



THE FUTURE IS SEEN
FROM THE ISLAND
OF PATMOS

*The Angel unfolds to John
a revelation vision*

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The Revelation

By Harold Bollinger

**We may often wonder about the mysteries of the past.
And wonder with amazement how things do seldom last.
But the mysteries of the future will crown our minds with awe.
As we review John's vision from the greatest book of all.**

Follow the Journey

THROUGH THE BOOK OF REVELATION

The book of Revelation is a complex book, but, we can avoid confusion by understanding the literary structure of this book. . John indicates change throughout the book to change of scene, a change of subject, or a flashback to an earlier scene.

The first chapter relates the circumstances that led to the writing of this book (Rev. 1:1-20). In Rev. 2 and Rev. 3 Jesus gives special messages to the seven churches of Asia Minor (Rev. 2:1-3:22).

John is suddenly caught up into heaven, where he sees a vision of God Almighty on his throne. All of Christ's followers and the heavenly angels are worshiping God (Rev. 4:1-11). John watches as God gives a scroll with seven seals to the worthy Lamb, Jesus Christ, (Rev. 5:1-14). The Lamb begins to open the seals one by one. As each seal is opened, a new vision appears.

As the first four seals are opened, riders appear on horses of different colors—war, famine, disease, and death are in their path (Rev. 6:1-8). As the fifth seal is opened, John sees those in heaven who have been martyred for their faith in Christ (Rev. 6:9-11).

A set of contrasting images appears at the opening of the sixth seal. On one side, there is a huge earthquake, stars falling from the sky, and the sky rolling up like a scroll (Rev. 6:12-17). On the other side, multitudes are before the great throne, worshiping and praising God and the Lamb (Rev. 7:1-17).

Finally, the seventh seal is opened (Rev. 8:1-5), unveiling a series of God's judgments

announced by seven angels with seven trumpets. The first four angels bring hail, fire, a burning mountain, and a falling star—the sun and the moon are darkened (Rev. 8:6-13). The fifth trumpet announces the coming of locusts with the power to sting (Rev. 9:1-12). The sixth trumpet heralds the coming of an army of warriors on horses (Rev. 9:13-21). In Rev. 10:1-11, John is given a little scroll to eat. Following this, John is commanded to measure the temple of God (Rev. 11:1-2). He sees two witnesses who proclaim God’s judgment on the earth for three and a half years (Rev. 11:3-14).

Finally, the seventh trumpet sounds, calling the rival forces of good and evil to the final battle. On one side is Satan and his forces; on the other side stands Jesus Christ with his forces (Rev. 11:15-13:18). In the midst of this call to battle, John sees three angels announcing the final judgment (Rev. 14:6-13). Two angels begin to reap this harvest of judgment on the earth (Rev. 14:14-20). Following on the heels of these two angels are seven more angels who pour out God’s judgment on the earth from seven bowls (Rev. 15:1-16:21). One of these angels from the group of seven reveals to John a vision of a “great prostitute” called Babylon (symbolizing the Roman empire) riding a scarlet beast (Rev. 17:1-18). After the defeat of Babylon (Rev. 18:1-24), a great multitude in heaven shouts praise to God for his mighty victory (Rev. 19:1-10).

The final three chapters of the book of Revelation catalogue the events that finalize Christ’s victory over the enemy: Satan’s 1,000-year imprisonment (Rev. 20:1-10), the final judgment (Rev. 20:11-15), and the creation of a new earth and a new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:1-22:6).

An angel then gives John final instructions concerning the visions John has seen and what to do once he has written them all down (Rev. 22:7-11).

Revelation concludes with the promise of Christ’s soon return, an offer to drink of the water of life that flows through the great street of the new Jerusalem, and a warning to those who read the book (Rev. 22:12-21). May we pray with John, “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:20).

The Bible ends with a message of warning and hope for men and women of every generation. Christ is victorious, and all evil has been done away with. As you read the book of Revelation, marvel at God’s grace in the salvation of the saints and his power over the evil forces of Satan, and remember the hope of this victory to come.

Revelation, Chapter 1.

LETTERS TO THE CHURCHES

Near the end of his life, John received a vision from Christ, which he recorded for the benefit of the seven churches in Asia and for Christians throughout history. This is the only book in the Bible that promises a blessing to those who listen to its words and do what it says. Revelation is a book about the future and about the present. It offers future hope to all believers, especially those who have suffered for their faith, by proclaiming Christ's final victory over evil and the reality of eternal life with him. It also gives present guidance as it teaches us about Jesus Christ and how we should live for him now.

Through graphic pictures we learn that (1) Jesus Christ is coming again, (2) evil will be judged, and (3) the dead will be raised to judgment, resulting in eternal life or eternal destruction.

According to tradition, John, the author, was the only one of Jesus' original twelve disciples who was not killed for the faith. He also wrote the Gospel of John and the letters of 1, 2, and 3 John. When he wrote Revelation, John was in exile on the island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea, sent there by the Romans for his witness concerning Jesus Christ.

This book is the revelation of, concerning, and from Jesus Christ. God gave the revelation of his plan to Jesus Christ, who, in turn, revealed it to John. The book of Revelation unveils Christ's full identity and God's plan for the end of the world, and it focuses on Jesus Christ, his second coming, his victory over evil, and the establishment of his kingdom. As you read and study Revelation, don't focus so much on the timetable of the events or the details of John's imagery that you miss the main message—the infinite love, power, and justice of the Lord Jesus Christ.

. John denounces evil and exhorts people to high Christian standards; He offers hope rather than gloom. John was not a psychic attempting to predict the future; he was a prophet of God describing what God had shown him.

Jesus gave his message to John in a vision, allowing John to see and record certain future events so they could be an encouragement to all believers. The vision includes many signs and symbols that convey the essence of what is to happen. What John saw, in most cases, was indescribable, so he used illustrations to show what it was like. When reading this symbolic language, we don't have to understand every detail—John himself didn't. Instead, realize that John's imagery shows us that Christ is indeed the glorious and victorious Lord of all.

Revelation is a book of prophecy that is both prediction (foretelling future events) and proclamation (preaching about who God is and what he will do). Prophecy is more than

telling the future. Behind the predictions are important principles about God's character and promises. As we read, we will get to know God better so that we can trust him completely.

Jesus told John to write to seven churches that knew and trusted him and had read his earlier letters (see Rev. 1:11). The letters were addressed so that they could be read and passed on in a systematic fashion, following the main Roman road clockwise around the province of Asia (now called Turkey).

The "seven spirits" is another name for the Holy Spirit. The number seven is used throughout Revelation to symbolize completeness and perfection.

The Trinity—the Father ("him who is, and who was, and who is to come"), the Holy Spirit ("the seven spirits"), and the Son (Jesus Christ)—is the source of all truth (John 14:6-17; 1 John 2:27; Rev. 19:11). Thus we can be assured that John's message is reliable and is God's word to us.

Verse 5 tell that others had risen from the dead—people whom the prophets, Jesus, and the apostles had brought back to life during their ministries—but later those people died again. Jesus was the first who rose from the dead in an imperishable body (1 Cor. 15:20), never to die again. He is the firstborn from the dead. The fact that the all-powerful God has offered eternal life to you is nothing short of spectacular.

Jesus is portrayed as an all-powerful King, victorious in battle, glorious in peace. He is not just a humble earthly teacher, he is the glorious God. When you read John's description of the vision, keep in mind that his words are not just good advice; they are truth from the King of kings. Don't just read his words for their interesting and amazing portrayal of the future. Let the truth about Christ penetrate your life, deepen your faith in him, and strengthen your commitment to follow him no matter what the cost.

In verse 7, John is announcing the return of Jesus to earth (see also Matthew 24; Mark 13; 1 Thes. 4:15-18). Jesus' second coming will be visible and victorious. All people will see him arrive (Mark 13:26), and they will know it is Jesus. When he comes, he will conquer evil and judge all people according to their deeds (Rev. 20:11-15).

Those who pierced him" could refer to the Roman soldiers who pierced Jesus' side as he hung on the cross or to the Jews who were responsible for his death. John saw Jesus' death with his own eyes, and he never forgot the horror of it (see John 19:34-35; see also Zech. 12:10).

Verse 8 speaks of the Alpha and omega. They are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. The Lord God is the beginning and the end. God the Father is the eternal Lord and Ruler of the past, present, and future (see also Rev. 4:8; Isaiah 44:6; Isaiah 48:12-15).

Patmos was a small rocky island in the Aegean Sea, about 50 miles offshore from the city of Ephesus on the Asia Minor seacoast.

The Christian church was facing severe persecution. Almost all believers were socially, politically, or economically suffering because of this empire-wide persecution, and some were even being killed for their faith. John was exiled to Patmos because he refused to stop preaching the gospel. ?

The Seven Churches

As described beginning in verse 9, the seven golden lampstands are the seven churches in Asia (Rev. 1:11, 20), and Jesus stands among them. No matter what the churches face, Jesus protects them with his all-encompassing love and reassuring power. Through his Spirit, Jesus Christ is still among the churches today. When a church faces persecution, it should remember Christ's deep love and compassion. When a church is wracked by internal strife and conflict, it should remember Christ's concern for purity and his intolerance of sin.

This man "like a son of man" is Jesus himself. The title Son of Man occurs many times in the New Testament in reference to Jesus as the Messiah. John recognized Jesus because he lived with him for three years and had seen him both as the Galilean preacher and as the glorified Son of God at the transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-8). Here Jesus appears as the mighty Son of Man. His white hair indicates his wisdom and divine nature (see also Daniel 7:9); his blazing eyes symbolize judgment of all evil; the golden sash around his chest reveals him as the high priest who goes into God's presence to obtain forgiveness of sin for those who have believed in him.

The sword in Jesus' mouth symbolizes the power and force of his message. His words of judgment are as sharp as swords (Isaiah 49:2; Hebrews 4:12).

As the Roman government stepped up its persecution of Christians, John must have wondered if the church could survive and stand against the opposition. But Jesus appeared in glory and splendor, reassuring John that he and his fellow believers had access to God's strength to face these trials

Our sins have convicted and sentenced us, but Jesus holds the keys of death and Hades. He alone can free us from eternal bondage to Satan. He alone has the power and authority to set us free from sin's control. Believers don't have to fear Hades or death, because Christ holds the keys to both. All we must do is turn from sin and turn to him in faith. When we attempt to control our lives and disregard God, we set a course that leads directly to hell. But when we place our lives in Christ's hands, he restores us now and resurrects us later to an eternal, peaceful relationship with him.

Revelation, Chapter 2

The Church of Ephesus

This letter is written to the angel of the church in Ephesus. This is the message from the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand, the one who walks among the seven gold lampstands:

Ephesus was the capital of Asia Minor, a center of land and sea trade, and, along with Alexandria and Antioch in Syria, one of the three most influential cities in the eastern part of the Roman empire. The temple to Artemis, one of the ancient wonders of the world, was located in this city, and a major industry was the manufacture of images of this goddess (see Acts 19:21-41).

Paul ministered in Ephesus for three years and warned the Ephesians that false teachers would come and try to draw people away from the faith (see Acts 20:29-31). False teachers did indeed cause problems in the Ephesian church, but the church resisted them, as we can see from Paul's letter to them (see the book of Ephesians). John spent much of his ministry in this city and knew that they had resisted false teaching (Rev. 2:2).

The one who "walks among the seven golden lampstands" (the seven churches) is Jesus (Rev. 1:11-13). He holds the "seven stars in his right hand" (messengers of the churches), indicating his power and authority over the churches and their leaders. Ephesus had become a large, proud church, and Jesus' message would remind them that he alone is the head of the body of believers..

"I know all the things you do. I have seen your hard work and your patient endurance. I know you don't tolerate evil people. You have examined the claims of those who say they are apostles but are not. You have discovered they are liars.

You have patiently suffered for me without quitting. But I have this complaint against you. You don't love me or each other as you did at first! Look how far you have fallen from your first love! Turn back to me again and work as you did at first. If you don't, I will come and remove your lampstand from its place among the churches.

Jesus to "remove your lampstand from its place" would mean the church would cease to be an effective church. Just as the seven-branched candlestick in the temple gave light for the priests to see, the churches were to give light to their surrounding communities. But Jesus warned them that their lights could go out. In fact, Jesus himself would extinguish any light that did not fulfill its purpose. The church had to repent of its sins

But there is this about you that is good: You hate the deeds of the immoral Nicolaitans,

just as I do. Anyone who is willing to hear should listen to the Spirit and understand what the Spirit is saying to the churches. Everyone who is victorious will eat from the tree of life in the paradise of God.

The Church of Smyrna:

"Write this letter to the angel of the church in Smyrna. This is the message from the one who is the First and the Last, who died and is alive:

The city of Smyrna was about 25 miles north of Ephesus. It was nicknamed "Port of Asia" because it had an excellent harbor on the Aegean Sea. The church in this city struggled against two hostile forces: a Jewish population strongly opposed to Christianity, and a non-Jewish population that was loyal to Rome and supported emperor worship. Persecution and suffering were inevitable in an environment like this.

"I know about your suffering and your poverty—but you are rich! I know the slander of those opposing you. They say they are Jews, but they really aren't because theirs is a synagogue of Satan. Don't be afraid of what you are about to suffer. The Devil will throw some of you into prison and put you to the test. You will be persecuted for 'ten days.' Remain faithful even when facing death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Anyone who is willing to hear should listen to the Spirit and understand what the Spirit is saying to the churches. Whoever is victorious will not be hurt by the second death.

Pain is part of life, but it is never easy to suffer, no matter what the cause. Jesus commended the church at Smyrna for its faith in suffering. He then encouraged the believers that they need not fear the future if they remained faithful. (also Rev. 22:12-14).

The Church in Pergamum:

This letter was written to the angel of the church in Pergamum. This is the message from the one who has a sharp two-edged sword:

The city of Pergamum was built on a hill 1,000 feet above the surrounding countryside, creating a natural fortress. It was a sophisticated city, a center of Greek culture and education, with a 200,000-volume library. But it was also the center of four cults, and it rivaled Ephesus in its worship of idols. The city's chief god was Asclepius, whose symbol was a serpent, and who was considered the god of healing. People came to Pergamum from all over the world to seek healing from this god.

Jesus encourages the church when he says: "I know that you live in the city where that great throne of Satan is located, and yet you have remained loyal to me. And you refused to deny me even when Antipas, my faithful witness, was martyred among you by Satan's followers.: And yet, Jesus had a few complaints against them.. :You tolerate some among you who are like Balaam, who showed Balak how to trip up the people of Israel. He

taught them to worship idols by eating food offered to idols and by committing sexual sin.”

It was not easy to be a Christian in Pergamum. Believers experienced great pressure to compromise or leave the faith. Nothing is known about Antipas except that he did not compromise. He was faithful, and he died for his faith.

Apparently, however, some in the church were tolerating those who taught or practiced what Christ opposed. Compromise can be defined as a blending of the qualities of two different things or a concession of principles. Cooperate with people as much as you can, but avoid any alliance, partnership, or participation that could lead to immoral practices.

There is room for differences of opinion among Christians in some areas, but there is no room for heresy and moral impurity

In the same way, you have some Nicolaitans among you—people who follow the same teaching and commit the same sins.

Balak was a king who feared the large number of Israelites traveling through his country, so he hired Balaam to pronounce a curse on them. Balaam refused at first, but an offer of money changed his mind (Numbers 22-24).

Later Balaam influenced the Israelites to turn to idol worship (Numbers 31:16; also see 2 Peter 2:15; Jude 1:11). Here Christ rebuked the church for tolerating those who, like Balaam, lead people away from God.

