therefore keep watch, because **you do not know on what day your Lord will come.** 43 But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. 44 So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

Nowhere does the Bible teach that Jesus will set foot on the earth again; that there will be a rapture; that there will be an earthly kingdom; that Christ will reign on earth for a 1,000 years.