Repent, or I will come to you suddenly and fight against them with the sword of my mouth. "Anyone who is willing to hear should listen to the Spirit and understand what the Spirit is saying to the churches. Everyone who is victorious will eat of the manna that has been hidden away in heaven. And I will give to each one a white stone, and on the stone will be engraved a new name that no one knows except the one who receives it.

“Hidden manna” suggests the spiritual nourishment that the faithful believers will receive. As the Israelites traveled toward the promised land, God provided manna from heaven for their physical nourishment (Exodus 16:13-18). Jesus, as the bread of life (John 6:51), provides spiritual nourishment that satisfies our deepest hunger.

The Church of Thyatira:

Thyatira was a working man’s town, with many trade guilds for cloth making, dyeing, and pottery. Lydia, Paul’s first convert in Philippi, was a merchant from Thyatira (Acts

16:14). The city was basically secular, with no focus on any particular religion.

This is the message from the Son of God, whose eyes are bright like flames of fire, whose feet are like polished bronze: "I know all the things you do—your love, your faith, your service, and your patient endurance. And I can see your constant improvement in all these things.

The believers in Thyatira were commended for growing in good deeds. We should not feel satisfied when our church only rejoices in the salvation of its members or in the comfort of gathering for worship. We should grow in love, faith, and acts of service. Because the times are critical, we must spend our days wisely and faithfully.

In seeking the need for change, Jesus said, :But I have this complaint against you. You are permitting that woman—that Jezebel who calls herself a prophet—to lead my servants astray. She is encouraging them to worship idols, eat food offered to idols, and commit sexual sin... I gave her time to repent, but she would not turn away from her immorality.

Therefore, I will throw her upon a sickbed, and she will suffer greatly with all who commit adultery with her, unless they turn away from all their evil deeds. I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am the one who searches out the thoughts and intentions of every person. And I will give to each of you whatever you deserve.

A woman in the church in Thyatira was teaching that immorality was not a serious matter for believers. Her name may have been Jezebel, or John may have used the name Jezebel to symbolize the kind of evil she was promoting. Jezebel, a pagan queen of Israel, was considered the most evil woman who ever lived (see 1 Kings 19:1-2; 1 Kings 21:1-15; 2 Kings 9:7-10, 30-37; and her Profile).

In pagan temples, meat was often offered to idols. Then the meat that wasn't burned was sold to shoppers in the temple marketplace.

] But I also have a message for the rest of you in Thyatira who have not followed this false teaching ('deeper truths,' as they call them—depths of Satan, really). I will ask nothing more of you except that you hold tightly to what you have until I come.

Christ says that those who overcome (those who remain faithful until the end and continue to please God) will rule over Christ's enemies and reign with him as he judges evil (see also Psalm 2:8-9; Isaiah 30:14; Jeremiah 19:11; 1 Cor. 6:2-3; Rev. 12:5; Rev. 19:15; Rev. 20:3-4 for more about God's judgment).

"To all who are victorious, who obey me to the very end, I will give authority over all the nations. [27] They will rule the nations with an iron rod and smash them like clay pots. [28] They will have the same authority I received from my Father, and I will also give

them the morning star!

Christ is called the morning star in Rev. 2:28, Rev. 22:16, and 2 Peter 1:19. A morning star appears just before dawn, when the night is coldest and darkest. When the world is at its bleakest point, Christ will burst onto the scene, exposing evil with his light of truth and bringing his promised reward.

Anyone who is willing to hear should listen to the Spirit and understand what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

Revelation, Chapter 3

The church in Sardis

"This letter is written to the angel of the church in Sardis. This is the message from the one who has the sevenfold Spirit of God and the seven stars:

The wealthy city of Sardis was actually in two locations. The older section of the city was on a mountain, and, when its population outgrew the spot, a newer section was built in the valley below.

The "seven spirits of God" is another name for the Holy Spirit. The seven stars are the messengers, or leaders, of the churches (see Rev. 2:1).

The problem in the Sardis church was not heresy, but spiritual death. In spite of its reputation for being active, Sardis was infested with sin. Its deeds were evil and its clothes soiled. The Spirit has no words of commendation for this church that looked so good on the outside but was so corrupt on the inside

"I know all the things you do, and that you have a reputation for being alive—but you are dead Now wake up! Strengthen what little remains, for even what is left is at the point of death. Your deeds are far from right in the sight of God. Go back to what you heard and believed at first; hold to it firmly and turn to me again. Unless you do, I will come upon you suddenly, as unexpected as a thief.

The church at Sardis was urged to obey the Christian truth they had heard when they first believed in Christ, to get back to the basics of the faith. It is important to grow in our knowledge of the Lord, to deepen our understanding through careful study. But no matter how much we learn, we must never abandon the basic truths about Jesus. Jesus will always be God's Son, and his sacrifice for our sins is permanent. No new truth from God will ever contradict these Biblical teachings.

[4] "Yet even in Sardis there are some who have not soiled their garments with evil deeds. They will walk with me in white, for they are worthy. All who are victorious will be clothed in white. I will never erase their names from the Book of Life, but I will announce before my Father and his angels that they are mine. Anyone who is willing to hear should listen to the Spirit and understand what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

To be "dressed in white" means to be set apart for God and made pure. Christ promises future honor and eternal life to those who stand firm in their faith. The names of all believers are registered in the book of life. This book symbolizes God's knowledge of

who belongs to him. All such people are guaranteed a listing in the book of life and are introduced to the hosts of heaven as belonging to Christ (see Luke 12:8-9).

The church in Philadelphia

"Write this letter to the angel of the church in Philadelphia. This is the message from the one who is holy and true. He is the one who has the key of David. He opens doors, and no one can shut them; he shuts doors, and no one can open them.

Philadelphia was founded by the citizens of Pergamum. The community was built in a frontier area as a gateway to the central plateau of Asia Minor. Philadelphia's residents kept barbarians out of the region and brought in Greek culture and language. The city was destroyed by an earthquake in A.D. 17, and aftershocks kept the people so worried that most of them lived outside the city limits.

The key of David represents Christ's authority to open the door of invitation into his future kingdom. After the door is opened, no one can close it—salvation is assured. Once it is closed, no one can open it—judgment is certain.

[8] "I know all the things you do, and I have opened a door for you that no one can shut. You have little strength, yet you obeyed my word and did not deny me. [9] Look! I will force those who belong to Satan—those liars who say they are Jews but are not—to come and bow down at your feet. They will acknowledge that you are the ones I love.

"Because you have obeyed my command to persevere, I will protect you from the great time of testing that will come upon the whole world to test those who belong to this world.

Some believe that "I will also keep you from the hour of trial" means there will be a future time of great tribulation from which true believers will be spared. Others interpret this to mean that the church will go through the time of tribulation and that God will keep them strong in the midst of it. Still others believe this refers to times of great distress in general, the church's suffering through the ages. Whatever the case, our emphasis should be on patiently obeying God no matter what we may face.

Look, I am coming quickly. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take away your crown.

Christians have differing gifts, abilities, experience, and maturity. God doesn't expect us all to be and act the same, but he does expect us to "hold on" to what we have, to persevere in using our resources for him. The Philadelphians are commended for their effort to obey (Rev. 3:8) and encouraged to hold tightly to whatever strength they have. You may be a new believer and feel that your faith and spiritual strength are little. Use

what you have to live for Christ, and God will commend you

All who are victorious will become pillars in the Temple of my God, and they will never have to leave it. And I will write my God's name on them, and they will be citizens in the city of my God—the new Jerusalem that comes down from heaven from my God. And they will have my new name inscribed upon them. [

The new Jerusalem is the future dwelling of the people of God (Rev. 21:2). We will have a new citizenship in God's future kingdom. Everything will be new, pure, and secure.

Anyone who is willing to hear should listen to the Spirit and understand what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

The church in Laodicea

"Write this letter to the angel of the church in Laodicea. This is the message from the one who is the Amen—the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation:

Laodicea was the wealthiest of the seven cities, known for its banking industry, manufacture of wool, and a medical school that produced eye salve. But the city had always had a problem with its water supply. At one time an aqueduct was built to bring water to the city from hot springs. But by the time the water reached the city, it was neither hot nor refreshingly cool—only lukewarm. The church had become as bland as the tepid water that came into the city.

"I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish you were one or the other! But since you are like lukewarm water, I will spit you out of my mouth!

Lukewarm water makes a disgusting drink. The church in Laodicea had become lukewarm and thus distasteful and repugnant. The believers didn't take a stand for anything; indifference had led to idleness. By neglecting to do anything for Christ, the church had become hardened and self-satisfied, and it was destroying itself. There is nothing more disgusting than a halfhearted, in-name-only Christian who is self-sufficient. Don't settle for following God halfway. Let Christ fire up your faith and get you into the action.

You say, 'I am rich. I have everything I want. I don't need a thing!' And you don't realize that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.

Some believers falsely assume that numerous material possessions are a sign of God's spiritual blessing. Laodicea was a wealthy city, and the church was also wealthy. But what the Laodiceans could see and buy had become more valuable to them than what is unseen and eternal. Wealth, luxury, and ease can make people feel confident, satisfied, and complacent. But no matter how much you possess or how much money you make, you have nothing if you don't have a vital relationship with Christ. How does your current level of wealth affect your spiritual desire? Instead of centering your life primarily on

comfort and luxury, find your true riches in Christ.

I advise you to buy gold from me—gold that has been purified by fire. Then you will be rich. And also buy white garments so you will not be shamed by your nakedness. And buy ointment for your eyes so you will be able to see. [19] I am the one who corrects and disciplines everyone I love. Be diligent and turn from your indifference.

The Laodicean church was complacent and rich. They felt self-satisfied, but they didn't have Christ's presence among them. Christ knocked at the door of their hearts, but they were so busy enjoying worldly pleasures that they didn't notice that he was trying to enter. The pleasures of this world—money, security, material possessions—can be dangerous, because their temporary satisfaction makes us indifferent to God's offer of lasting satisfaction. If you find yourself feeling indifferent to church, to God, or to the Bible, you have begun to shut God out of your life. Leave the door of your heart constantly open to God, and you won't need to worry about hearing his knock. Letting him in is your only hope for lasting fulfillment.

"Look! Here I stand at the door and knock. If you hear me calling and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal as friends.

Jesus is knocking on the door of our hearts every time we sense we should turn to him. Jesus wants to have fellowship with us, and he wants us to open up to him. He is patient and persistent in trying to get through to us—not breaking and entering, but knocking. He allows us to decide whether or not to open our lives to him. Do you intentionally keep his life-changing presence and power on the other side of the door?

God would discipline this lukewarm church unless it turned from its indifference toward him. God's purpose in discipline is not to punish, but to bring people back to him. Are you lukewarm in your devotion to God? God may discipline you to help you out of your uncaring attitude, but he uses only loving discipline. You can avoid God's discipline by drawing near to him again through confession, service, worship, and studying his Word. Just as the spark of love can be rekindled in marriage, so the Holy Spirit can reignite our zeal for God when we allow him to work in our hearts.

I will invite everyone who is victorious to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat with my Father on his throne.] Anyone who is willing to hear should listen to the Spirit and understand what the Spirit is saying to the churches."

At the end of each letter to these churches, the believers were urged to listen and take to heart what was written to them. Although a different message was addressed to each church, all the messages contain warnings and principles for everyone. Which letter speaks most directly to your church? Which has the greatest bearing on your own spiritual condition at this time? How will you respond?

Revelation, Chapter 4

MESSAGE FOR THE CHURCH

Moving from the conditions within the churches in Asia to the future of the universal church, John sees the course of coming events in a way similar to Daniel and Ezekiel. Many of these passages contain clear spiritual teachings, but others seem beyond our ability to understand. The clear teaching of this book is that God will defeat all evil in the end. We must live in obedience to Jesus Christ, the coming Conqueror and Judge.

“Then as I looked, I saw a door standing open in heaven, and the same voice I had heard before spoke to me with the sound of a mighty trumpet blast. The voice said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must happen after these things.”

Chapter four and five record glimpses into Christ’s glory. Here we see into the throne room of heaven. God is on the throne and orchestrating all the events that John will record. The world is not spinning out of control; the God of creation will carry out his plans as Christ initiates the final battle with the forces of evil. John shows us heaven before showing us earth so that we will not be frightened by future events.

The voice John had first heard that sounded like a trumpet blast was the voice of Christ (see Rev. 1:10-11)

“And instantly I was in the Spirit, and I saw a throne in heaven and someone sitting on it!”

Four times in the book of Revelation John says he was “in the Spirit” (Rev. 1:10; Rev. 4:2; Rev. 17:3; Rev. 21:10). This expression means that the Holy Spirit was giving him a vision—showing him situations and events he could not have seen with mere human eyesight. All true prophecy comes from God through the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21)

“The one sitting on the throne was as brilliant as gemstones—jasper and carnelian. And the glow of an emerald circled his throne like a rainbow. Twenty-four thrones surrounded him, and twenty-four elders sat on them. They were all clothed in white and had gold crowns on their heads”

Who are these 24 elders? Because there were 12 tribes of Israel in the Old Testament and 12 apostles in the New Testament, the 24 elders in this vision probably represent all the redeemed of God for all time (both before and after Christ’s death and resurrection). They symbolize all those—both Jews and Gentiles—who are now part of God’s family. The 24 elders show us that all the redeemed of the Lord are worshiping him.

“And from the throne came flashes of lightning and the rumble of thunder. And in front of the throne were seven lampstands with burning flames. They are the seven spirits of God.”

In Revelation, lightning and thunder are connected with significant events in heaven. They remind us of the lightning and thunder at Mount Sinai when God gave the people his laws (Exodus 19:16). The Old Testament often uses such imagery to reflect God’s power and majesty (Psalm 77:18).

The “seven spirits of God” is another name for the Holy Spirit. See also Zech. 4:2-6, where the seven lamps are equated with the one Spirit.

“In front of the throne was a shiny sea of glass, sparkling like crystal.

In the center and around the throne were four living beings, each covered with eyes, front and back.”Glass was very rare in New Testament times, and crystal-clear glass was virtually impossible to find (see 1 Cor. 13:12). The “sea of glass” highlights both the magnificence and holiness of God.

Just as the Holy Spirit is seen symbolically in the seven lighted lamps, so the “four living creatures” represent the attributes (the qualities and character) of God. These creatures were not real animals. Like the cherubim (the highest order of the angels), they guard God’s throne, lead others in worship, and proclaim God’s holiness. God’s attributes symbolized in the animal-like appearance of these four creatures are majesty and power (the lion), faithfulness (the ox), intelligence (the man), and sovereignty (the eagle). The Old Testament prophet Ezekiel saw four similar creatures in one of his visions (Ezekiel 1:5-10)

“ The first of these living beings had the form of a lion; the second looked like an ox; the third had a human face; and the fourth had the form of an eagle with wings spread out as though in flight. [8] Each of these living beings had six wings, and their wings were covered with eyes, inside and out. Day after day and night after night they keep on saying,

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty—the one who always was, who is, and who is still to come."

Whenever the living beings give glory and honor and thanks to the one sitting on the throne, the one who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down and worship the one who lives forever and ever. And they lay their crowns before the throne and say,

"You are worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power. For you created everything, and it is for your pleasure that they exist and were created."

The point of this chapter is summed up in this verse: all creatures in heaven and earth will praise and honor God because he is the Creator and Sustainer of everything

Revelation, Chapter 5

Rev. 5 continues the glimpse into heaven begun in Rev. 4.

“And I saw a scroll in the right hand of the one who was sitting on the throne. There was writing on the inside and the outside of the scroll, and it was sealed with seven seals.”

In John’s day, books were written on scrolls—pieces of papyrus or vellum up to 30 feet long, rolled up and sealed with clay or wax. The scroll that John sees contains the full account of what God has in store for the world. The seven seals indicate the importance of its contents. The seals are located throughout the scroll so that as each one is broken, more of the scroll can be read to reveal another phase of God’s plan for the end of the world. Only Christ is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll (Rev. 5:3-5).

“ And I saw a strong angel, who shouted with a loud voice: "Who is worthy to break the seals on this scroll and unroll it?"

“And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.”

The Lion, Jesus, proved himself worthy to break the seals and open the scroll by living a perfect life of obedience to God, dying on the cross for the sins of the world, and rising from the dead to show his power and authority over evil and death. Only Christ conquered sin, death, hell, and Satan himself; so only he can be trusted with the world’s future. The Root of David refers to Jesus being from David’s family line, thus fulfilling the promise of the Messiah in the Old Testament.

“And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.”

Jesus Christ is pictured as both a Lion (symbolizing his authority and power) and a Lamb (symbolizing his submission to God’s will). One of the elders calls John to look at the Lion, but when John looks he sees a Lamb. Christ the Lamb was the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all mankind; therefore, only he can save us from the terrible events revealed by the scroll. Christ the Lamb won the greatest battle of all. He defeated all the forces of evil by dying on the cross. The role of Christ the Lion will be to lead the battle where Satan is finally defeated (Rev. 19:19-21). Christ the Lion is victorious because of what Christ the Lamb has already done. We will participate in his victory not because of our

effort or goodness, but because he has promised eternal life to all who believe in him.

John sees the Lamb “looking as if it had been slain;” the wounds inflicted on Jesus’ body during his trial and crucifixion could still be seen (see John 20:24-31). Jesus was called the Lamb of God by John the Baptist (John 1:29). In the Old Testament, lambs were sacrificed to atone for sins: the Lamb of God died as the final sacrifice for all sins (see Isaiah 53:7; Hebrews 10:1-12, 18).

The horns symbolize strength and power (see 1 Kings 22:11; Zech. 1:18). Although Christ is a sacrificial lamb, he is in no way weak. He was killed, but now he lives in God’s strength and power. In Zech. 4:2-10, the eyes are equated with the seven lamps and the one Spirit.

“ And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.”
“And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”

People from every nation are praising God before his throne. God’s message of salvation and eternal life is not limited to a specific culture, race, or country. Anyone who comes to God in repentance and faith is accepted by him and will be part of his kingdom. Don’t allow prejudice or bias to keep you from sharing Christ with others. Christ welcomes all people into his kingdom.”

The song of God’s people praises Christ’s work. He (1) was slain, (2) purchased them with his blood, (3) gathered them into a kingdom, (4) made them priests, and (5) appointed them to reign on the earth. Jesus has already died and paid the penalty for sin. He is now gathering us into his kingdom and making us priests. In the future we will reign with him. Worship God and praise him for what he has done, what he is doing, and what he will do for all who trust in him. When we realize the glorious future that awaits us, we will find the strength to face our present difficulties.

The believers’ song praises Christ for bringing them into the kingdom and making them kings and priests. While now we are sometimes despised and mocked for our faith (John 15:17-27), in the future we will reign over all the earth (Luke 22:29-30). Christ’s death made all believers priests of God—the channels of blessing between God and mankind (1 Peter 2:5-9)

11] And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;

“Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. [13] And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. [14] And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.”

Angels are spiritual beings created by God who help carry out his work on earth. They bring messages (Luke 1:26-28), protect God’s people (Daniel 6:22), offer encouragement (Genesis 16:7ff), give guidance (Exodus 14:19), bring punishment (2 Samuel 24:16), patrol the earth (Ezekiel 1:9-14), and fight the forces of evil (2 Kings 6:16-18; Rev. 20:1). There are both good and evil angels (Rev. 12:7), but because evil angels are allied with Satan, they have considerably less power and authority than good angels. Eventually, the main role of the good angels will be to offer continuous praise to God (see also Rev. 19:1-3).

The scene in Rev. 5 shows us that only the Lamb, Jesus Christ, is worthy to open the scroll (the events of history). Jesus, not Satan, holds the future. Jesus Christ is in control, and he alone is worthy to set into motion the events of the last days of history.

Revelation, Chapter 6

“As I watched, the Lamb broke the first of the seven seals on the scroll. Then one of the four living beings called out with a voice that sounded like thunder, “Come!”

This is the first of three seven-part judgments. The trumpets (Rev. 8-9) and the bowls (Rev. 16) are the other two. As each seal is opened, Christ the Lamb sets in motion events that will bring about the end of human history. This scroll is not completely opened until the seventh seal is broken (Rev. 8:1). The contents of the scroll reveal mankind’s depravity and portray God’s authority over the events of human history.

“ I looked up and saw a white horse. Its rider carried a bow, and a crown was placed on his head. He rode out to win many battles and gain the victory.”

Four horses appear as the first four seals are opened. The horses represent God’s judgment of people’s sin and rebellion. God is directing human history—even using his enemies to accomplish his purposes. The four horses are a foretaste of the final judgments yet to come. Some view this chapter as a parallel to the Olivet Discourse (see Matthew 24). The imagery of four horses is also found in Zech. 6:1-8.

“When the Lamb broke the second seal, I heard the second living being say, “Come!” And another horse appeared, a red one. Its rider was given a mighty sword and the authority to remove peace from the earth. And there was war and slaughter everywhere. When the Lamb broke the third seal, I heard the third living being say, “Come!” And I looked up and saw a black horse, and its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. And a voice from among the four living beings said, “A loaf of wheat bread or three loaves of barley for a day’s pay. And don’t waste the olive oil and wine.” And when the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the fourth living being say, “Come!” And I looked up and saw a horse whose color was pale green like a corpse. And Death was the name of its rider, who was followed around by the Grave. They were given authority over one-fourth of the earth, to kill with the sword and famine and disease and wild animals“

Each of the four horses is a different color. Some assume that the white horse represents victory and that its rider must be Christ (because Christ later rides to victory on a white horse— Rev. 19:11). But because the other three horses relate to judgment and destruction, this rider on a white horse would most likely not be Christ. The four are part of the unfolding judgment of God, and it would be premature for Christ to ride forth as conqueror. The other horses represent different kinds of judgment: red for warfare and bloodshed; black for famine; pale for death. The high prices of wheat and barley illustrate famine conditions. But the worst is yet to come.

It is not clear whether Hades was on a separate horse than Death or merely rode along with Death, but the riders described in Rev. 6:2-8 are commonly referred to as the four

horsemen of the Apocalypse.

The four riders are given power over one-fourth of the earth, indicating that God is still limiting his judgment—it is not yet complete. With these judgments there is still time for unbelievers to turn to Christ and away from their sin. In this case, the limited punishment not only demonstrates God’s wrath on sin, but also his merciful love in giving people yet another opportunity to turn to him before he brings final judgment.

“And when the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of all who had been martyred for the word of God and for being faithful in their witness.”

The altar represents the altar of sacrifice in the temple, where animals were sacrificed to atone for sins. Instead of the animals’ blood at the base of the altar, John saw the souls of martyrs who had died for preaching the gospel. These martyrs were told that still more would lose their lives for their belief in Christ (Rev. 6:11). In the face of warfare, famine, persecution, and death, Christians will be called on to stand firmly for what they believe. Only those who endure to the end will be rewarded by God (Mark 13:13).

“They called loudly to the Lord and said, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long will it be before you judge the people who belong to this world for what they have done to us? When will you avenge our blood against these people?” Then a white robe was given to each of them. And they were told to rest a little longer until the full number of their brothers and sisters—their fellow servants of Jesus—had been martyred.”

The martyrs are eager for God to bring justice to the earth, but they are told to wait. God is not waiting until a certain number is reached, but he is promising that those who suffer and die for their faith will not be forgotten. Rather, they will be singled out by God for special honor. We may wish for justice immediately, as these martyrs did, but we must be patient. God works according to his own timetable, and he promises justice. No suffering for the sake of God’s kingdom, however, is wasted.

“ I watched as the Lamb broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake. The sun became as dark as black cloth, and the moon became as red as blood.”

The sixth seal changes the scene back to the physical world. The first five judgments were directed toward specific areas, but this judgment is universal. Everyone will be afraid when the earth itself trembles.

“Then the stars of the sky fell to the earth like green figs falling from trees shaken by mighty winds. And the sky was rolled up like a scroll and taken away. And all of the mountains and all of the islands disappeared. Then the kings of the earth, the rulers, the generals, the wealthy people, the people with great power, and every slave and every free person—all hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains. And they cried to the mountains and the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of the one who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. [17] For the great day of their wrath has come, and who will be able to survive?”

At the sight of God sitting on the throne, all human beings, great and small, will be terrified, calling for the mountains to fall on them so that they will not have to face the judgment of the Lamb. This vivid picture was not intended to frighten believers. For them, the Lamb is a gentle Savior. But those generals, emperors, or kings who previously showed no fear of God and arrogantly flaunted their unbelief will find that they were wrong, and in that day they will have to face God's wrath. No one who has rejected God can survive the day of his wrath, but those who belong to Christ will receive a reward rather than punishment. Do you belong to Christ? If so, you need not fear these final days.

Revelation, Chapter 7

“Then I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds from blowing upon the earth. Not a leaf rustled in the trees, and the sea became as smooth as glass.”

The sixth seal has been opened, and the people of the earth have tried to hide from God, saying, “Who can stand?” (Rev. 6:12-17). Just when all hope seems lost, four angels hold back the four winds of judgment until God’s people are sealed as his own. Only then will God open the seventh seal (Rev. 8:1).

“And I saw another angel coming from the east, carrying the seal of the living God. And he shouted out to those four angels who had been given power to injure land and sea,”

A seal on a scroll or document identified and protected its contents. God places his own seal on his followers, identifying them as his own and guaranteeing his protection over their souls. This shows how valuable we are to him. Our physical bodies may be beaten, maimed, or even destroyed, but nothing can harm our souls when we have been sealed by God. See Ephes. 1:13 for the seal of the Holy Spirit.

““Wait! Don't hurt the land or the sea or the trees until we have placed the seal of God on the foreheads of his servants.”

God’s seal is placed on the foreheads of his servants. This seal is the exact opposite of the mark of the beast explained in Rev. 13:16. These two marks place the people in two distinct categories—those owned by God and those owned by Satan.

“And I heard how many were marked with the seal of God. There were 144,000 who were sealed from all the tribes of Israel:

from Judah — 12,000, from Reuben — 12,000, from Gad — 12,000, from Asher — 12,000, from Naphtali — 12,000, from Manasseh — 12,000, from Simeon — 12,000, from Levi — 12,000, from Issachar — 12,000, from Zebulun — 12,000. from Joseph — 12,000, from Benjamin — 12,000.

The number 144,000 is 12 x 12 x 1,000, symbolizing completeness—all God’s followers will be brought safely to him; not one will be overlooked or forgotten. God seals these believers either by withdrawing them from the earth (this is called the Rapture) or by giving them special strength and courage to make it through this time of great persecution. Even though many believers have to undergo persecution, the seal does not necessarily guarantee protection from physical harm—many will die (see Rev. 6:11)—but God will protect them from spiritual harm. No matter what happens, they will be

brought to their reward of eternal life. Their destiny is secure. These believers will not fall away from God even though they may undergo intense persecution.

This is not saying that 144,000 individuals must be sealed before the persecution comes, but that when persecution begins, the faithful will have already been sealed (marked by God) and they will remain true to him until the end.

This is a different list from the usual listing of the 12 tribes in the Old Testament, because it is a symbolic list of God's true followers. (1) Judah is mentioned first because Judah is both the tribe of David and of Jesus the Messiah (Genesis 49:8-12; Matthew 1:1). (2) Levi had no tribal allotment because of the Levites' work for God in the temple (Deut. 18:1), but here the tribe is given a place as a reward for faithfulness. (3) Dan is not mentioned because it was known for rebellion and idolatry, traits unacceptable for God's followers (Genesis 49:17). (4) The two tribes representing Joseph (usually called Ephraim and Manasseh, after Joseph's sons) are here called Joseph and Manasseh because of Ephraim's rebellion. See Genesis 49 for the story of the beginning of these 12 tribes.

"After this I saw a vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white and held palm branches in their hands

Who is this great multitude? While some interpreters identify it as the martyrs described in Rev. 6:9, it may also be the same group as the 144,000 just mentioned (Rev. 7:4-8). The 144,000 were sealed by God before the great time of persecution; the great multitude was brought to eternal life, as God had promised. Before, they were being prepared; now, they are victorious. This multitude in heaven is composed of all those who remained faithful to God throughout the generations. No true believer ever need worry about which group he or she will be in. God includes and protects each of us, and we are guaranteed a place in his presence.

"And they were shouting with a mighty shout, "Salvation comes from our God on the throne and from the Lamb!"

People try many methods to remove the guilt of sin—good deeds, intellectual pursuits, and even casting blame on others. The multitude in heaven however, praises God, saying that salvation comes from him and from the Lamb. Salvation from sin's penalty can come only through Jesus Christ. Have you had the guilt of sin removed in the only way possible?

"And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living beings. And they fell face down before the throne and worshiped God. They said, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and strength belong to our God forever and forever. Amen!"

Then one of the twenty-four elders asked me, "Who are these who are clothed in white? Where do they come from?" And I said to him, "Sir, you are the one who knows. Then he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb and made them white"

"The great tribulation" has been explained in several ways. Some believe it refers to the suffering of believers through the ages; others believe that there is a specific time of intense tribulation yet to come. In either case, these believers come through their times of suffering by remaining loyal to God. Because they remain faithful, God will give them eternal life with him (Rev. 7:17).

It is difficult to imagine how blood could make any cloth white, but the blood of Jesus Christ is the world's greatest purifier because it removes the stain of sin. White symbolizes sinless perfection or holiness, which can be given to people only by the death of the sinless Lamb of God on our behalf. This is a picture of how we are saved through faith (see Isaiah 1:18; Romans 3:21-26).

" That is why they are standing in front of the throne of God, serving him day and night in his Temple. And he who sits on the throne will live among them and shelter them. They will never again be hungry or thirsty, and they will be fully protected from the scorching noontime heat. For the Lamb who stands in front of the throne will be their Shepherd. He will lead them to the springs of life-giving water. And God will wipe away all their tears."

God will provide for his children's needs in their eternal home where there will be no hunger, thirst, or pain, and he will wipe away all tears. When you are suffering or torn apart by sorrow, take comfort in this promise of complete protection and relief.

In Rev. 7:1-8 we see the believers receiving a seal to protect them through a time of great tribulation and suffering; in Rev. 7:9-17 we see the believers finally with God in heaven. All who have been faithful through the ages are singing before God's throne. Their tribulations and sorrows are over: no more tears for sin, for all sins are forgiven; no more tears for suffering, for all suffering is over; no more tears for death, for all believers have been resurrected to die no more.

Revelation, Chapter 8

“When the Lamb broke the seventh seal, there was silence throughout heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and they were given seven trumpets.”

When the seventh seal is opened, the seven trumpet judgments are revealed. In the same way, the seventh trumpet will announce the seven bowl judgments in Rev. 11:15 and Rev. 16:1-21. The trumpet judgments, like the seal judgments, are only partial. God’s final and complete judgment has not yet come.

“Then another angel with a gold incense burner came and stood at the altar. And a great quantity of incense was given to him to mix with the prayers of God's people, to be offered on the gold altar before the throne.”

A censer filled with live coals was used in temple worship. Incense was poured on the coals, and the sweet-smelling smoke drifted upwards, symbolizing believers’ prayers ascending to God (see Exodus 30:7-9

“The smoke of the incense, mixed with the prayers of the saints, ascended up to God from the altar where the angel had poured them out. Then the angel filled the incense burner with fire from the altar and threw it down upon the earth; and thunder crashed, lightning flashed, and there was a terrible earthquake. Then the seven angels with the seven trumpets prepared to blow their mighty blasts.”

The trumpet blasts have three purposes: (1) to warn that judgment is certain, (2) to call the forces of good and evil to battle, and (3) to announce the return of the King, the Messiah. These warnings urge us to make sure our faith is firmly fixed on Christ.

“The first angel blew his trumpet, and hail and fire mixed with blood were thrown down upon the earth, and one-third of the earth was set on fire. One-third of the trees were burned, and all the grass was burned. Then the second angel blew his trumpet, and a great mountain of fire was thrown into the sea. And one-third of the water in the sea became blood. And one-third of all things living in the sea died. And one-third of all the ships on the sea were destroyed. Then the third angel blew his trumpet, and a great flaming star fell out of the sky, burning like a torch. It fell upon one-third of the rivers and on the springs of water. The name of the star was Bitterness. It made one-third of the water bitter, and many people died because the water was so bitter. Then the fourth angel blew his trumpet, and one-third of the sun was struck, and one-third of the moon, and one-third of the stars, and they became dark. And one-third of the day was dark and one-third of the night also.”

Since only one-third of the earth is destroyed by these trumpet judgments, this is only a partial judgment from God. His full wrath is yet to be unleashed.

Wormwood is a plant with a very bitter taste, and it stands for the bitterness of God's judgment.

"Then I looked up. And I heard a single eagle crying loudly as it flew through the air, "Terror, terror, terror to all who belong to this world because of what will happen when the last three angels blow their trumpets."

Habakkuk used the image of a vulture to symbolize swiftness and destruction (see Habakkuk 1:8). The picture here is of a strong, powerful bird flying over all the earth, warning of the terrors yet to come. While both believers and unbelievers experience the terrors described in Rev. 8:7-12, the "inhabitants of the earth" are the unbelievers who will meet spiritual harm through the next three trumpet judgments. God has guaranteed believers protection from spiritual harm (Rev. 7:2-3).

In Rev. 6:10, the martyrs call out to God, "How long. . . until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" As we see the world's wickedness, we too may cry out to God, "How long?" In the following chapters, the judgment comes at last. We may be distressed and impatient, but God has his plan and his timing, and we must learn to trust him to know what is best. Judgment is coming—be sure of that. Thank God for the time he has given you to turn from sin. Use the available time to work to help others turn to him.

Revelation, Chapter 9

“ Then the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen to earth from the sky, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit. When he opened it, smoke poured out as though from a huge furnace, and the sunlight and air were darkened by the smoke. Then locusts came from the smoke and descended on the earth, and they were given power to sting like scorpions.”

The prophet Joel described a locust plague as a foreshadowing of the “day of the LORD,” meaning God’s coming judgment (Joel 2:1-10). In the Old Testament, locusts were symbols of destruction because they destroyed vegetation. Here, however, they symbolize an invasion of demons called to torture people who do not believe in God. The limitations placed on the demons (they could only torment people for five months) show that they are under God’s authority.

Most likely these locusts are demons—evil spirits ruled by Satan who tempt people to sin. They were not created by Satan, because God is the Creator of all; rather, they are fallen angels who joined Satan in his rebellion. God limits what they can do; they can do nothing without his permission. Their main purpose on earth is to prevent, distort, or destroy people’s relationship with God. Because they are corrupt and degenerate, their appearance reflects the distortion of their spirits. While it is important to recognize their evil activity so we can stay away from them, we must avoid any curiosity about or involvement with demonic forces or with the occult.

“ They were told not to hurt the grass or plants or trees but to attack all the people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. They were told not to kill them but to torture them for five months with agony like the pain of scorpion stings. In those days people will seek death but will not find it. They will long to die, but death will flee away! The locusts looked like horses armed for battle. They had gold crowns on their heads, and they had human faces. Their hair was long like the hair of a woman, and their teeth were like the teeth of a lion. They wore armor made of iron, and their wings roared like an army of chariots rushing into battle. They had tails that stung like scorpions, with power to torture people. This power was given to them for five months. Their king is the angel from the bottomless pit; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon—the Destroyer.”

The locust-demons have a leader whose name in Hebrew and in Greek means destroyer. It may be a play on words by John to show that those who worshiped the great god Apollo worshiped only a demon.

“ The first terror is past, but look, two more terrors are coming!

Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice speaking from the four horns of the gold altar that stands in the presence of God.” [

The altar in the temple had four projections, one at each corner, and these were called the horns of the altar (see Exodus 27:2).

“And the voice spoke to the sixth angel who held the trumpet: "Release the four angels who are bound at the great Euphrates River."

“The word “angels” here means fallen angels or demons. These four unidentified demons will be exceedingly evil and destructive. But note that they do not have the power to release themselves and do their evil work on earth. Instead, they are held back by God and will be released at a specific time, doing only what he allows them to do. And the four angels who had been prepared for this hour and day and month and year were turned loose to kill one-third of all the people on earth.”

Here one-third of all people are killed. In Rev. 6:7-8, one-fourth of mankind was killed. Thus, over one-half of the people in the world will have been killed by God’s great judgments. Even more would have been killed if God had not set limits on the destruction.

“They led an army of 200 million mounted troops—I heard an announcement of how many there were.”

In John’s day, this number of mounted troops in an army was inconceivable, but today there are countries and alliances that could easily amass this many soldiers. This huge army, led by the four demons, will be sent out to destroy one-third of the earth’s population. But the judgment is still not complete.

“And in my vision, I saw the horses and the riders sitting on them. The riders wore armor that was fiery red and sky blue and yellow. The horses’ heads were like the heads of lions, and fire and smoke and burning sulfur billowed from their mouths. One-third of all the people on earth were killed by these three plagues—by the fire and the smoke and burning sulfur that came from the mouths of the horses. Their power was in their mouths, but also in their tails. For their tails had heads like snakes, with the power to injure people.

But the people who did not die in these plagues still refused to turn from their evil deeds. They continued to worship demons and idols made of gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood—idols that neither see nor hear nor walk! [21] And they did not repent of their murders or their witchcraft or their immorality or their thefts.”

These people were so hardhearted that even plagues did not drive them to God. People don’t usually fall into immorality and evil suddenly—they slip into it a little bit at a time until, hardly realizing what has happened, they are irrevocably mired in their wicked

ways.

Any person who allows sin to take root in his or her life can find himself or herself in this predicament. Temptation entertained today becomes sin tomorrow, then a habit the next day, then death and separation from God forever (see James 1:15). To think you could never become this evil is the first step toward a hard heart. Acknowledge your need to confess your sin before God.

Revelation Chapter 10

“ Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, surrounded by a cloud, with a rainbow over his head. His face shone like the sun, and his feet were like pillars of fire. And in his hand was a small scroll, which he had unrolled. He stood with his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land. And he gave a great shout, like the roar of a lion. And when he shouted, the seven thunders answered. When the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write. But a voice from heaven called to me: "Keep secret what the seven thunders said. Do not write it down." Then the mighty angel standing on the sea and on the land lifted his right hand to heaven. And he swore an oath in the name of the one who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and everything in it, the earth and everything in it, and the sea and everything in it. He said, "God will wait no longer.”

The purpose of this mighty angel is clear—to announce the final judgments on the earth. His right foot on the sea and left foot on the land (Rev. 10:2) indicate that his words deal with all creation, not just a limited part as did the seal and trumpet judgments. The seventh trumpet (Rev. 11:15) will usher in the seven bowl judgments, which will bring an end to the present world. When this universal judgment comes, God’s truth will prevail.

We see two scrolls in Revelation. The first contains a revelation of judgments against evil (Rev. 5:1ff). The contents of the second little scroll are not indicated, but it also may contain a revelation of judgment.

Throughout history people have wanted to know what would happen in the future, and God reveals some of it in this book. But John was stopped from revealing certain parts of his vision. An angel also told the prophet Daniel that some visions he saw were not to be revealed yet to everyone (Daniel 12:9), and Jesus told his disciples that the time of the end is known by no one but God (Mark 13:32-33). God has revealed all we need to know to live for him now. In our desire to be ready for the end, we must not place more emphasis on speculation about the last days than on living for God while we wait.

“ But when the seventh angel blows his trumpet, God's mysterious plan will be fulfilled. It will happen just as he announced it to his servants the prophets." Then the voice from heaven called to me again: "Go and take the unrolled scroll from the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land." So I approached him and asked him to give me the little scroll. "Yes, take it and eat it," he said. "At first it will taste like honey, but when you swallow it, it will make your stomach sour!" So I took the little scroll from the hands of the angel, and I ate it! It was sweet in my mouth, but it made my stomach sour.

The prophet Ezekiel had a vision in which he was told to eat a scroll filled with judgments against the nation of Israel (Ezekiel 3:1ff). The taste was sweet in his mouth, but the scroll’s contents brought destruction—just like the scroll John was told to eat. God’s Word is sweet to us as believers because it brings encouragement.

Revelation Chapter 11

“Then I was given a measuring stick, and I was told, "Go and measure the Temple of God and the altar, and count the number of worshipers.”

This temple is most likely a symbol of the church (all true believers), because there will be no temple in the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:22). John measured the temple to show that God is building walls of protection around his people to spare them from spiritual harm, and that there is a place reserved for all believers who remain faithful to God.

“But do not measure the outer courtyard, for it has been turned over to the nations. They will trample the holy city for 42 months.”

Those worshiping inside the temple will be protected spiritually, but those outside will face great suffering. This is a way of saying that true believers will be protected through persecution, but those who refuse to believe will be destroyed.

“And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will be clothed in sackcloth and will prophesy during those 1,260 days.”

These two witnesses bear strong resemblance to Moses and Elijah, two of God’s mighty prophets. With God’s power, Moses called plagues down upon the nation of Egypt (see Exodus 8-11). Elijah defeated the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18). Both of these men appeared with Christ at his transfiguration (see Matthew 17:1-7). They may be two witnesses that God raises up from the earth’s population at that time.

In the book of Revelation, numbers are likely to have symbolic rather than literal meanings. The 42 months or 1,260 days equal 3 1/2 years. As half of the perfect number 7, 3 1/2 can indicate incompleteness, imperfection, or even evil. Notice the events predicted for this time period: there is trouble (Daniel 12:7), the holy city is trampled (Rev. 11:2), the woman takes refuge in the desert (Rev. 12:6), and the devil-inspired beast exercises his authority (Rev. 13:5).

Some commentators link the 3 1/2 years with the period of famine in the days of Elijah (Luke 4:25; James 5:17). Since Malachi predicted the return of Elijah before the Last Judgment (Malachi 4:5), and since the events in Daniel and Revelation pave the way for the second coming, perhaps John was making this connection. It is possible, of course, that the 3 1/2 years are literal. If so, we will clearly recognize when the 3 1/2 years are over! Whether symbolic or literal, however, they indicate that evil’s reign will have a definite end.

“ These two prophets are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of all the earth. If anyone tries to harm them, fire flashes from the mouths of the prophets and consumes their enemies. This is how anyone who tries to harm them must

die. They have power to shut the skies so that no rain will fall for as long as they prophesy. And they have the power to turn the rivers and oceans into blood, and to send every kind of plague upon the earth as often as they wish. When they complete their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the bottomless pit will declare war against them. He will conquer them and kill them.”

This beast could be Satan or an agent of Satan.

“And their bodies will lie in the main street of Jerusalem, the city which is called "Sodom" and "Egypt," the city where their Lord was crucified. And for three and a half days, all peoples, tribes, languages, and nations will come to stare at their bodies. No one will be allowed to bury them.”

Jerusalem, once the great city and the capital of Israel, is now enemy territory. It is compared with Sodom and with Egypt, both well known for their evil. At the time of John’s writing, Jerusalem had been destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D., nearly a million Jews had been slaughtered, and the temple treasures had been carried off to Rome.

“All the people who belong to this world will give presents to each other to celebrate the death of the two prophets who had tormented them.”

The whole world rejoices at the deaths of these two witnesses who have caused trouble by saying what the people didn’t want to hear—words about their sin, their need for repentance, and the coming punishment. Sinful people hate those who call attention to their sin and who urge them to repent. They hated Christ, and they hate his followers (1 John 3:13). When you obey Christ and take a stand against sin, be prepared to experience the world’s hatred. But remember that the great reward awaiting you in heaven far outweighs any suffering that you face now.

“But after three and a half days, the spirit of life from God entered them, and they stood up! And terror struck all who were staring at them. [12] Then a loud voice shouted from heaven, "Come up here!" And they rose to heaven in a cloud as their enemies watched.

“And in the same hour there was a terrible earthquake that destroyed a tenth of the city. Seven thousand people died in that earthquake. And everyone who did not die was terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. The second terror is past, but look, now the third terror is coming quickly. Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices shouting in heaven: "The whole world has now become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever.”

The seventh trumpet is sounded, announcing the arrival of the King. There is now no turning back. The coming judgments are no longer partial, but complete in their destruction. God is in control, and he unleashes his full wrath on the evil world that refuses to turn to him (Rev. 9:20-21). When his wrath begins, there will be no escape.

“And the twenty-four elders sitting on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped him. And they said, "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the one who is and who always was, for now you have assumed your great power and have begun to reign. The nations were angry with you, but now the time of your wrath has come. It is time to judge the dead and reward your servants. You will reward your prophets and your holy people, all who fear your name, from the least to the greatest. And you will destroy all who have caused destruction on the earth.”

In the Bible, God gives rewards to his people according to what they deserve. Throughout the Old Testament, obedience often brought reward in this life (Deut. 28), but obedience and immediate reward are not always linked. If they were, good people would always be rich, and suffering would always be a sign of sin. If we were quickly rewarded for every faithful deed, we would soon think we were pretty good. Before long, we would be doing many good deeds for purely selfish reasons. While it is true that God will reward us for our earthly deeds (see Rev. 20:12), our greatest reward will be eternal life in his presence.

“Then, in heaven, the Temple of God was opened and the Ark of his covenant could be seen inside the Temple. Lightning flashed, thunder crashed and roared; there was a great hailstorm, and the world was shaken by a mighty earthquake.”

In Old Testament days, the ark of the covenant was the most sacred treasure of the Israelite nation. Exodus 37:1.

Revelation Chapter 12

“Then I witnessed in heaven an event of great significance. I saw a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon beneath her feet, and a crown of twelve stars on her head”

The seventh trumpet (Rev. 11:15) ushers in the bowl judgments (Rev. 15:1-16:21), but in the intervening chapters (Rev. 12-14), John sees the conflict between God and Satan. He sees the source of all sin, evil, persecution, and suffering on the earth, and he understands why the great battle between the forces of God and Satan must soon take place. In these chapters the nature of evil is exposed, and Satan is seen in all his wickedness.

“She was pregnant, and she cried out in the pain of labor as she awaited her delivery. Suddenly, I witnessed in heaven another significant event. I saw a large red dragon with seven heads and ten horns, with seven crowns on his heads. His tail dragged down one-third of the stars, which he threw to the earth. He stood before the woman as she was about to give birth to her child, ready to devour the baby as soon as it was born. She gave birth to a boy who was to rule all nations with an iron rod. And the child was snatched away from the dragon and was caught up to God and to his throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where God had prepared a place to give her care for 1,260 days.

The woman represents God’s faithful people who have been waiting for the Messiah; the crown of 12 stars represents the 12 tribes of Israel. God set apart the Jews for himself (Romans 9:4-5), and that nation gave birth to the Messiah. The male child (Rev. 12:5) is Jesus, born to a devout Jew named Mary (Luke 1:26-33). Evil King Herod immediately tried to destroy the infant Jesus (Matthew 2:13-20). Herod’s desire to kill this newborn king, whom he saw as a threat to his throne, was motivated by Satan (the red dragon), who wanted to kill the world’s Savior. The heavenly pageant of Rev. 12 shows that Christ’s quiet birth in the town of Bethlehem had cosmic significance.

The enormous red dragon, Satan, has seven heads, ten horns, and seven crowns, representing his power and the kingdoms of the world over which he rules. The stars that plunged to earth with him are usually considered to be the angels who fell with Satan and became his demons. According to Hebrew tradition, one-third of all the angels in heaven fell with Satan. For more on demons, see the notes on Rev. 9:3ff and Mark 5:1-20.

The desert represents a place of spiritual refuge and protection from Satan. Because God aided the woman’s escape into the desert, we can be sure that he offers security to all true believers. Satan always attacks God’s people, but God keeps them spiritually secure. Some will experience physical harm, but all will be protected from spiritual harm. God will not let Satan take the souls of God’s true followers.

The 1,260 days (3 1/2 years) is the same length of time that the dragon is allowed to exercise his authority (Rev. 13:5) and that the holy city is trampled (see the second note on Rev. 11:3).

“Then there was war in heaven. Michael and the angels under his command fought the dragon and his angels, And the dragon lost the battle and was forced out of heaven.

This event fulfills Daniel 12:1ff. Michael is a high-ranking angel. One of his responsibilities is to guard God’s community of believers.

Much more happened at Christ’s birth, death, and resurrection than most people realize. A war between the forces of good and evil was under way. With Christ’s resurrection, Satan’s ultimate defeat was assured. Some believe that Satan’s fall to earth took place at Jesus’ resurrection or ascension and that the 1,260 days (3 1/2 years) is a symbolic way of referring to the time between Christ’s first and second comings.

Others say that Satan’s defeat will occur in the middle of a literal seven-year tribulation period, following the rapture of the church and preceding the second coming of Christ and the beginning of Christ’s 1,000-year reign. Whatever the case, we must remember that Christ is victorious—Satan has already been defeated because of Christ’s death on the cross (Rev. 12:10-12).

“This great dragon—the ancient serpent called the Devil, or Satan, the one deceiving the whole world—was thrown down to the earth with all his angels.”

The devil is not a symbol or legend; he is very real. Originally Satan was an angel of God, but through his own pride, he became corrupt. The devil is God’s enemy, and he constantly tries to hinder God’s work, but he is limited by God’s power and can do only what he is permitted to do (Job 1:6-2:8). The name Satan means “accuser” (Rev. 12:10). He actively looks for people to attack (1 Peter 5:8-9). Satan likes to pursue believers who are vulnerable in their faith, who are spiritually weak, or who are isolated from other believers. Even though God permits the devil to do his work in this world, God is still in control. And Jesus has complete power over Satan—he defeated Satan when he died and rose again for the sins of mankind. One day Satan will be bound forever, never again to do his evil work (see Rev. 20:10).

“Then I heard a loud voice shouting across the heavens, “It has happened at last—the salvation and power and kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ! For the Accuser has been thrown down to earth—the one who accused our brothers and sisters before our God day and night.”

Many believe that until this time, Satan still had access to God (see the note on Job 1:7ff). But here his access is forever barred (see also Rev. 9:1). He can no longer accuse people before God (see how Satan made accusations about Job before God in Job 1:6ff.

“And they have defeated him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of their testimony. And they were not afraid to die.

The critical blow to Satan came when the Lamb, Jesus Christ, shed his blood for our sins. The victory is won by sacrifice—Christ’s death in our place to pay the penalty for our sin, and the sacrifices we make because of our faith in him. As we face the battle with Satan, we should not fear it or try to escape from it, but we should loyally serve Christ, who alone brings victory (see Romans 8:34-39).

“Rejoice, O heavens! And you who live in the heavens, rejoice! But terror will come on the earth and the sea. For the Devil has come down to you in great anger, and he knows that he has little time.”

The devil begins to step up his persecution because he knows that “his time is short.” We are living in the last days, and Satan’s work has become more intense. Even though the devil is very powerful, as we can see by the condition of our world, he is always under God’s control. One of the reasons God allows Satan to work evil and bring temptation is so that those who pretend to be Christ’s followers will be weeded out from Christ’s true believers. Knowing that the last great confrontation with Jesus is near, Satan is desperately trying to recruit as great an enemy force as possible for this final battle.

“And when the dragon realized that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the child. But she was given two wings like those of a great eagle. This allowed her to fly to a place prepared for her in the wilderness, where she would be cared for and protected from the dragon for a time, times, and half a time. Then the dragon tried to drown the woman with a flood of water that flowed from its mouth. But the earth helped her by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that gushed out from the mouth of the dragon. Then the dragon became angry at the woman, and he declared war against the rest of her children—all who keep God’s commandments and confess that they belong to Jesus.”

While the woman (Rev. 12:1) represents faithful Jews and the child (Rev. 12:5) represents Christ, the rest of her offspring could be either Jewish believers or, most likely, all believers.

The apostle Paul tells us that we are in a spiritual battle (Ephes. 6:10-12). John says that the war is still being waged, but the outcome has already been determined. Satan and his followers have been defeated and will be destroyed. Nevertheless, Satan is battling daily to bring more into his ranks and to keep his own from defecting to God’s side. Those who belong to Christ have gone into battle on God’s side, and he has guaranteed them victory. God will not lose the war, but we must make certain not to lose the battle for our own souls. Don’t waver in your commitment to Christ. A great spiritual battle is being fought, and there is no time for indecision.

Revelation Chapter 13

“And now in my vision I saw a beast rising up out of the sea. It had seven heads and ten horns, with ten crowns on its horns. And written on each head were names that blasphemed God.”

This beast was initially identified with Rome, because the Roman empire, in its early days, encouraged an evil life-style, persecuted believers, and opposed God and his followers. But the beast also symbolizes the antichrist—not Satan, but someone under Satan’s power and control. This antichrist looks like a combination of the four beasts that Daniel saw centuries earlier in a vision (Daniel 7). As the dragon (Rev. 12:17) is in opposition to God, so the beast from the sea is against Christ and may be seen as Satan’s false messiah. The early Roman empire was strong and also anti-Christ (or against Christ’s standards); many other individual powers throughout history have been anti- Christ. Many Christians believe that Satan’s evil will culminate in a final antichrist, one who will focus all the powers of evil against Jesus Christ and his followers.

Rev. 13 introduces Satan’s (the dragon’s) two evil accomplices: (1) the beast out of the sea (Rev. 13:1ff) and (2) the beast out of the earth (Rev. 13:11ff). Together, the three evil beings form an unholy trinity in direct opposition to the holy Trinity of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

When Satan tempted Jesus in the desert, he wanted Jesus to show his power by turning stones into bread, to do miracles by jumping from a high place, and to gain political power by worshiping him (see Matthew 4:1-11). Satan’s plan was to rule the world through Jesus, but Jesus refused to do Satan’s bidding. Thus Satan turns to the fearsome beasts described in Revelation. To the beast out of the sea he gives political power. To the beast out of the earth he gives power to do miracles. Both beasts work together to capture the control of the whole world. This unholy trinity—the dragon, the beast out of the sea, and the false prophet (see Rev. 16:13)—unite in a desperate attempt to overthrow God, but their efforts are doomed to failure. See what becomes of them in Rev. 19:19-21 and Rev. 20:10.

“This beast looked like a leopard, but it had bear's feet and a lion's mouth! And the dragon gave him his own power and throne and great authority. I saw that one of the heads of the beast seemed wounded beyond recovery—but the fatal wound was healed! All the world marveled at this miracle and followed the beast in awe.”

Because the beast, the antichrist, is a false messiah, he will be a counterfeit of Christ and will even stage a false resurrection (Rev. 13:14). People will follow and worship him because they will be awed by his power and miracles (Rev. 13:3-4). He will unite the world under his leadership (Rev. 13:7-8), and he will control the world economy (Rev. 13:16-17). People are impressed by power and will follow those who display it forcefully or offer it to their followers. But those who follow the beast will only be fooling

themselves: he will use his power to manipulate others, to point to himself, and to promote evil plans. God, by contrast, uses his infinitely greater power to love and to build up. Don't be misled by claims of great miracles or reports about a resurrection or reincarnation of someone claiming to be Christ. When Jesus returns, he will reveal himself to everyone (Matthew 24:23-28).

"They worshiped the dragon for giving the beast such power, and they worshiped the beast. "Is there anyone as great as the beast?" they exclaimed. "Who is able to fight against him?" Then the beast was allowed to speak great blasphemies against God. And he was given authority to do what he wanted for forty-two months."

The power given to the beast will be limited by God. He will allow the beast to exercise authority only for a short time. Even while the beast is in power, God will still be in control (Rev. 11:15; Rev. 12:10-12).

"And he spoke terrible words of blasphemy against God, slandering his name and all who live in heaven, who are his temple"

The woman represents God's faithful people who have been waiting for the Messiah; the crown of 12 stars represents the 12 tribes of Israel. God set apart the Jews for himself (Romans 9:4-5), and that nation gave birth to the Messiah. The male child (Rev. 12:5) is Jesus, born to a devout Jew named Mary (Luke 1:26-33). Evil King Herod immediately tried to destroy the infant Jesus (Matthew 2:13-20). Herod's desire to kill this newborn king, whom he saw as a threat to his throne, was motivated by Satan (the red dragon), who wanted to kill the world's Savior. The heavenly pageant of Rev. 12 shows that Christ's quiet birth in the town of Bethlehem had cosmic significance.

The enormous red dragon, Satan, has seven heads, ten horns, and seven crowns, representing his power and the kingdoms of the world over which he rules. The stars that plunged to earth with him are usually considered to be the angels who fell with Satan and became his demons. According to Hebrew tradition, one-third of all the angels in heaven fell with Satan. For more on demons, see the notes on Rev. 9:3ff and Mark 5:1-20.

The desert represents a place of spiritual refuge and protection from Satan. Because God aided the woman's escape into the desert, we can be sure that he offers security to all true believers. Satan always attacks God's people, but God keeps them spiritually secure. Some will experience physical harm, but all will be protected from spiritual harm. God will not let Satan take the souls of God's true followers.

"And the beast was allowed to wage war against God's holy people and to overcome them. And he was given authority to rule over every tribe and people and language and nation."

The power given to the beast will be limited by God. He will allow the beast to exercise authority only for a short time. Even while the beast is in power, God will still be in control (Rev. 11:15; Rev. 12:10-12).

“And all the people who belong to this world worshiped the beast. They are the ones whose names were not written in the Book of Life, which belongs to the Lamb who was killed before the world was made.”

“Anyone who is willing to hear should listen and understand. The people who are destined for prison will be arrested and taken away. Those who are destined for death will be killed. But do not be dismayed, for here is your opportunity to have endurance and faith.”

In this time of persecution, being faithful to Christ could bring imprisonment and even execution. Some believers will be hurt or killed. But all that the beast and his followers will be able to do to believers is harm them physically; no spiritual harm will come to those whose faith in God is sincere. All believers will enter God’s presence perfected and purified by the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 7:9-17).

The times of great persecution that John saw will provide an opportunity for believers to exercise patient endurance and faithfulness. The tough times we face right now are also opportunities for spiritual growth. Don’t fall into Satan’s trap and turn away from God when hard times come. Instead, use those tough times as opportunities for growth.

“Then I saw another beast come up out of the earth. He had two horns like those of a lamb, and he spoke with the voice of a dragon.”

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The first beast came out of the sea (Rev. 13:1), but this second beast comes out of the earth. Later identified as the false prophet (Rev. 16:13; Rev. 19:20), he is a counterfeit of the Holy Spirit. He seems to do good, but the purpose of his miracles is to deceive.

:“He exercised all the authority of the first beast. And he required all the earth and those who belong to this world to worship the first beast, whose death-wound had been healed. He did astounding miracles, such as making fire flash down to earth from heaven while everyone was watching. And with all the miracles he was allowed to perform on behalf of the first beast, he deceived all the people who belong to this world. He ordered the people of the world to make a great statue of the first beast, who was fatally wounded and then came back to life“.

Throughout the Bible we see miracles performed as proofs of God’s power, love, and authority. But here we see counterfeit miracles performed to deceive. This is a reminder of Pharaoh’s magicians, who duplicated Moses’ signs in Egypt. True signs and miracles point us to Jesus Christ, but miracles alone can be deceptive. That is why we must ask with respect to each miracle we see: Is this consistent with what God says in the Bible? The second beast here gains influence through the signs and wonders that he can perform on behalf of the first beast. The second beast orders the people to worship an image in honor of the first beast—a direct flouting of the second commandment (Exodus 20:4-6). Allowing the Bible to guide our faith and practice will keep us from being deceived by false signs, however convincing they appear to be. Any teaching that contradicts God’s

Word is false.

“He was permitted to give life to this statue so that it could speak. Then the statue commanded that anyone refusing to worship it must die. He required everyone—great and small, rich and poor, slave and free—to be given a mark on the right hand or on the forehead. And no one could buy or sell anything without that mark, which was either the name of the beast or the number representing his name. Wisdom is needed to understand this. Let the one who has understanding solve the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man. His number is 666“.

This mark of the beast is designed to mock the seal that God places on his followers (Rev. 7:2-3). Just as God marks his people to save them, so Satan’s beast marks his people to save them from the persecution that Satan will inflict upon God’s followers. Identifying this particular mark is not as important as identifying the purpose of the mark. Those who accept it show their allegiance to Satan, their willingness to operate within the economic system he promotes, and their rebellion against God. To refuse the mark means to commit oneself entirely to God, preferring death to compromising one’s faith in Christ.

The meaning of this number has been discussed more than that of any other part of the book of Revelation. The three sixes have been said to represent many things, including the number of man or the unholy trinity of Satan, the first beast, and the false prophet (Rev. 16:13). If the number seven is considered to be the perfect number in the Bible, and if three sevens represent complete perfection, then the number 666 falls completely short of perfection. The first readers of this book probably applied the number to the Emperor Nero, who symbolized all the evils of the Roman empire. (The Greek letters of Nero’s name represent numbers that total 666.) Whatever specific application the number is given, the number symbolizes the worldwide dominion and complete evil of this unholy trinity designed to undo Christ’s work and overthrow him.

Revelation Chapter 14

“Then I saw the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with him were 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads“.

Rev. 13 described the onslaught of evil that will occur when Satan and his helpers control the world. Rev. 14 gives a glimpse into eternity to show believers what awaits them if they endure. The Lamb is the Messiah. Mount Zion, often another name for Jerusalem, the capital of Israel, is contrasted with the worldly empire. The 144,000 represent believers who have endured persecutions on earth and now are ready to enjoy the eternal benefits and blessings of life with God forever. The three angels contrast the destiny of believers with that of unbelievers.

The seventh trumpet (Rev. 11:15) ushers in the bowl judgments (Rev. 15:1-16:21), but in the intervening chapters (Rev. 12-14), John sees the conflict between God and Satan. He sees the source of all sin, evil, persecution, and suffering on the earth, and he understands why the great battle between the forces of God and Satan must soon take place. In these chapters the nature of evil is exposed, and Satan is seen in all his wickedness.

“And I heard a sound from heaven like the roaring of a great waterfall or the rolling of mighty thunder. It was like the sound of many harpists playing together. This great choir sang a wonderful new song in front of the throne of God and before the four living beings and the twenty-four elders. And no one could learn this song except those 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. For they are spiritually undefiled, pure as virgins, following the Lamb wherever he goes. They have been purchased from among the people on the earth as a special offering to God and to the Lamb“

These people are true believers whose robes have been washed and made white in Christ's blood (Rev. 7:14) through his death (“purchased from among men”). In the Old Testament, idolatry was often portrayed as spiritual adultery (see the book of Hosea). Their purity is best understood symbolically, meaning that they are free from involvement with the pagan world system. These believers are spiritually pure; they have remained faithful to Christ, they have followed him exclusively, and they have received God's reward for staying committed to him. “Firstfruits” refers to the act of dedicating the first part of the harvest as holy to God (Exodus 23:19; see also James 1:18).

The enormous red dragon, Satan, has seven heads, ten horns, and seven crowns, representing his power and the kingdoms of the world over which he rules. The stars that plunged to earth with him are usually considered to be the angels who fell with Satan and became his demons. According to Hebrew tradition, one-third of all the angels in heaven fell with Satan. For more on demons, see the notes on Rev. 9:3ff and Mark 5:1-20.

“No falsehood can be charged against them; they are blameless. And I saw another angel

flying through the heavens, carrying the everlasting Good News to preach to the people who belong to this world—to every nation, tribe, language, and people.”.

The woman represents God’s faithful people who have been waiting for the Messiah; the crown of 12 stars represents the 12 tribes of Israel. God set apart the Jews for himself (Romans 9:4-5), and that nation gave birth to the Messiah. The male child (Rev. 12:5) is Jesus, born to a devout Jew named Mary (Luke 1:26-33). Evil King Herod immediately tried to destroy the infant Jesus (Matthew 2:13-20). Herod’s desire to kill this newborn king, whom he saw as a threat to his throne, was motivated by Satan (the red dragon), who wanted to kill the world’s Savior. The heavenly pageant of Rev. 12 shows that Christ’s quiet birth in the town of Bethlehem had cosmic significance.

The desert represents a place of spiritual refuge and protection from Satan. Because God aided the woman’s escape into the desert, we can be sure that he offers security to all true believers. Satan always attacks God’s people, but God keeps them spiritually secure. Some will experience physical harm, but all will be protected from spiritual harm. God will not let Satan take the souls of God’s true followers.

The 1,260 days (3 1/2 years) is the same length of time that the dragon is allowed to exercise his authority (Rev. 13:5) and that the holy city is trampled (see the second note on Rev. 11:3).

"Fear God," he shouted. "Give glory to him. For the time has come when he will sit as judge. Worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all the springs of water."

Some believe that this is a final, worldwide appeal to all people to recognize the one true God. No one will have the excuse of never hearing God’s truth. Others, however, see this as an announcement of judgment rather than as an appeal. The people of the world have had their chance to proclaim their allegiance to God, and now God’s great judgment is about to begin. If you are reading this, you have already heard God’s truth. You know that God’s final judgment will not be put off forever. Have you joyfully received the everlasting Good News? Have you confessed your sins and trusted in Christ to save you? If so, you have nothing to fear from God’s judgment. The Judge of all the earth is your Savior!

“Then another angel followed him through the skies, shouting, "Babylon is fallen—that great city is fallen—because she seduced the nations of the world and made them drink the wine of her passionate immorality."

Babylon was the name of both an evil city and an immoral empire, a world center for idol worship. Babylon ransacked Jerusalem and carried the people of Judah into captivity (see 2 Kings 24 and 2 Chron. 36). Just as Babylon was the Jews’ worst enemy, the Roman empire was the worst enemy of the early Christians. John, who probably did not dare speak against Rome openly, applied the name Babylon to this enemy of God’s people (Rome)—and, by extension, to all God’s enemies of all times.

“Then a third angel followed them, shouting, “Anyone who worships the beast and his statue or who accepts his mark on the forehead or the hand must drink the wine of God’s wrath. It is poured out undiluted into God’s cup of wrath. And they will be tormented with fire and burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and the Lamb. The smoke of their torment rises forever and ever, and they will have no relief day or night, for they have worshiped the beast and his statue and have accepted the mark of his name.”.

Those who worship the beast, accept his mark on their foreheads, and operate according to his world economic system will ultimately face God’s judgment. Our world values money, power, and pleasure over God’s leadership. To get what the world values, many people disown God and violate Christian principles. Thus they must drink of the wine of God’s wrath (see Psalm 75; Isaiah 51:17).

The ultimate result of sin is unending separation from God. Because human beings are created in God’s image with an inborn thirst for fellowship with him, separation from God will be the ultimate torment and misery. Sin always brings misery, but in this life we can choose to repent and restore our relationship with God. In eternity there will no longer be opportunity for repentance. If in this life we choose to be independent of God, in the next life we will be separated from him forever. Nobody is forced to choose eternal separation from God, and nobody suffers this fate by accident. Jesus invites all of us to open the door of our hearts to him (Rev. 3:20). If we do this, we will enjoy everlasting fellowship with him.

“Let this encourage God’s holy people to endure persecution patiently and remain firm to the end, obeying his commands and trusting in Jesus.”

This news about God’s ultimate triumph should encourage God’s people to remain faithful through every trial and persecution. They can do this, God promises, by trusting in Jesus and obeying the commands found in his Word. The secret to enduring, therefore, is trust and obedience. Trust God to give you patience to endure even the small trials you face daily; obey him even when obedience is unattractive or dangerous.

“And I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Write this down: Blessed are those who die in the Lord from now on. Yes, says the Spirit, they are blessed indeed, for they will rest from all their toils and trials; for their good deeds follow them!”

While it is true that money, fame, and belongings can’t be taken with us from this life, God’s people can produce fruit that survives even death. God will remember our love, kindness, and faithfulness, and those who accept Christ through our witness will join us in the new earth. Be sure that your values are in line with God’s values, and decide today to produce fruit that lasts forever.

“Then I saw the Son of Man sitting on a white cloud. He had a gold crown on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. Then an angel came from the Temple and called out in a

loud voice to the one sitting on the cloud, "Use the sickle, for the time has come for you to harvest; the crop is ripe on the earth." So the one sitting on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the whole earth was harvested.

This is an image of judgment: Christ is separating the faithful from the unfaithful like a farmer harvesting his crops. This is a time of joy for the Christians who have been persecuted and martyred—they will receive their long-awaited reward. Christians should not fear the Last Judgment. Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life" (John 5:24)

"After that, another angel came from the Temple in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle. Then another angel, who has power to destroy the world with fire, shouted to the angel with the sickle, "Use your sickle now to gather the clusters of grapes from the vines of the earth, for they are fully ripe for judgment." So the angel swung his sickle on the earth and loaded the grapes into the great winepress of God's wrath."

A winepress was a large vat or trough where grapes were collected and then smashed. The juice flowed out of a duct that led into a large holding vat. The winepress is often used in the Bible as a symbol of God's wrath and judgment against sin (Isaiah 63:3-6; Lament. 1:15; Joel 3:12-13).

"And the grapes were trodden in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed from the winepress in a stream about 180 miles long and as high as a horse's bridle".

The distance of 1,600 stadia equals about 180 miles, approximately the north-south length of Palestine.

Revelation Chapter 15

“Then I saw in heaven another significant event, and it was great and marvelous. Seven angels were holding the seven last plagues, which would bring God's wrath to completion.”

The seven last plagues are also called the seven bowl judgments. They actually begin in Rev. 16. Unlike the previous plagues, these are universal, and they will culminate in the abolition of all evil (“with them God’s wrath is completed”) and the end of the world.

“I saw before me what seemed to be a crystal sea mixed with fire. And on it stood all the people who had been victorious over the beast and his statue and the number representing his name. They were all holding harps that God had given them.”

This is similar to the “sea of glass” described in Rev. 4:6, located before the throne of God. Here it is mixed with fire to represent wrath and judgment. Those who stand beside it are victorious over Satan and his evil beast.

”And they were singing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb: "Great and marvelous are your actions, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations. Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous deeds have been revealed."

The song of Moses celebrated Israel’s deliverance from Egypt (Exodus 15). The song of the Lamb celebrates the ultimate deliverance of God’s people from the power of Satan.

‘Then I looked and saw that the Temple in heaven, God's Tabernacle, was thrown wide open! The seven angels who were holding the bowls of the seven plagues came from the Temple, clothed in spotless white linen with gold belts across their chests And one of the four living beings handed each of the seven angels a gold bowl filled with the terrible wrath of God, who lives forever and forever. The Temple was filled with smoke from God's glory and power. No one could enter the Temple until the seven angels had completed pouring out the seven plagues.’

The tabernacle of Testimony is a Greek translation for the Hebrew “Tent of Meeting” (see Exodus 40:34-35). The imagery brings us back to the time of the exodus in the desert when the ark of the covenant (the symbol of God’s presence among his people) resided in the tabernacle. The angels coming out of the temple are clothed in clean, shining linen with golden sashes around their chests. Their garments, reminiscent of the high priest’s clothing, show that they are free from corruption, immorality, and injustice. The smoke that fills the temple is the manifestation of God’s glory and power. There is no escape from this judgment.

Our eternal reign with Christ won’t begin until all evil is destroyed by his judgment. The

faithful must wait for his timetable to be revealed.

Revelation Chapter 16

“Then I heard a mighty voice shouting from the Temple to the seven angels, “Now go your ways and empty out the seven bowls of God's wrath on the earth.”

The bowl judgments are God’s final and complete judgments on the earth. The end has come. There are many similarities between the bowl judgments and the trumpet judgments (Rev. 8:6-11:19), but there are three main differences: (1) these judgments are complete whereas the trumpet judgments are partial; (2) the trumpet judgments still give unbelievers the opportunity to repent, but the bowl judgments do not; and (3) mankind is indirectly affected by several of the trumpet judgments but directly attacked by all the bowl judgments.

“ So the first angel left the Temple and poured out his bowl over the earth, and horrible, malignant sores broke out on everyone who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his statue.”

“ Then the second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it became like the blood of a corpse. And everything in the sea died. Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs, and they became blood And I heard the angel who had authority over all water saying, “You are just in sending this judgment, O Holy One, who is and who always was. For your holy people and your prophets have been killed, and their blood was poured out on the earth. So you have given their murderers blood to drink. It is their just reward.” And I heard a voice from the altar saying, “Yes, Lord God Almighty, your punishments are true and just.”

The significance of the altar itself responding is that everyone and everything will be praising God, acknowledging his righteousness and perfect justice.

“Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, causing it to scorch everyone with its fire. [9] Everyone was burned by this blast of heat, and they cursed the name of God, who sent all of these plagues. They did not repent and give him glory.”

We know that the people realize that these judgments come from God because they curse him for sending them. But they still refuse to recognize God’s authority and repent of their sins. Christians should not be surprised at the hostility and hardness of heart of unbelievers. Even when the power of God is fully and completely revealed, many will still refuse to repent. If you find yourself ignoring God more and more, turn back to him now before your heart becomes too hard to repent (see the note on Rev. 9:20-21 for more on hard hearts).

“Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom was

plunged into darkness. And his subjects ground their teeth in anguish, and they cursed the God of heaven for their pains and sores. But they refused to repent of all their evil deeds.”

Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great Euphrates River, and it dried up so that the kings from the east could march their armies westward without hindrance.”

The Euphrates River was a natural protective boundary against the empires to the east (Babylon, Assyria, Persia). If it dried up, nothing could hold back invading armies. The armies from the east symbolize unhindered judgment.

“And I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs leap from the mouth of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. [14] These miracle-working demons caused all the rulers of the world to gather for battle against the Lord on that great judgment day of God Almighty.”

These spirits of demons performing miraculous signs who come out of the mouths of the unholy trinity unite the rulers of the world for battle against God. The imagery of the demons coming out of the mouths of the three evil rulers signifies the verbal enticements and propaganda that will draw many people to their evil cause. For more about demons, see the note on Rev. 9:3.

“Take note: I will come as unexpectedly as a thief! Blessed are all who are watching for me, who keep their robes ready so they will not need to walk naked and ashamed.”

Christ will return unexpectedly (1 Thes. 5:1-6), so we must be ready when he returns. We can prepare ourselves by standing firm in temptation and by being committed to God’s moral standards. In what ways does your life show either your readiness or your lack of preparation for Christ’s return?

“And they gathered all the rulers and their armies to a place called Armageddon in Hebrew.”

This battlefield called Armageddon is near the city of Megiddo (southeast of the modern port of Haifa), which guarded a large plain in northern Israel. It is a strategic location near a prominent international highway leading north from Egypt through Israel, along the coast, and on to Babylon. Megiddo overlooked the entire plain southward toward Galilee and westward toward the mountains of Gilboa.

Sinful people will unite to fight against God in a final display of rebellion. Many are already united against Christ and his people—those who stand for truth, peace, justice, and morality. Your personal battle with evil foreshadows the great battle pictured here, where God will meet evil and destroy it once and for all. Be strong and courageous as you battle against sin and evil: you are fighting on the winning side.

“Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air. And a mighty shout came from the throne of the Temple in heaven, saying, “It is finished!” Then the thunder crashed

and rolled, and lightning flashed. And there was an earthquake greater than ever before in human history. [19] The great city of Babylon split into three pieces, and cities around the world fell into heaps of rubble. And so God remembered all of Babylon's sins, and he made her drink the cup that was filled with the wine of his fierce wrath. [20] And every island disappeared, and all the mountains were leveled. [21] There was a terrible hailstorm, and hailstones weighing seventy-five pounds fell from the sky onto the people below. They cursed God because of the hailstorm, which was a very terrible plague.

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made her drink the cup that was filled with the wine of his fierce wrath. And every island disappeared, and all the mountains were leveled. There was a terrible hailstorm, and hailstones weighing seventy-five pounds fell from the sky onto the people below. They cursed God because of the hailstorm, which was a very terrible plague.

The city's division into three sections is a symbol of its complete destruction.

Revelation Chapter 17

“One of the seven angels who had poured out the seven bowls came over and spoke to me. "Come with me," he said, "and I will show you the judgment that is going to come on the great prostitute, who sits on many waters.”

The destruction of Babylon mentioned in Rev. 16:17-21 is now described in greater detail. The “great prostitute,” called Babylon, represents the early Roman empire with its many gods and the blood of Christian martyrs on its hands. The water stands for either sea commerce or a well-watered (well-provisioned) city. The great prostitute represents the seductiveness of the governmental system that uses immoral means to gain its own pleasure, prosperity, and advantage. In contrast to the prostitute, Christ’s bride, the church, is pure and obedient (Rev. 19:6-9). The wicked city of Babylon contrasts with the heavenly city of Jerusalem (Rev. 21:10-22:5). The original readers probably rather quickly identified Babylon with Rome, but Babylon also symbolizes any system that is hostile to God (see Rev. 17:5).

“The rulers of the world have had immoral relations with her, and the people who belong to this world have been made drunk by the wine of her immorality." So the angel took me in spirit into the wilderness. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that had seven heads and ten horns, written all over with blasphemies against God.

The scarlet beast is either the dragon of Rev. 12:3, or the beast from the sea described in Rev. 13:1.

“The woman wore purple and scarlet clothing and beautiful jewelry made of gold and precious gems and pearls. She held in her hand a gold goblet full of obscenities and the impurities of her immorality. A mysterious name was written on her forehead: "Babylon the Great, Mother of All Prostitutes and Obscenities in the World." I could see that she was drunk—drunk with the blood of God's holy people who were witnesses for Jesus. I stared at her completely amazed.”

Throughout history, people have been killed for their faith. Over the last century, millions have been killed by oppressive governments, and many of those victims were believers. The woman’s drunkenness shows her pleasure in her evil accomplishments and her false feeling of triumph over the church. But every martyr who has fallen before her sword has only served to strengthen the faith of the church.

““Why are you so amazed?" the angel asked. "I will tell you the mystery of this woman and of the beast with seven heads and ten horns. The beast you saw was alive but isn't now. And yet he will soon come up out of the bottomless pit and go to eternal destruction. And the people who belong to this world, whose names were not written in the Book of Life from before the world began, will be amazed at the reappearance of this beast who had died.

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"And now understand this: The seven heads of the beast represent the seven hills of the city where this woman rules. They also represent seven kings. Five kings have already fallen, the sixth now reigns, and the seventh is yet to come, but his reign will be brief. The scarlet beast that was alive and then died is the eighth king. He is like the other seven, and he, too, will go to his doom.

Here John is referring to Rome, the city famous for its seven hills. Many say that this city also symbolized all evil in the world—any person, religion, group, government, or structure that opposed Christ. Whatever view is taken of the seven hills and seven kings, this section indicates the climax of Satan's struggle against God. Evil's power is limited, and its destruction is on the horizon.

“ His ten horns are ten kings who have not yet risen to power; they will be appointed to their kingdoms for one brief moment to reign with the beast. “

The ten horns represent kings of nations yet to arise. Rome will be followed by other powers. Rome is a good example of how the antichrist's system will work, demanding complete allegiance, and ruling by raw power, oppression, and slavery. Whoever the ten kings are, they will give their power to the antichrist and will make war against the Lamb.

“They will all agree to give their power and authority to him. Together they will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will defeat them because he is Lord over all lords and King over all kings, and his people are the called and chosen and faithful ones.” And the angel said to me, “The waters where the prostitute is sitting represent masses of people of every nation and language. The scarlet beast and his ten horns—which represent ten kings who will reign with him—all hate the prostitute. They will strip her naked, eat her flesh, and burn her remains with fire.

In a dramatic turn of events, the prostitute's allies turn on her and destroy her. This is how evil operates. Destructive by its very nature, it discards its own adherents when they cease to serve its purposes. An unholy alliance is an uneasy alliance because each partner puts its own interests first

“For God has put a plan into their minds, a plan that will carry out his purposes. They will mutually agree to give their authority to the scarlet beast, and so the words of God will be fulfilled.”

No matter what happens, we must trust that God is still in charge, that God overrules all the plans and intrigues of the evil one, and that God's plans will happen just as he says. God even uses people opposed to him as tools to execute his will. Although he allows

evil to permeate this present world, the new earth will never know sin.”

“And this woman you saw in your vision represents the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.”

Revelation Chapter 18

“After all this I saw another angel come down from heaven with great authority, and the earth grew bright with his splendor.”

This chapter shows the complete destruction of Babylon, John’s metaphorical name for the evil world power and all it represents. Everything that tries to block God’s purposes will come to a violent end. For more information on how the book of Revelation uses the name Babylon, see the note on Rev. 14:8.

“He gave a mighty shout, “Babylon is fallen—that great city is fallen! She has become the hideout of demons and evil spirits, a nest for filthy buzzards, and a den for dreadful beasts. For all the nations have drunk the wine of her passionate immorality. The rulers of the world have committed adultery with her, and merchants throughout the world have grown rich as a result of her luxurious living.”

Merchants in the Roman empire grew rich by exploiting the sinful pleasures of their society. Many business people today do the same thing. Businesses and governments are often based on greed, money, and power. Many bright individuals are tempted to take advantage of an evil system to enrich themselves. Christians are warned to stay free from the lure of money, status, and the good life. We are to live according to the values Christ exemplified: service, giving, self-sacrifice, obedience, and truth.

“Then I heard another voice calling from heaven, “Come away from her, my people. Do not take part in her sins, or you will be punished with her. [5] For her sins are piled as high as heaven, and God is ready to judge her for her evil deeds. [6] Do to her as she has done to your people. Give her a double penalty for all her evil deeds. She brewed a cup of terror for others, so give her twice as much as she gave out. [7] She has lived in luxury and pleasure, so match it now with torments and sorrows. She boasts, ‘I am queen on my throne. I am no helpless widow. I will not experience sorrow.’ [8] Therefore, the sorrows of death and mourning and famine will overtake her in a single day. She will be utterly consumed by fire, for the Lord God who judges her is mighty.”

The people of Babylon had lived in luxury and pleasure. The city boasted, “I sit as queen. . . and I will never mourn.” The powerful, wealthy people of this world are susceptible to this same attitude. A person who is financially comfortable often feels invulnerable, secure, and in control, feeling no need for God or anyone else. This kind of attitude defies God, and his judgment against it is harsh. We are told to avoid Babylon’s sins. If you are financially secure, don’t become complacent and deluded by the myth of self-sufficiency. Use your resources to help others and advance God’s kingdom.

“And the rulers of the world who took part in her immoral acts and enjoyed her great luxury will mourn for her as they see the smoke rising from her charred remains. They will stand at a distance, terrified by her great torment. They will cry out, “How terrible, how terrible for Babylon, that great city! In one single moment God’s judgment came on

her."

Those who are tied to the world's system will lose everything when it collapses. What they have worked for a lifetime to build up will be destroyed in one hour. Those who work only for material rewards will have nothing when they die or when their possessions are destroyed. What can we take with us to the new earth? Our faith, our Christian character, and our relationships with other believers. These are more important than any amount of money, power, or pleasure.

"The merchants of the world will weep and mourn for her, for there is no one left to buy their goods. She bought great quantities of gold, silver, jewels, pearls, fine linen, purple dye, silk, scarlet cloth, every kind of perfumed wood, ivory goods, objects made of expensive wood, bronze, iron, and marble. She also bought cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, olive oil, fine flour, wheat, cattle, sheep, horses, chariots, and slaves—yes, she even traded in human lives.

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[14] "All the fancy things you loved so much are gone," they cry. "The luxuries and splendor that you prized so much will never be yours again. They are gone forever."

[15] The merchants who became wealthy by selling her these things will stand at a distance, terrified by her great torment. They will weep and cry. [16] "How terrible, how terrible for that great city! She was so beautiful—like a woman clothed in finest purple and scarlet linens, decked out with gold and precious stones and pearls! [17] And in one single moment all the wealth of the city is gone!"

"And all the ship owners and captains of the merchant ships and their crews will stand at a distance. They will weep as they watch the smoke ascend, and they will say, "Where in all the world is there another city like this?" And they will throw dust on their heads to show their great sorrow. And they will say, "How terrible, how terrible for the great city! She made us all rich from her great wealth. And now in a single hour it is all gone."

Those who are in control of various parts of the economic system will mourn at Babylon's fall. The political leaders will mourn because they were the overseers of Babylon's wealth and were in a position to enrich themselves greatly. The merchants will mourn because Babylon, the greatest customer for their goods, will be gone. The sea captains will no longer have anywhere to bring their goods because the merchants will have nowhere to sell them. The fall of the evil world system affects all who enjoyed and depended on it. No one will remain unaffected by Babylon's fall.

God's people should not live for money, because money will be worthless in eternity.

And they should keep on guard constantly against greed, a sin that is always ready to take over their lives.

“But you, O heaven, rejoice over her fate. And you also rejoice, O holy people of God and apostles and prophets! For at last God has judged her on your behalf. Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder as large as a great millstone. He threw it into the ocean and shouted, "Babylon, the great city, will be thrown down as violently as I have thrown away this stone, and she will disappear forever.

“Never again will the sound of music be heard there—no more harps, songs, flutes, or trumpets. There will be no industry of any kind, and no more milling of grain. Her nights will be dark, without a single lamp. There will be no happy voices of brides and grooms. This will happen because her merchants, who were the greatest in the world, deceived the nations with her sorceries. In her streets the blood of the prophets was spilled. She was the one who slaughtered God's people all over the world.”

Revelation Chapter 19

“After this, I heard the sound of a vast crowd in heaven shouting, "Hallelujah! Salvation is from our God. Glory and power belong to him alone.

Praise is the heartfelt response to God by those who love him. The more you get to know God and realize what he has done, the more you will respond with praise. Praise is at the heart of true worship. Let your praise of God flow out of your realization of who he is and how much he loves you.

”His judgments are just and true. He has punished the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and he has avenged the murder of his servants.”

The identity of this great prostitute is explained in Rev. 17:1

“Again and again their voices rang, "Hallelujah! The smoke from that city ascends forever and forever!" Then the twenty-four elders and the four living beings fell down and worshiped God, who was sitting on the throne. They cried out, "Amen! Hallelujah!" And from the throne came a voice that said, "Praise our God, all his servants, from the least to the greatest, all who fear him.”

“ Then I heard again what sounded like the shout of a huge crowd, or the roar of mighty ocean waves, or the crash of loud thunder: "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us be glad and rejoice and honor him. For the time has come for the wedding feast of the Lamb, and his bride has prepared herself. She is permitted to wear the finest white linen." (Fine linen represents the good deeds done by the people of God.)

A great multitude in heaven initiates the chorus of praise to God for his victory (Rev. 19:1-3). Then the 24 elders (identified in the note on Rev. 4:4) join the chorus (Rev. 19:4). Finally, the great choir of heaven once again praises God—the wedding of the Lamb has come (Rev. 19:6-8). See Matthew 25:1-13 where Christ compares the coming of his kingdom to a wedding for which we must be prepared.”

This is the culmination of human history—the judgment of the wicked and the wedding of the Lamb and his bride, the church. The church consists of all faithful believers from all time. The bride’s clothing stands in sharp contrast to the gaudy clothing of the great prostitute of Rev. 17:4 and Rev. 18:16. The bride’s clothing is the righteousness of the saints. These righteous acts are not religious deeds done by believers to their merit, but they reflect the work of Christ to save us (Rev. 7:9, 14).

“And the angel said, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb." And he added, "These are true words that come from God.”

Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said, "No, don't worship me. For I am a servant of God, just like you and other brothers and sisters who testify of their faith in Jesus. Worship God. For the essence of prophecy is to give a clear witness for Jesus."

The angel did not accept John's homage and worship because only God is worthy of worship. Like John, it would be easy for us to become overwhelmed by this prophetic pageant. But Jesus is the central focus of God's revelation and his redemptive plan (as announced by the prophets). As you read the book of Revelation, don't get bogged down in all the details of the awesome visions; remember that the overarching theme in all the visions is the ultimate victory of Jesus Christ over evil.

"Then I saw heaven opened, and a white horse was standing there. And the one sitting on the horse was named Faithful and True. For he judges fairly and then goes to war."

The name "Faithful and True" contrasts with the faithless and deceitful Babylon described in Rev. 18.

[12] His eyes were bright like flames of fire, and on his head were many crowns. A name was written on him, and only he knew what it meant. [13] He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and his title was the Word of God. [14] The armies of heaven, dressed in pure white linen, followed him on white horses. [15] From his mouth came a sharp sword, and with it he struck down the nations. He ruled them with an iron rod, and he trod the winepress of the fierce wrath of almighty God. [16] On his robe and thigh was written this title: King of kings and Lord of lords.

This title indicates our God's sovereignty. Most of the world is worshiping the beast, the antichrist, whom they believe has all power and authority. Then suddenly out of heaven rides Christ and his army of angels—the "KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS." His entrance signals the end of the false powers.

"Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, shouting to the vultures flying high in the sky: "Come! Gather together for the great banquet God has prepared."

This "great supper of God" is a grim contrast to the wedding supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9). One is a celebration; the other is devastation

"Come and eat the flesh of kings, captains, and strong warriors; of horses and their riders; and of all humanity, both free and slave, small and great."

"Then I saw the beast gathering the kings of the earth and their armies in order to fight against the one sitting on the horse and his army. And the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who did mighty miracles on behalf of the beast—miracles that deceived all who had accepted the mark of the beast and who worshiped his statue. Both the beast and his false prophet were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur.

The fiery lake of burning sulfur is the final destination of the wicked. This lake is different from the Abyss (bottomless pit) referred to in Rev. 9:1. The antichrist and the false prophet are thrown into the fiery lake. Then their leader, Satan himself, will be thrown into that lake (Rev. 20:10), and finally death and Hades (Rev. 20:14). Afterward, everyone whose name is not recorded in the book of life will be thrown into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:15).

“Their entire army was killed by the sharp sword that came out of the mouth of the one riding the white horse. And all the vultures of the sky gorged themselves on the dead bodies.”

John’s vision shifts again. Heaven opens and Jesus appears, this time not as a Lamb, but as a warrior on a white horse (symbolizing victory). Jesus came first as a Lamb to be a sacrifice for sin, but he will return as a Conqueror and King to execute judgment (2 Thes. 1:7-10). Jesus’ first coming brought forgiveness; his second will bring judgment. The battle lines have been drawn between God and evil, and the world is waiting for the King to ride onto the field.

Revelation Chapter 20

“Then I saw an angel come down from heaven with the key to the bottomless pit and a heavy chain in his hand. He seized the dragon—that old serpent, the Devil, Satan—and bound him in chains for a thousand years.”

The dragon, Satan, is discussed in more detail in the notes on Rev. 12:3-4 and Rev. 12:9. The dragon is not bound as punishment—that occurs in Rev. 20:10—but so that he cannot deceive the nations.

“The angel threw him into the bottomless pit, which he then shut and locked so Satan could not deceive the nations anymore until the thousand years were finished. Afterward he would be released again for a little while.”

John doesn't say why God once again sets Satan free, but it is part of God's plan for judging the world. Perhaps it is to expose those who rebel against God in their hearts and confirm those who are truly faithful to God. Whatever the reason, Satan's release results in the final destruction of all evil (Rev. 20:12-15).

“Then I saw thrones, and the people sitting on them had been given the authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony about Jesus, for proclaiming the word of God. And I saw the souls of those who had not worshiped the beast or his statue, nor accepted his mark on their forehead or their hands. They came to life again, and they reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

The 1,000 years are often referred to as the Millennium (Latin for 1,000). Just how and when this 1,000 years takes place is understood differently among Christian scholars. The three major positions on this issue are called postmillennialism, premillennialism, and amillennialism.

(1) Postmillennialism looks for a literal 1,000-year period of peace on earth ushered in by the church. At the end of the 1,000 years, Satan will be unleashed once more, but then Christ will return to defeat him and reign forever. Christ's second coming will not occur until after the 1,000-year period.

(2) Premillennialism also views the 1,000 years as a literal time period, but holds that Christ's second coming initiates his 1,000-year reign and that this reign occurs before the final removal of Satan.

(3) Amillennialism understands the 1,000-year period to be symbolic of the time between Christ's ascension and his return. This Millennium is the reign of Christ in the hearts of believers and in his church; thus it is another way of referring to the church age. This period will end with the second coming of Christ.

These different views about the Millennium need not cause division and controversy in the church, because each view acknowledges what is most crucial to Christianity—Christ will return, defeat Satan, and reign forever! Whatever and whenever the Millennium is, Jesus Christ will unite all believers; therefore, we should not let this issue divide us.

“This is the first resurrection. (The rest of the dead did not come back to life until the thousand years had ended.) Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. For them the second death holds no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him a thousand years.”

Christians hold two basic views concerning this first resurrection. (1) Some believe that the first resurrection is spiritual (in our hearts at salvation), and that the Millennium is our spiritual reign with Christ between his first and second comings. During this time, we are priests of God because Christ reigns in our hearts. In this view, the second resurrection is the bodily resurrection of all people for judgment. (2) Others believe that the first resurrection occurs after Satan has been set aside. It is a physical resurrection of believers who then reign with Christ on the earth for a literal 1,000 years. The second resurrection occurs at the end of this Millennium in order to judge unbelievers who have died.

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“When the thousand years end, Satan will be let out of his prison. He will go out to deceive the nations from every corner of the earth, which are called Gog and Magog. He will gather them together for battle—a mighty host, as numberless as sand along the shore. And I saw them as they went up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded God's people and the beloved city. But fire from heaven came down on the attacking armies and consumed them.”

Gog and Magog symbolize all the forces of evil that band together to battle God. Noah's son, Japheth, had a son named Magog (Genesis 10:2). Ezekiel presents Gog as a leader of forces against Israel (Ezekiel 38-39).

20:9 This is not a typical battle where the outcome is in doubt during the heat of the conflict. Here there is no contest. Two mighty forces of evil—those of the beast (Rev. 19:19) and of Satan (Rev. 20:8)—unite to do battle against God. The Bible uses just two verses to describe each battle—the evil beast and his forces are captured and thrown into the fiery lake (Rev. 19:20-21), and fire from heaven devours Satan and his attacking armies (Rev. 20:9-10). For God, it is as easy as that. There will be no doubt, no worry, no second thoughts for believers about whether they have chosen the right side. If you are with God, you will experience this tremendous victory with Christ

“Then the Devil, who betrayed them, was thrown into the lake of fire that burns with

sulfur, joining the beast and the false prophet. There they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”

Satan’s power is not eternal—he will meet his doom. He began his evil work in mankind at the beginning (Genesis 3:1-6) and continues it today, but he will be destroyed when he is thrown into the lake of burning sulfur. The devil will be released from the Abyss (“his prison,” Rev. 20:7), but he will never be released from the fiery lake. He will never be a threat to anyone again.

‘And I saw a great white throne, and I saw the one who was sitting on it. The earth and sky fled from his presence, but they found no place to hide. I saw the dead, both great and small, standing before God's throne. And the books were opened, including the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to the things written in the books, according to what they had done. The sea gave up the dead in it, and death and the grave gave up the dead in them. They were all judged according to their deeds. [14] And death and the grave were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death—the lake of fire. And anyone whose name was not found recorded in the Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire.

At the judgment, the books are opened. They represent God’s judgment, and in them are recorded the deeds of everyone, good or evil. We are not saved by deeds, but deeds are seen as clear evidence of a person’s actual relationship with God. The book of life contains the names of those who have put their trust in Christ to save them.

Revelation Chapter 21

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

The earth as we know it will not last forever, but after God's great judgment, he will create a new earth (see Romans 8:18-21; 2 Peter 3:7-13). God had also promised Isaiah that he would create a new and eternal earth (Isaiah 65:17; Isaiah 66:22). The sea in John's time was viewed as dangerous and changeable. It was also the source of the beast (Rev. 13:1). We don't know how the new earth will look or where it will be, but God and his followers—those whose names are written in the book of life—will be united to live there forever. Will you be there?

Chart: The Beginning and the End

The Bible records for us the beginning of the world and the end of the world. The story of mankind, from beginning to end—from the fall into sin to redemption and God's ultimate victory over evil—is found in the pages of the Bible.

1. Genesis	Revelation
The sun is created	The sun is not needed
Satan is victorious	Satan is defeated
Sin enters the human race	Sin is banished
People run and hide from God	People are invited to live with God forever
People are cursed	The curse is removed
Tears are shed, with sorrow for sin	No more sin, no more tears or sorrow
The garden and earth are cursed	God's city is glorified, the earth is made new
The fruit from the tree of life is not to be eaten	God's people may eat from the tree of life
Paradise is lost	Paradise is regained

People are doomed to death
Death is defeated,
believers live forever
with God

“And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

The new Jerusalem is where God lives among his people. Instead of our going up to meet him, he comes down to be with us, just as God became man in Jesus Christ and lived among us (John 1:14). Wherever God reigns, there is peace, security, and love.

Have you ever wondered what eternity will be like? The “Holy City, the new Jerusalem” is described as the place where God will “wipe every tear from their eyes.” Forevermore, there will be no death, pain, sorrow, or crying. What a wonderful truth! No matter what you are going through, it’s not the last word—God has written the final chapter, and it is about true fulfillment and eternal joy for those who love him. We do not know as much as we would like, but it is enough to know that eternity with God will be more wonderful than we could ever imagine.

Chart: What We Know About Eternity

CHART: WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT ETERNITY

Reference	Description
John 14:2-3	A place prepared for us
John 20:19, 26	Unlimited by physical properties (1 Cor. 15:35-49)
1 John 3:2	We will be like Jesus
1 Cor. 15	We will have new bodies
1 Cor. 2:9	Our experience will be wonderful
Rev. 21:1	A new environment
Rev. 21:3	A new experience of God’s presence (1 Cor. 13:12)

Rev. 21:4 New emotions

Rev. 21:4 There will be no more death

The Bible devotes much less space to describing eternity than it does to convincing people that eternal life is available as a free gift from God. Most of the brief descriptions of eternity would be more accurately called hints, since they use terms and ideas from present experience to describe what we cannot fully grasp until we are there ourselves. These references hint at aspects of what our future will be like if we have accepted Christ's gift of eternal life.

“And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.”

God is the Creator. The Bible begins with the majestic story of his creation of the universe, and it concludes with his creation of a new heaven and a new earth. This is a tremendous hope and encouragement for the believer. When we are with God, with our sins forgiven and our future secure, we will be like Christ. We will be made perfect like him.

“ And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.”

Just as God finished the work of creation (Genesis 2:1-3) and Jesus finished the work of redemption (John 19:30), so the Trinity will finish the entire plan of salvation by inviting the redeemed into a new creation.

“He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. [8] But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”

The “cowardly” are not those who are fainthearted in their faith or who sometimes doubt or question, but those who turn back from following God. They are not brave enough to stand up for Christ; they are not humble enough to accept his authority over their lives. They are put in the same list as the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the liars, the idolaters, the sexually immoral, and those practicing magic arts.

People who overcome “stand firm to the end” (Mark 13:13). They will receive the blessings that God promised: (1) eating from the tree of life (Rev. 2:7), (2) escaping from the lake of fire (the “second death,” Rev. 2:11), (3) receiving a special name (Rev. 2:17), (4) having authority over the nations (Rev. 2:26), (5) being included in the book of life (Rev. 3:5), (6) being a pillar in God's spiritual temple (Rev. 3:12), and (7) sitting with Christ on his throne (Rev. 3:21). Those who can endure the testing of evil and remain faithful will be rewarded by God.

The lake is explained in the notes on Rev. 19:20 and Rev. 20:14. The second death is spiritual death, meaning either eternal torment or destruction. In either case, it is permanent separation from God.

“And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. [10] And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,

21:10 The rest of the chapter is a stunning description of the new city of God. The vision is symbolic and shows us that our new home with God will defy description. We will not be disappointed by it in any way.”

“Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb“.

“The new Jerusalem is a picture of God’s future home for his people. The 12 tribes of Israel (Rev. 21:12) probably represent all the faithful in the Old Testament; the twelve apostles (Rev. 21:14) represent the church. Thus, both believing Gentiles and Jews who have been faithful to God will live together in the new earth.”

“And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.”

The city’s measurements are symbolic of a place that will hold all God’s people. These measurements are all multiples of 12, the number for God’s people: there were 12 tribes in Israel, and 12 apostles who started the church. The walls are 144 (12 x 12) cubits (200 feet) thick; there are 12 layers in the walls, and 12 gates in the city; and the height, length, and breadth are all the same, 12,000 stadia (1,400 miles). The new Jerusalem is a perfect cube, the same shape as the Most Holy Place in the temple (1 Kings 6:20). These measurements illustrate that this new home will be perfect for us.

“And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a

jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.”

The picture of walls made of jewels reveals that the new Jerusalem will be a place of purity and durability—it will last forever.

“And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it.”

The temple, the center of God’s presence among his people, was the primary place of worship. No temple is needed in the new city, however, because God’s presence will be everywhere. He will be worshiped throughout the city, and nothing will hinder us from being with him.

“And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. [26] And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

Not everyone will be allowed into the new Jerusalem, but “only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.” (The book of life is explained in the notes on Rev. 3:5 and Rev. 20:12-15.) Don’t think that you will get in because of your background, personality, or good behavior. Eternal life is available to you only because of what Jesus, the Lamb, has done. Trust him today to secure your citizenship in his new creation.

Revelation Chapter 22

“And the angel showed me a pure river with the water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb,”

The water of life is a symbol of eternal life. Jesus used this same image with the Samaritan woman (John 4:7-14). It pictures the fullness of life with God and the eternal blessings that come when we believe in him and allow him to satisfy our spiritual thirst (see Rev. 22:17).

“coursing down the center of the main street. On each side of the river grew a tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, with a fresh crop each month. The leaves were used for medicine to heal the nations.”

This tree of life is like the tree of life in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:9). After Adam and Eve sinned, they were forbidden to eat from the tree of life because they could not have eternal life as long as they were under sin’s control. But because of the forgiveness of sin through the blood of Jesus, there will be no evil or sin in this city. We will be able to eat freely from the tree of life when sin’s control over us is destroyed and our eternity with God is secure.

Why would the nations need to be healed if all evil is gone? John is quoting from Ezekiel 47:12, where water flowing from the temple produces trees with healing leaves. He is not implying that there will be illness in the new earth; he is emphasizing that the water of life produces health and strength wherever it goes.

“No longer will anything be cursed. For the throne of God and of the Lamb will be there, and his servants will worship him.”

“No longer will there be any curse” means that nothing accursed will be in God’s presence. This fulfills Zechariah’s prophecy (see Zech. 14:11).

“And they will see his face, and his name will be written on their foreheads. [5] And there will be no night there—no need for lamps or sun—for the Lord God will shine on them. And they will reign forever and ever“

Then the angel said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true: 'The Lord God, who tells his prophets what the future holds, has sent his angel to tell you what will happen soon.' " "Look, I am coming soon! Blessed are those who obey the prophecy written in this scroll."

I, John, am the one who saw and heard all these things. And when I saw and heard these things, I fell down to worship the angel who showed them to me. But again he said, "No, don't worship me. I am a servant of God, just like you and your brothers the prophets, as well as all who obey what is written in this scroll. Worship God!"

Hearing or reading an eyewitness account is the next best thing to seeing the event yourself. John witnessed the events reported in Revelation and wrote them down so we could see and believe as he did. If you have read this far, you have seen. Have you also believed?

The first of the Ten Commandments is “You shall have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3). Jesus said that the greatest command of Moses’ laws was “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37). Here, at the end of the Bible, this truth is reiterated. The angel instructs John to “worship God!” God alone is worthy of our worship and adoration. He is above all creation, even the angels. Are there people, ideas, goals, or possessions that occupy the central place in your life, crowding God out? Worship only God by allowing nothing to distract you from your devotion to him.

“Then he instructed me, "Do not seal up the prophetic words you have written, for the time is near. Let the one who is doing wrong continue to do wrong; the one who is vile, continue to be vile; the one who is good, continue to do good; and the one who is holy, continue in holiness."

The angel tells John what to do after his vision is over. Instead of sealing up what he has written, as Daniel was commanded to do (Daniel 12:4-12), the book is to be left open so that all can read and understand. Daniel’s message was sealed because it was not a message for Daniel’s time. But the book of Revelation was a message for John’s time, and it is relevant today. As Christ’s return gets closer, there is a greater polarization between God’s followers and Satan’s followers. We must read the book of Revelation, hear its message, and be prepared for Christ’s imminent return.

"See, I am coming soon, and my reward is with me, to repay all according to their deeds. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End."

Blessed are those who wash their robes so they can enter through the gates of the city and eat the fruit from the tree of life“.

Those who wash their robes are those who seek to purify themselves from a sinful way of life. They strive daily to remain faithful and ready for Christ’s return. This concept is also explained in the second note on Rev. 7:14.

In Eden, Adam and Eve were barred from any access to the tree of life because of their sin (Genesis 3:22-24). In the new earth, God’s people will eat from the tree of life because their sins have been removed by Christ’s death and resurrection. Those who eat the fruit of this tree will live forever. If Jesus has forgiven your sins, you will have the right to eat from this tree. For more on this concept, see the first note on Rev. 22:2.

“Outside the city are the dogs—the sorcerers, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idol worshipers, and all who love to live a life

The exact location of these sinners is not known, nor is it relevant. They are outside. They were judged and condemned in Rev. 21:7-8. The emphasis is that nothing evil and no sinner will be in God’s presence to corrupt or harm any of the faithful.

"I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this message for the churches. I am both the source of David and the heir to his throne. I am the bright morning star."

Jesus is both David’s “Root” and “Offspring.” As the Creator of all, Jesus existed long before David. As a human, however, he was one of David’s direct descendants (see Isaiah 11:1-5; Matthew 1:1-17). As the Messiah, he is the “bright Morning Star,” the light of salvation to all.

[17] The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." Let each one who hears them say, "Come." Let the thirsty ones come—anyone who wants to. Let them come and drink the water of life without charge.

“Both the Holy Spirit and the bride, the church, extend the invitation to all the world to come to Jesus and experience the joys of salvation in Christ“.

When Jesus met the Samaritan woman at the well, he told her of the living water that he could supply (John 4:10-15). This image is used again as Christ invites anyone to come and drink of the water of life. The gospel is unlimited in scope—all people everywhere may come. Salvation cannot be earned, but God gives it freely. We live in a world desperately thirsty for living water, and many are dying of thirst. But it’s still not too late. Let us invite everyone to come and drink.

“And I solemnly declare to everyone who hears the prophetic words of this book: If anyone adds anything to what is written here, God will add to that person the plagues described in this book. [19] And if anyone removes any of the words of this prophetic book, God will remove that person's share in the tree of life and in the holy city that are described in this book.

This warning is given to those who might purposefully distort the message in this book. Moses gave a similar warning in Deut. 4:1-4. We too must handle the Bible with care and great respect so that we do not distort its message, even unintentionally. We should be quick to put its principles into practice in our lives. No human explanation or interpretation of God’s Word should be elevated to the same authority as the text itself.

“He who is the faithful witness to all these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon!" Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!"

We don’t know the day or the hour, but Jesus is coming soon and unexpectedly. This is good news to those who trust him, but a terrible message for those who have rejected him and stand under judgment. Soon means at any moment, and we must be ready for him,

always prepared for his return. Would Jesus' sudden appearance catch you off guard?

“The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all“.

Revelation closes human history as Genesis opened it—in paradise. But there is one distinct difference in Revelation—evil is gone forever. Genesis describes Adam and Eve walking and talking with God; Revelation describes people worshiping God face to face. Genesis describes a garden with an evil serpent; Revelation describes a perfect city with no evil. The Garden of Eden was destroyed by sin; but paradise is re-created in the new Jerusalem.

The book of Revelation ends with an urgent request: “Come, Lord Jesus.” In a world of problems, persecution, evil, and immorality, Christ calls us to endure in our faith. Our efforts to better our world are important, but their results cannot compare with the transformation that Jesus will bring about when he returns. He alone controls human history, forgives sin, and will re-create the earth and bring lasting peace.

Revelation is, above all, a book of hope. It shows that no matter what happens on earth, God is in control. It promises that evil will not last forever. And it depicts the wonderful reward that is waiting for all those who believe in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

THE BREAK OF DAWN

By Carl Banks

**In the eastern skies so far away,
We see the break of dawn.
With soon the morning bright to
be, Then the noon-day's sun.**

**Soon will be evening time again,
When all shall be at rest.
But who will wait the morning dawn,
When Jesus Christ shall bless.**

**He'll take His children all away,
to live in perfect peace.
No sorrow, sickness, nor harm shall come
For His children shall reap the feast!**

**They'll feast and feast upon His Word,
And sing around His throne.
And praise Jesus Christ our Lord,
Who redeemed us for His own!**

**Oh, friend, awake thy slumbering and thy
sleep, And rise to worlds beyond.
For Jesus Christ, the Lord of Lords.
Shall take His children home!**